



Working together in partnership

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BirdLife International is a global alliance of conservation organisations working together for the world's birds and people. Our vision is of a world rich in biodiversity, with people and nature living in harmony, equitably and sustainably. Our mission is to conserve wild birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, by working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

BirdLife is a network of over 100 autonomous non-governmental conservation organisations in as many countries. BirdLife is the world authority on Threatened birds and a leader in global biodiversity priority setting. As a conservation network we work to conserve species, protect habitats and improve people's quality of life, principally through identifying and conserving a worldwide network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

Rio Tinto is a world leader in finding, mining and processing the earth's mineral resources. To deliver superior returns to shareholders over time, Rio Tinto takes a long term and responsible approach to the Group's business. We concentrate on the development of first class orebodies into large, long life and efficient operations, capable of sustaining competitive advantage through business cycles.

Major products are aluminium, copper, diamonds, energy products (coal and uranium), gold, industrial minerals (borax, titanium dioxide, salt, talc and zircon), and iron ore. The Group's activities span the world but are strongly represented in Australia and North America with significant businesses in South America, Asia, Europe and southern Africa.

BirdLife International's commitment

BirdLife International believes that partnership with business can deliver significant conservation outcomes and influence business practice with respect to biodiversity. BirdLife itself is a partnership of over 100 national conservation organisations and represents a strong, representative force for enthusiastic and committed conservation effort. Its relationship with Rio Tinto is clearly underpinned by a conviction that working with business in a focused way, achieving priority conservation objectives on the ground, will deliver practical results and assist business in functioning in a more sustainable manner.

Rio Tinto and BirdLife share mutually held objectives of integrating biodiversity conservation into core business practices. The range of partnership projects described in this brochure indicates practical methods of identifying locally significant actions within a framework of global priorities.

BirdLife International's programmes for Threatened Species and Important Bird Areas are being developed and implemented by BirdLife Partner organisations and when working with Rio Tinto businesses we can ensure that local actions are resourced within the context of local communities. Such an approach can ensure a stronger level of local involvement while achieving objectives that contribute to a global framework for conservation action, meeting both business and NGO aspirations for sustainable development.

Partnerships can take many forms. There is a growing realisation in all sectors of society that sustainability will only be realised with major paradigm shifts in the way we think and work. We see our partnership with Rio Tinto as a pioneering attempt to meet these challenges head-on and deliver practical responses that demonstrate effective and sustainable collaboration, based on trust and transparency.

The various initiatives outlined in this brochure range from a highly successful ecotourism initiative, achieved through developing sustainable livelihoods that conserve biodiversity, to the development of environmental education resources and stakeholder-oriented conservation management actions on sites and for species.

Through this programme with Rio Tinto, BirdLife has gained support for our global Important Bird Areas programme and for IBA programmes being developed in countries where Rio Tinto operates. The programme has been built through the collaboration of our willing and ready network of conservation organisations that have strong links with local communities working with Rio Tinto businesses and their own local communities. This brings to mining businesses an enabling resource that ensures that biodiversity conservation is better integrated into the practices of extractive industry.

Dr Michael Rands Director & Chief executive, BirdLife International

Rio Tinto's commitment

Rio Tinto is committed to excellence in all aspects of its work. As a company we also understand that we need to respond to the expanded expectations of society. Environmental stewardship is obviously a critical responsibility for us, and we know that the footprint created by our activities must be minimised and managed.

Over the past decade we have developed an approach which involves extensive engagement with outside organisations. This is important for a number of reasons. It enables us to better understand the views of civil society so that our policies and programmes are well informed. In addition, we gain access to skills and approaches that we may not have internally.

Rio Tinto and BirdLife International have committed substantial resources to the partnership to ensure well defined objectives and sustainable outcomes. The practical and inclusive programmes developed by the partnership have inspired great enthusiasm from many Rio Tinto operations around the world. I have no doubt that we are a better organisation in many ways as a result of our collaboration with BirdLife International.

Leigh Clifford Chief executive, Rio Tinto

Introduction



Martial Eagle

In 2001, BirdLife International and Rio Tinto formed a partnership to achieve mutually held goals of biodiversity conservation within the context of the global transition to sustainable development. Together we believe our partnership provides sustainable and far reaching outcomes where the objectives of both our organisations are more effectively fulfilled than by acting alone.

BirdLife's scientific expertise and global biodiversity databases place them in a strong position to identify conservation priorities relevant to Rio Tinto operations. And through its grass-roots organisational networks and widespread technical capacity, BirdLife is also well positioned to recognise potential local conservation initiatives for Rio Tinto's communities.

Biodiversity and its management are of strategic importance to Rio Tinto. Worldwide, the company works in regions that are recognised and valued locally and globally for their biodiversity resources. By working with capable international and national conservation and environmental organisations, Rio Tinto can better develop and implement programmes around the management of biodiversity.

The partnership realises that both organisations have a significant overlap of agendas – biodiversity conservation within the context of sustainable development – and use collaboration as a tool to fulfil these objectives. For example, BirdLife International, along with other conservation organisations, has assisted Rio Tinto in the development of Rio Tinto's biodiversity strategy and will continue to aid its implementation across the Rio Tinto Group.

