



**GLOBAL FLYWAYS SUMMIT, APRIL 23-26 2018**

# Conserving critical networks of coastal wetlands for migratory waterbirds

**H**uman pressure on coastal wetlands is increasing worldwide. Land claim, human disturbance, pollution, invasive species, unsustainable harvest, reduced sediment flows from upstream damming and a range of other threats are driving the declines of many waterbird species. Climate change impacts including changes to Arctic breeding habitat and rising sea-levels are exacerbating the effects of other threats. The effective conservation of networks of coastal wetlands is crucially important to safeguarding migratory waterbirds around the world. The wise use of coasts will not only ensure survival and recovery of waterbirds but also will sustain ecosystem services provided to humanity, in particular climate resilience.

The Coastal Wetlands and migratory waterbirds session at the Flyways Summit synthesised our current understanding of the threats to coastal waterbirds and their habitats in each major global flyway, and explored successful approaches to improve the identification, protection, management and restoration of critical sites. By bringing together key stakeholders, we further developed committed alliances to support and implement priority actions to conserve coastal wetland networks and the migratory waterbirds and ecosystem services they support.

The session was attended by over 75 delegates and identified the following actions as being a priority for the conservation of coastal wetlands and associated migratory waterbirds. There is urgent need to:

- establish a **Global Coastal Forum** that strengthens recognition, protection, sustainable management, restoration and governance of coastal wetlands through high priority initiatives, encouraging stronger policy and funding mechanisms;
- strengthen capacity within flyways to advance **strategic communications** - aligning economic development with coastal management for human well-being and bird conservation;
- develop global, regional and national science-based assessments on the **state of coastal wetlands, the threats affecting them, the benefits (economic, social, cultural and environmental) of and recommendations for their protection, conservation management and restoration** to support policy, engagement and communications;



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■ empower **local communities and campaigning initiatives by developing networks** between local communities at different key sites along a flyway to better support coastal wetland conservation and in integrated management, including sustainable use at local, national and flyway levels; and

■ promote **integrated ecosystem-based coastal zone planning and governance** (taking into account the land/sea interface) with improved collaboration between management agencies to mainstream coastal birds and habitats including into Marine Protected Areas and water catchments.

Many of the issues highlighted in the flyway specific breakout groups below relate to issues already identified as priorities within existing international conservation frameworks. This suggests that the overarching need is actually more focussed, better coordinated and better resourced implementation.

More detailed conclusions reached include the following issues.

## A. Global Coastal Forum

There is a need to develop a Global Coastal Forum as requested by the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species at COP 12, October 2017 in Manila. This Global Coastal Forum should be established jointly with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It should have an agreed Terms of Reference which specifies: membership; arrangements for chairing; modes of engagement with existing international advisory structures and fora; and a mechanism for agreeing a programme of work, including indicators and targets, for the initial period 2019-2021. At an early stage, there will need to be clarity on resourcing. The following were identified as possible elements to include in a programme of work:

### 1. Protection of coastal wetlands and avoidance of damaging impacts

- **Identify and protect** as World Heritage or Ramsar Sites, critically important coastal sites for migratory birds in each flyway, based on assessment of best available knowledge
- Undertaking/promotion of **Strategic Environmental Assessments** for 'at risk' coasts – especially where impacts may be international in scope and/or derived from more than one sector. This should include sensitivity mapping, for example for coastal and offshore renewable energy development and coastal tourism development.

### 2. Processes that mitigate or manage damaging impacts on coasts

- Promote **mainstreaming of existing guidance** into sectoral awareness, including promotion of access to knowledge; identification of knowledge gaps such as habitat mapping needs; production of sectoral specific guidance (including from existing guidance synthesised from multiple MEAs, updated as necessary).

- Identify **priority stakeholder sectors** with a particular impact/dependency on coasts and global representative bodies that are feasible to engage including as relevant to: *Livelihoods* (for 'Working Coastal Wetlands' of socio-economic and cultural importance); *Government sectors* (including authorities concerned with biodiversity, water, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, planning and coastal defences); *Business* including construction; tourism, ports, dredging, sand extraction and insurance; and *Coastal and Offshore renewable energy; Agriculture; Fisheries and Aquaculture; and Tourism*.

