

wings over wetlands

The UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project



FLYWAY CONSERVATION AT WORK



ACROSS AFRICA AND EURASIA



*Enhancing the conservation of the critical network
of sites required by migratory waterbirds
on the African-Eurasian Flyways*



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List of Acronyms

AEWA	African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement
BfN	German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSN	Critical Site Network
EAAFP	East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FWG	Flyway Working Group
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information System
IBA	Important Bird Area
IIT	International Implementation Tasks
IWC	International Waterbird Census
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WHSRN	Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network
WI	Wetlands International
WOW	Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP/GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project



Photo: Camillo Ponziani



African-Eurasian Flyway Partnership

The Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project is a joint effort between UNEP-GEF, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, AEWA, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNOPS, UNEP-WCMC and a range of other donors and local partners along the African-Eurasian flyways. The area covered by the initiative includes all 118 Range States of the UNEP-administered African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), covering all of Africa, all of Europe, south-west Asia (including the Middle East and Central Asian States), Greenland and the Canadian Archipelago.



WOW Project Newsletter
Flyway Conservation At Work

Cover Photograph
Simay Gábor

Publisher
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Eurasian Flyways Project

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Poster showing the African-Eurasian region made from a mosaic of photos depicting the international WOW project team / Original poster design: Florian Keil (2008)

Welcome to WOW! The Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project



It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the third annual newsletter of the Wings Over Wetlands project and to share with you the latest achievements of this important and exciting initiative. WOW is one of two flyway-themed undertakings currently being implemented by UNEP-GEF, and as such, it occupies a unique place in the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) portfolio. In recent years, the "flyway approach" that forms the core of the WOW project has become a key factor in international initiatives supporting the conservation of migratory birds and the critical network of wetland habitats these species need to survive. As such, many see this project as an important first step in furthering the experience on multi-country and multi-stakeholder projects focusing on the entire migratory range of multiple species, and an initiative that can serve as a template for future endeavours.

The WOW project spans four continents. It covers 118 Range States and its overarching goal is to maintain the favourable conservation status of over 250 wetland-dependent species across their entire migratory range. The project has generated important lessons and tools for the African-Eurasian region - lessons and tools that can also play a key role in furthering similar initiatives in other parts of the world, thereby underscoring how the flyway approach can be put into practice. More importantly though, the project is an example of how a leading group of international and local NGOs, international conventions and agreements, governments, donors and UN agencies can join forces towards achieving a common goal. Indeed, the success of this project has much

to do with the efforts of all parties involved. It offers yet another example of the broad partnerships that characterize UNEP's support to multi-national efforts in the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources.



Photo: Tim Faasen - wildphoto.nl

In this newsletter and on the WOW website (www.wingsoverwetlands.org), you can find out more about the WOW experience and the lessons learned from the project. You will be able to learn about the new conservation tools emerging from the implementation of the WOW project, which will move into its final phase in 2010. And you can also find out more about what the partners involved in WOW are working on in their respective areas of expertise and under their different mandates, all of which will result in a collaborative experience that I am sure will provide an excellent platform for the future of migratory bird conservation.

I hope that this positive experience will lead to further investments that support the proper use of wetland resources, and in the conservation of migratory birds worldwide.

Edoardo Zandri
UNEP/DGEF Task Manager
Biodiversity and Natural Resources



Photo: Sergey Dereliev / UNEP-AEWA

foreword

Flyways Conservation at Work - WOW and beyond!

Foreword by Dr. Gerard C. Boere

Nearly a decade has passed since the first Meeting of the Parties (MOP) of AEWA in Cape Town, South Africa, where the Dutch Government, the AEWA interim Secretariat and Wetlands International (WI) held preliminary discussions on a possible GEF project to support AEWA activities. This was based on the common belief that a GEF-funded initiative, supported by a number of key countries, could become a catalyst for boosting flyway conservation efforts across the entire AEWA region.

That meeting gave rise to the Wings Over Wetlands project - a critical initiative in the conservation of migratory waterbirds worldwide, whose principal goal is to raise

awareness on the links between the sites needed by migratory waterbirds in their life cycles, as well as to develop innovative tools to support their conservation and promote the wise-use of wetlands across the entire flyway. Since its inception in 2006 the WOW project has been making remarkable progress in changing the conservation landscape for migratory waterbirds, in individual countries (through field-based activities that are generating exciting results) and throughout the African-Eurasian region. The project has turned a vision into reality. Its comprehensive Flyway Training Kit, to be released in 2010, will not only serve as a resource for both site managers and policy makers alike, but will undoubtedly become the

blueprint for all flyway training programmes conducted throughout the African-Eurasian region. WOW is also on track to launch a state-of-the-art online portal - the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool - for better flyway planning and management in 2010.

But perhaps WOW's greatest forte lies in the high level of cooperation and partnership in its multi-institutional and international team. Over 100 highly dedicated staff members are working at all levels of the project and across Africa and Eurasia. At the flyway level, technical teams are working together with the Project Coordination Unit and implementing partners, to ensure the timely delivery of new tools to assist with flyway conservation. WOW also has four regional hubs that guide the technical work on the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool, contribute to the regional adaptation of the Flyway Training Kit and support field-based activities. And at the local level, demonstration project teams ensure field-based initiatives reach a successful conclusion.

Across the African-Eurasian region, national governments have highlighted the importance of flyway-scale conservation as the only meaningful way to protect waterbirds across their diverse habitats. WOW's success has set the wheel in motion for flyway collaboration within the AEWA region.

With just over a year left to run, WOW is already close to achieving many of its goals. I sincerely hope that the foundations laid by this initiative will continue to strengthen existing collaboration and allow for new long-term partnerships between supporting governments and organizations dedicated to the flyway approach in the African-Eurasian region.

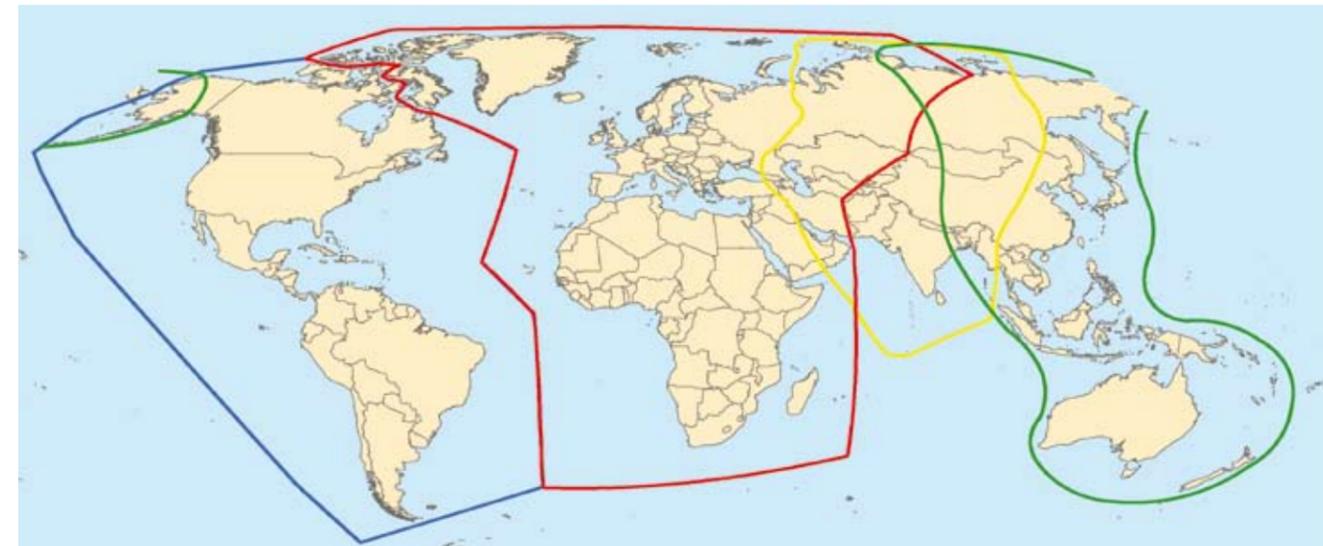
Dr. Gerard C. Boere
Steering Committee Chair
Wings Over Wetlands (WOW)
UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project



Photo: Ella Boere



Photo: Simay Gábor



Source: Waterbirds around the world. Eds. G. C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith & D.A. Stroud. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK, p. 33.

Figure: Possible global scope of multilateral agreements for the conservation of migratory waterbirds.

Bird migration and flyways

Bird migration has never ceased to amaze humankind. For centuries, we have marveled at the vast numbers of migrant birds and the mysteries of their movements. Scientific understanding has not reduced this fascination: indeed, the more we find out about bird migration, the more extraordinary it seems.

The incredible journeys that birds undertake each year are often perilous, and made more so because of the threats created by people. Yet bird migration also plays an indispensable economic and ecological role, helping sustain the livelihoods of millions of people living along the migration routes. Conservation of these species and their habitats is vital.

What is flyway conservation?

To get to and from their breeding grounds, migratory waterbirds follow distinct paths known as “flyways.” These have been defined as “the entire range of a migratory population through which it moves on annual basis from the breeding grounds to the non-breeding areas, including intermediate resting and feeding places as well as the area within which

the birds migrate”.¹ The term is also used to help define overlapping migration routes of multiple species.

The life cycles of migratory birds uniquely illustrate the connectivity and interdependence of various ecosystems across the globe. The conservation and wise use of multiple sites is key to the flyway approach. When it comes to waterbirds, the migration chain is fragile, being only as strong as its weakest link — if one link is broken, an entire population may decline. The flyway approach thus requires concerted management effort along the entire flyway, ensuring connectivity between sites, species and the ecological interactions that link them, while ensuring that the needs of local people are also met.

Flyways in the international policy environment

The 2004 ‘Waterbirds Around the World’ conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland was key in bringing the flyway approach to the forefront of the international conservation landscape. It set groundbreaking priorities for future global flyway conservation and underscored

¹ Boere, G.C. & Stroud, D.A. 2006. The flyway concept: what it is and what it isn't. *Waterbirds around the world*. Eds. G.C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith & D.A. Stroud. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK, p. 40.



Photo: Tim Faasen - wildphoto.nl

the need to conserve all critical sites along a migratory pathway. The conference and the resulting Edinburgh Declaration on Global Flyways spurred a series of follow-up decisions from Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), with important implications for migratory waterbirds.

These include Resolution 10.22 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (passed at the tenth COP in November 2008), and Resolution 9.2 of the Convention of Migratory Species (passed at the ninth COP in December 2008). These and other measures have focused on the need for conservation activities along global flyways.

The Wings Over Wetlands project and its two main products — the Flyway Training Kit and the Critical Site Network Tool — showcase how the flyway approach can be put into practice, and provide a potential model to adapt to other regions. WOW has significantly helped to boost the implementation of AEWA and other MEAs and has contributed to making the flyway approach more mainstream and well-known in the African-Eurasian region and beyond.