The partnership recognises that mining operations can both mitigate and compensate for their impact on biodiversity. Mitigation may be achieved through effective design and planning such as identification of habitat management opportunities on site. The partnership has presented opportunities to achieve biodiversity compensation through identifying biodiversity priorities local to mining operations. For example, collaborative stewardship roles have been developed in support of BirdLife's conservation initiatives such as the global Important Bird Area (IBA) programme. Such opportunities provide practical means of achieving meaningful and targeted offset actions which can compensate for environmental disturbance due to mining operations.

The partnership programme objectives

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Improve knowledge and interest in birds throughout Rio Tinto's operations.
- Improve and/or monitor habitats for birds at Rio Tinto sites or within nearby communities.
- Assist and advise Rio Tinto about local and regional conservation issues.
- Identify opportunities at Rio Tinto sites for effective biodiversity risk assessment, loss mitigation and offset.
- Create opportunities to link with local and relevant communities on the integrated conservation and management of biodiversity.
- Gain long term support for BirdLife's global Important Bird Area programme.
- Promote and develop stewardship roles for practical action at Important Bird Areas and for threatened species.
- Develop strategic initiatives for sustainable development with targeted benefits for birds and biodiversity.

The partnership in context

The significance of the planet's biodiversity resources continues to increase as human and natural pressures escalate extinction rates and modify natural habitats. The management of the environment is a complex issue for which we are all responsible and without sufficiently attending to the environment we risk compromising our world for ourselves and future generations.

In 1996 Rio Tinto carried out an internal review of strategic issues that might affect the Group's business prospects in the medium to long term. This review was prompted by recognition that, while operating within the law, the mining industry was collectively failing to meet certain expectations of society. Legislation is a lagging indicator of society's expectations, so even full legal compliance falls short of what some key sectors of society expect responsible businesses to achieve.

Biodiversity was one of the issues recognised in the 1996 review. Society's expectations of the mining industry include reducing the footprint of its activities so that the conservation of habitats and species is compromised as little as possible, while enhancing opportunities for community development and maintaining cultural and heritage values. Accordingly, the enhancement of community development and the maintenance of cultural and heritage values is essential.

In late 2003 Rio Tinto further strengthened its commitment to biodiversity with the development of a biodiversity strategy, as well as a position statement, a set of biodiversity principles and a technical guidance document. The strategy helps to consolidate the company's response to biodiversity at a global level by building on the work of the Global Mining Initiative and linking together initiatives such as Rio Tinto's role in the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) work on biodiversity and partnerships with some of the world's leading conservation NGOs.

To deliver against these commitments, it will be necessary for Rio Tinto to demonstrate convincingly that its actions have positive effects on biodiversity conservation that not only balance, but are accepted to outweigh the inevitable negative effects of the physical disturbance and land use changes associated with mining. Rio Tinto aims to achieve this by reducing, managing and rectifying impacts and capitalising on conservation opportunities.

Cross-sector partnerships such as the BirdLife International – Rio Tinto partnership have been developed to address these critical environmental and biodiversity issues. The partnership provides a mechanism for change, mobilises joint resources and increases awareness of the issues. BirdLife International, has, since the outset of its relationship with Rio Tinto, positively advocated the need for a global biodiversity strategy and welcomes the development and implementation of such an approach. Partnership activities will help local businesses implement the Rio Tinto biodiversity strategy. Both organisations believe that through cooperation we will achieve more than in isolation or in conflict.

How the partnership works

The partnership achieves biodiversity conservation through several activities:

- Promotion of an interest in birds as a gateway to awareness of the environment, including annual birdwatching events at Rio Tinto operations.
- Identification and development of biodiversity conservation projects relevant to mining operations.
- Global outreach, advancing the debate on corporate responsibility through demonstration of the partnership's successes.

Why the kumul flies and the Muruk runs

A story from Papua New Guinea
Retold by Amy Tearikifareata

Long ago when our ancestors lived, there were two birds, a muruk and a kumul. The muruk is known as the cassowary and the kumul is known as the bird of paradise. The kumul had beautiful long legs and the muruk had very colourful feathers that made him look very attractive. The muruk and the kumul were very close friends, every morning the two birds would go hunting for food. Muruk would fly high to the top of the tree looking for fruits like coconut, paw paw, laulau and heaps more. Kumul would go hunting for animals in the bushes. One day as they were hunting for food, kumul looked and saw that muruk was showing off with his colourful feathers to other birds. Kumul was so jealous that he thought of a plan to try to steal muruk's feathers. That night as they were eating in the light of the moon, kumul asked if he could try using muruk's wings to fly high in the air just for once. Muruk agreed and the next day they swapped. Muruk gave kumul his feathers and kumul gave his long legs to muruk. As they went hunting muruk saw that kumul was showing off with his feathers and wasn't looking for food. That afternoon muruk asked for his wings but kumul was too greedy to give it back. It made muruk so mad that he started chasing kumul. Kumul was too clever and he flew to the top of the tree. Muruk tried flying but he couldn't. These days, if you put a cassowary and a bird of paradise together, they will fight and chase each other.