- The joint development of **guidelines for the rapid assessment of coastal wetlands biological diversity**

3. **Processes related to wetland restoration and creation** (discussions have taken place via CBD/Ramsar proposed Global Coastal Restoration Initiative)

4. **Communication and Public awareness raising initiatives** (to be elaborated, learning as much as possible from existing coastal wetland campaigns eg the one currently underway for the coastal wetlands of the Mediterranean region, coordinated by MedWet as Ramsar Regional Initiative).

## B. African-Eurasian Flyway: Arabian Peninsula Coastal wetlands

1. **Regional assessments of the state of the coastal wetlands** have been shown to be influential in stimulating policy initiatives at various scales, as shown for example by IUCN's 2012 situation analysis of the Yellow Sea and East Asian - Australasian Flyway, significantly helping to advance policy development there. There is great value in undertaking such assessments in other coastal regions, with an urgent need for a "situation analysis" of the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding areas, possibly extended later to include other areas of relevance in the East African-West Asian flyway.

2. An **initial concept document** should be prepared to assist in scoping and fund-raising for a situation analysis. It should outline next steps in relation to initiating the analysis and means of raising the profile of the issue at Ramsar COP 13. A preliminary list of government, NGO, private sector organisations and international agencies to be involved in the analysis should be prepared.

3. Agreement on immediate need for national and regional coordination and capacity building for waterbird and wetland monitoring, through a strategic planning process with preliminary results being profiled at Ramsar COP 13.

4. Need for creation of a network of experts in waterbird monitoring that could be called on by all countries in the region to help with surveys, training and capacity building, experience sharing and responding on site/species conservation issues of urgent importance.

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## C. African-Eurasian Flyway: East Atlantic Flyway

1. Further consolidation and coordination is needed of **waterbird monitoring schemes and databases** among various actors involved in migratory waterbird conservation.
2. Creation of, and further strengthening (where these exist) of effective **flyway network partnerships**, building on the multiple existing frameworks such as the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative and Mediterranean Waterbirds network, including to **strengthen capacity** at government and civil society organisation levels.
3. Enhanced communication and outreach at all scales, from national to flyway including awareness and education campaigns to increase appreciation of coastal wetlands.
4. Initiatives that promote the mainstreamed integration of flyway conservation imperatives into existing governmental and sectoral policies and collaboration across borders are essential.
5. The need for landscape level planning to be embedded in national policies and plans to deliver climate change adaptation benefits for migratory waterbirds and people, as illustrated through the Climate Resilient Flyways Project.

## D. East Asian – Australasian Flyway

1. **Education** is critical to long-term awareness-raising and this can be promoted by curriculum development, and good storytelling related to conservation challenges and successes, building on current research and monitoring findings.
2. There is an urgent need to strengthen **site protection networks** within the flyway, developing the capacity for site managements and building links between individual sites and local schools and communities adjacent to these areas, as well as links between sites.
3. With rising sea-levels, there is a need to promote initiatives that seek to **restore past coastal wetlands** lost to land claim, for example by managed realignment – moving sea defenses inland. All of the above require a need to engage with multiple sectors of society including:
  - **Local communities and local governments** including through initiatives relating to, schools, farmers, fishing communities, bird photographers and other local birdwatching initiatives, where awareness-raising champions are identified for each group and assisted to communicate messages.
  - **International policy fora**; there should be outreach to

relevant fora (CBD, Ramsar, ASEAN, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Davos), higher-level and government engagement beyond the environment sector including advocacy at diplomatic level including via Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative; with China, as host to the 2020 CBD COP, there is a significant opportunity to raise the profile of the issue in the region and globally.