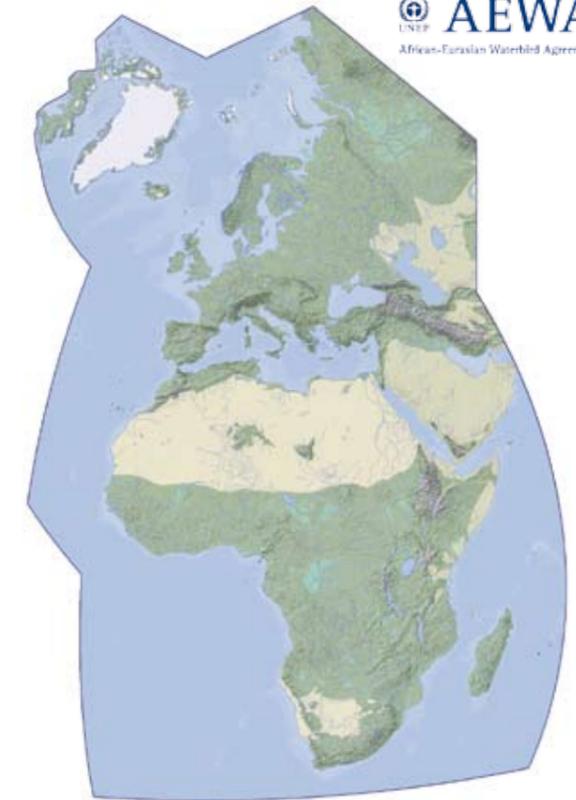


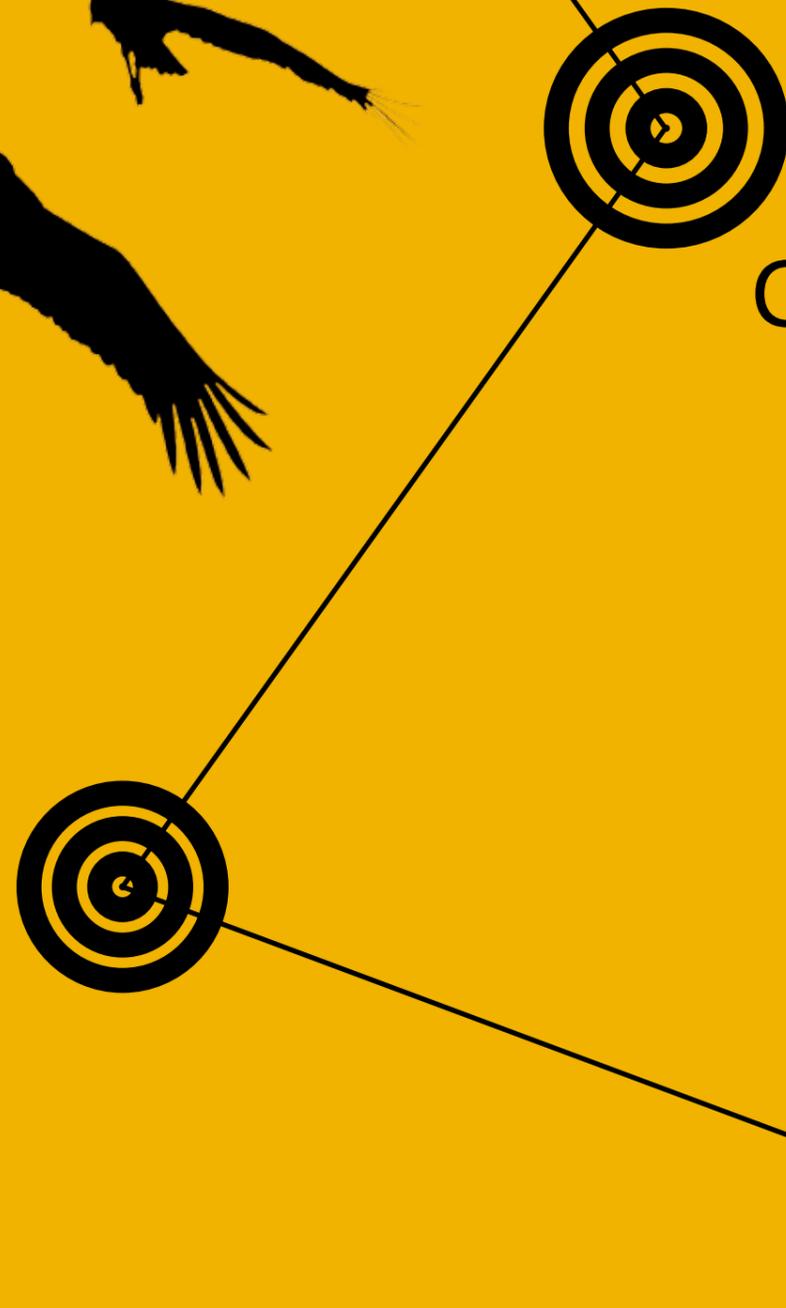
Figure: Map of the AEWA Region

The African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)

The African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement is mandated to promote international flyway-level cooperation for 255 species of migratory waterbirds in Africa and Eurasia. AEWA provides the international legal framework for up to 118 countries to take coordinated measures, so as to keep or restore migratory waterbirds to favourable conservation status. The AEWA Strategic Plan, together with an updated AEWA Action Plan, were adopted at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties in September 2008. Together they set out medium-term goals, objectives and targets for the AEWA region, many of which are being addressed by activities carried out in the context of the WOW project.



Photo: The 4th session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA, Antananarivo, Madagascar (15-19 September 2008) / © IISD Markus Staas



Critical Site Network Tool

The **CRITICAL SITE NETWORK TOOL**, a new electronic portal, is a major achievement of the WOW project. The CSN Tool makes it easy to obtain information, in a flyway context, about the critical sites for waterbird species in the African-Eurasian region. It is designed to help a range of different users, from site managers to national authorities and international organizations. The tool directly supports the implementation of AEWA and the Ramsar Convention, and is also very relevant to the EU Birds Directive and the Bern Convention's Emerald Network.



CSN Tool

The Critical Site Network Tool

The Critical Site Network Tool is an open-access information portal that integrates current knowledge on migratory waterbirds along the African-Eurasian flyways.

It applies technology to conservation by combining and presenting information from three separate databases: on Important Bird Areas (IBAs), the International Waterbird Census (IWC) and Ramsar sites.

For a particular waterbird species or a group of species, the CSN Tool provides information on distribution and flyways, an overview of the importance of individual sites, and management and ecological requirements.

For example, the map on the right shows the protected area status of the site network for Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*).

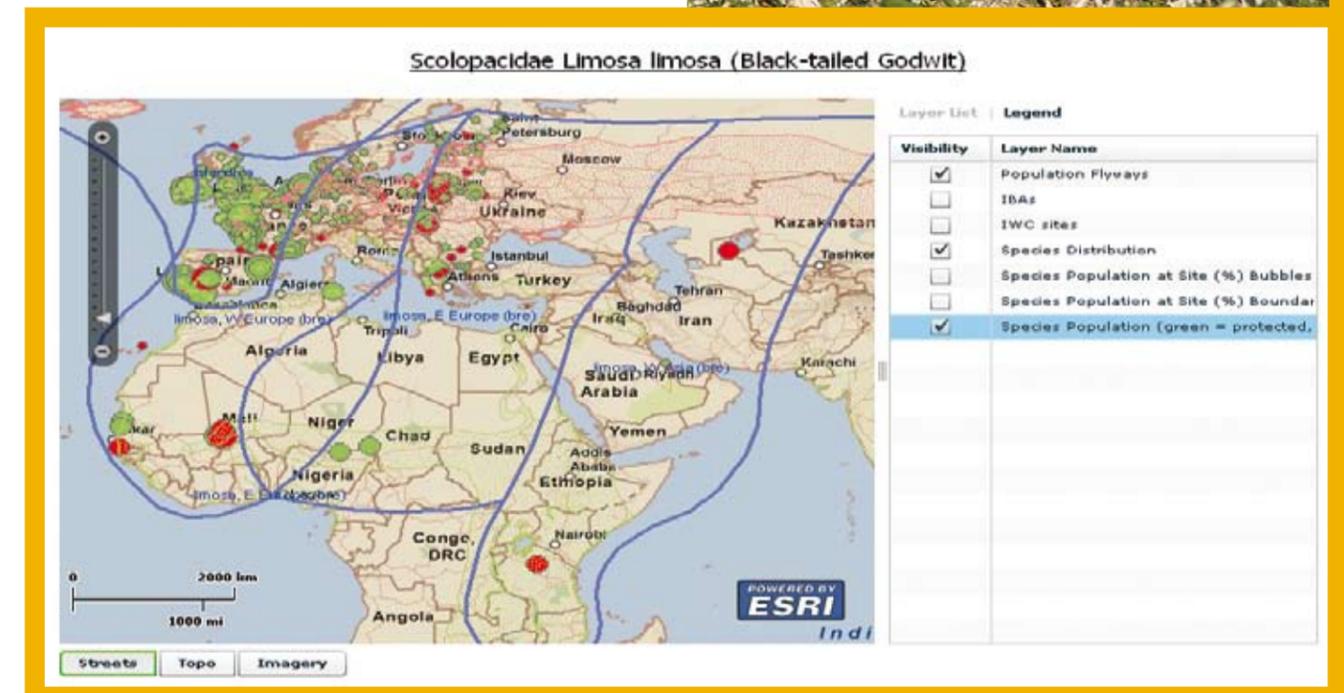
This information can be viewed at a range of scales, from site to national and flyway levels, taking care of the needs of a wide range of users. At the flyway scale, the CSN Tool displays the key or 'critical' sites for every waterbird population in the AEWA region. At the local level, site managers can use it to see the significance of their site in a flyway context. The system provides site inventories and illustrates site boundaries, changes in population size over time and ecological requirements, to help inform practical site management.

The CSN Tool allows users to identify site networks, protected area coverage and potential threats, and thus to identify and prioritize conservation targets and actions across the flyway.

It will have many other uses, including development of International Single Species Action Plans, systematic identification of wetlands to be protected under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and compilation of



Photo: Marek Szczepanek



environmental impact assessments. Most of all, it is hoped that the tool will help foster international cooperation among a wide range of government and non-governmental organizations working towards flyway level conservation of migratory waterbirds.

Protected area status of the site network for Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

The colour green indicates protected areas, red unprotected areas. The map shows that although sites are well protected in Western Europe, some key sites for that population are still not protected in Africa, and that protected area coverage is also not as robust in Eastern Europe. The map also highlights discrepancies in terms of available data. It shows that wintering and stop-over sites are still poorly known in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

CSN Tool

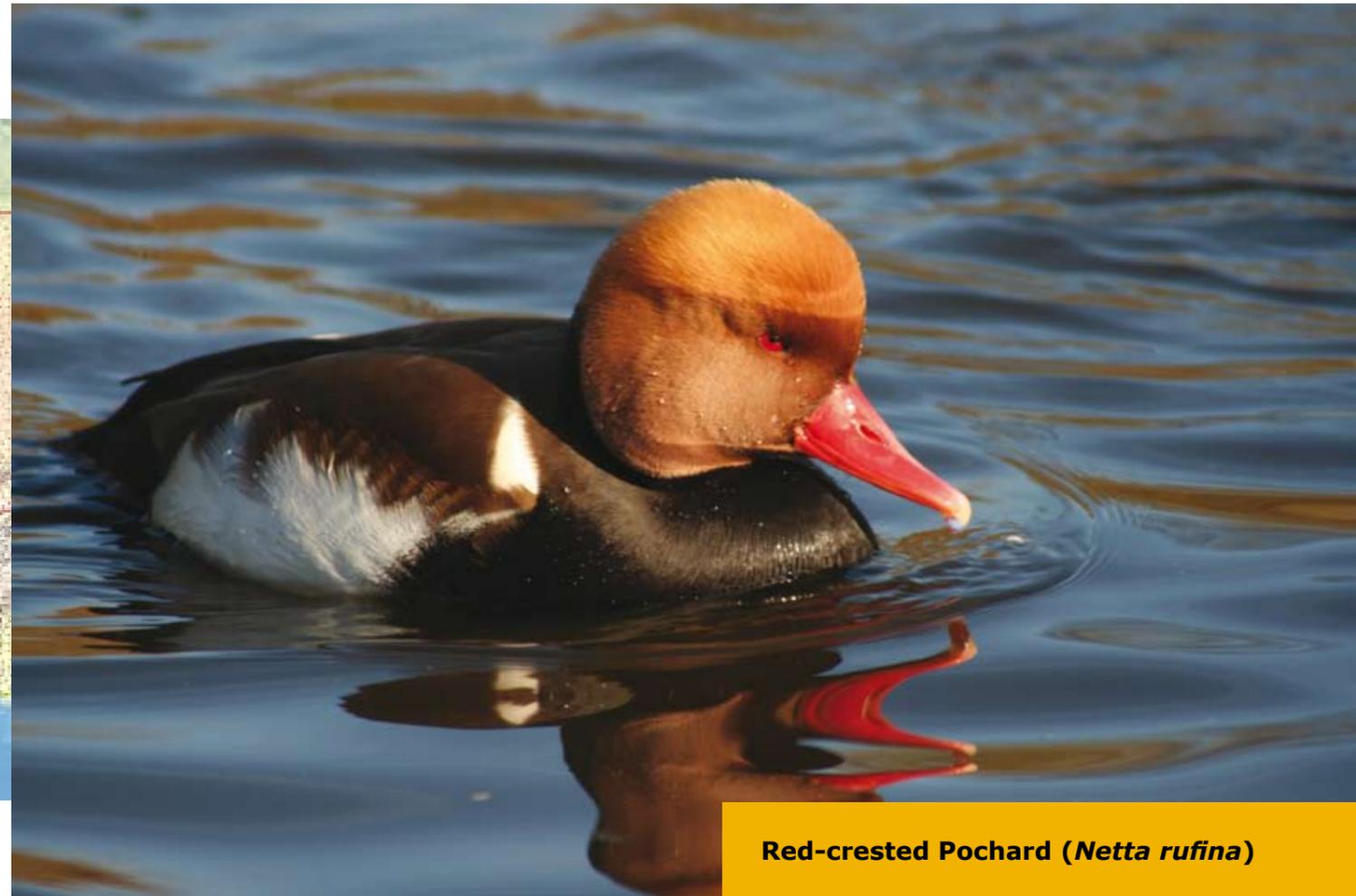


Photo: Duncan Wright

The Critical Site Network Tool and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement

The CSN Tool will provide better access to the waterbird and site information that national authorities need to implement AEWA. Using the tool, it will be quick and easy to generate detailed and reliable information on which of the 255 migratory waterbird species and/or 522 populations internationally protected under AEWA occur within a given country.