Promoting an interest in birds: the annual Rio Tinto birdwatch event

The birdwatch event is an opportunity for Rio Tinto employees, families and members of the local community to enjoy and appreciate the birds and habitats associated with the company's operating sites. With the expertise of the local BirdLife Partner, these social outdoor meetings provide an initial vehicle for promoting the Rio Tinto – BirdLife partnership, aid relationship-building and can act as a communication springboard for the identification and development of partnership biodiversity projects.

Each year the number of birdwatch events, the number of people involved, and the number of birds seen continues to increase. In 2000, there were 21 events with 330 participants. In 2003, this doubled to 42 events involving 1,800 people from both sides of the partnership.

Birdwatch events have been held in North and South America, southern Africa, Britain, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and India. The participants have visited local Protected Areas, key biodiversity sites and IBAs such as Brasilia National Park and Great Salt Lake, Utah. They have also made contributions to internationally important biodiversity monitoring schemes and others have created self-sustaining annual community environmental education activities.

In addition to holding their own birdwatching events, several businesses have begun to engage in wider birding initiatives. These include International Migratory Bird Days, Christmas bird counts and visits to birds-of-prey centres in North America Australia, South Africa and Quebec.

The fourth birdwatch event held in 2003 provided an opportunity for several businesses including Lihir Gold, Palabora Mining Company, Rossing Uranium Limited, Kennecott Minerals (Greens Creek) and Dampier Salt to extend the birdwatching activities to involve schools, firmly embedding the annual event into the culture and calendar of the local community.



Project identification and development

Collaborative biodiversity projects have been developed between Rio Tinto businesses and BirdLife Partner organisations. The resulting projects are varied, and influenced by the priorities and capacity of both organisations and the culture of their locality. The collaboration has sometimes commenced by addressing issues of bird conservation or habitat management associated with operations and lease areas. In several cases these have expanded into nearby protected areas or IBAs requiring a multi-stakeholder engagement process where the local community, the BirdLife Partner and the Rio Tinto business join in the stewardship of a priority site or species. The tailoring of each biodiversity initiative to meet the needs and capacities of both partners is the key to successful outcomes.

The most successful projects are those which develop strategic initiatives, generating interest among relevant stakeholders from all sectors of civil society including business, NGOs, communities and schools. Examples of these include environmental education programmes, eco-tourism initiatives, and engagement in land-use planning where the needs of the mine meet the needs of wildlife in the wider catchment area – as described in the following case studies.

Global outreach

The partnership seeks to demonstrate the potential benefits of cross-sector partnerships and to advocate best practice for biodiversity and the environment across the global mining sector. Our activities show that a pro-active, inclusive and integrated approach will secure lasting and effective benefits for birds, biodiversity, the business community and for relevant stakeholders. There has been a considerable amount of interest in hearing more about how the BirdLife International Rio Tinto partnership has developed, its progress to date and the plans for future cooperation. The partnership members have been responding to this interest by being open in their communications with people wanting to hear more about the partnership. It is hoped that other companies, government agencies and NGOs may benefit from the experiences of the partnership.



Birdwatch at Kakadu, Australia

Partnership biodiversity projects

Richards Bay Avitourism project

Location	Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
Rio Tinto company	Richards Bay Minerals (RBM)
Partner organisations	BirdLife South Africa (BLSA), BirdLife Zululand (BLZ)
Habitats	Coastal wetlands and dune forests, savanna, scarp forests.
Key people	Duncan Pritchard and Sakhamuzi Mhlongo (BLSA); Jeanette Small and Pete Outhwaite (RBM)
Birds	Green Barbet, Mangrove Kingfisher, Green Malkoha, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Spotted Ground-thrush, Woodward's Batis, Rudd's Apalis, African Broadbill.
Outcomes	Community-based sustainable livelihoods and bird conservation.

A collaboration between Richards Bay Minerals and BirdLife South Africa, this project achieves sustainable development goals through community-led ecotourism businesses whilst achieving global and national bird conservation priorities in the region of the Richards Bay mine. Over 30 members of the local community have been trained as birdwatching guides and now make their living from ecotourism. Local government has been actively involved, such as in handing over a wetland to the project for wise conservation stewardship. See <http://www.zbr.co.za/>

Project background and history

Richards Bay Minerals (RBM) has been a major employer in the region since operations began in 1976. The company is located in an area that has remarkable bird diversity and includes several Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Spectacular and widespread species such as African Crowned and Long-crested Eagles can be found in the area; and also rare species or species localised within South Africa such as Pel's Fishing Owl, Woolly-necked Storks, Mangrove Kingfisher, Green Malkoha and the African Broadbill. These birds inhabit a variety of habitats including wetlands, coastal areas and dune forest or savanna ecosystems along the renowned Zululand Birding Route.

The Richards Bay and the wider hinterland area has approximately 600 bird species including 45 species found in South Africa's Red Data Book. No less than 24 species are regarded as national rarities, and 16 are regarded 'Zululand Specials' which attract birdwatchers to this area and make it one of the premier domestic birding locations in South Africa. As a result, the Richards Bay area is an excellent site for the development of bird-based ecotourism (avitourism). Ecotourism is currently one of the fastest growing domestic and international tourism sectors and birdwatching is one of the ecotourism activities showing most rapid growth.