- **The business sector.**
- **The media.**

## E. Americas Flyway

1. The **collaborative partnership of flyway scale strategies and plans** needs to scale up implementation (e.g. Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative, Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy, the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative of the Arctic Council's Working Group on the Conservation of Arctic Flora & Fauna, Audubon/BirdLife Climate Action Plan for the Americas). This is currently constrained by lack of funding, but the development of public-private partnerships could assist in increasing collective capacity to both engage with financial institutions and policy processes. Further actors that are critical to this are national governments and the agro-industry.
2. There is an urgent need to ensure the needs of coastal waterbirds and their habitats are fully integrated into **Marine Protected Areas** planning and management processes. This could be undertaken by: high level policy discussions with key funders and executing agencies; improved data analysis and availability; and integrating data into national processes and mechanisms (such as national information systems where they exist).
3. The **Americas Flyway Strategies should be given greater visibility in global policy processes** (e.g. those related to CBD, CMS, Ramsar, and especially to the delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and national implementation of the Paris Agreement) including to help direct funding mechanisms that support priority coastal site protection and management.

## F. Central Asian Flyway

Actions were agreed to advance implementation of the **CMS Central Asian Flyway (CAF) Waterbird Action Plan**, building on the decision of the **Indian government to establish an interim secretariat** (based in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and staffed by the Bombay Natural History Society) to facilitate the process towards submitting a proposal for amendment of the AEWA annexes in 2021 (AEWA MOP8).

The meeting made the following recommendations:

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1. The **Indian Government, CMS and AEWA Secretariats should scope the process** as soon as possible.
2. The Indian Government, with the CMS and AEWA Secretariats, should convene an **Intergovernmental Consultation Group (ICG)** to meet first before December 2018 (AEWA MOP7).
3. The **ICG should develop three documents:**
  - Proposal for amendments of the AEWA annexes;
  - Medium-term (6-year) plan for further development and implementation of the CAF AP with accompanying resourcing plan ensuring its self-sustainability;
  - Finalise the 2013 assessment of the implications for AEWA of expanding its scope to include the CAF region.
4. The ICG to lay the foundations of an alliance for ensuring the **self-sustainability of the CAF AP under AEWA.**
5. The Indian Government should write to CAF Range States inviting them to develop **national CAF action plans** following their current example.
6. The Indian Government should also write to AEWA/CAF Range States inviting them to consider accelerating their **accession to AEWA** to provide stronger support for the CAF integration into AEWA in 2021 e.g. via a preliminary accession procedure (see point 9 below).
7. The Indian Government should attend **AEWA MOP7 (December 2017)** in South Africa to update Parties on the progress of the CAF process.
8. At **CMS COP13 in 2020** in India, the Indian Government should present an update of the CAF process.
9. India (and hopefully other CAF ranges states) should undertake a **preliminary accession procedure** to AEWA to take effect immediately after MOP8 in 2021, and the AEWA Secretariat will clarify that accession procedure.



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# Mainstreaming flyway conservation with wind energy and power transmission sectors

**T**he deployment of renewable energy, such as wind energy or solar power generation, is expanding rapidly, and an increasing number of renewable energy technologies are becoming cost-competitive. Alongside this, the scale and reach of power transmission infrastructure is expanding in order to deliver energy to growing urban centres and remote rural populations. These technologies are playing an important role in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and delivering clean energy for all, helping to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 and 7 respectively.

However, while the potential benefits of renewable energy and improved power transmission are huge, like any other development this can have negative impacts on biodiversity if facilities are not planned and implemented appropriately. For example, poorly-sited wind farms have been shown to have detrimental impacts on birds, particularly migratory soaring birds which make use of wind currents along their flyways.

Wind energy and power transmission infrastructure can lead to impacts including: collision leading to direct mortality; electrocution where pylons are poorly designed; disturbance and displacement from around the turbines or exclusion from the whole wind farm; barriers to movement disrupting ecological links between feeding, wintering, breeding and moulting areas; and change to or loss of habitat due to wind turbines and associated infrastructure.

The Energy session at the Global Flyways Summit explored the issues relating to biodiversity associated with wind energy and power transmission and identified practical solutions for governments, conventions, business and civil society. By bringing together key stakeholders, the session further developed committed alliances to share, support and implement priority actions to accelerate mainstreaming flyway conservation into the wind energy and power transmission sectors.



