



Mission "Migratory Birds for People"

European wetland sites make up a chain along bird migration routes, and many of these sites have visitor centres that function as ways to engage local people. They connect the birds and sites to the visiting audience, local citizens, children, birdwatchers and other lovers of these Natura 2000-locations. It is our dream to get these birds, their migration routes and their sites firmly in the hearts and minds of the European citizens. We want to really connect the Natura 2000 sites and their centres and emphasize their importance as a coherent system by which thousands and thousands of birds roam across Europe and Africa. The idea is simple. The chain of sites and related centres linked by migrating birds is also directly expressed in the centre itself. Modern digital equipment and technique play an essential role in this flow of information.

The first step is to collect data of birds flying over Europe and Africa in all directions. This can be done by radio- and/or satellite tracking, as well as through sightings from local birdwatchers. Data of existing and extended tracking programmes can be used and displayed on large screens in each of the partaking visitor centres all over Europe, raising awareness amongst visitors that their centre is an important part of a chain of similar ones. Through indicators and digital software, local visitors can collect extra information of the particular site the birds are residing at the specific moment.

The input for the information mentioned above, is gathered by local amateurs and committed visitors and contains, for example, local made films, pictures taken by amateur photographers and actual counts and other gathered data. Every visitor centre, being a meeting point and a centre of all sorts of activities, is creating a database of information, connected through an interactive website, specially developed for the project.

The most important connection will be made in the minds of the visitors. During a visit or by means of a website, a visitor is asked to connect him or herself to a migrating bird by leaving his/her e-mail address behind. Through this e-address, information is broadcasted periodically of where and when the bird is flying, nesting, foraging and resting. The information gathered is giving an extra and in-depth view of the local circumstances in which the 'connected bird' is living at that particular moment in time. Thus the person or group of young students that are connected are given real-time impressions of the circumstances and conditions in which 'their' bird is residing.

By this 'broadcasting' of information and creating a life-long connection with a bird or groups of birds, a deeper understanding will be created among European citizens of the value of Natura 2000 wetlands. More than before, people will be able to understand the importance of their site in relation to the migratory routes or the birds. Information is made easily accessible by sending email messages and using the website and social media. With this knowledge, support for the conservation and management of the local site will increase as well as the support for the other sites will grow. Not only will people be involved in their own community and their local Natura 2000 site and wetland, they will also become a stakeholder for the other European Natura 2000 Wetlands.

With the migration routes as central chain, sites, centres and people will get connected. A better understanding of the importance of the network of site is created and an increased co-operation **among** centres is established. Not just for the partners taking part, but as a start for a European collaboration among centres and their organisations illustrating the wonders of migrating birds and their wetlands.

The "Migratory Birds for People"-programme is contributing to the CEPA-programme of Ramsar