Expert guidance at the RBM birdwatch event

Rio Tinto, RBM and BirdLife realised early on that avitourism enterprises employing local people could be a win-win model of corporate social and environmental responsibility, achieving real conservation goals in the face of rapid coastal industrial development and providing self-sustaining employment for local communities. In response to this, the Richards Bay Avitourism Group was formed in 2001 to co-ordinate the development of the pre-existing Zululand Birding Route into a set of community-led avitourism enterprises to achieve the dual objectives of biodiversity conservation and sustainable community development.

Project details

Bird Guides

Over 30 birdwatching guides from the local Richards Bay communities have been trained at BirdLife South Africa's training facility at Wakkerstroom. Visiting birders have revealed unprecedented interest in using local bird guides and as a result additional guides are trained every year and all those trained are either employed full time or gather significant amounts of income as freelance guides. Workshops have also commenced to assist the guides share ideas, keep skills honed and develop marketing and business management abilities.

One of the guides recently took on the role of development officer for the project. This is a key role in the growth of the project as it involves conserving IBAs and co-ordinates environmental education projects in collaboration with local schools.

Site Support Groups (a fundamental concept in BirdLife's global conservation action plans) are also key to conserving IBAs and the Dube community has a group of volunteers specifically dedicated to looking after the Southern Sanctuary, a neighbouring estuarine Protected Area. The success of the local guides has encouraged the local municipality to include avitourism in its economic development plan.

Birding infrastructure and resources

The Zululand Birding Route is now represented on four tourism-orientated committees in the area and several special birding events were run in 2003 to encourage birders to visit the area. BirdLife Travel (a company evolved from BLSA) has been administering accommodation for birdwatchers, recognising appropriate establishments as 'birder friendly'. Birdwatching hides have been built at Richards Bay and elsewhere in the region. In this way, local conservation infrastructure has also improved and become decentralised. For example, the Thulasihleka Pan site has been handed over to the project by the local municipality and has been declared a conservation amenity area, to be managed by BirdLife Zululand. Development is also proceeding within the wider area: in 2004 the construction of a birdwatching camp began, which will be managed by the local community at Ongoye Forest – a forest renowned for its rare endemic species. A similar community-led bird-hide project is underway at the Muzi Pans involving negotiations with the KwaJobe tribal leaders.

Corporate involvement

RBM employees are involved in BirdLife Zululand activities, including guide training and bird-ringing groups. The impact of the project as a whole is reflected in the support shown by various stakeholders: further funds have been provided by the local municipality, Central Timber Corporation and the Richards Bay Coal Terminal for further guide-training and marketing, while SAPPI- WWF and Uthungulu District Municipality have approved the provision of funds for the Ongoye Forest Project. This initiative aligns itself with and realises some of RBM's long term goals for sustainable development and mine closure plans.

The Richards Bay Avitourism Programme was one of three finalists in the Smithsonian Institute's 'Sustainable Tourism Awards'.

The future

The partnership hopes to find support among Rio Tinto operations to replicate and tailor this programme for use elsewhere in the Rio Tinto Group.



Gorgeous Bush-shrike

Partnership biodiversity projects

Zimbabwe Bird Awareness Programme



Cam and Motor Primary School
Wildlife Club

Locations	Renco Mine, Masvingo Province; Eiffel Flats, Mashonaland West Province
Rio Tinto company	Renco Mine and Eiffel Flats
Partner organisations	BirdLife Zimbabwe, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Zimbabwe Schools and Colleges Permaculture Programme (SCOPE)
Key people	Leslee Maasdorp (Birdlife Zimbabwe); Brian Peters (Rio Zim)
Habitats	School and College gardens
Outcomes	Environmental awareness, conservation management skills

This programme, now running in ten schools across the Rio Tinto Zimbabwe mine catchment areas, seeks to empower young people to change their environment and themselves through gardening skills, land management ideas and by developing a lifelong interest in birds and their conservation.

Project background and history

During the past few years, the BirdLife Zimbabwe's Bird Awareness Programme has been introduced into no less than 110 schools in Zimbabwe under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture. This education programme was managed by BirdLife Zimbabwe, and initially funded by the RSPB (BirdLife partner in the UK). The Bird Awareness Programme uses school grounds and the surrounding habitats as an environmental resource where birds and their habitats can be observed, monitored and appreciated. In addition, a key link between environmental health and personal well-being is provided through developing gardening skills and sustainable land-use design in the school grounds.

Project details

Rio Tinto Zimbabwe saw the opportunity to become a partner in these school bird awareness programmes to fulfil its own objectives to support its local community and environment in the Renco and Eiffel Flats areas. BirdLife Zimbabwe was also keen to extend this successful programme into new rural areas.

Three schools were invited to join the programme in the Eiffel Flats area: Chemukute Secondary, Cam and Motor Primary and Eiffel Flats Primary school. This resulted in birdwatching and conservation clubs becoming active at all the schools. Many children now have the opportunity to enjoy the donated binoculars, bird books and posters available through the programme. Birdwatching competitions, quizzes and poems concerning the wonder of birds and our relationship with the natural world have all featured in these schools' programmes. Teacher capacity skills and the school's resource base have also been improved. In 2004 the Eiffel Flats schools combined to set up a bird awareness stand at the Kadoma community show, representing outreach into the wider community.