Another exciting new feature of the CSN Tool is its ability to generate comprehensive flyway maps for all AEWA species populations, including their wintering and staging areas. Reliably identifying which AEWA species populations are relevant for a country will enable both authorities and other stakeholders to prioritize and target their conservation efforts better. Because both the IWC and IBA are long-

term, site-based monitoring schemes, data on population trends and dynamics will also be accessible. Where species or populations are concentrated in a few critical sites, trends for these can be easily gathered. This can help assess the effectiveness of management efforts, and highlight where more work is needed. Identifying the critical sites and understanding threats and trends is the basis for long-term conservation of flyway populations, such as those of the Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*), pictured right.

A prototype of the CSN Tool is available at:

www.wingsoverwetlands.org/csntool

The prototype is developing the functionalities of the portal while the underlying data are being improved. The full CSN Tool will be launched in 2010.

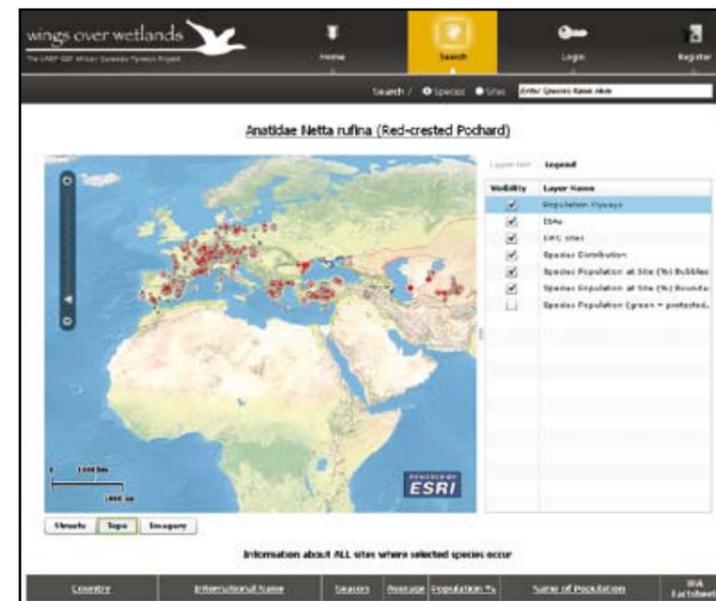


Photo: Screenshot from the CSN Tool (prototype) showing data for the Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*)

Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*)

Three flyway populations of Red-crested Pochard occur in the AEWA region and each has a different population trend. While the Central Europe and Western Mediterranean population is increasing, the Black Sea and East Mediterranean (nonbreeding) population is decreasing and the Central & South West Asia population is stable.

The CSN Tool can help identify which of these populations actually occurs in a given country and significantly help target conservation efforts. Knowing which of the three flyway populations of the Red-crested Pochard occurs in a given country makes a big difference in defining national responsibility and prioritizing national conservation action for a given species.



Flyway Training Programme

The WOW project is building capacity for flyway conservation within the African-Eurasian region through the work of four Regional Centres and associated Regional Training Boards. WOW's **FLYWAY TRAINING PROGRAMME** is supported by a comprehensive **FLYWAY TRAINING KIT**, including tailor-made training materials on topics related to flyway conservation, wetland management and migratory waterbird conservation, targeted to a range of stakeholders in the African-Eurasian region. In addition, the project has helped to strengthen several flyway monitoring and data collection schemes in different regions to address current gaps in geographical coverage and knowledge.





Photo: Wetlands International Africa

The Flyway Training Programme Building capacity for flyway conservation across Africa and Eurasia

Each year, millions of waterbirds migrate along the African-Eurasian flyways, moving between thousands of sites that span a hundred different countries. Conserving these species requires a truly international effort. It calls for concerted actions across the entire range of habitats where these species stop to feed, mate, rest and raise their offspring. Conservation success also depends on the continued exchange of relevant information, technical expertise and resources among a wide range of stakeholders and between countries. Flyway-scale conservation is vital, but implementing it successfully is a challenge. Many countries on the flyway have already committed to wetland and waterbird conservation by joining AEWA and the Ramsar

Convention on Wetlands. However, many countries still have very limited capacity to plan, implement, monitor and engage in action for effective flyway-scale conservation. WOW's Flyway Training Kit is helping to build this capacity for flyway conservation across the African-Eurasian region. The programme includes a set of practical and adaptable training materials to assist in targeted trainings, and these can be customized by topic as they relate to flyway conservation, wetland management and migratory waterbird conservation. The programme comes in a generic English version, and regionalized versions are available in Russian, French and Arabic. The Flyway

Training Kit will be the basis of training coordinated and promoted by each Regional Centre through their network of academic and training institutions.

A collective effort

The training modules are the result of a broad collaborative effort, and have been designed and reviewed through a series of meetings and major workshops involving Regional Training Boards and the main project partners. A formal review and test run of the modules was held in Amman, Jordan in 2008, with many project partners and potential users of the modules taking part.

The final version has been formally endorsed by Regional Training Boards and the review



Photos: BirdLife Middle East Division



process helped to ensure that the modules are of the highest quality, practical, transferable and address the main knowledge gaps in the region. Most importantly, though, a team of dedicated individuals has been established through the Regional Centres to help drive this process locally.





Photo: Florian Keil

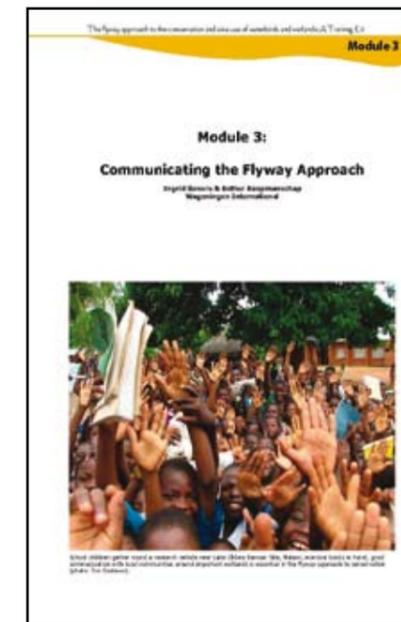
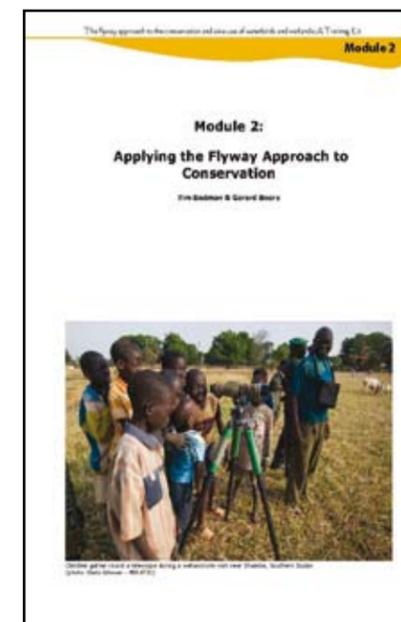
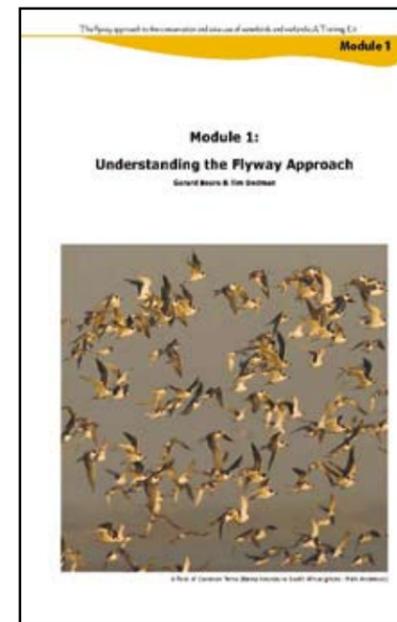


training kit

Flyway Level Training

While there are a number of site-specific training programmes on wetland and waterbird conservation in the African-Eurasian region, they are not yet equipped to tackle the long-term management of wetland and migratory waterbird resources from a flyway perspective.

From the outset, the Wings Over Wetlands project has worked with the principal training institutions and stakeholders in Africa and Eurasia to assess training needs in each region. Project members have worked on building consensus throughout the process and have made it a point to nurture and support local ownership.



The Flyway Training Kit

The Flyway Training Kit is the product of this effort. It consists of a set of widely reviewed, locally owned, flexible and practical training modules on wetland and migratory waterbird conservation. These modules provide a broad generic outline that can easily be adapted to the actual training needs of any target group in a given country or region.

Each training kit includes three modules with example-rich text, case studies and exercises, presented in a flexible ring-bound format and supported by a comprehensive set of powerpoint presentations. The format allows each user to extract exactly what they

need and tailor training to a specific target group. As well as powerpoint presentations, the accompanying CD includes a range of supporting material such as AEWa and Ramsar documents and guidelines.



Photo: Omar Al-Saghiier



Photo: Wetlands International Africa



Photo: Florian Keil



Photo: BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat



Photo: Tim Dodman



Photo: Szabolcs Nagy



Photo: BirdLife Middle East Division



Photo: Alexander Solokha



Photo: Camillo Ponziani

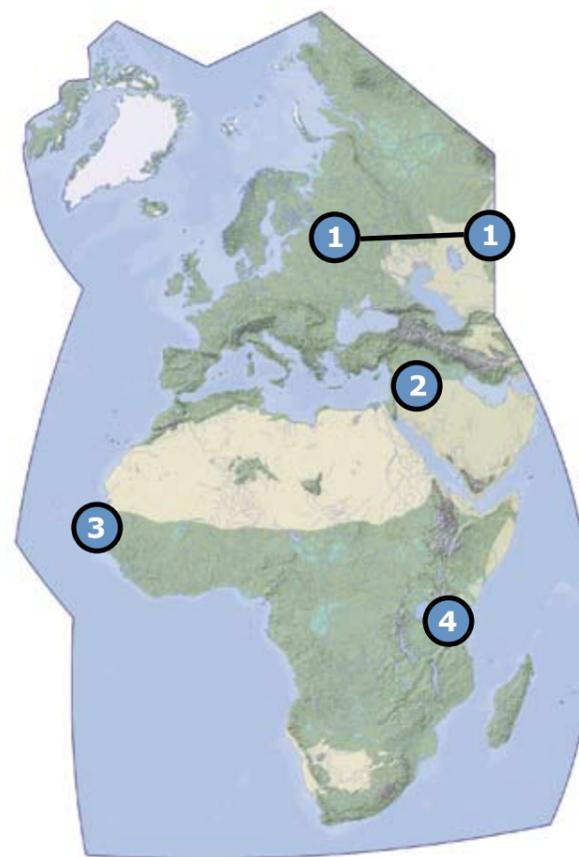


Photo: Wetlands International Africa



Photo: BirdLife Middle East Division

WOW Regional Centres



- 1 Central Asia and Caucasus States** (Moscow, Russia and Almaty, Kazakhstan)
- 2 Middle East** (Amman, Jordan)
- 3 Western and Central Africa** (Dakar, Senegal)
- 4 Eastern and Southern Africa** (Nairobi, Kenya)

The WOW Regional Centre for Western and Central Africa is located at the Wetlands International Africa Office in Dakar, Senegal, while the Eastern and Southern African region is covered by the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat Office in Nairobi, Kenya. The Middle East WOW Regional Centre is hosted by BirdLife Middle East in Amman, Jordan and the Central Asia and Caucasus States are serviced jointly through the Wetlands International Russia Programme in Moscow and the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Key to implementation of the WOW project are four WOW Regional Centres located across the African-Eurasian region, which co-ordinate regional activities and link to field-based work. Each WOW Regional Centre has an established network to encourage multi-country activities within a flyway context. Regional Centres are helping to coordinate and build capacity in data gathering and monitoring across their networks. Improved data from ongoing monitoring not only bolster efforts to protect the network of critical sites used by waterbirds, but further strengthen the effectiveness of the CSN Tool for planning and decision-making.

