

The Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Project

The UNEP-GEF Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) African-Eurasian Flyways Project is a US\$ 12 million initiative funded by The Global Environment Facility, the German Government, the UNEP-AEWA Secretariat and many other donors. The project is a joint effort between UNEP-GEF, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, UNEP-AEWA, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNOPS, UNEP-WCMC and a range of other local partners in Africa and Eurasia.

The area covered by the initiative includes all 118 Range States of the UNEP-administered African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, covering all of Africa, all of Europe, south-west Asia (including the Middle East and Central Asian States), Greenland and the Canadian Archipelago.

For more information on the WOW project please visit:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org <<http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org>>

Or download our latest Project Newsletter: Flyway Conservation at Work - Across Africa and Eurasia
<<http://wow.wetlands.org/ABOUTWOW/LATESTNEWS/tabid/125/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2164/Default.aspx>>

Note to Editors

The Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool

The CSN Tool brings together information held in four databases used for international waterbird and wetland conservation. Jointly developed by Wetlands International, BirdLife International and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the CSN Tool internet portal provides comprehensive information on 294 waterbird species, the critical sites upon which they rely and the flyways they use. The CSN currently covers over 3020 sites of importance to 561 populations of waterbirds. It also helps to highlight areas for which information is lacking.

A consultation version of the **CSN Tool will be made public on 14 June 2010 (13:00 GMT)** and will be accessible from this webpage:

www.wingsoverwetlands.org/csntool
<<http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/csntool>>

A new CSN Tool Flyer, photos and sample maps produced by the CSN Tool will also be made available for download from the above webpage.

The four databases included in the CSN Tool are:

World Bird Database (WBDB) is managed by BirdLife International and stores information on all of the world's bird species and the key sites identified for their conservation (Important Bird Areas - IBAs).

International Waterbird Census (IWC) Database is maintained by Wetlands

International and includes over 25,000 sites of importance to waterbirds. It contains the most complete waterbird count data available in the African-Eurasian region and other flyways.

Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) provides data on wetlands designated as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, generally called Ramsar sites. Wetlands International manages the database for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

World Database on Protected Areas (WDBPA) provides the most comprehensive dataset on protected areas worldwide and is managed by UNEP-WCMC in partnership with the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and the World Database on Protected Areas Consortium.

Flyway Conservation

Waterbirds travel vast distances, crossing many countries and often entire continents during their annual migration cycles along 'flyways' that connect breeding, staging and non-breeding areas. These migratory cycles highlight the connectivity and interdependence of ecosystems across the globe. Moreover, these critical wetland sites the birds rely on provide important ecosystem services that make them vital for people, both locally as well as on a wider scale.

Maintaining a functioning 'ecological network' of such sites is therefore key to the flyway approach, and complementary local, national and international conservation action is essential to maintain healthy waterbird populations and conserve critical wetlands along these flyways.

This concept is the essence of flyway conservation. AEWA and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands outline the requirements and provide guidelines for achieving effective management of flyway networks. The CSN Tool will help them meet these requirements.

Example: The Lesser Flamingo

The Near Threatened Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*), is an example of a species that responds to changes in local environmental conditions by moving between wetlands, and thus depends on a network of suitable sites. However, a map generated by the CSN Tool clearly shows that only two of the five most important sites for the species in Tanzania are protected, others are only partially protected, while Lake Eyasi (where up to 35 % of the population has been recorded) is not protected.

While Lake Natron in Tanzania is by far the most important breeding site for this species, (it is the only breeding site for the East African population which represents >75% of the species' global population), the sites that the species uses outside the breeding season are also important. The CSN Tool clearly identifies the non-breeding sites which are currently not protected, providing useful information for the establishment of an effective network of protected areas in the country for the species.

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