Specific activities created through the programme include the Eiffel Flats conservation club's trip to the Rifa camp on the Zambezi river where they counted 95 bird species and approximately 80 vultures at a single carcass. Other activities, such as establishing a herb garden, are also a result of the programme and Chemukute Secondary school has created a wilderness area near the school which has become an important area for the school's birdwatching club. Seven additional schools in the Renco mine catchment joined the programme in 2004. Over 60 children and 14 teachers were involved in their first birdwatching day at Rupike Dam, followed up by a workshop on herb gardens and a quiz event. BirdLife Zimbabwe has an ongoing commitment to the existing programme and looks forward to expanding the programme throughout Rio Tinto's mine catchments.

Partnership biodiversity projects

Protecting Damara Terns in Namibia

Location	Swakopmund – Walvis Bay IBA
Rio Tinto company	Rössing Uranium
Partner organisations	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
Key people	Rod Braby (MET); Frances Anderson (Rössing Uranium Ltd.)
Habitats	Coastal Dunes
Birds	Damara Terns
Outcomes	Protection of tern breeding sites, community education

This project has seen the Namibian government, corporates and tourism operators finding common ground to conserve the endemic Damara Tern, now a symbol of conservation on the Namibian coast. Rössing Uranium Ltd. has supported the project as it was a prominent biodiversity issue within some of its key communities that are associated with the business. A 30 per cent decline in hatching losses of this rare tern in 2002 speaks for the success of the project.



The diminutive Damara Tern

Project background and history

The Walvis-Swakopmund IBA, known as the 30 kilometre beach, is a narrow strip of coastal dune and beach habitat renowned not only for its density and variety of shorebirds but also for the populous colony of Damara Terns. Damara Terns, a breeding endemic species, enjoys its highest breeding densities along this sensitive stretch of coast. Namibian coastal waters hold unparalleled food resources as a result of the intense oceanic upwelling that brings nutrients to the surface and swept north by the Benguela current. Damara Terns, classified by BirdLife International as a globally near-threatened species, breed mainly at Caution Reef where they breed at high densities, with at up to 120 nesting pairs per km². Other associated breeding sites occur inland on enclosed gravel plains within the higher dunes.

The tern dune breeding sites occur within the most popular stretch of Namibian coastline for tourism. Tern nests were commonly destroyed by off-road vehicles, driving without restraint over the dunes. What was clearly needed was a practical fencing system which delineated sensitive areas, together with an information campaign educating tourism operators and tourists. Rössing uranium highlighted the plight of the Damara Tern with local communities and the press at a number of birdwatch events, providing targeted community education and cultivating support.

Project details

The Swakopmund office of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism initiated and implemented a fencing programme in October 2000 to protect the Caution Reef colony. The work, extending to 30 kilometres of fencing, continued until 2003 and now prevents uncontrolled access to most core breeding areas adjacent to the coast and within the dunes. The project is complicated by a national road and a proposed Swakopmund detour road passing through the middle of the colony. In addition, tour companies and some off-road vehicle enthusiasts are having some of their routes closed off by cable fencing. This neat, self-contained project has been a remarkable success with zero human-induced nesting failures in fully enclosed areas and a 30 per cent overall decline in hatching losses in 2002. The project has been well received by the communities on the coast and good relationships have been developed with adventure tourism operators who are integral in addressing this human – biodiversity conflict.

The future

With the protective infrastructure now largely established, the project will concentrate on maintenance and developing environmental awareness among local stakeholders.

Partnership biodiversity projects

The Madison Valley Important Bird Area project

Location	Madison River Valley, Montana, USA
Rio Tinto company	Luzenac America, Montana
Partner organisations	Montana Audubon Madison Valley Ranchlands Group
Key people	Jeff Marks, (Montana Audubon); Stephanie Rost (Luzenac Montana), Rich Zazenski (Luzenac America); Lane Adamson (MVRG)
Habitats	Riverine cottonwood forests
Birds	Common Loon, Bald Eagle, Red-naped Sapsucker, Willow Flycatcher, Veery.
Outcomes	IBA survey, identification, designation and protection

Montana Audubon, Luzenac America and the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group collaborated to survey and highlight the importance of the riverine forests of the Madison Valley as a site of bird conservation importance in the state. The result is a bid to recognise the site as a one of Montana's IBAs.

Project background and history

This collaborative research and consultation venture is assessing riverine and lake habitats in the Madison Valley within the context of Montana Audubon's IBA Programme.

Three separate stakeholders are engaged with a focus on mutually held objectives of biodiversity conservation in southern Montana: **Montana Audubon's** primary mission, as the state representative of National Audubon, is to conserve birds and their habitats. To this end they administer the Montana IBA programme, part of a national and global effort to identify, monitor and conserve a worldwide network of sites as priorities for bird conservation. **The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group** works to maintain ranching as a viable way of life in the valley and seeks to ensure that traditional management recognises the importance of birds and wildlife. **Luzenac America**, a Rio Tinto subsidiary, operates the Yellowstone Talc Mine in the Madison Valley and processes talc at several state mills. Luzenac is interested in developing collaborative local partnerships for the conservation of biodiversity in ways that have wider benefits for the local communities within the valley.