Each Regional Centre has assembled a Regional Training Board represented by the leading regional training institutions and conservation organisations, and is supported by a dedicated Capacity Building Officer. The Training Boards

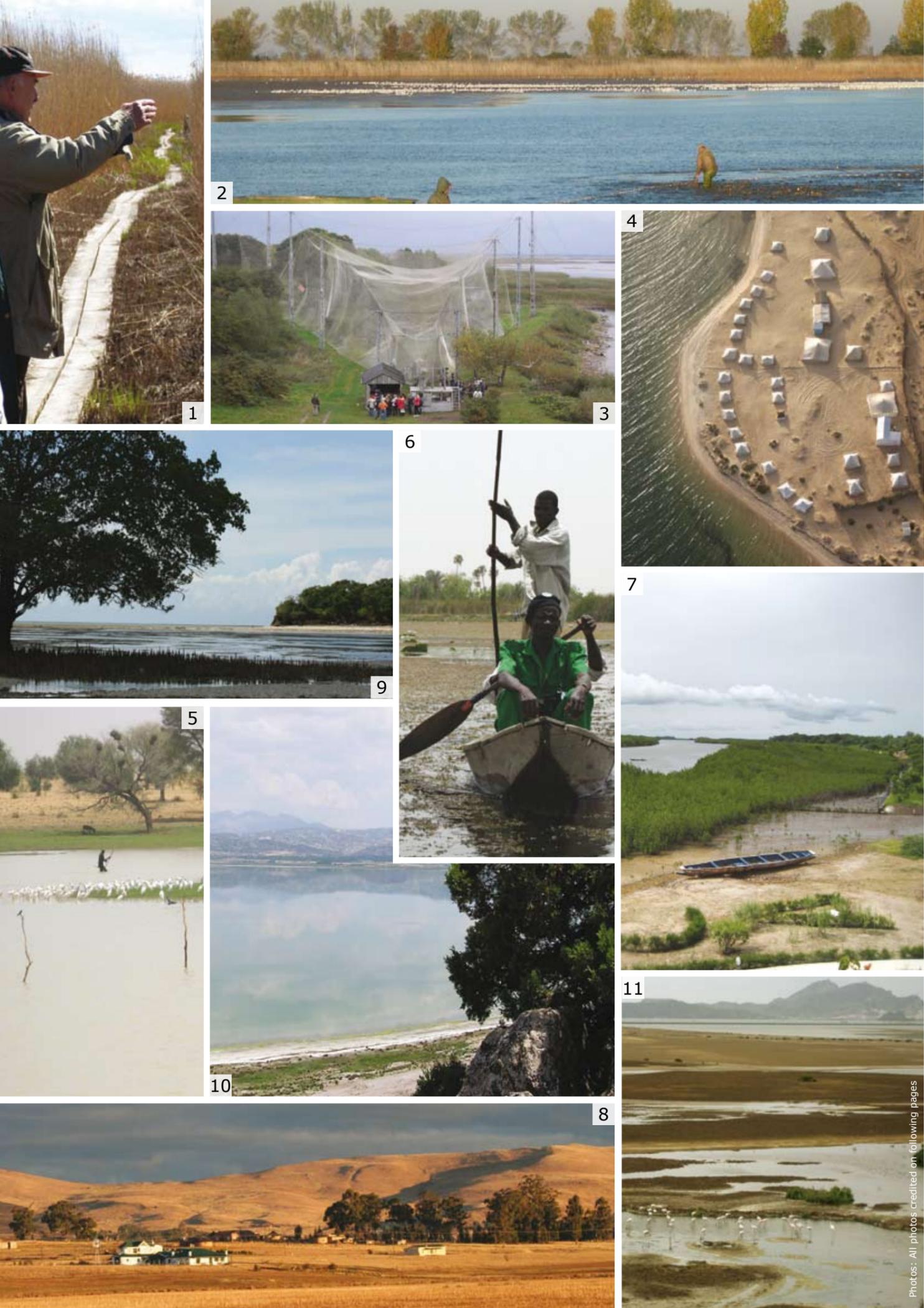
have worked together to define the requisite training needs and to enrich the modules within the Flyway Training Kit with regionally-relevant examples and case-studies. Using their networks, efforts are underway to further promote the Flyway Training Kit within each region and to encourage its use by relevant academic and training institutions. Training of Trainers courses using material from the WOW Flyway Training Kit have already been conducted for the Middle East (in Amman, Jordan, August 2008) and the Western and Central African region (in Limbe, Cameroon, November 2009) and additional workshops are planned for the future. Finally, the Regional Centres are also supporting the implementation of WOW Demonstration Projects in their region, and offer a platform for the dissemination of lessons learned and the experiences generated by these exciting field projects.



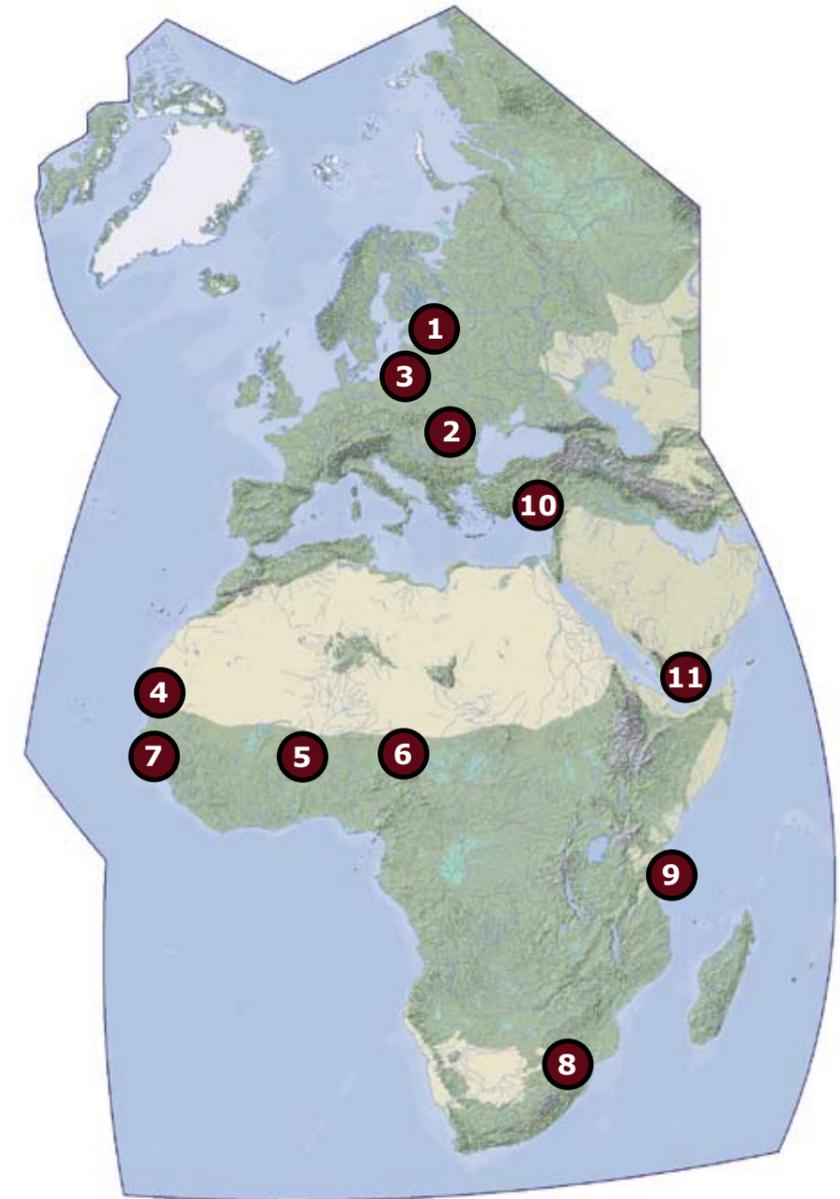
11 Demonstration Projects

The WOW project supports **ELEVEN DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS** located in twelve countries in the African-Eurasian region. Each focuses on a key issue for wetland and waterbird conservation, including community mobilization, management planning, ecotourism, field research, wetland restoration, control of invasive species, trans-boundary management, education and alternative livelihoods and flyway-level cooperation.

11 WOW Demonstration Projects



- 1 Estonia**
Haapsalu-Noarootsi Bays
- 2 Hungary**
Biharugra Fishponds
- 3 Lithuania**
Nemunas River Delta
- 4 Mauritania**
Banc D'Arguin National Park
- 5 Niger**
Namga-Kokorou Complex
- 6 Nigeria**
Hadejia-Nguru Wetlands
- 7 Senegal & The Gambia**
Saloum-Niumi Complex
- 8 South Africa**
Wakkerstroom Wetlands
- 9 Tanzania**
Dar Es Salaam Wetlands
- 10 Turkey**
Burdur Gölü
- 11 Yemen**
Aden Wetlands



All WOW Demonstration Projects are at sites classified as wetlands of international importance, in part because of their significance in supporting waterbird species. Over the past four years, the eleven projects have contributed to addressing the causes of current biodiversity loss at these sites in different ways, creating new opportunities for local communities,

sustaining both livelihoods and the environment. Many of the WOW Demonstration Projects have become best-practice examples for other sites across the AEWA region, in such areas as ecotourism, trans-boundary management, control of invasive species and environmental education.

Photos: All photos credited on following pages

Nature education in the Haapsalu-Noarootsi Bays

Estonia

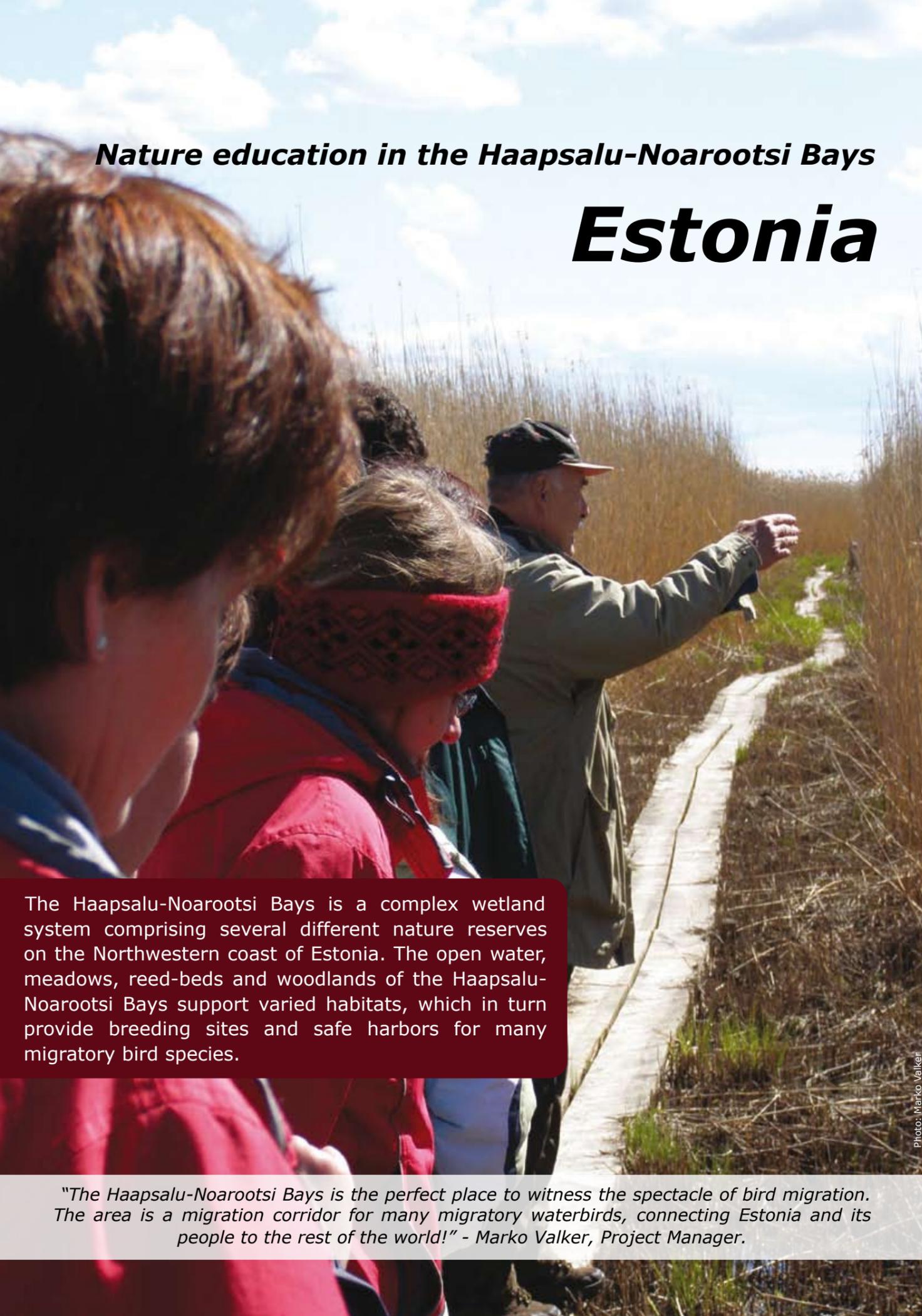


Photo: Kaia Vooremaa



Photo: Ivar Ojaste



Photo: Kaarel Kaisel



The Haapsalu-Noarootsi Bays is a complex wetland system comprising several different nature reserves on the Northwestern coast of Estonia. The open water, meadows, reed-beds and woodlands of the Haapsalu-Noarootsi Bays support varied habitats, which in turn provide breeding sites and safe harbors for many migratory bird species.

