



# Newsletter

November 2021

Special edition!

*10 years - 40 newsletters! We are proud to take over Roelof's great work, even if we are aware that we will never be able to replace this dedicated and cheerful person.*

*Audrey & Isabelle*

What an Editor!

This is a very special edition of the MBP newsletter. Our inimitable editor, Roelof Heringa, is stepping down from the voluntary role after ten years. If you have read or contributed to an MBP newsletter in that time, you have heard from Roelof.

Roelof is a lynchpin of MBP; a founding member, and completely engaged in monthly and annual meetings. Roelof's dedication to the network has been essential in keeping it together. You are all busy in your visitor centre and reserves, and you receive a lot of emails demanding your attention. Roelof perseveres in finding out your news and sharing it with the other MBP members, to inspire you and help connect us.

Roelof, congratulations on your achievement! Without your hard work MBP would be a much weaker network.

Connor Walsh



# Online Annual Meeting 2021

## 11 and 12 october 2021

### Key topics:

- We have great experience with using binoculars with children.
- There are techniques for dealing with difficult visitors!
- Planning and fundraising for our next annual meeting.
- Architects and young people can inspire us in how we engage with people and nature.

### Summary:

We met online via Zoom for two half days, with simultaneous interpretation between French and English. We had live and pre-recorded content from MBP members and four external groups. We assessed our progress since the last Annual Meeting, and planned for 2021/2022. We can look forward to new partnerships and advisors from the meeting, and outputs for training on binocular and visitor control. For our next annual meeting, we have a great venue and possible activities.

## Programm & replay:

### MBP Member topics:

#### Optics for Africa and binoculars with kids:

We spent 40 minutes discussing how we use binoculars with children and visitors. Here are some key lessons:

Very first act is for the person to put the binocular strap around their neck. And the strap should be of the right length for them, which is different for children of different ages!

For kids

- Safety: never look at the sun.
- Don't walk around with binoculars to your eyes, so you don't hit another person and hurt them or hit an object and damage the binoculars.
- Don't turn with binoculars to your eyes; turn first, then raise the binoculars.
- Never use binoculars in a moving vehicle as they can push back against your eyes and injure you - a particular sensitivity in children.
- If you wear glasses, be extra careful of the eyepiece, push or fold the eyecups back and place your glasses against them.

For staff

- Create static targets, such as photos of the birds, somewhere in the location so everyone will get to see something.
- Consider using simpler equipment: monoculars, or autofocus or fixed focus binoculars; and very wide binocular straps.
- Binoculars that can focus close are also fun, e.g. to look at classmate's ear!

Ibrahim recommended [this blog](#) on the training which included using binoculars.



## Bird ringing

Patric Lorgé made an instructive video on bird ringing which the group loves! We could use it at events, providing we are careful about the audience so that we are not educating poachers on how to use mist nets etc. Due to the presence of video provided by the operators of the Argos satellite system we cannot put it online yet. We could have a workshop for staff next year, including non-passerines. There are very few qualified ringers in West Africa so formal qualification training would be welcome.

See the video in French.



## When visitors damage wetlands

Tatiana Fuentes and Anja Szczesinski led this session. Tatiana is a bird ranger and Environmental Police officer in southwest France. She introduced some approaches they use when dealing with people breaking the rules.

### Preparation

They wear a uniform, with different logos: indicating that they are an environmental expert and a police officer. The police badge is removable and they can choose in which role they appear and removing the police badge before a difficult situation can help. Training as a team in advance also helps a lot. They are responsible for signage and understanding the relevant laws. They undergo workshops to understand new laws.



### Safety

Form a triangle of you, your teammate, and the other person. You may need to leave for safety.

If engaging with children who are without adults, at least one person should have undergone police checks or the local equivalent.

Create a team of two.

1: observe; decide whether to intervene, as police or not, whether you need help or not. One person explains, one will reprimand. Who is the expert? e.g. birds or plants.

Triangle - maintain/change distance from the problem.

You cannot negotiate - they will always try to!

Ultimately the person can be grateful for the explanation and apologize for the damage done. Try to keep in good terms.

## Teamwork

They usually work in teams of two. In controlling a situation: first, observe. Understand the damage and decide whether to intervene, whether to do so as police, whether to call for backup, or to have a different type of intervention.

Having observed the situation, divide the roles within the team. One explains, one reprimands. Depending on the situation, raising awareness may be enough. If you show the signs and are very clear; if you wish to fine the person you will have to be strict and clear from the beginning. The people will always want to negotiate; you cannot let that happen.

