



Dear WLI Colleague,

It has been busy at WWT Slimbridge over winter, with our Bewick swans on their annual migration, and all manner of other winter visitors here too. WWT has also launched our 'inspiring generations' scheme, supporting children from deprived areas to visit our centres, which has been hugely popular, involving schools that had never previously visited. It's a great opportunity for these pupils to experience wetlands at first hand.

In this issue...

- World Wetlands Day 2013
- Baikka Beel centre opens
- WWF China study trip to Taiwan
- Russian trans-boundary project
- Welney, UK, art and swans
- WLI future plans

The WLI team has produced our first set of four [WLI information sheets](#), designed to give an introduction to various topics of interest to WLI members. If you would like to see a topic covered, or suggest one that your centre is particularly strong at, then do let us know.

We have just come back from the WLI Asia conference, which took place in late April in Suncheon, South Korea. Suncheon City has just launched a new wetland centre, and we hope they will play an active role in the WLI Asia network. Partners came from across the Asia region, with a focus on wetland biodiversity and evaluation, particularly focusing on marine protected areas. We have also been coordinating with the East Asia Australasia Flyway Partnership, to look at how wetland centres can both benefit from and support their flyway-based work. Clearly, local groups and people are vital to protect flyway wetland sites, but can also learn from each other's expertise and experience.

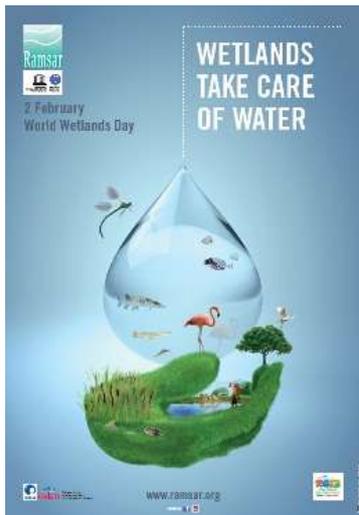
WLI Russia is also active, with Wetlands International Russia, and we will be taking part in two workshops near St Petersburg and Moscow. These will support the wider WI project that is working to strengthen the network of wetland centres, and also to produce a national CEPA action plan for western Russia. Our Russian colleagues are also helping to translate the WLI website into Russian bit by bit, making it more accessible in Russian speaking countries.

I hope you enjoy this WLI update - please let me know if you would like to contribute anything to the next edition,

Best regards,

Chris Rostron
Head of WLI

World Wetlands Day 2013 – Wetlands take care of water



The World Wetland Day theme this year was 'wetlands and water management, highlighting the important role that wetlands play in storing, cleaning and providing water, as well as how people manage their water resources. WLI members sent in their stories of activities that they had carried out, ranging from

beach cleans in Mexico, to special guided walks and talks, to wetland art and even poetry at WWT's Welney Wetland Centre. You can see the whole range of activities at our [website](#). You can also see the range of activities on the Ramsar website, which give a comprehensive review of wetland events across the globe.



Baikka Beel, Bangladesh, new wetland centre



Regular readers will recall the previous article about Baikka Beel, reporting on the planning work leading up to the launch of the new site. The sanctuary covers about 170 ha of wetland in northeast Bangladesh, within Hail Haor, one of the largest wetlands in the country that extends over 14,000 ha in the monsoon and is one of only 19 Important Bird Areas in Bangladesh.

Barangina Resource Management Organisation, a voluntary organisation of local people, protects the beel with guidance from a sub-district committee and an NGO. Habitat restoration and other support has been provided by USAID. As a result of the sanctuary fish catches have doubled in the haor since 2000. Waterbirds also returned – from under 300 in 2003-4 to over 10,000 in most years since 2006-7, with 170 species of bird recorded in the sanctuary including 12 threatened and near-threatened species.

Baikka Beel has attracted increasing numbers of visitors since an observation tower was opened in 2006. Since 2010 a visitor centre has been planned. With funds from USAID supplemented by support from Chevron and volunteers – both local and international mobilised through WLI, the centre went through a lengthy process of design, revision and then construction. Because of the seasonal flooding and wet soils piling 50 ft deep was required and the building is elevated almost 2 m above ground level. The basic structure was completed during the 2012 wet season, and then fitted out in the dry season.

The centre was opened on 4 April 2013. A 50 m walkway leads from the end of the track directly into the reception area of the building. Solar panels power two aquaria and a TV to show videos. There is a small refreshment area under development, and a range of interpretive displays along with colourful murals prepared by a local artist.

Please contact Paul Thomas at the e-mail below.
E-mail: paul@agni.com W: baikka.beel



WWF China education visit, Taiwan

After 15 years of hard work in the Yangtze River Basin, WWF China understands the importance of CEPA, and regards environmental education a useful tool to encourage social participation in wetland conservation.

To enhance Chinese Educators' capacity to implement effective education (EE) programmes, WWF China arranged a group of EE educators to Taiwan in October. Specifically, the study group aimed to understand more on Wetland and EE centre operation, key stakeholders collaboration and best practices regarding environmental education.

The 10 demo sites in the study tour are all quite diverse. There are nature centers supported by Taiwan forestry bureau, and supervised by professional EE experts. There are nature parks, completely operated by local NGOs, like Guandu Nature Park by Wild Bird Society of



Taipei. There are also nature centers run by school teachers. Take Wulaokeng for example, eight teachers developed a series of stream-themed EE programmes, catering for the field study needs of primary and middle school kids at different ages.