Many bird species of conservation importance are found in the priority habitat of riverine cottonwood/box osier willow woodland. The key bird species found include the Bald Eagle, Willow Flycatcher and Veery. Ennis Lake is also included within the survey area and supports migratory waterfowl and is of particular importance for Common Loons during Autumn migration. For this reason the Audubon identified this riverine forest corridor as a priority for action. Surveys were required to assess the status of tracts of riverine habitat in the Madison Valley as potential IBAs for inclusion in the state programme. To execute these surveys, analyse the data and implement the findings, a two-phase project was created, co-funded by Luzenac America and the Rio Tinto Partnership Action Fund.

Project details

Phase I (2003 – 2004): Avian inventory of riverine tracts

Dr. Jeff Marks, director of Bird Conservation for Montana Audubon, managed two field seasons of bird surveys conducted by AIM teams (Avian Inventory and Monitoring) in 2003 and 2004. The AIM teams were assisted by the local Sacajawea Audubon chapter and used aerial photography, maps and GIS-aided field survey techniques in completing the two seasons of fieldwork.

This IBA nomination will be the first for Montana's IBA programme that focuses on private lands. Crucially important liaison with local ranchers and other private landowners required for land access was facilitated by the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group. Further data, access rights and survey help was received from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Montana Outdoor Science School and the U.S. Forest Service.

An impressive 145 species of birds have been recorded during surveys. Significant amongst these are five pairs of Bald Eagles nesting in the riparian zone, at least three pairs of Ferruginous Hawks (near-threatened) nest on the uplands above the river, and at least three pairs of Sprague's Pipits (Vulnerable) nest on a prairie flat immediately adjacent to the river.

Phase II (2005): IBA identification

With the surveys now complete, the project is about to enter Phase II where the survey data will be assessed to determine if Madison Valley qualifies as a state IBA. Sacajawea Audubon and the Ranchlands Group, with the help of the Montana Audubon, will submit a formal application to the Montana IBA technical committee seeking recognition of the Madison Valley IBA.

"Without question, the study area provides important breeding habitat for several species of conservation concern in Montana such as Bald Eagle, Red-naped Sapsucker, and Willow Flycatcher" said Jeff Marks "as well as critical stopover habitat for Common Loons during spring and fall migration. The data we have gathered, which was made possible by excellent cooperation of the stakeholders, will result in a very strong nomination package in support of formally recognizing the Madison Valley as an Important Bird Area."



Jeff Marks organising the Loon Count

Partnership biodiversity projects

Creation of an Audubon Nature Centre in Wyoming, USA



Greater Sage Grouse – icon of the sagebrush prairie



Thunder Basin Grasslands – some of the best sagebrush steppe

Location	Gillette, Wyoming, USA
Rio Tinto company	Kennecott Energy
Partner organisations	Audubon Wyoming
Key people	Vicki Spencer and Jim Handley (Wyoming Audubon); Bob Green (Kennecott Energy)
Habitats	Sagebrush Prairie
Birds	Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Sage Grouse, Mountain Plover
Outcomes	Business plan for an Audubon centre in Gillette

Environmental education is a key to sustainable development. State commerce and conservation has come together in Wyoming to create a new nature centre for public education, a collaboration between Kennecott Energy and Audubon Wyoming.

Project background and history

Kennecott Energy, a leading coal mining and processing company, has head offices in Gillette, Wyoming, a town sitting in the heart of one of the most extensive and intact areas of sagebrush prairie in the United States. This is a priority habitat that supports a number of threatened and near-threatened bird species. However, sagebrush habitat suffers from continuing mismanagement and the biodiversity of these prairies is impinged upon by fires and overgrazing of livestock. Recently, a number of gas developments have also added further pressure to this ecosystem.

Audubon Wyoming (a state partner of BirdLife) has identified environmental education as a key to improved land management practices in the prairies surrounding Gillette. Widespread appreciation of the outstanding natural assets of the area will be conducive to the conservation of habitats and birds through wise and sustainable management. Birds including the Greater Sage Grouse are likely to benefit from improved land use practices envisaged as a result of community environmental education.

Gillette, as one of Wyoming's fastest growing population centres, is a perfect site for the development of an Audubon nature centre focused on prairie environmental education. The centre will be part of a network of community-based centres across the USA. Through the Rio Tinto – BirdLife Programme, Audubon Wyoming and Kennecott Energy have joined forces to make this vision a reality.

Project details

For the past five years Audubon Wyoming has run a successful community-based nature centre at Garden Creek, Casper. Following a similar governance framework and with help from National Audubon, the proposed Gillette nature centre will be developed with target audiences including young school children, families and community groups.

Gillette is both a gateway to the West and also a focus point for the sagebrush prairie ecosystem. Using the overarching principle of connecting people with nature, the centre will allow visitors to learn about local wildlife, habitats and environmental threats, as well as details of Wyoming's culture and history, landscapes and natural resources.

This new project commenced in early 2004. The first three years of business planning and centre development are receiving finance from Kennecott Energy and Rio Tinto. The programme director for Gillette, Jim Handley, was hired in late July 2004 and has completed the initial market analysis, stakeholder identification and preliminary site selection processes. Four prospective site location opportunities for the centre have been identified, fundraising continues and it is hoped that the site will be selected in early 2005.