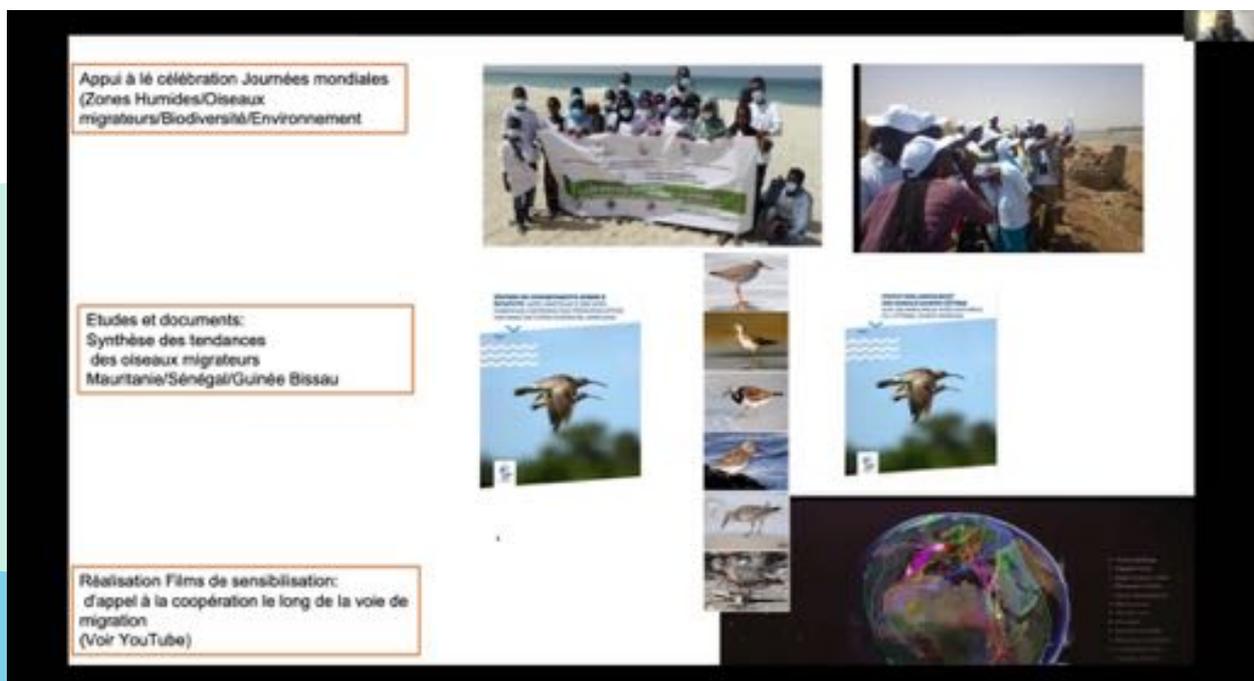
Control the end of the intervention - when, and how. This is decisive. The start may be abrasive; but the end slowly arrives where the explanation leave them grateful for the clarity and will apologise. Try to stay on good terms. Their specialist biodiversity / geography knowledge helps, e.g. with changes in behaviour required according to season.

## Infrastructure

Kennels to leave dogs at wetland visitor centres.

## External presentations & partnerships:

PRCM (Partenariat Régional La Conservation de la zone côtière Afrique de l'Ouest)



Ibrahima Gueye of PRCM introduced the Partnership's marine and coastal work. PRCM covers seven countries in West Africa with small local and large international organisations, all working towards biodiversity conservation. Sustainable fisheries, coastal resilience, offshore oil and gas impacts, mangrove and coastal wetland conservation and restoration, and vulnerable species protection and habitats. They have an Action Plan for wetlands and coastal birds, funded by MAVA. Breeding and wintering areas in Banc D'Arguin, Lower Senegal River Delta, Saloum Delta, Bijagos Archipelago.

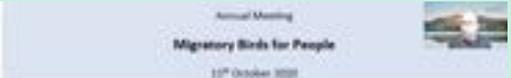
Sharing information locally to mobilise international donors. Focus on land/resource use and disturbance and direct mortality. He introduced their Theory of Change. They have five wetland projects.

They celebrate WWD, WMBD, World Environment Day, Global Biodiversity Day with public activities. They produce texts on vulnerable and endangered species monitoring in three languages, and a regular newsletter. He recommends [this video](#) by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in which they had input. He also sees opportunities for PRCM and MBP to work together; we could have a bigger impact together.

