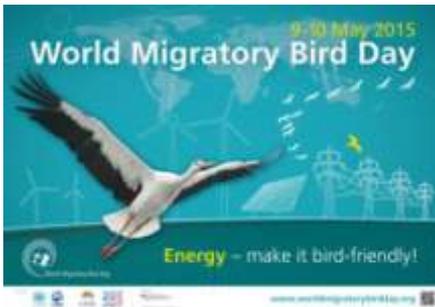




## World Migratory Bird Day, 9-10 May 2015

### Energy – make it bird-friendly

#### Bird-friendly energy at wetland centres in the Migratory Birds for People network



#### Introduction:

World Migratory Bird Day takes place every year, and highlights not only the miracle of migration, but also the challenges that these birds face during their incredible annual journey. This year the focus is on energy, particularly exploring how it can be made less harmful to birds, whether it is conventional energy or renewable.

The MBP network of wetland centres is using this opportunity to highlight issues and solutions that have been relevant to their centres. We can all make a difference to migratory birds, just by switching our energy source, thinking about how our centres are designed, or working with planners and energy providers to improve the infrastructure.

Finally, we should not forget that a reliance on fossil fuels will have a further impact on climate change, through greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is one of the major factors influencing birds and wetlands, due to extreme weather events, changes in availability of food and shelter, and impacts on the migratory behaviour of birds.

#### Case studies:

*Urdaibai, Basque Country, Spain:* The Urdaibai Bird Center has carried out two major species reintroduction programmes on storks and osprey, and found that around 20% of the birds were being killed by electrocution from power lines. They did a campaign with

local schools to adopt and name the birds, making this story much



Safe design of pylon



Anti-collision bird-savers

more powerful. In addition, they worked with the power company to redesign the pylons, making them much safer (see right) and put in anti-collision 'bird-savers' on the power line themselves. These efforts will vastly reduce the risk of death by electrocution at Urdaibai, however in other countries, such as Morocco and Mauritania, power lines are still the most popular perch for the birds. Contact: [Edorta Unamuno](#), Urdaibai Bird Center

*WWT Slimbridge, UK:* Biomass may not seem to have much of a direct positive impact for birds, but at Slimbridge, our old heating system was reliant on oil stored on site. This had the potential to cause a hazard in the wetlands, and Biomass reduced the number of tanks immensely. Obviously, from a global view point, using fossil fuels to heat our centres also generates a lot of carbon, adding to the green house gas emissions and contributing to climate change. This in turn impacts on



migration routes, availability of wetlands and creates extreme weather events, none of which are good for migratory birds. Finally, we checked to make sure that our biomass is being fed by wood pellets from a sustainable, local source – not from clear-felling of forests, which is definitely not wildlife friendly.

Contact [Chris Rostron](#) at WWT to find out more.

#### *Geothermal at Lake Tåkern, Sweden*

At naturum Tåkern there is a system of geothermal heating installed when the center was built in 2011. Deep holes were drilled into the ground both for drinking water and for water that can both heat (during winter) and cool (during summer) our facilities. This is a system that does not affect bird life in any negative way! There are no spills, no waste, no need to be linked to energy infrastructure, and no emissions. For electricity, we use underground electricity cables and buy it from a company that offers electricity produced in an environmentally friendly way (no nuclear power or fossil fuels).



Although renewables are definitely good for reducing carbon emissions and moving away from fossil fuels, they are sometimes not good for wildlife. In Sweden, hydropower is a significant source of electricity, with most major rivers affected by dams, and this has a negative impact on wildlife such as fish, benthic fauna,

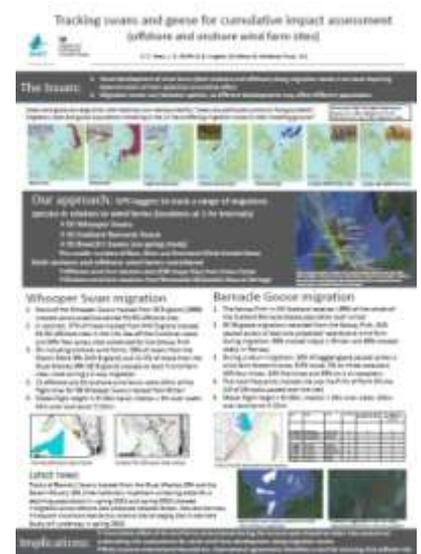


Hydropower dam

riverine shore environments and of course all birds dependent on these environments for breeding or feeding. Areas that naturally would have streams or rivers now have still water instead, or no water at all after a dam is built. Shores are sharp and stony without the natural sand or mud vegetation. Although hydropower may be positive in that it doesn't contribute to climate change, it is negative for wildlife dependant on riverine or flooded areas as well as shore and delta habitats.

Contact [Ellen Hultman](#) for more information.

*WWT research on windfarms and birds:* Long term monitoring of swan and goose movements carried out by WWT has shown that reducing the chance of bird strike from windfarms and turbines can be greatly reduced if they are positioned in the correct places. The key finding is that many birds fly at a height of 9m over water, putting them at risk of wind turbine damage, and that barnacle goose migration from South West Scotland results in many birds flying across an offshore windfarm footprint. Find out more from WWT's information poster [here](#), or contact [Eileen Rees](#) at WWT for more information.





### **Recommendations:**

1. Invest in renewables to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and on infrastructure that is bad for birds. But do this sensibly! No wind turbines built on migration routes or on sensitive wetlands, for example, and make sure biomass wood pellets are sustainably sourced.
2. Publicise bird-friendly energy to your visitors, to encourage them to 'go green' either with a green energy provider, or with their own domestic insulation, renewable energy such as photovoltaic cells, or other ways of reducing reliance on fossil fuel energy.
3. Check your energy provider to see if you can change to sustainably produced energy, or change providers if they don't offer this.
4. Ensure that power lines and pylons are not located in areas where they put birds at risk. If existing powerlines are affecting birds, work with power companies to take corrective actions, including by making them safer by putting in anti-collision 'bird-savers' on the power line themselves.
4. Visit the World Migratory Bird Day website at: <http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/energy>, and migratory birds for people at [www.migratorybirdsforpeople.org](http://www.migratorybirdsforpeople.org)