Photo: Marko Valker

"The Haapsalu-Noarootsi Bays is the perfect place to witness the spectacle of bird migration. The area is a migration corridor for many migratory waterbirds, connecting Estonia and its people to the rest of the world!" - Marko Valker, Project Manager.

The north-western coastal zone of Estonia is one of the most important waterbird migration corridors in the Baltic Sea. Millions of birds take advantage of its passage-friendly flyway annually between their breeding and wintering areas. A recently-inaugurated visitor centre hosts an array of interactive exhibits highlighting waterbird migration, the results of restoration work on 100 ha of coastal habitat and a detailed study of the Baltic seabed, all supported by the WOW project. Not too long ago, though, the region suffered greatly from the effects of unsustainable fishing, hunting and tourism and the collapse of traditional agricultural land-use. Thanks to a concerted effort, a comprehensive five-year management plan for Northwest Estonia's network of protected areas is now helping to redress the damage. This has helped to save this vital area for many migratory waterbirds covered by AEWA, not least the globally endangered Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*), for which this is the main stopover site in Estonia.

Executing organization:
Environmental Board /
Estonian State Nature
Conservation Centre

GEF funds: \$ 200,000
Co-financing: \$ 100,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/estonia

Nature-friendly management and eco-tourism development in the Biharugra Fishponds

Hungary



Photo: Tógye János

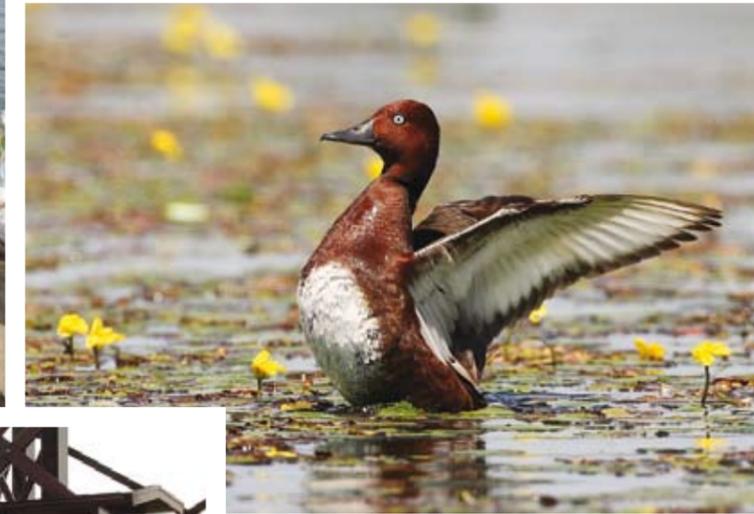


Photo: Simay Gábor



Photo: Simay Gábor



The Biharugra Fishponds are one of the most valuable bird habitats in Hungary. This low-lying flood-plain, surrounded by extensive saline grasslands and arable fields, is considered one of the most important wetlands in the country, supporting significant populations of threatened breeding waterbirds. WOW's nature-friendly fish-farming management and eco-tourism approach is creating triple-win solutions for environmental conservation, as well as new opportunities for the private sector and the local community.

"The Biharugra Fishponds are a positive model showing how the private sector can thrive in partnership with nature conservation. Sustainable fish farming practices are becoming more accepted by fishpond farmers throughout Hungary and we hope it will spread even further across the industry." - Simay Gábor, Project Manager.

Traditionally, fish-farming in Central and Eastern Europe has proven a good way to manage a set of wetlands important for threatened breeding waterbirds. But managing the Biharugra Fishponds (which are located within Körös-Maros National Park) in a viable manner requires paying careful attention to conservation requirements, which in the past have always been in conflict with private-sector interests.

By defining a range of practical, nature-friendly solutions for the local fish farming industry, which detail ways in which to manage the fishpond system at Biharugra, BirdLife Hungary, the Bihar Public Foundation and Agropoint Ltd - with WOW support - have created a viable model for fishpond management that promotes cooperation between the private sector and conservationists. The model has shown that the fish farming industry can profit from adopting nature-friendly management techniques. This has not only benefited wildlife conservation, but also opened the doors for eco-tourism opportunities, which in turn serves the interests of the local community around Biharugra.

Executing organization:
MME / BirdLife Hungary

GEF funds: \$ 201,370
Co-financing: \$ 689,869

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/hungary

Building education, research and eco-tourism facilities in the Nemunas River Delta Lithuania

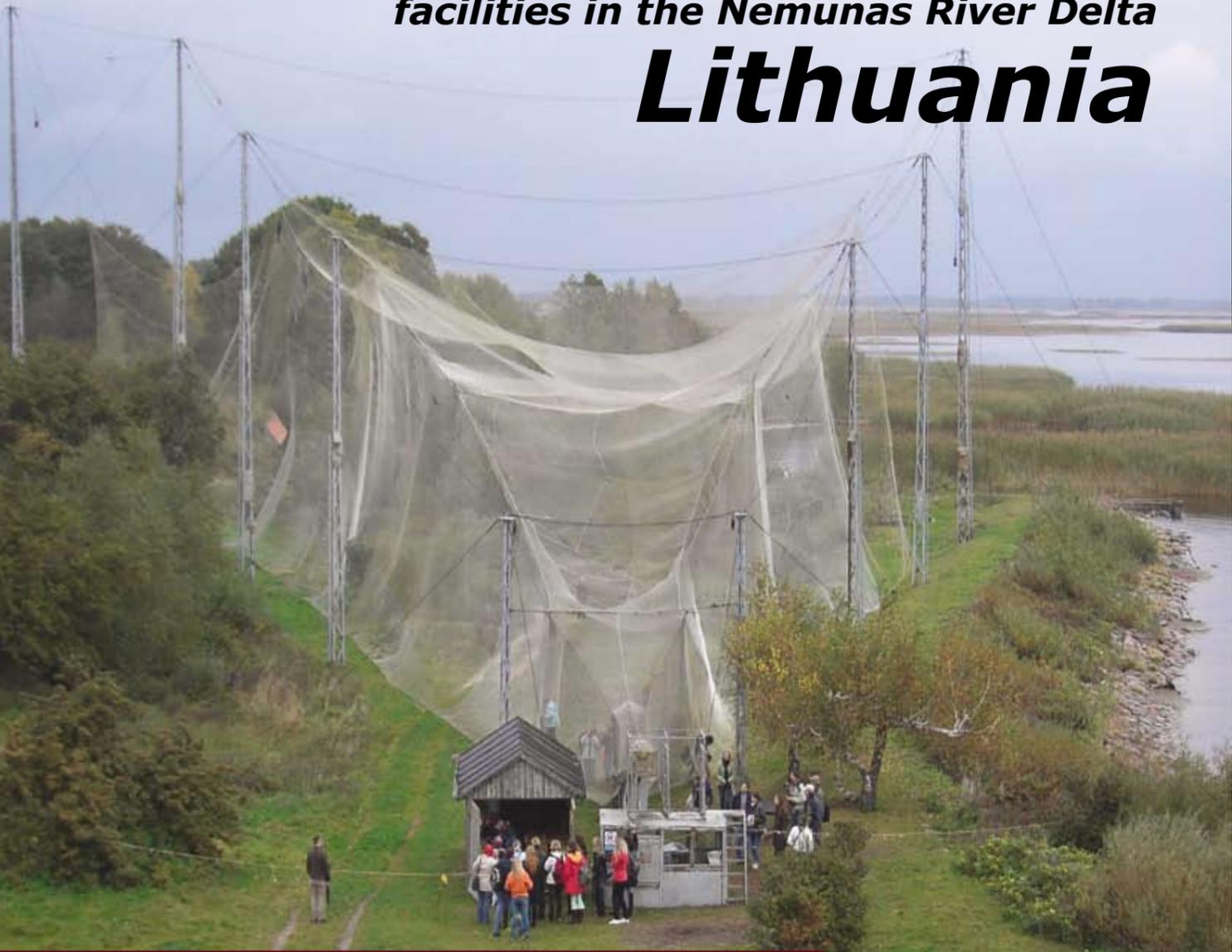


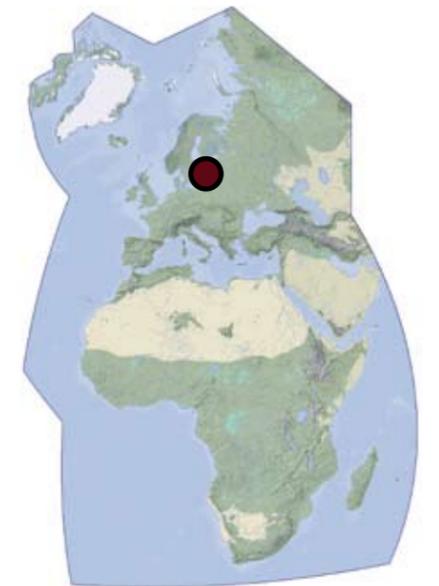
Photo: Saulius Svazas



Photo: Saulius Svazas



Photo: Camillo Ponziani



The Nemunas River Delta, shared by Lithuania and Russia, is by far the most important wetland complex in Lithuania and one of the very few natural estuaries remaining in the Baltic Region. It is a key stop-over site for many migratory waterbirds and hosts nesting vulnerable bird species, but recent changes in the land-use regime have damaged this key bird area.

With support from WOW, the Institute of Ecology of Vilnius University spearheaded the restoration of a number of key floodplain habitats. As a result, several globally threatened bird species have returned to the restored sites. A newly established bird observatory is being used as a base for scientific research, monitoring of migratory waterbirds and for transboundary environmental cooperation with Russia's Kaliningrad region. New facilities for eco-tourism were also developed in the delta area.

Executing organization:
Institute of Ecology of
Vilnius University

GEF funds: \$ 296,000
Co-financing: \$ 285,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/lithuania

The Nemunas River Delta is one of the key stop-over sites for migratory waterbirds in Europe and it regularly supports internationally important concentrations of more than 20 waterbird species. WOW supported a small-scale floodplain restoration project conducted by the Institute of Ecology at Vilnius University, which is already demonstrating the effectiveness of such restoration methods for other sites in Lithuania.

"It was amazing to see restoration efforts pay off so quickly. The successes and results of our demonstration project are important for further large-scale wetland restoration work in Lithuania." - Saulius Svazas, Project Manager.