Moreover, With "Taiwan environmental education legislation" put in place in June 2011, more nature centers are now improving their quality to get official certification, while more young people are inspired to grow up as qualified environmental educators.

WWF China would like to introduce these best practices to China, and facilitate wetland "nature schools" development in the Yangtze River basin. For more information, please contact Ms Li Yuan at liyuan@wwfchina.org



Russia / Belarus / Ukraine Trans-boundary Project

Under a project "Conservation of transboundary territories in Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine" we are planning to start a program for ecological education called "Wetland keepers". The main goal is to create a network of volunteers to monitor the state of the most valuable springs, streams, rivers, lakes, bogs, on and leading to the river Zapadnaya Dvina and its tributaries.

The project started at the beginning of January 2013 (4-8 of January) in the Tverskaya region. We will deliver it in the form of an ecological camp for children aged between 11 and 16, involving around 16 pupils from Moscow, 20 from the region and 17 teachers. With support of the governmental

Ecological Center at Tver University, the ecological club "Chilim", we will organize workshops for teachers on the "Development Program of "Wetland

keepers". This will include information about the Ramsar Convention and valuable wetland territories, a plan of work for 2013, and proposals for future developments. Ecological best practice



will contain introductions to the research and training projects of pupils describing the experience of investigation of wetlands, and excursions and practice works in the field.



We are also involved with partners in Bangladesh as part of a wetland centre exchange program. In

Bangladesh, students met with the Nature Conservation Commission, Forestry Commission and IUCN representatives, and presented a paper at a seminar attended by 60 people called 'Best Wetland Management Practices'. Mr Sajahan Sorder, Director of the NCC, hosted their 18 day visit; he had previously been hosted in Western Australia in 2010 when he presented a paper at CWEC's Wetland Management.

Contact: Ana Blidchenko, Birds and People Russia, E: anna.blidchenko@gmail.com

WWT Welney, UK – art and swans

Each year, thousands of Whooper swans make vast journeys from their breeding grounds in Iceland to wintering sites in the UK. Inspired by this journey, and by the people that experience their passing, whether en route or as part of their wintering or breeding grounds, artist Sandie Sutton set to work to help raise awareness of these splendid animals and in turn connect the communities that they pass between.

Looking at myths and legends surrounding the swans and key migratory sites that they utilise along their way to stop off and feed up (much like a motor way service station), Sandie created migration plaques that will be both creative markers of information and for reflection. These markers will be housed at various places including WWT Welney, Martin Mere and Caerlaverock centres as well as the Reykjavik wetland centre and Myvatn Lake Information Centre.

Here's what some people have said about the project: *"Sandie's exploration of the Whooper Swans' historic migratory routes has, for me, highlighted the benefits of raising awareness; a little knowledge can provide a window into a quietly stunning natural phenomenon" -*

Anne Foley
Leicester.

"The arrival of the first swans in late September signals the end of summer and the beginning of a winter full of their honking and whooping like rusty hinges in the fens and fields around our home. We hear them flying in the dark at night, calling to each other and we wake to their sounds on and around the river just yards from our windows. We see their shapes materialising out of the mist on our morning runs to school and we go to see the floodlit feeds on frosty winter nights at Welney wetland centre. The sights and sounds of the Whoopers is synonymous with home for us" - Ali Calver, Ely



If you would like to know more about this project, please contact Samantha Lee, Public Engagement Officer at WWT Welney on samantha.lee@wwt.org.uk or Sandie Sutton on www.sandiemariesutton@gmail.com

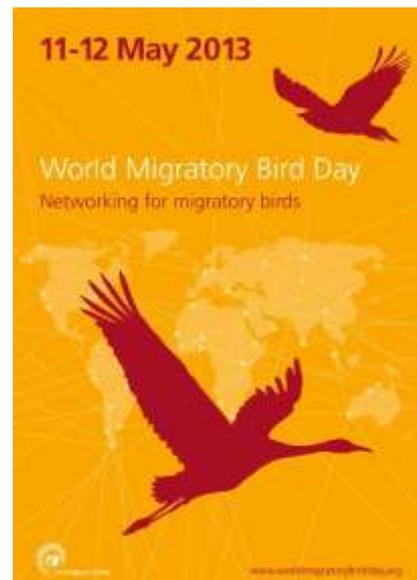
WLI future plans

We are currently working with the Fundacion Kennedy and the Universidad Chileno-Britanico de Cultura to translate WLI materials and other wetland resources into Spanish. The partnership is good grounding for students working on translation courses to gain an understanding of wetland issues, and hopefully prepare them to be better dealing with language around the subject of the environment.

In April the Head of WLI, Wetlands International Russia and the Ramsar CEPA manager will take part with colleagues in Russia for two workshops on developing wetland CEPA across the vast country. We have been working with Wetlands International, and several wetland centres to support the development of resources for the centres, and in putting together a CEPA action plan for European Russia. The first workshop in Olonets, near St Petersburg, with the Baltic Fund for Nature will look at developing the skills of those working in outdoor education. The second will

focus on cases of best practice at wetland centres, and work on developing the CEPA action plan. We will feed back in the next issue.

This year's World Migratory Bird Day takes 'networking for migratory birds' as its theme, very relevant to what WLI aims to do, connecting wetland centres around the globe. If you are planning activities, then do let us know – we would like to encourage you to mark the event by sending a message to another wetland centre on your flyway. You can also register your event at their [website](http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org).



Contact

Head of WLI

Chris Rostron

WWT, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BT, UK

T +44 (0)1453 891214

E chris.rostron@wwt.org.uk

W wli.org.uk