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Joint Newsletter Issue no. 1, September 2013 Wetland Site CEPA News in the EAA Flyway

Dear East Asia Flyway Colleague,

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EAAFP and the WLI initiative. The newsletter focuses on wetland CEPA activities across the flyway, aiming to share experience of practical wetland CEPA activities between partners of both WLI and EAAFP. Wetland centres form an important interface between national and international agreements on conservation, and the local action and implementation by stakeholders, and play a crucial role in raising awareness of wetlands with local communities and decision-makers.

As you will read in this issue, the range of activities is huge, from competitions to get local people excited and involved in surveying wild birds, working with farmers to encourage bird-friendly farming, to developing new high-profile wetland centres as part of an international expo.

We hope that you find these stories as interesting and inspiring as we do, and please do send us stories for our next issue which is due out in April next year. Please do send us your articles, around 400 words long and with some pictures of your site, wildlife and activities, see our contact details on the back page.

Best regards,

Chris Rostron
Head of WLI

Spike Millington
EAAFP secretariat

We are launching this joint newsletter, to be sent out twice a year, marking the cooperation between the

Call for case studies

We're keen to set up a space on the WLI and EAAFP websites that gives regular updates on your case studies of work that is taking place at wetland sites delivering wetland CEPA activities. As we are sure you know, wetland conservation cannot succeed unless we have collaborative work between international conventions, national policies and guidance, and local delivery. It is this last activity where CEPA is so important. Unless you can convince local people of the importance of wetlands for the benefit of local people, as well as wildlife, it will be difficult to effectively protect them.

But successful local engagement is not always very easy. Local people often see wetlands as dangerous, as a source of food or water, as a waste of space, or just

have very little knowledge of what they are. Finding ways to show how local people can use them sustainably, whilst protecting their environment and wildlife, is a really crucial activity.

This is where successful examples of your CEPA activities would be really useful to help others learn about what works and what doesn't. We will send you a template shortly asking for information in a standard format, including your contact details so that colleagues can pick your brains about the activities that you have highlighted. We will be in touch soon!



Ms Minseon Kim, EAAFP Programme Officer

Miranda Shore Bird Centre - Bioblitz



Down the road from the Miranda Shorebird Centre is the bird roost, visually it's a shellbank, a shallow pond and a grazed paddock. But what makes up the environment of our

area? What makes our place what it is? And if we want to manage it better what do we need to be aware of? On February 27th 2013 Miranda Naturalists' Trust arranged the first ever Miranda Bioblitz; 18 hours where the community and experts tried to find as many species as possible, to try and make a biological inventory of our place, we called it the 1000 species challenge.

Going into the day was a bit nerve wracking, we had arranged experts to show up on birds, insects, plants, fish, lichens, fungi, molluscs, diatoms, mites and more, we had thirty volunteers arranged for the day to help with food, traffic, transport, and organisation. The local marae had arranged for a group to come and do a formal Maori welcome for the day, and the mayor was coming. We tore the Centre apart and rearranged it all. But would the community join us in this day?

The answer was yes. Over the course of the day over 500 people joined in the attempt to find every species in the area. School groups, their grandparents, members of the trust, and locals, people from up to several hundred kilometres arrived to search the area. The

public got a chance to peer through microscopes at tiny organisms they may never normally see, review tracking tunnels in the attempt to identify footprints of the various mammals running around the area, turn



over logs looking for, and finding shore skinks, and pull in fish nets to identify the small fish. 10 minute talks every hour went into a bit more

depth on specialized topics.

Over the course of the day more than 1000 species were found. A total of 1142 species were identified. This was a great start to our biological inventory; it included one new species, and several species that were new to NZ. But as well as our inventory we've also made great contacts within the scientific community, and we and our community have had a chance to learn a lot about our local environment. It's been a fabulous way to meet our aims around conservation and education in an unusual and highly engaging way.