Photo: Saulius Svazas

Supporting livelihoods through ornithological ecotourism at Banc d'Arguin National Park Mauritania

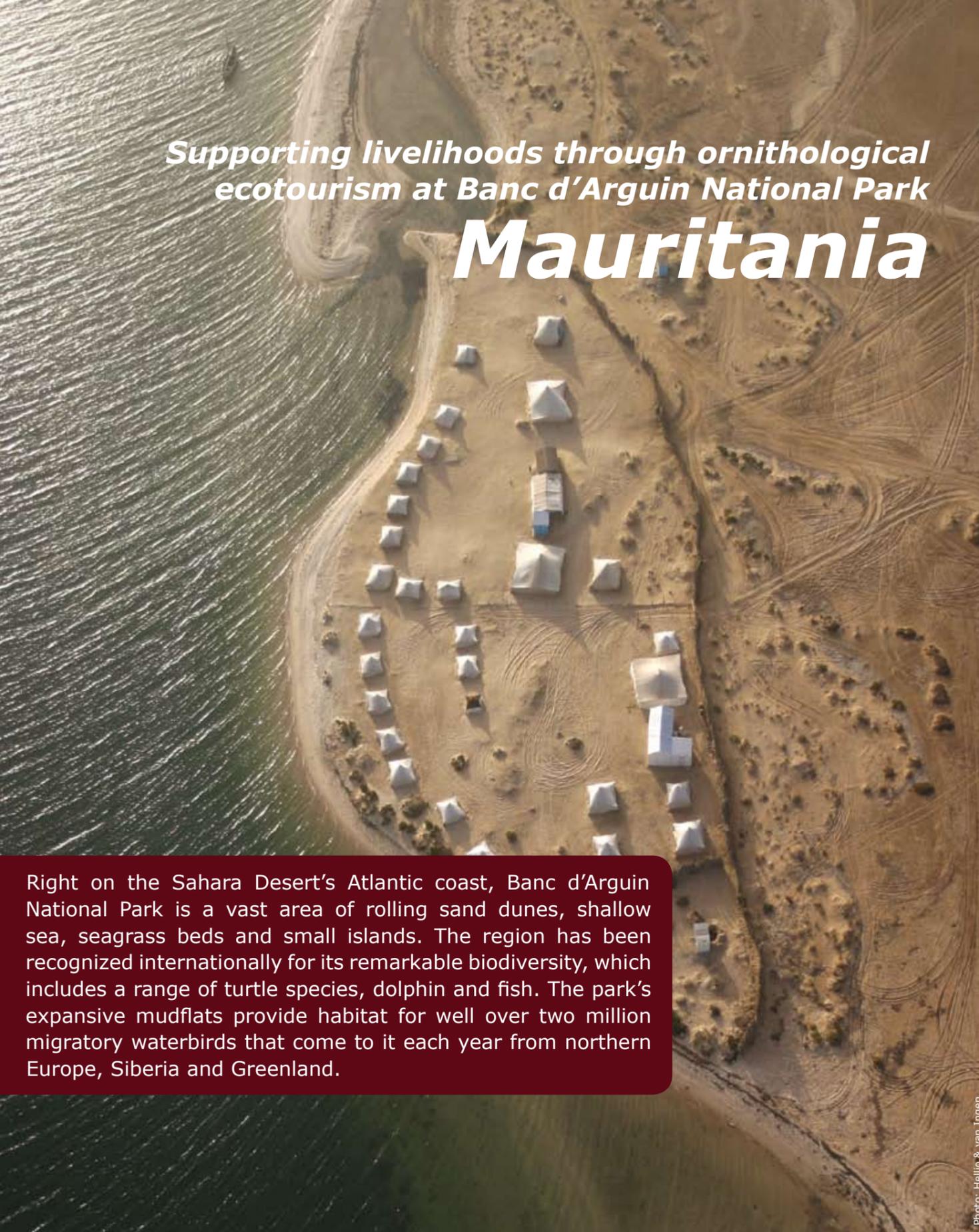


Photo: Mahmoud Chihaoui



Photo: Hedio & van Ingen



Photo: PNBA



Right on the Sahara Desert's Atlantic coast, Banc d'Arguin National Park is a vast area of rolling sand dunes, shallow sea, seagrass beds and small islands. The region has been recognized internationally for its remarkable biodiversity, which includes a range of turtle species, dolphin and fish. The park's expansive mudflats provide habitat for well over two million migratory waterbirds that come to it each year from northern Europe, Siberia and Greenland.

Photo: Hedio & van Ingen

"The local Imraguen population depends on fishing for their livelihood. However, a number of species have been exploited at an unsustainable level, causing an imbalance to the ecology of the park. These days they are catching fewer fish and need to find other ways to earn a living."
- Mahmoud Chihaoui, Project Manager.

With fish populations now under severe threat, local communities in Banc d'Arguin National Park have no choice but to find alternative ways of generating income. The WOW project is helping to build local capacity for ornithological ecotourism within Banc d'Arguin National Park. Capitalising on the emerging opportunities created by the international ecotourism market, the project is focusing on developing a nature guiding programme for the local Imraguen population. Close to 20 Imraguen from different villages were selected to undergo intensive language training and to participate in a special guiding course which includes an ornithological component combined with the geography, history and the ecology of the Parc National du Banc d'Arguin. To maximize the park's potential, the field team is also working to improve local tourism infrastructure, is conducting a market analysis to target tourism potential better and is working closely with international tour operators to raise the profile of Banc d'Arguin National Park as a destination for ornithological tourism.

Executing organization:
Wetlands International Africa

GEF financing: \$ 200,000
Co-financing: \$ 270,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/mauritania

*Developing a community-based management plan
for the Namga-Kokorou Complex*
Niger

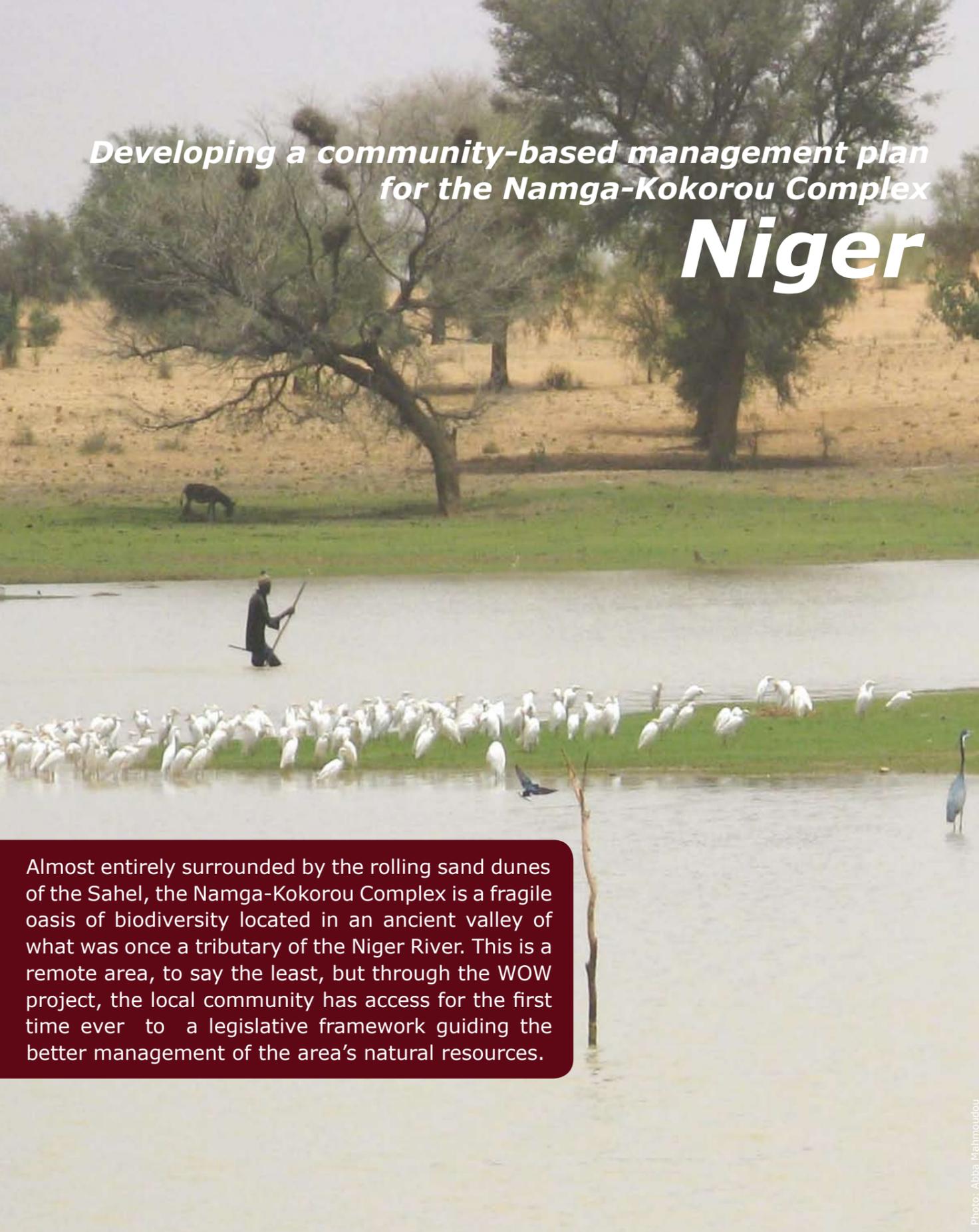


Photo: Camillo Ponziani



Photo: Abba Mahmoudou



Photo: Abba Mahmoudou



Almost entirely surrounded by the rolling sand dunes of the Sahel, the Namga-Kokorou Complex is a fragile oasis of biodiversity located in an ancient valley of what was once a tributary of the Niger River. This is a remote area, to say the least, but through the WOW project, the local community has access for the first time ever to a legislative framework guiding the better management of the area's natural resources.

"In the past the community had to approach problems individually and through the mediation of the village chief. The community management plan will help benefit local livelihoods and the way wetland resources are utilized by different user groups." - Abba Mahmoudou, Project Manager.

The Namga-Kokorou Complex Community Management Plan, developed within the WOW project framework, is the first attempt in Niger to combine sustainable resource management and biodiversity conservation in a freshwater wetland through a coordinated and participatory approach. The plan's aim is to let the local community take the lead in resource management, while at the same time introducing sustainable forms of management, and habitat restoration. In spite of its abundant biodiversity, the area is especially prone to sand deposition and drought, both of which threaten the mosaic of marshes and floodplains - hosts to a rich and varied flora and fauna, including many migratory waterbirds. Ensuring the good health of the wetland complex is vital to the entire Namga-Kokorou community because it maintains ground and surface water quality, and supports agriculture, fishing and pastoralism. Through consultations with the local community and via a series of public meetings, local partners have developed a blueprint that will contribute to the sustainability of the wetland for years to come.

Executing organization:
Wetlands International
Africa & WWF Niger

GEF funds: \$ 200,000
Co-financing: \$ 150,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/niger

Clearing Typha in the Hadejia-Nguru Wetlands

Nigeria

Located in the north-eastern part of Nigeria is a system of Sudano-Sahelian wetlands that have suffered enormous damage from the invasion of Typha bulrushes. WOW has helped to empower local communities to clear more than 30 kilometres of channel in the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands, with numerous beneficial effects.

