

PRESS RELEASE

World Migratory Bird Day: Light Pollution Threatens Birds across the World but Solutions are Readily Available

Bonn, 14 May 2022 - Light pollution and its impact on migratory birds is the focus of World Migratory Bird Day 2022, a global campaign that aims to raise awareness of migratory birds and the need for international cooperation to conserve them. Activities to mark the day will be held globally under the theme “*Dim the Lights for Birds at Night*”.

Light pollution is increasing around the globe. More than 80 per cent of the world's population is currently estimated to live under a “lit sky”, a figure closer to 99 per cent in Europe and North America. The amount of artificial light on the Earth’s surface is increasing by at least 2 per cent each year and could be much greater.

Executive Secretary Amy Fraenkel of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) said: “Natural darkness has a conservation value in the same way as clean water, air, and soil. A key goal of World Migratory Bird Day 2022 is to raise awareness of the issue of light pollution and its negative impacts on migratory birds. Solutions are readily available, and we hope to encourage key decision-makers to adopt measures to address light pollution.”

Light pollution is a significant and growing threat to wildlife including many species of migratory birds. Every year, light pollution contributes to the death of millions of birds. It alters the natural patterns of light and dark in ecosystems. It can change birds' migration patterns, foraging behaviours, and vocal communication. Attracted by artificial light at night, particularly when there is low cloud, fog, rain or when flying at lower altitudes, migrating birds become disorientated and may end up circling in illuminated areas. Depleted energy reserves put them at risk of exhaustion, predation, and fatal collision with buildings.

Executive Secretary Jacques Trouvilliez of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) said: “An enormous diversity of birds, active at night, experience the impacts of light pollution. Many nocturnally migrating birds such as ducks, geese, plovers, sandpipers and songbirds are affected by light pollution causing disorientation and collisions with fatal consequences. Seabirds such as petrels and shearwaters are attracted by artificial lights on land and become prey for rats and cats.”

Solutions and recommendations to mitigate light pollution

Guidelines on light pollution covering marine turtles, seabirds, and migratory shorebirds were endorsed by the CMS Parties in 2020. Among their recommendations, the guidelines set forth six principles of best lighting practices and call for Environmental Impact Assessments for relevant projects that could result in light pollution. These should consider the main sources of light pollution at a certain site, the likely wild species that could be impacted, and facts about proximity to important habitats and migratory pathways.

New guidelines focusing on migratory landbirds and bats are currently being developed under CMS. They will be presented to CMS Parties for adoption at the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS in 2023.

Numerous governments, cities, companies, and communities around the world are already taking steps to address light pollution.

In some cities, particularly in North America, initiatives such as “Lights Out” programmes and bird-friendly building guidelines aim to protect migrating birds from light pollution by encouraging building owners and managers to turn off any unnecessary lighting during migration periods.

Susan Bonfield, Director, Environment for the Americas, said: “World Migratory Bird Day is a call to action for international migratory bird conservation. As migratory birds journey across borders, inspiring and connecting people along the way, it is our aim to use the two days in 2022 to raise awareness of the threat of light pollution and the importance of dark skies to bird migrations.”



World Migratory Bird Day 2022 – Animated Promo Video

Description: Follow a small migratory songbird as it is lured into the dangers of the city by intense lights. The threats it faces are common for migrating birds trying to navigate urban environments. The 2-minute animation has been produced and made available by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It can be used in any promotional activities related to World Migratory Bird Day 2022. All language versions of the animation can be downloaded via this [download folder](https://bit.ly/3w68a0g): <https://bit.ly/3w68a0g>

About World Migratory Bird Day

World Migratory Bird Day, celebrated in both May and October each year, is organized by a collaborative partnership among two UN wildlife treaties – the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals ([CMS](#)) and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds

([AEWA](#)) – and the non-profit organization, Environment for the Americas ([EFTA](#)). The 2022 campaign is also being actively supported by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership ([EAAFP](#)) Secretariat, BirdLife International and a growing number of other dedicated organizations. World Migratory Bird Day highlights the importance of international cooperation for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. For the peak day in May, more than 200 registered events in over 30 countries to mark World Migratory Bird Day 2022 will include bird festivals, education programmes, media events, bird watching trips, presentations, film screenings and a benefit concert to raise funds for international nature conservation.

These events are hosted by governments, parks, schools, libraries, and numerous other groups and range from bird walks to educational workshops and festivals. Some events are offered virtually.

In the Americas, upcoming virtual events include an [expert-led webinar on bird migration](#) hosted by the National Audubon Society and a [conversation with bird-glass collision researcher and author Daniel Klem Jr.](#) hosted by Environment for the Americas on May 12th. There will be a [virtual art activity and reading of the children's book *What if Night?*](#) with author Paul Bogard and illustrator Sarah Holden on May 13th.

The **East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership** ([EAAFP](#)) established a special [WMBD Small Grant Fund](#) to provide financial support to EAAFP Partners and collaborators to raise awareness on the need of conserving migratory waterbirds and the value of their habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway. The EAAFP also published a [special newsletter to mark World Migratory Bird Day 2022](#).

Why celebrate World Migratory Bird Day on two days?

Traditionally observed on the second Saturday of May and October, the two celebrations of World Migratory Bird Day are a way to 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. The two-day observance of World Migratory Bird Day also gives more people the chance to celebrate and contemplate migratory birds during peak migration times in different parts of the world.

www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

About the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

An environmental treaty of the United Nations, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) 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.

[@bonnconvention](http://www.cms.int)

About the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)

The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) is an intergovernmental treaty dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds that migrate along the African-Eurasian Flyway. The Agreement covers 255 species of bird ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle. The treaty covers 119 range States from Europe, parts of Asia and

Canada, the Middle East and Africa. As of today, AEWA currently has 82 Parties, 44 from Eurasia (including the European Union) and 38 from Africa.

www.unep-aewa.org @UNEP_AEWA

Environment for the Americas (EFTA)

EFTA is a Colorado-based non-profit organization that provides bilingual educational materials and information about birds and bird conservation to raise awareness of migratory birds and to promote actions that protect migratory birds throughout the Americas.

<https://www.environmentamericas.org/>

Related links:

[World Migratory Bird Day](#) - @WMBD

[Resources Page](#)

[Social Media Trello Board](#)

[Global Event Map | World Migratory Bird Day](#)

CMS COP13 Resolutions and Decisions on Addressing Light Pollution:

[Resolution 13.5 - Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife](#)

[Annex of Resolution 13.5 - National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds](#)

[Decisions 13.138 to 13.139 - Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife](#)

For more information and expert interviews, please contact:

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