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Hong Kong (1) - Inter-school Bird Race



Before the race, two days of training were provided to the students by the HKWP and the HKBWS. The training equipped students with knowledge on

Hong Kong Wetland Park is located at the north-western part of Hong Kong, adjacent Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site (the Ramsar Site). The Ramsar Site is an important staging post for migratory waterbirds in the East Asia-Australasian Flyway, which supports up to 90,000 waterbirds every year, including regionally important populations of many waterbird species such as the globally endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*).

common waterbird species, techniques and equipment for bird watching as well as importance of conservation on wetlands. The volunteer team of the HKWP played an important role in providing training, logistical arrangements and providing on-site support to students during the race.

In 2012, a total of 200 students and teachers from 26 local secondary schools "raced" in the Hong Kong wetlands to see as many bird species as they can in the 5-hour competition. The endangered Black-faced Spoonbill was seen by all teams, and many teams are able to identify shorebirds such as Common Greenshank and Spotted Redshank from the wetlands. Records from the teams were assessed by an adjudication panel formed by experienced bird watchers from the HKBWS. The top teams recorded over 60 species of birds, and awards of the Inter-school Bird Race were presented to winners on the World Wetlands Day Hong Kong Celebration Ceremony held in the HKWP on 2 February 2013.



The "Inter-school Bird Race" (IBR) is an annual event organized by the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP) since 2001. It has been an important CEPA programme of the HKWP in promoting bird watching and bird conservation to students in Hong Kong. The activity aims to equip students with knowledge about different wetland habitats, as well as

skills in carrying out ecological surveys. The IBR has been a successful CEPA programme over the years through the concerted efforts of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS), a local non-government organization aiming at promoting bird watching and conservation, and a large team of volunteers of the HKWP.

During the IBR, students in teams of 4 searched and identified birds in the wetlands, and recorded their findings. Teams have to plan their own routes in designated areas of the Hong Kong Wetland Park and the adjacent Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site, where they can find various wetland habitats such as mangroves, mudflat and fishponds.

Over the past 13 years, the IBR has successfully promoted bird watching at schools in Hong Kong, and nourished youngsters in Hong Kong to concern about wetland conservation. Many schools have established their bird watching clubs to promote bird watching at schools. The next, 14th Inter-school Bird Race would be held in December 2013 and we would expect a heated competition as in previous years.

Josephine Cheng, Wetland Park Manager (Education and Community Services)

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Hong Kong (2) - Community engagement work at Mai Po



The Mai Po Nature Reserve (MPNR) in Hong Kong is part of the Mai Po Inner Deep Ramsar Site and has been

managed for nature conservation and education by the WWF-Hong Kong since 1983. Despite its position in a highly urban area, it was recently recognized in an IUCN list as a critical inter-tidal area in Asia for migratory waterbirds. This is partly due to former traditional non-intensive aquaculture practices employed to rear shrimp and fish, and even today some local residents retain a sentimental connection with, and sense of ownership over the Reserve. WWF recognises the importance of maintaining a healthy relationship with them as a key component to achieving its own goals for the Reserve - an understanding of, and support for WWF's conservation and education work by local people is essential.

Sometimes challenging issues that impact on the Reserve and our neighbours such as water pollution can create an alliance to tackle the problem, but conflicts with the local community occur too. Issues range from local fish farmers' unease that the Reserve harbours waterbirds that take fish from their fishponds, to concerns from nearby residents about mosquitos or vehicular usage of local roads for Reserve operations. To facilitate a good relationship with the local communities WWF holds a number of engagement activities at the Reserve throughout the year, one of which is the annual *gei wai* shrimp harvesting celebration attended by members of the local community, village heads, the fishermen association, district board members and government officials.

WWF has maintained traditional management practices on a handful of these *gei wai* (*penaeid* shrimp ponds) to Mathew Cheng, Mai Po Centre Manager,

preserve aquaculture heritage in the area and to illustrate the wise-use concept to current and future generations in the local community, as well as to WWF projects in South China. The guests watch harvesting at a *gei wai* and help collect and sort the shrimps before visiting a *gei wai* museum. They then go to a local restaurant to eat the shrimp, giving an opportunity to engage with local people in an informal setting and build up personal relationships.