Partnership biodiversity projects

Bird and biodiversity exhibitions at Lac St. Pierre, Sorel, Quebec, Canada

Location	Lac Saint Pierre Biosphere Reserve
Rio Tinto company	QIT Fer et Titane
Partner organisations	Centre d'Interprétation du Patrimoine de Sorel, Canadian Nature Federation, UQCN
Key people	Marc Mineau (CSPR); Jacques Thivierge (QIT)
Habitats	Lakes, grassland, marshes and inundated plains
Birds	Waterbirds and American passerine migrants
Outcomes	Wildlife exhibitions

This project has seen the Namibian government, corporates and tourism operators finding common ground to conserve the endemic Damara Tern, now a symbol of conservation on the Namibian coast. Rössing Uranium Ltd. has supported the project as it was a prominent biodiversity issue within some of its key communities that are associated with the business. A 30 per cent decline in hatching losses of this rare tern in 2002 speaks for the success of the project.



Lac Ste. Pierre is important for Northern Pintail

Project background and history

The town of Sorel is situated at the gateway to Lac Saint-Pierre in Quebec, one of the planet's biosphere reserves recognised by the UN. It is also a Ramsar site. The ecosystem can be described as mainly lacustrine systems and freshwater wetlands, harbouring several habitat types including aquatic grassbeds, marshlands, lakes, swamps, periodically flooded meadows and agricultural lands.

This diversity makes Lac Saint-Pierre a unique ecosystem, important for migratory birds, especially waterbirds; as a result, the lake area includes four IBAs of international importance. Its wetlands are particularly rich, making the area a vital stop along avian migration routes, resulting in a bird list of no less than 288 species for the reserve as a whole.

About 85,000 people live in the biosphere reserve, mostly in urban areas. Their main activities are agriculture, hunting, fishing, wildlife conservation activities, resorts, boating, commercial navigation as well as trade and industry. This comparatively high population density makes the biosphere reserve an outdoor laboratory in sustainable development and sound ecological living. One of the main challenges of managing the biosphere reserve is to maintain fish stocks.

With such important biodiversity co-habiting with a large human population, environmental education is at the forefront of everyone's agenda in the Saint Pierre lake area. One of the local NGOs, the Corporation Soreloise du Patrimoine Regional (CSPR), promotes the heritage of the area through its interpretation centre (partly funded by QIT Fer et Titane). The BirdLife partnership has facilitated an exhibition on avian wildlife for the centre.

Project details

Two exhibitions were created, under the supervision of CSPR's general manager Marc Mineau, by local ornithologist Anne-Marie Dulude and Benoît Limoges of UQCN, the BirdLife Partner in Quebec. Both displays were held in the QIT Fer et Titane conference room at CSPR. The first exhibition, entitled *Sous les ailes de l'archipel* (Under the wings of the archipelago), aimed to raise awareness of the natural heritage of the lake region. The first exhibition consisted of bird artwork with an explanation of the biodiversity and conservation importance of the local area. Indicator bird species were highlighted to demonstrate how birds can be used to track environmental change, and virtual birdwatching tours of different habitat types revealed the diversity of habitats for wildlife in the biosphere reserve. The second exhibition focused on the four IBAs found within the biosphere reserve, showcasing the IBA concept, demonstrating its effectiveness in identifying sites and focusing resources for priority bird conservation. It also revealed the irreplaceable value of Lac Saint Pierre as a crucial migratory stop-over point for birds along the Atlantic Flyway of the Americas.

QIT has always maintained close ties with its neighbouring community, and has been actively engaged in environmental projects since the early 1990s. The wildlife exhibitions simultaneously fulfilled UQCN, CNF and BirdLife International objectives of showcasing and promoting the IBA concept.



Lac Ste. Pierre – a Biosphere Reserve

Partnership biodiversity projects

Lee Creek Natural Area management, Utah, USA

Location	Lee Creek Natural Area, Great Salt Lake (GSL), Utah
Rio Tinto company	Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation
Partner organisations	National Audubon Society, Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (URMCC)
Key people	Ella Sorensen (National Audubon), Ann Neville (KUCC)
Habitats	Saline mudflats, freshwater inlets; shoreline of GSL
Birds	Snowy Plovers, American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope,
Outcomes	Habitat conservation, environmental education, promotion of Great Salt Lake IBA

Through a fencing and public education programme the ecological integrity of this important part of Great Salt Lake has been restored. Kennecott Utah Copper Company, National Audubon and local interest groups have found common ground to deliver these conservation outcomes.

Project background and history

Great Salt Lake is an internationally recognized treasure of great importance for millions of nesting and migrating birds. Shoreline beach areas where fresh water spreads and braids naturally across saline mudflats as it enters GSL provide excellent habitat for birds such as Snowy Plover, American Avocet, and Wilson's Phalarope and for internationally significant numbers on migration. The Lee Creek Natural Area is a key site for avian biodiversity within GSL and forms part of the Inland Sea Shorebird Reserve and Gillmore Sanctuary complex. John Rice of the URMCC said "The Great Salt Lake is one of America's natural wonders, playing host to hundreds of species of birds and other wildlife".