## MedWet (Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative)

Dr. Flavio Monti, Scientific and Technical Manager of MedWet introduced their Ramsar Regional Initiative. Established in 1991, works across the Mediterranean parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Their Committee coordinates governments, wetland research centres, and the International Organisation Parties of the Ramsar Convention. Works to support governments in implementing the Convention, with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals.

They work transboundary, with communications, through networking, and through technical assistance and project work. English, French, Arabic, and Spanish are basic languages. As well as facilitating exchange on technical and site-management skills, with a science network across the region, they also promote the feeling of a Mediterranean 'ethos'. Website and newsletters, webinars, annual forums, and site twinning. They have published a Governance Handbook for coastal wetlands in the region. Includes online planning tools. He admires engagement with people across generations.



### The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet)

- Established in 1991
- The **first** Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI)
- Bringing together **27** Ramsar Contracting parties
- Operating across **3** Ramsar regions (Africa, Asia, Europe)
- Following the Ramsar Strategic Plan (**2016-2024**)
- Governance: the **MedWet/Com**, a committee aiming for cooperation between governments and other organizations, wetlands research centers and NGOs (The International Organization Partners of Ramsar).



- Core funding for MedWet is provided by its member countries and, at present, by grants from the MAVA Foundation and the French Water Agency

## Re-peat



Bethany Copsey introduced Re-Peat, a youth-led group to build appreciation of peatlands. They specialise in creative real-world and digital events. Based in Amsterdam but now about 30 people across Europe. The online Peat-Fest is 24 hours continuous of talks and events about wetlands, from diverse disciplines including songs, poetry, archaeology, and history. Has been a good way to connect to new people, a learning experience for the

organisers as well as the presenters. In the UK, they are holding a series of webinars connecting peatlands to other topics e.g. climate COP26, climate justice, forestry etc.

For COP26 they are holding an online event and an event at the Youth Pavilion, raising profile of peatlands at Climate COP, and a global youth event too.

They welcome interaction with MBP members! They would love to work on art projects with a wetland visitor centre.

## Biotope



Tormod Amundsen of the outdoor and nature architectural practice biotope joined us from Vardø, in Arctic Norway. He shared beautiful picture of arctic wildlife and scenery. He also shared photos of familiar but refreshed human engagement with birds and the environment.

After touring nature reserves in the UK he saw many people are willing to travel for unique nature experiences, but he also wished to improve the design of bird watching hides and screens. He wished to draw people to the nature in his town using: bird watching festivals; ringing workshops for children; inviting renowned bird artists; birding routes with maps; and their special architecture to engage people with architecture. In the wild weather they created semi-open hides to shelter people but also connect them with nature. Nature is the big picture, the architecture are small pieces.

Bird hides are not 'one size fits all': children, bird watchers, and bird photographers will all have different experiences. How they are designed will affect people. Open, friendly designs mean people are less likely to vandalise. The better the materials, the less maintenance required.



# Member presentations

## FYF

Together with Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, Youth Engaged in Wetlands, and WWT, we arranged the [East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum](#). About 40 young people took part for four half-days via Zoom and a smaller group are now preparing a Declaration.

## Social Media Guide

MBP and Eurosite have drafted a guide an advance social media for wetland centres, based on the decision at the last Annual Meeting. We will prepare a PDF for the new year; in the meantime, chapters are appearing on the [MBP website](#) every week.

## Star Centres

New [WLI global initiative](#), open to MBP members as well. A panel will award Stars to wetland centres. Aims to raise the visibility of wetland centre's work and encourage them to improve. First year will be two per region as a pilot; subsequent years will be more widely open. Likely to be done every three years. Gold, silver, and bronze levels. 'Stamps' will recognise work under specific themes. Application process will be fully online, via a detailed form.

# 2022 Annual Meeting

Participants can get to Saloum (the host) within a day from Dakar - about three hours drive. Including other activities and travel, best to set aside a week.

A World Migratory Bird Day activity, before or after, could include media attention and good connections. Should we schedule it for before or after the Annual Meeting? The activity could be a shared game played in different places! At AM people could bring flyway objects from own centre and back.

October schools are shut in Africa; October better for people using wetlands. Dakar/WI team confirms the possible dates for AM; we ask all MBP members for preferred dates around 3 October to 14 October in the Newsletter; then set date in the next couple of months. 2.5 days for meeting, plus time for WMBD activity; plus for ecotourism.

Optics: Connor will improve the packaging; look into getting stickers for the binoculars. Team in Dakar will work on creating a shared database of where optics are sent.