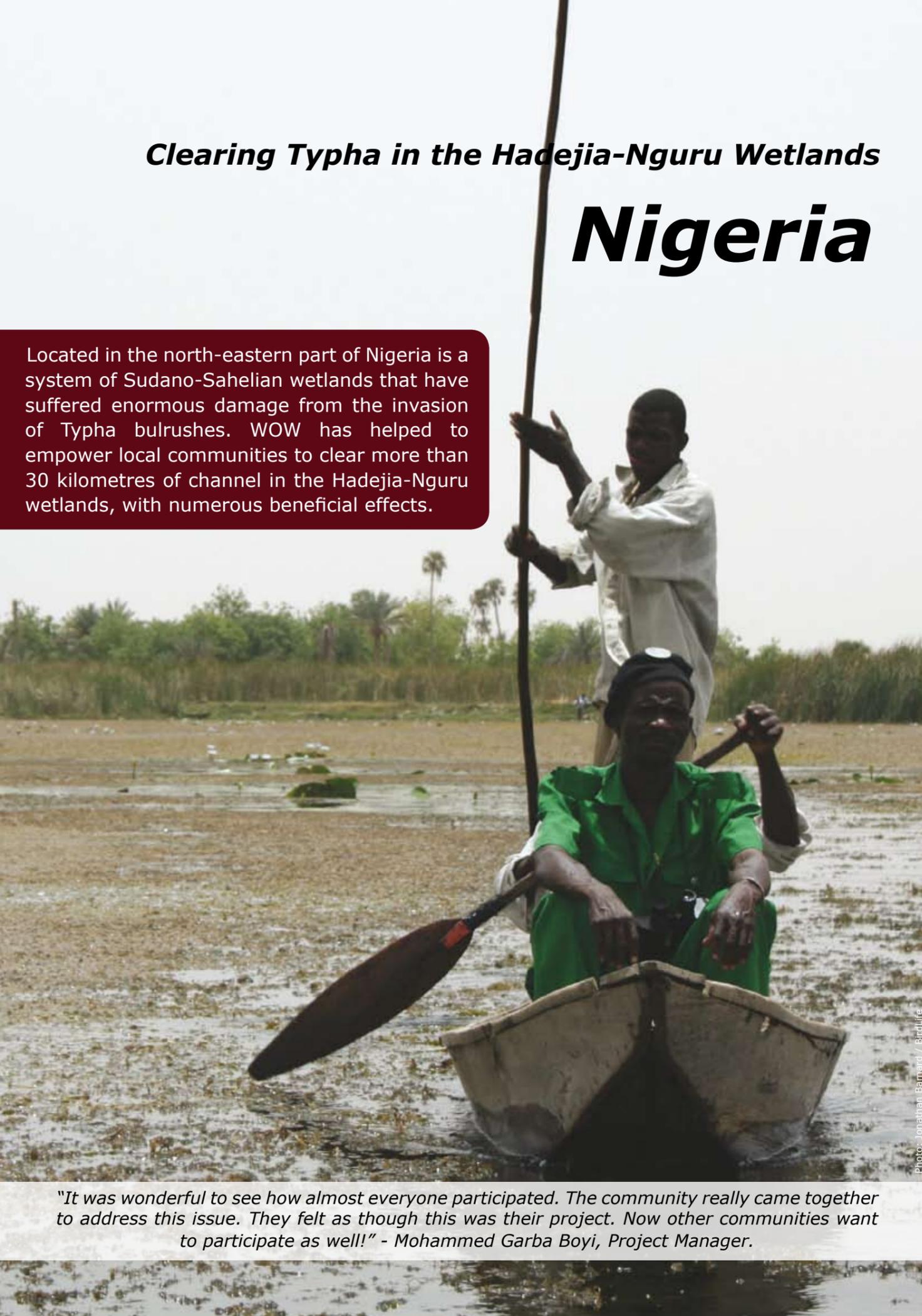


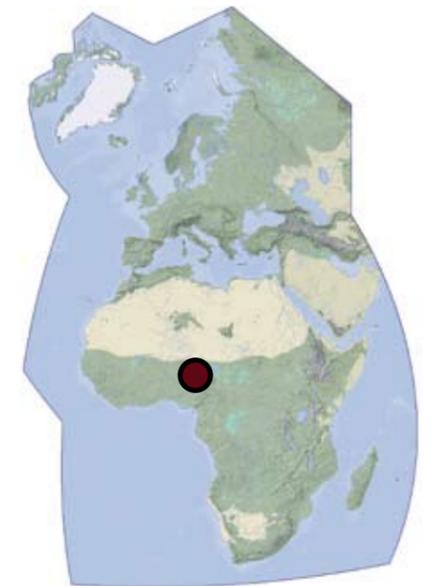
Photo: Mohammed Boyi



Photo: Nigerian Conservation Foundation



Photo: Jonathan Barnard / BirdLife



For years, Typha bulrushes have been a problem in the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands, disrupting the hydrological cycle and choking off entire water channels within the wider catchment area. This has led to episodes of drought and, in some areas, heavy flooding, both of which made it much harder for local communities to earn a livelihood. To address these issues, the WOW project has supported a community engagement approach. Through providing technical guidance, tools and credits for food and transportation, WOW helped the Dabar Magini community to band together to clear the blocked water channels physically. As a result the flooding has now stopped, local fishermen are catching more fish and many agricultural and grazing areas can be used again. The community is also able to generate additional income from the tourists visiting the wetlands, which host a multitude of bird species. The news about the success of the demonstration project has reached many neighbouring communities, who now want to clear Typha in their own areas.

"It was wonderful to see how almost everyone participated. The community really came together to address this issue. They felt as though this was their project. Now other communities want to participate as well!" - Mohammed Garba Boyi, Project Manager.

Executing organization:
Nigerian Conservation
Foundation (NCF)

GEF funds: \$ 206,000
Co-financing: \$ 248,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/nigeria

Transboundary cooperation and community participation in the Saloum-Niumi Complex

Senegal & The Gambia



Photo: Wetlands International Africa



Photo: Wetlands International Africa



Photo: Camillo Ponziani

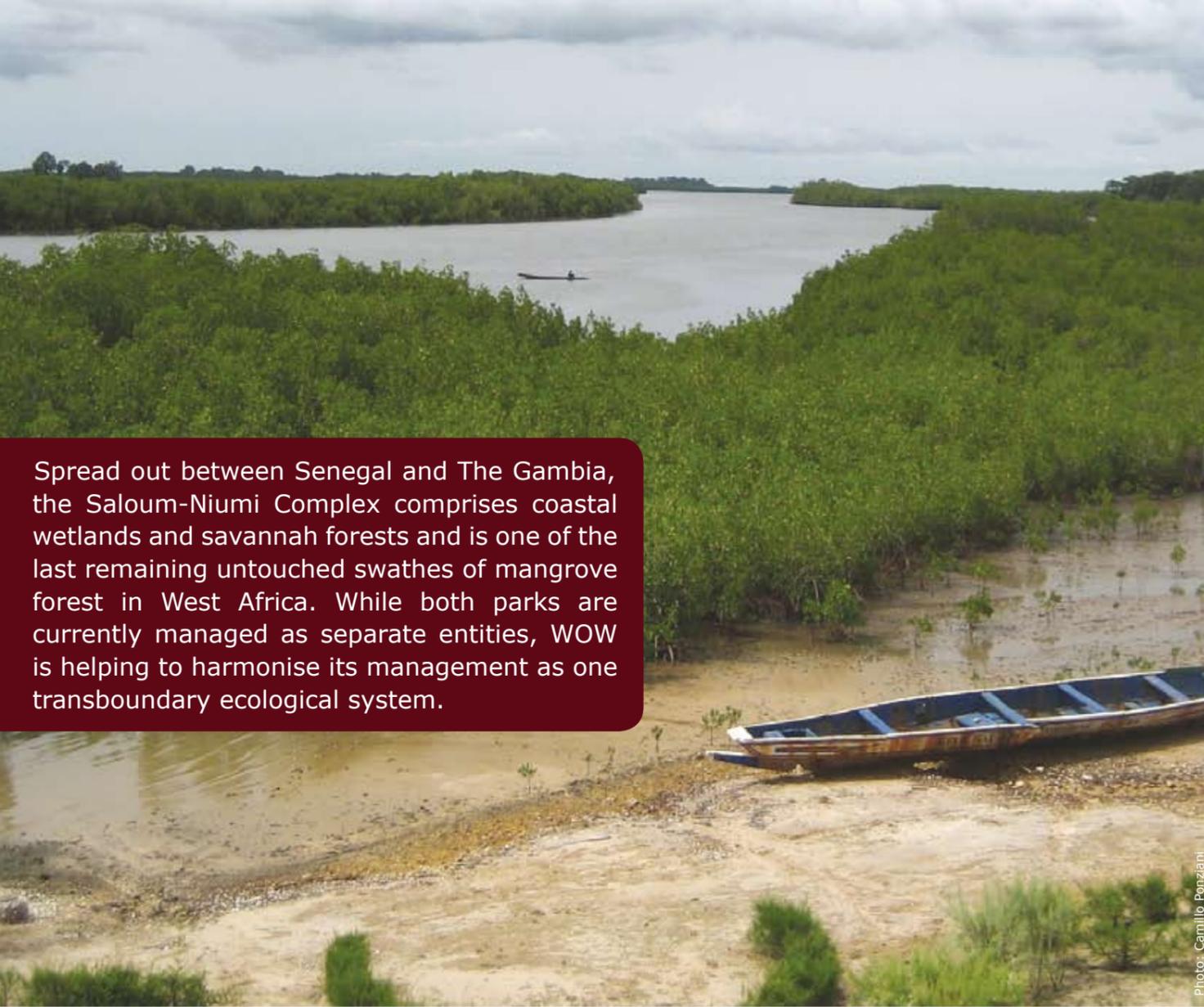
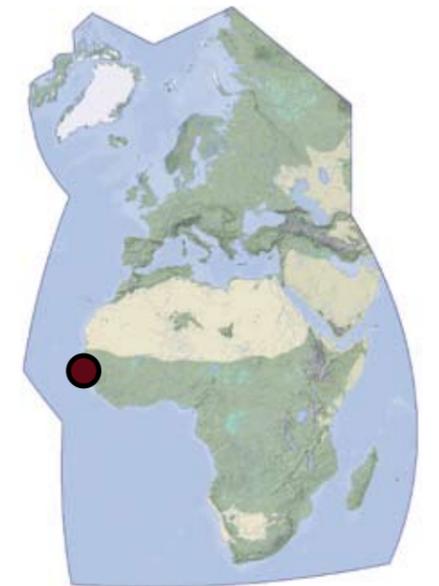


Photo: Camillo Ponziani

Spread out between Senegal and The Gambia, the Saloum-Niumi Complex comprises coastal wetlands and savannah forests and is one of the last remaining untouched swathes of mangrove forest in West Africa. While both parks are currently managed as separate entities, WOW is helping to harmonise its management as one transboundary ecological system.

The Saloum-Niumi Complex is a relatively unexplored area that is rich in biodiversity and that plays host to many rare bird species. However, it is cut through by a national boundary. The different languages and divergent management procedures within Niumi National Park in the northwestern part of The Gambia and the adjacent Saloum Delta National Park in Senegal make it very difficult to address pervasive threats.

Illegal fishing, hunting and overharvesting of natural resources are quickly taking a toll on the remarkable range of habitats shared by the two countries, and holding back a uniform, more harmonious management of what really is a single ecological entity. WOW is supporting the development of an integrated transboundary management plan, in combination with a renewed effort on environmental education and awareness-raising among the local communities.

Executing organization:
Wetlands International Africa

GEF funds: \$ 400,000
Co-financing: \$ 400,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/senegalgambia

"There is tremendous potential for ecotourism and nature conservation within the two parks, but to get there we need to get management right!" - Bounama Dieye, Project Manager.

Developing Ecotourism around Wakkerstroom

South Africa



Photo: BirdLife South Africa



Photo: Camillo Ponziani



Photo: Camillo Ponziani



Wakkerstroom, a small town in Mpumalanga Province around 200 km southeast of Johannesburg, is a jewel in South Africa's crown – a region that attracts scores of visitors for its unique landscapes, wetland habitats, plants, animals and abundant birdlife. But as this once sleepy village tries to accommodate an ever-growing stream of visitors and tourists, the local black community has largely been left behind, not yet experiencing the benefit of tourism-based economic growth.

In an effort to promote the equitable distribution of tourism income around Wakkerstroom, BirdLife South Africa, through the WOW project, is developing the capacity of local communities to manage key wetland sites and protect Wakkerstroom's birdlife, while also enhancing community livelihoods through environmentally sustainable and economically viable income-generating activities.

Executing organization:
BirdLife South Africa

GEF funds: \$ 248,000
Co-financing: \$ 434,583

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/southafrica

Wakkerstroom is easily one of South Africa's best options for birdwatchers, and ecotourism has great potential to provide economic benefit to the community at large. Indeed, the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve and Training Centre is not just a breathtakingly beautiful place for birding, it also provides work for nature guides, most of whom come from the surrounding rural area and have few options to make a living.

Photo: BirdLife South Africa

"BirdLife South Africa has an obligation to play a role in reducing poverty levels through conservation." - Daniel Marnewick, Project Manager.

Raising awareness on the importance of wetlands and waterbirds around Dar Es Salaam Wetlands Tanzania



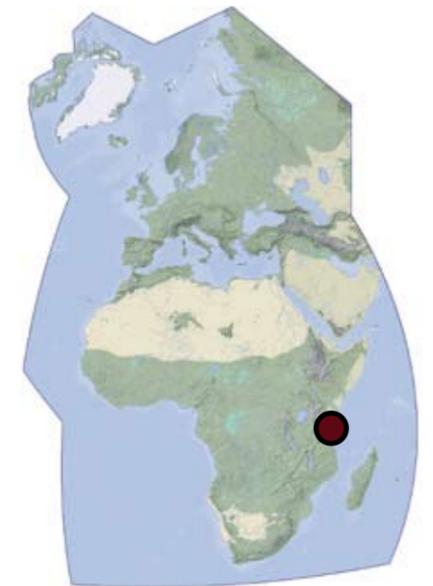
Photo: Camillo Ponziani



Photo: Jonathan Barnard / BirdLife



Photo: Camillo Ponziani



Located along the Indian Ocean coastline, the Dar es Salaam wetland is a system of lagoons, creeks, intertidal mudflats, estuaries and mangrove forest spanning sandy beaches, rock cliffs and several small islands. The area supports up to 30,000 wintering migratory waterbirds at a time, and over 100,000 waterbirds use the wetland as a stop-over site during migration.