Lee Creek Natural Area is neighbored by the Inland Sea Shore Reserve and the Gillmore Sanctuary are a large part of a Utah state IBA. Lee Creek has been heavily trespassed by off road vehicles in the past and suffered from rubbish dumping, hunting and other unauthorised activities. Bird habitat (including nesting grounds), other wildlife and water quality in general have all been degraded by these uncontrolled activities. These threats prompted National Audubon and Kennecott Utah Copper to join forces and make a difference both to local wildlife of global importance and the community's appreciation of the natural world.

Project details

In 1996 the Utah Reclamation Mitigation Commission purchased and began to manage 282 acres of the Lee Creek Natural Area, aided by the financial assistance of Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation and the National Audubon Society. The objectives were to improve site security, facilitate more effective access for visitors and provide an interpretation centre to raise community environmental awareness. Education is an important component of the project because the Lee Creek area is the closest lake site to Salt Lake City, and therefore has the potential to become very popular with visitors.

The integrity of the site was principally secured through the placement of about 6,500 feet of barbed wire fencing around the site to prevent uncontrolled access and further continued surveillance of the area is necessary to ensure enhanced land use changes are successful. A small parking area and pedestrian walk through fence will soon allow public access in designated areas and during appropriate seasons. To raise awareness of the site's value for wildlife, a kiosk with educational material will provide information for interested visitors from Salt Lake City and those travelling on the nearby Interstate-80 highway. Habitat management is continuing for the benefit of key bird species of state, national and global significance. Wildlife-compatible activities such as birdwatching, photography, and quiet appreciation of the views and beauty of GSL will be available in 2005.

The restoration of ecological function to this formally degraded site has the potential to reverse perceptions of Great Salt Lake, from that of a derelict wasteland to an area rich in biodiversity, and recognized as an asset to the local community.

The future

This project has demonstrated that local alliances between conservation organizations, community regeneration groups and a Rio Tinto company can fulfil mutual objectives of conservation, education and corporate citizenship. Continued management of the site will improve habitat for both migrating and breeding birds, especially Snowy plovers, to nurture a site of international importance for avian biodiversity.



Snowy Plover – an important breeding species

Partnership biodiversity projects

Other collaborative ventures

In Australia, the partnership commissioned Birds Australia to produce a biodiversity toolkit for Rio Tinto businesses, using recent Australian Bird Atlas data and the Action Plan for Australian birds (2000). Incorporating national and state lists, this document will assist Rio Tinto's Australian businesses target biodiversity priorities that can ensure their efforts are as effective as possible.

In Brazil, BirdLife International has assisted Fauna & Flora International, and more recently, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, in a programme developing Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) at Rio Tinto Brasil's operations. Local institutions and expertise was contracted to undertake survey work that is now being used to inform biodiversity conservation management. In this way the actual operational practices of the Rio Tinto business have been improved and enhanced to engage with the local-global need to respond to biodiversity issues.

In Paraguay, local Rio Tinto business Transbarga Navegacion has entered into a partnership with BirdLife Partner Guyra Paraguay to undertake biodiversity assessments in habitats adjoining the River Paraguay. These assessments will identify key areas of importance for birds and other taxa.

In Canada, the annual birdwatch event at Diavik Diamonds has been expanded and extended into a bird and mammal monitoring scheme which takes place with the help and collaboration of the local community. This is an example of the Birdwatch Event leading to wider local initiatives of direct relevance to all stakeholders involved.

In South Africa, BirdLife SA and the Palabora Mining Company are in discussion over a number of initiatives to bring bird conservation and ecotourism possibilities alive in and

Wetlands of Kakadu, Northern Territory, Australia



Morraria de Santa Cruz, Pantanal, Brazil



around the Kruger National Park. The projects will fulfil the mutual objectives of pre-existing regional plans such as the Oliphants River Integrated Regional Management Plan and the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Reserve Initiative.

In Madagascar, QMM S.A. have received a permit from the Madagascan government to mine titanium dioxide from the coastal dunes in the south east of the country near to the town of Tolagnaro (Fort Dauphin). The area has extremely high biodiversity value and is of global significance for both plants and animals. The BirdLife in Madagascar Programme has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM S.A.), to fulfil part of QMM's Environmental Management Plan and ensure the assistance of BirdLife to QMM in the environmental monitoring of coastal forest. The partnership will also fulfil BirdLife's regional objectives and satisfy a part of QMM's regional development plan by creating a priority conservation project in the Anosy region starting in 2005.

In the USA, further projects are being considered for development in Colorado (Audubon Colorado with KEC and Luzenac America), in Nevada (Audubon Nevada and USFWS with KMC Rawhide) and in Arizona (Audubon Arizona, Arizona Game and Fish Department with the Resolution Copper Company).

In New Zealand, in 1990, in an interesting precedent for biodiversity partnerships that significantly pre-dated the Rio Tinto – BirdLife International Programme, Comalco Limited provided major support for the Kakapo Recovery Programme, in partnership with the Department for Conservation and Forest and Bird (BirdLife in New Zealand). This programme has been crucial in saving the Kakapo, a critically endangered flightless parrot, from certain extinction. A further project seeks to support the conservation of the Westland Black Petrel, which is endemic to South Island.

[Palabora borders the Kruger National Park](#)





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