Fundraising, as well as for travel to attend, could include local signage supporting ecotourism after the Annual Meeting. Could have a live video ringing session via EVOA.

AEWA MOP is around Oct/Nov.

# Other notes

Andreia can connect new member, centre run by BirdLife partner SPEA. Site not as big as Tagus but run by important NGO.

Anja attended a conference on UNESCO visitor centres & community engagement, which raised the question: is 'visitor centre' the right term?

## Speakers

Anja Szczesinski  
Bethany Copsy  
Chris Rostron  
Connor Walsh  
Flavio Monti  
Ibrahim Hama  
Ibrahima Gueye  
Jelke Brandehof  
Tatiana Fuentes-Rodríguez  
Tormod Amundsen

Downloads

Recordings of the presentations

PowerPoints of other presentations

The Meeting in Numbers

Presenters were 60/40 male/female,  
80/20 Europe/Africa.

## Participants

Abdoulaye Ndiaye  
Andreia Silva  
Audrey Cadou  
Dembo Jatta  
Esther Nosazeogie  
Evgeny Genelt-Yanovskiy  
Florian Keil  
Gabin Agblonon  
Ian Barber  
Jenny Carlsson  
Jonathan Olwenyi  
Khady Gueye  
Pathe Balde  
Patric Lorgé  
Roelof Heringa  
Rowan Hardman  
Sandra Silva  
Teresa Lopez  
Theo de Bruin



## Reviewing previous workplan 2020/2021

Work area	Activities	Progress
Communications	Updating the new website and profiles Roelof continues with the newsletter Social media. Jelke and Connor on the social media guide	On-going Excellent Releasing from today online, PDF to follow
Annual meeting	Saloum, Senegal. Week 44 - holidays in Sweden! But will COVID be bad in Autumn/ Winter? Might make travel harder. Make it a hybrid meeting to allow everyone to participate even if they can't travel.	Postponed due to COVID Documents can be used for 2022. Going beyond the AM, working with other orgs. Finding resources still challenge - WWT Fundraising trying but more welcome. MB Africa working on it.
World Migratory Bird Day	Explore a flyway youth forum. EFTA in the Americas. Discussion on the theme. To be defined. Singing, soaring and flying like a bird. Birds and schools initiative	Completed & likely to continue. Impossible under COVID
Africa	Optics for Africa	Continuing; Noted at IUCN WCC. Really appreciated. IUCN World Congress Tomos Avent (WWT) spoke about it and showed the map, as well as handing over binoculars. Online viewers in three countries in W Africa Sent guidebooks from Biodiversum and WWT and Common Wadden Sea
Youth	Event to be held by IWSS, as part of the partnership hub	Delayed and overlapped with online Flyway Youth Forum; 2022?
Lead shot and Dam removal	Send letter of support from MBP group and individuals to lobby their MEPs. Dam removal for centres near a river	Sent; ban enacted EU Life bid not successful
Resources	Finish and distribute the guidebook the map Jelke the social media guide	Complete; corrections received & implemented Releasing from today online, PDF to follow



## Workplan 2021/2022

Work area	Activities	Lead person	Progress
MBP annual meeting 2022	Dakar/WI team confirms the possible dates for AM; in Newsletter we ask all MBP members for preferred dates around WMBD; then set date in the next couple of months. 2.5 days for meeting, plus time for WMBD activity; plus for ecotourism.		
Africa	Finish the bird fold-out guide. Optics: improve packaging; stickers for the binoculars; database of where optics are sent: team in Dakar will work in this, WWT to inform where packages go. Package optics and guides together. Fundraising for local signage supporting ecotourism after Annual Meeting. Connect with PRCM.		
Communications & Campaigns	Maintain website. Newsletter: Roelof to step down as editor. <b>Isabelle</b> & Audrey produce, and receive support as needed. Public-facing version of ringing video (with safety & ethical concerns). Roll-out social-media guide Lead shot: letter to UK government Oct 2021; EU later in 2022.		Underway
World Migratory Bird Day	Video conferences with schools return - still a good offering. Month of May might be better for this. October event possibly around the Annual Meeting in Senegal with international connections. Possible live video ringing session with EVOA; for October could have same game in different centres and bring physical objects between the centres/schools at AM.		
Youth	Run Flyway Youth Forum before end of 2022. Consider AEWA MOP as milestone. Invite FYF Ambassador to MBP core group. Re-Peat & YEW: ask if they will be advisors.		
Partnerships	PRCM: MBP & MBP Africa to approach.		
Resources	Binoculars guide - format to be decided. Explore concept of videos of best resources at each centre		