With over three million people living in Dar es Salaam City, the pressure on the wetland system is increasing in step with the city's rapid development. Urban encroachment is a pervasive threat to the wetland and could completely undermine its ecological integrity. There are also threats from pollution of waterways by industrial and urban effluents; uncontrolled beach tourism; beach erosion; solid waste littering beaches and the clearing of mangroves for construction and other domestic uses.

A number of complexities at the local level prevented the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania from building a much-needed Wetland Education Centre at the site. Although the WOW Demonstration Project in Tanzania is now closed, the project implemented some awareness-raising activities and has produced a short film on the value of the Dar es Salaam Wetlands.

Executing organization:
Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania

GEF funds: \$ 100,000
Co-financing: \$ 50,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/tanzania

"To really stop unplanned development and guarantee proper management of the Dar es Salaam wetland, our Government needs to let the coastline become a Ramsar site, to protect our beautiful wetland from the increasing threats." - Sophia Masuka, Project Manager.

Photo: Jonathan Barnard / BirdLife

Awareness raising to support site conservation at Burdur Gölü Turkey

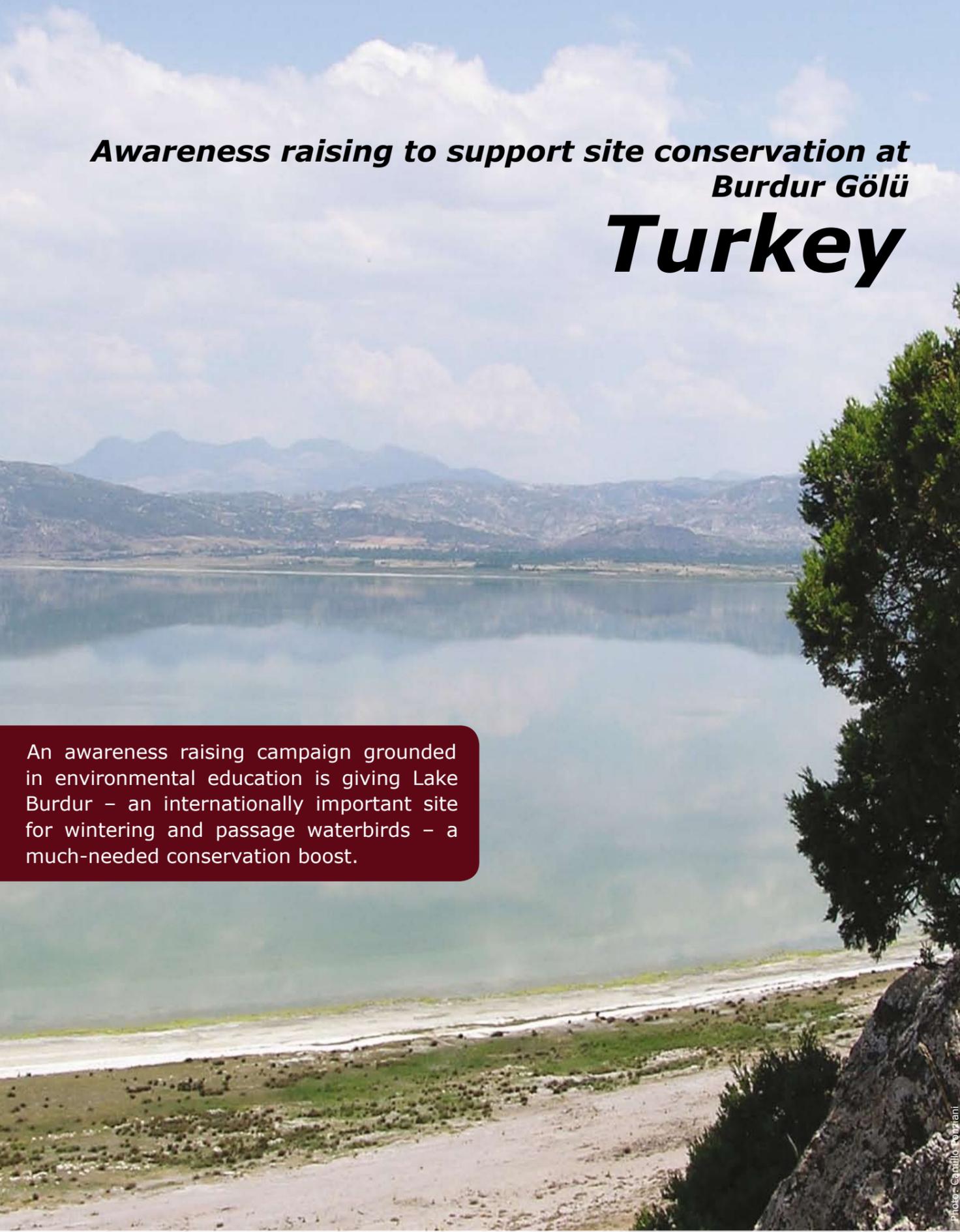


Photo: Lale Aktay

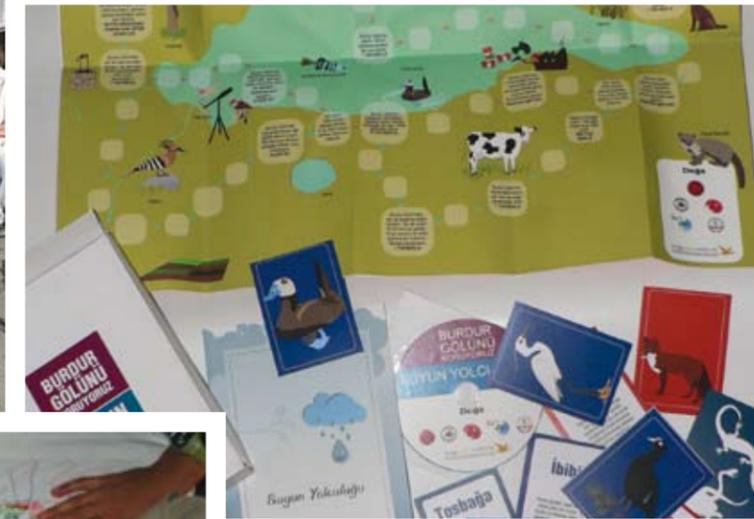


Photo: Lale Aktay



Photo: Lale Aktay



An awareness raising campaign grounded in environmental education is giving Lake Burdur – an internationally important site for wintering and passage waterbirds – a much-needed conservation boost.

In spite of its international importance for endangered Whiteheaded Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), Lake Burdur has been threatened in recent years by pollution, urban development and unsustainable agricultural practices.

In response and through funding from WOW, Doğa Derneği - the BirdLife Partner in Turkey – has implemented the 'Conserving Lake Burdur Project,' aimed at nurturing environmental education, leadership and community capacity in order to raise the profile of Lake Burdur and its conservation needs. A special education programme tailored for children has also been developed. Initially rolled-out as a pilot in four elementary schools, the education programme is quickly gaining momentum in the wider Burdur area, and includes a multitude of activities to foster an appreciation of wetland habitats and wetland-dependent species.

Executing organization:
Doğa Derneği

GEF funds: \$ 195,000
Co-financing: \$ 75,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/turkey

"The Conserving Lake Burdur Project is about empowering young people, connecting them to nature and instilling a sense of lifelong stewardship!" - Lale Aktay, Project Manager.

Integrated management plan and awareness raising for Aden Wetlands Yemen



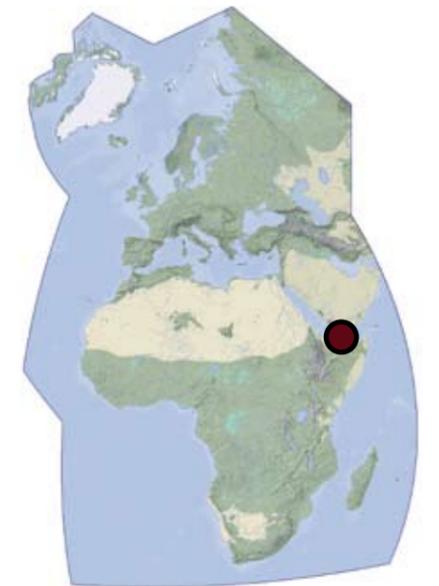
Photo: Omar Al-Saghier



Photo: Yemeni Society for the Protection of Wildlife



Photo: Yemeni Society for the Protection of Wildlife



The Aden wetlands are amongst the most important wetlands in Yemen. They are a series of lagoons and salt pans, which are used by more than 100 different migratory bird species for feeding and roosting. However, the system of lagoons fringing Aden's Free Zone is threatened by rapid economic development and increased demand for building land, which has put pressure on the ecosystem.



Photo: Camillo Ponziani

The WOW project has supported the review and update of an existing management plan to include the inter-tidal mudflats and inshore waters adjacent to a system of protected areas that were designated in 2005.

The demonstration project team is working closely with the local community and consulting with relevant government authorities to integrate the plan into national and local land use planning. Convincing stakeholders, beneficiaries and development sectors to adhere to the newly updated management plan is an important piece of the conservation challenge at the Aden wetlands.

Executing organization:
BirdLife Middle East
Division & Yemeni Society
for the Protection of
Wildlife

GEF funds: \$ 253,243
Co-financing: \$ 185,000

Project webpage:
www.wingsoverwetlands.org/yemen

"Together with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, this management plan will help mitigate threats and ensure wise land use policies for the conservation of important bird habitats."
- Gamal Bawazir, Project Manager.



WOW Partners & Sponsors

WOW is supported by many donors and partners at the international and local level, across the entire African-Eurasian region. The primary partners and sponsors of the project are UNEP-GEF, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, AEWA, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), UNOPS, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and UNEP-WCMC.

A Project Coordination Unit is hosted by the AEWA Secretariat at the UN Premises in Bonn, Germany and is staffed by UNOPS. The PCU is responsible for day-to-day operations and overall technical coordination of the project at all levels.

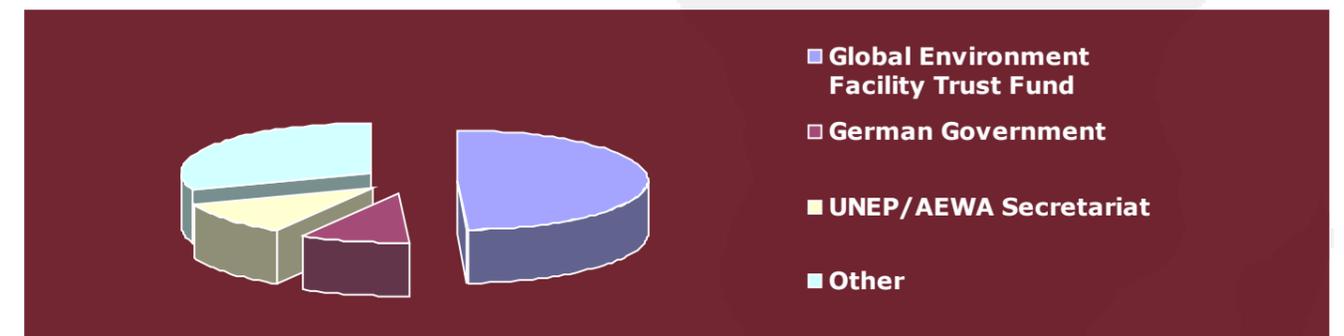
Main Project Partners



WOW took its first steps in August 2006 and is expected to run until the end of 2010. The work undertaken by this project is part of the mandate of all partner organizations involved. It will therefore continue as part of their programmes in subsequent years.

Overview of Project Funding

WOW has many donors at the international and local level. Funding committed to WOW stands at US\$12,195,229, including: US\$6,000,000 from the Global Environment Facility, US\$1,365,460 from AEWA, US\$1,114,405 from the German Government and US\$3,715,364 from other sources of co-financing.



WOW also acknowledges the generous financial support from the European Commission, French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Danish Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape, and all local partners at the site level.

For more information please see: www.wingsoverwetlands.org



www.wingsoverwetlands.org

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