



PRESS RELEASE

World Migratory Bird Day 2023 highlights impact of the growing water crisis on migratory birds

BOULDER/BONN/INCHEON, 13 May 2023 – Water and its importance to migratory birds – and the increasing threats to both water quality and quantity - is the focus of this year’s World Migratory Bird Day, a global campaign that aims to raise awareness of migratory birds and the need for international cooperation to conserve them. Activities to mark the campaign will be held globally on two peak days in May and October under the theme **“Water: Sustaining Bird Life”**

Water is fundamental to sustaining life on our planet. Migratory birds rely on water and its associated habitats—lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, swamps, marshes, and coastal wetlands—for breeding, resting, refueling during migration, and wintering. Yet increasing human demand for water, along with climate change, pollution, and other factors, are threatening these precious aquatic ecosystems.

Headlines around the world are sounding alarm: 35 percent of the world’s wetlands, critical to migratory birds, have been lost in the last 50 years. Utah’s Great Salt Lake, the largest saltwater lake in the Western Hemisphere and used by more than a million shorebirds, is in danger of disappearing within five years. Across the Amur-Heilong Basin in Asia, climate change is amplifying the impact of habitat destruction by depleting natural water systems and depriving migratory birds of vital breeding and stopover site. These sobering examples go hand-in-hand with recent reports that reveal that 48 percent of bird species worldwide are undergoing population declines.

Another poignant example is that of the Aral Sea shared by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Once the fourth-largest lake in the world, it is widely regarded as one of the planet’s worst water-related environmental disasters. Soviet-era irrigation projects almost completely dried up the lake, which led to the loss of livelihoods for fishermen and farmers and the deterioration of public health due to toxic dust and reduced access to clean water. The impact has been severe for the communities around the lake, but also for migratory birds, which lost important food sources and a critically important stopover point on their journey.

Another example is the Sahel, a vast semi-arid region in Africa: Prolonged periods of drought, deforestation, and overgrazing in the Sahel have led to the degradation of the soil and loss of vegetation, threatening the survival of both the local human population and wildlife, including migratory birds. Lake Chad, one of the

largest water bodies in Africa in 1960, lost 90 % of its area, depleting water resources for local communities and also for many migratory birds.

World Migratory Bird Day serves as an international call to action for the protection of migratory birds, whose ranges often span multiple countries, and are facing many different threats worldwide. The annual campaign is organized by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), Environment for the Americas (EFTA), and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP).

World Migratory Bird Day 2023 will be officially held on 13 May and 14 October. The two days of World Migratory Bird Day reflect the cyclical nature of bird migration as well as the fact that there are varying peak migration periods in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Events to raise awareness of migratory birds and the importance of water will take place all over the world including in local parks, nature centers, museums, libraries, schools, and other locations on these peak days and throughout the year.

To learn more about this year's World Migratory Bird Day campaign and actions to take, visit www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

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Quotes

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

“Water is essential for people as well as for migratory birds and other wild species of animals. Yet around the world, the availability and quality of water is under enormous pressure, with deeply concerning implications. The looming global water crisis requires urgent action by governments, businesses, local communities as well as individuals. Because migratory birds cross national borders and even continents, international cooperation is essential to ensure that actions are taken to conserve and restore important habitat for migratory birds, and to address the drivers of water loss, pollution, and climate change,” said **Amy Fraenkel**, Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)

“The water crisis recently highlighted by the UN 2023 Water Conference also has a tremendous impact on migratory birds. In the Sahel in particular, many wetlands on which migratory waterbirds rely during the non-breeding period are shrinking. Water is a vital resource for all, local communities as well as birds. By reducing our consumption, combatting climate change, and managing wetlands wiser, we can improve the situation,” said **Dr. Jacques Trouvilliez**, Executive Secretary of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA).

Environment for the Americas (EFTA)

“World Migratory Bird Day 2023 spotlights the vital role that water plays in the survival of our shared birds. The focal species illustrated on the campaign poster depict the intricate bond each bird shares with water. The diminutive Rufous Hummingbird thrives on nectar-producing flowers that rely on water for their blooms, and the Dickcissel scours the grasslands for seeds that hold the moisture they need. White Pelicans and Ospreys seek their prey in freshwater lakes, while the magnificent Wandering Albatross and Atlantic Puffin remain at sea.

WMBD is an opportunity to unify our voices for the conservation of migratory birds and to celebrate their spectacular journeys,” said **Dr. Susan Bonfield**, Executive Director at Environment for the Americas (EFTA).

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)

“This year's WMBD theme serves as a vital reminder of the linkage of migratory birds to the importance of protecting aquatic ecosystems and conserving wetlands. As birds such as threatened Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Dalmatian Pelican, and Sarus Crane migrate, they rely heavily on wetlands for survival. We must take urgent actions and collaborate at all levels, from citizens to among governments, to tackle the problems of saving water and aquatic ecosystem, and ensure that migratory birds continue to thrive.” **Ms. Yeounhee Ahn**, Deputy Executive of East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP).

Notes to Editors

About the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), a global treaty of the United Nations, provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. This unique treaty brings governments and wildlife experts together to address the conservation needs of terrestrial, aquatic, and avian migratory species and their habitats around the world. Since the Convention's entry into force in 1979, its membership has grown steadily to include 133 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. Learn more at www.cms.int

About the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) is an inter-governmental treaty dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds that migrate along the African-Eurasian Flyway. The Agreement covers 255 species of birds ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle. A total of 83 countries and the European Union have signed the environmental treaty, which has a geographic range covering 119 countries across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, Greenland, and the Canadian Archipelago. Learn more at www.unep-awa.org

About Environment for the Americas (EFTA)

Environment for the Americas connects people to nature and birds through research, education, and outreach. At the heart of our efforts lies the coordination of World Migratory Bird Day across the Americas, an initiative that engages people of all ages in the protection of our shared migratory birds. This work has also led to the development of our internship programs, which provide unique opportunities for the next generation of researchers, conservationists, and natural resource professionals. Through these programs, we are empowering young people to make a tangible difference for the environment. EFTA's efforts have also spurred international collaborations for bird conservation and facilitated changes across borders that ensure a future where migratory birds are protected and celebrated. Learn more at www.environmentamericas.org

About the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) is a flyway-wide framework to promote dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration between a range of stakeholders to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitats. EAAFP is also recognized as one of the Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2005 and officially launched on 6 November 2006. With the 39 partners, the partnership aims to protect migratory waterbirds, their habitats, and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. For more information, visit www.eaaflyway.net

Related Links

World Migratory Bird Day Website: www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

Social Media Trello Board: www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/2023/resources

Global Event Map: www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/events-map

Social Media

Facebook: WorldMigratoryBirdDay

Instagram: @worldmigratorybirdday

Twitter: @WMBD

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