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The threats and solutions needed are broadly similar across many migratory species, and the following actions were highlighted as being priorities for migratory bird conservation:

- With global demand for energy forecast to greatly expand by 2035, and with much of this energy coming from renewable sources, it is critical that renewable energy infrastructure is **sited and operated** with biodiversity considerations taken into account.

- **Tools that map sensitive areas** for migratory species (such as BirdLife's Sensitivity Mapping Tool) should be employed as part of robust Strategic Environmental Assessments so that early stage planning decisions are taken with the best available information.

- It is important to emphasise the **business case** for integrating bird (and bat) conservation into renewable energy development. This must be achieved early on and before renewable energy planning decisions are made to secure support from industry and across government (e.g. to reduce risk and lower costs). Industry, government and international financial institutions are more willing to listen and engage positively in finding solutions before and during the planning stage and before irreversible or costly decisions, or political commitments, are made.

- **Stakeholder awareness** and capacity on the need to mainstream migratory species in the (renewable) energy sector must be increased – among energy ministries, investors, project developers, utility companies and donors. This includes **fostering linkages and communication platforms**, ensuring that any additional useful information is readily available and received early on in the planning process.

- There is a need to **communicate** the risks associated with renewable energy developments such as wind turbines on migratory species and to stress the importance of ongoing and further **research**.

- There is an urgent need to develop, collate and communicate relevant and available **tools and guidance** to facilitate the implementation of migratory bird and other biodiversity safeguards for both current and future renewable energy development.

- There is a need to work with the energy sector to help develop **sustainable energy policies and processes** before funds and sites are committed for renewable energy infrastructure development.

- Targeted policies and regulations should be enforced with stronger **compliance mechanisms** and greater power and remit of environmental ministries. Investors want a clear and strong regulatory environment to minimise the risk of investment.

- **Adequate funding** needs to be made available for to support all of the above activities, including research, communication, coordination, capacity building, planning and implementation.

- There is a need to **share data**, on both biodiversity and

development activities, including data from impact assessments and monitoring and experience with the application of mitigation measures, where possible putting it in the public domain.

- For developments already underway or in place, and where significant risks have been identified, technology to **mitigate biodiversity impacts** should be applied, such as the use of radar to detect birds and shutdown on demand for facilities during migration season or at particular times of day, and its long-term effectiveness monitored.

- A **holistic view** is required to include migratory bird safeguards together with an overall package of all environmental considerations that a company has to consider.

- There are a number of **policy entry points**, with a range of stakeholders and in a range of fora, including multilateral environmental agreements and other international policy processes, for mainstreaming and awareness-raising of migratory bird safeguards and solutions.

- **Collaboration** is needed to find common ground and solutions. The multi-stakeholder Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Energy Task Force, with environment and energy ministries, energy and utility companies, development banks, academia and NGOs amongst its membership, is supporting delivery of several of the above priority actions, and another example is Europe's Renewables Grid Initiative.

- There is an urgent need to **scale-up and build on existing initiatives**, such as the Energy Task Force's work on best practice guidelines, the **Spanish Ornithological Society's** work on Black Vultures and Storks to monitor flight paths and generate collision risk models, and the **UNDP-GEF-funded 11-country** Migratory Soaring Birds Project in the Red Sea/Rift Valley flyway. Building on the examples presented in the plenary and talks, breakout groups explored three thematic priority issues, as follows.

### 1. Next steps for policy, including through the CMS Energy Task Force and the biodiversity mainstreaming agenda of the forthcoming Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties (COP14)

The main challenges and solutions for the CMS Energy Task Force and the CBD in promoting and implementing mainstreaming of biodiversity into the energy sector were discussed, with the following issues and recommendations identified:

- Lack of compliance mechanisms for biodiversity conventions. Targeted guidance needs to be developed, communicated and enforced with stronger compliance mechanisms under relevant and able government ministries.

- Limited power and remit of environmental ministries. With energy often seen as a topic beyond their purview, the remit of environmental ministries needs to be broadened and included in cross-ministerial committees with joint responsibility for spatial and

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