In addition, an annual visit to 21 villages in the San Tin Township near the MPNR is attended by the chairman and vice chairman of the San Tin Rural Committee, a number of village heads and local residents. Visitors share stories about their childhood experiences on the Reserve (before it became a protected area) and about relatives who managed the *gei wai* in the 1950s and 60s. The information exchange enhances WWF's knowledge of the Reserve and helps to improve its traditional management practices of the *gei wai*.



Hong Kong

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Korea – Suncheon International Wetland Centre



Suncheon Bay is one of the representative Ramsar sites in

Korea with 3 million visitors a year. The drastic surge of visitors to the bay area has caused serious environmental impacts on the bay, such as exhaust

fumes and noise from visitors. To facilitate more lasting conservation policy for the bay, Suncheon city has created a garden 5.4 kilometers from the bay area, which will function as a buffer zone to safeguard the bay from downtown project. The city has also create a new visitor center at the garden expo site. See Suncheon Bay Garden Expo (Apr. 20 to Oct. 20, 2013) at <http://www.2013expo.or.kr> for more details.

Suncheon Bay International Wetland Center, situated in the garden expo site, is two stories above ground and one story underground and is equipped with renewable energy system of sunlight and geothermal power which



reduces energy consumption by 40%. As a visitor center, it has an audio visual room, experience gallery, a conference hall, exhibits, etc.

During the expo, Martin Spray (CEO of WWT) will visit the city to discuss international collaboration between WWT and Suncheon city, which includes an assessment of the indoor and outdoor of the newly-made wetland center with the help of WWT consulting. Suncheon city expects more efficient management of the wetland center after the expo thanks to the results of this project.

SBIWC will function as the main entrance to the bay area and visitor center to show the conservation value of the Suncheon Bay with education, displays, habitat restoration, research, and active CEPA programs. The wetland education program will be run at diverse ponds and wetlands around the center. In addition the center will develop its networking to create a national and international hub for migratory birds and wetlands.



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An ecological jewel in a City - Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve



Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve was a collection of fish and prawn farms destined to be converted into a series of agrotech farms, but in 1989 thanks to the efforts of a group of dedicated bird watchers from the then Malayan Nature Society, Parks & Recreation Department, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust UK, and WWF, it was transformed into a nature park instead. Opened in 1993, and

officially designated as a nature reserve in 2002, it is a tranquil and rich reserve set amidst 130ha of wetland of mangroves, mudflats, ponds and supporting secondary

forest. Today Sungei Buloh is an ASEAN Heritage Park and a member of the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network.

Over the years, the number of visitors to SBWR has increased from 80,000 to 37,000 a year, raising concerns over the long term sustainability of the place. A masterplan was created to address the increasing awareness of nature and the opportunity to bring together schools, communities and experts to create a vibrant culture of learning and co-operation. To meet the sometimes conflicting needs of visitors and wildlife, the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve will be kept in its natural state, whilst the area closer to the Kranji Dam will be developed as the formal visitor gateway to the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

The existing Visitor Centre will be enhanced and transformed into the Wetland Centre a place for research but also where people will learn about our conservation efforts and participate in our programmes and importantly, learn how they can help protect our

natural heritage. There will be interpretive galleries at both centres, each giving an introduction to our natural heritage, called our Living Wetlands. It is a place for passive and active learning, making use of tools to stimulate our senses through the use of visuals, sounds, videos and specimens.



Nature Gallery @ Visitor Centre -

The gallery at the main Visitor Centre focuses on Life in the Wetlands - the rich diversity of unique inhabitants occupying the

various strata of the Mangrove Forest as well as the freshwater swamp; Man and Mangrove – the uses of mangrove for food, medicine and shelter. It is a showcase of how plants and animals have adapted to live in a freshwater or seawater environment and tidal

zones where the natural rhythm of high and low tides, wet and dry conditions repeat infinitely. It is due to open in May 2014

Nature Gallery @ Wetland Centre - Conservation is the main theme for this gallery. It will be of a more introspective nature, generally about challenges faced in the protection and conservation of diminishing mangrove habitats in a fast-paced urban city and how it is inter-twinning in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Networks Sites.

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Kabukuri Numa - Japan

Kabukuri-numa is designated as a FNS of EAAFP because the site is the very important wintering site especially for White-fronted Goose. For conserving goose and realizing the sustainable use of the site, recognized the wildlife of the site as the magnetic local resource by the stakeholders is the most priority because, as the lake is surrounded by rice paddies which are also the fascinating habitats of goose and other wildlife and is so close to the local community, the site has really various stakeholders

For achieving that, the stakeholders like local people including farmers, researchers, government sectors, council members and NGOs established an organization named "Expedition team for Kabukuri-numa" aimed to developing the measures that the local people including farmers can sustainably enjoy the



benefit of Kabukuri-numa conserving the various nature and the function of flood control of the site.

As one of the activities of the organization, we

had the many open discussions respecting each-other's

positions and inviting the people from the various fields, we developed the common vision and creating the community-driven movement for the sustainable life in harmony with the nature.

For the smooth communication among stakeholders, a NGO took the role as "bridge" among.

One of the brilliant examples of this community-driven movement is developing and revising of the "Management Plan for the Environment of Kabukuri-numa", which well reflected the opinions of local peoples. As the people could well understand what was



described in the plan through the developing process, the implementation of the plan by the local community is also under the good situation.

Masayuki KURECHI
The president of Japanese
Association for Wild Geese
Protection



WCS Pathway to Conserving Colonial Birds in the Flooded Forests of Tonle Sap, Cambodia

When Cambodia re-opened its doors to the outside world in the early 1990s, conservationists were concerned over the status of large colonial waterbird species that were known to nest on Tonle Sap, the great lake in the heart of the country. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and other groups collaborated with government officials in surveying waterbird populations over a five-year stretch. These studies revealed that, in particular, the northwestern part of the lake, near the village of Prek Toal held the largest remaining colonies in mainland Southeast Asia of seven globally threatened and near-threatened species: Oriental Darter, Black-headed Ibis, Spot-billed Pelican, Milky Stork, Painted Stork, Lesser Adjutant and Greater Adjutants.

However, there was a thriving illegal trade in eggs collected from the bird colonies. In 1996 it was estimated that 26,000 eggs and close to 3,000 chicks had been harvested and sold locally during the breeding season. This was the most critical threat to the survival of the colonies of these globally important bird species.



In 1997, UNESCO approved the designation of Tonle Sap as a Biosphere Reserve, with Prek Toal as one of the core areas with 1.1 million people, and also the

poorest region in Cambodia. The main challenge for WCS was to engage the local community and find effective ways to protect the nests of these birds in the region from illegal trade.

This challenge was addressed by hiring people from the local community and then training them to become guards that both survey and protect nesting bird colonies. This system was established in 2001 by WCS with the Ministry of the



Environment and other government agencies, and was fully functioning with complete surveys and protection from poaching by 2003. The conservation results of this engagement have been dramatic. Since 2004, there has been a steady increase in the number of nests and in nesting success for all but one (Spot-billed Pelican) of the endangered species monitored. The area is also seeing increased ecotourism as Prek Toal is near Siem Reap and the temples of Angkor Wat.

The main lessons learned in this engagement are that 1) a good foundation of scientific information is needed to quantify the main threats to the species there; 2) to work with a diversity of stakeholders in the process and to identify where the most effective area is to mitigate conservation concerns and 3) to engage the local community in effective ways to offset the threats. In Prek Toal, new employment opportunities emerged to participate in the conservation activities, as guards and wildlife surveyors, so as to create effective ways to prevent illegal trade of bird eggs and provide economic alternatives.



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