

Report from the 6th Annual Meeting of MBP 2017

Biodiversum Remerschen, Luxembourg, 8th to the 11th October 2017



The 2017 annual MBP meeting was hosted at the wetland centre Biodiversum Remerschen, Luxembourg. 22 participants took part (see appendix I) mostly arriving on Sunday the 8th October, spending two days meeting and sharing information, and leaving on Wednesday the 11th. The MBP group would like to express their gratitude and thanks to Patric, Isabelle and the team at Biodiversum Remerschen for such and excellently organised meeting, and for the very impressive centre that they run.

Monday 8th October

Chris introduced the purpose and structure of the meeting, and gave a brief summary of the background of MBP and activities over the last year, highlighting key achievements in building activity in West Africa with new members and a newsletter, holding skype conference with schools for World Migratory Bird Day and maintaining a high level of communication between partners generally.

Patric and Isabelle then led a tour of the centre, which we completed in 2015 and has been open to the public for just over a year. The centre was built and is owned by the local authority administration, and run with staff from the administration and from a local NGO, BirdLife Luxembourg (Patric and Isabelle). There is a small charge for the centre, but no shop or restaurant/café so not much opportunity for income generations. The wooden structure is based on an upturned boat, and built with sustainability in mind, including underfloor heating systems powered by water-source heatpumps, from cables laid in the lake itself.

The group was impressed with the design, but also with the exhibits and interpretation of the centre. This is a mix of traditional panels and models, but also has innovative exhibits such as the 'night room', a dark room with audiovisual exhibits, and a globe projection which can show a huge range of displays and be changed by the user.

One of the key challenges is the number of languages that visitors require. In Luxembourg the official languages include Luxembourgish, French and German, and visitors also request English and other languages. The signage is in the three official languages, but the staff are considering how to improve this. A group discussion covered the following:

- Keep messaging short and to the point, that way it can be included in more languages on fixed displays.
- Rely on graphics, pictures and signs rather than language to avoid the usage of too much text.
- Use something like an audio guide, which the user can select their own language on.
- Produce printed materials in different languages that can accompany a visit.

- Try to have staff that can communicate in a number of languages, even just for basic terms that will help a visitor to experience the centre better.
- Provide QR codes or links so that visitors can use their smartphones / tablets to download information and guidance.



Presentation session I. Talks were then given by participants, which you can download in PDF format from our website (see the link).

After lunch, we did a practical group exercise on subjects set by our hosts. Each group gave a presentation of their findings on the topics of: 'our birds' – how to encourage groups to realise that migratory birds are other people's birds too; improving the web conference for World Migratory Birds Day; communication to visitors why it might be necessary to kill / remove invasive

bird species; running activities for children's birthday parties on site.

Our hosts then took us to a local organic winery to hear about their methods and taste some of their wines, followed by dinner. Jelke and Chris 'officially' signed the updated Friends of Eurosite agreement with MBP.

Tuesday 9th October

Presentation session II. Chris gave a presentation on a more detailed analysis of MBP's activities and what has gone well, as well as what we need to improve on. He also showed the new WLI website, and we had a discussion about how the MBP page could be incorporated, who used the site, and how it could provide a useful 'sorting tool' to allow visitors to the website to find what they need (other members, regional initiatives and resources, for example).

Theo talked about funding preparations to date, and explained a bit more about how the EU LIFE funding system works. Deadline of September next year. Although Russian and African partners can't apply for LIFE funding, they could apply to other funding streams to complement the project. MBP is still interested in how to find something to support a communications bid, which links directly to biodiversity gains. He continues to work on this with colleagues in Natuurpunt, Belgium, and some key wetland centres, but if anyone is interested please get in touch.

Gabin presented on the situation for migratory birds in Africa, and how wetland centres and conservation work is dealing with this in West Africa particularly. Key challenges are the lack of trained staff / capacity, outdated or insufficient communication materials and infrastructure on site, insufficient financial and other resources, and little political support. You can see his presentation on the web page.

Gerold talked about the Waddensee Flyway Initiative, what they are doing in terms of supporting local partners to deliver conservation action and to collect and share data on birds. He also mentioned that there are many wetland centres along the Waddensee, some of which already

belong to MBP (Husum, Terschelling, Vadehavet) but most of which don't, particularly in Germany / Denmark. Gerold to support us to make contact.

Jelke gave a presentation on how we can make better use of social media, focussing on how we currently use FaceBook and Twitter and some hints and tips about what there tools offer, including analytical tools and options to build contacts. See brief guidance document here.

Site visit around Remerschen, looking at outdoor teaching facilities, the hides, habitat management and challenges that the site faces.

Presentation session III. Oostaardersplassen, Terschelling, Urdaibai, Het Zwin, Americas (from Pato Guerrero, the WLI intern), Flight of the Swans.

Olivier and Audrey proposed that they would like to hold the 2018 annual meeting at their wetland centre the Maison du Lac de Grand Lieu near Nantes, France. All accepted their generous offer, and we aim to meet there on the 25th and 26th of September (a break from tradition, with arrival on a Monday, meeting Tuesday and Wednesday, and leaving Thursday).

We covered a huge amount during these two days, and as a 'reward' we all took part in Roelof's Euro-cocktail evening with food and drink that partners had all brought with them. Then entertainment, including songs, accordion playing and even some dancing!

Outcomes:

Guide to multilingual communication; strengthen links between core members; workshop on social media; on-site learning from the wetland centre itself; see actions in appendix II.



MBP annual meeting 2017 Biodiversum Remerschen

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Work area	Activities	Who?	By when?
Strategy plan	Update the long version and produce summary for use with partners and other external audiences	CR and MBP committee	November 2017
Fund-raising	Develop approach to LIFE with relevant partners. Work with Natuurpunt and contact MBP partners again to identify potential support	Theo de Bruin	Ongoing
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop WLI pages that create useful format to make resources, partners information and particularly regional initiatives easy to find - Integrate MBP pages within WLI site - Consult with MBP partners to ensure this works for everyone 	CR and MBP committee	End 2017
World Migratory Bird Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan and deliver web conference with schools and sites - Use fewer, more targeted messages, share local name for the birds - Flexibility on producing a film, ppt or other and use these separately to the skype discussion - Maison du Lac de Grand Lieu to lead on the Francophone version 	CR and MLGL (Maison du Lac de Grand Lieu) to lead	May 2018
Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Twinning between partners to provide support - Ensure African representative(s) attend(s) Nantes annual meeting - Continue development of MBP Africa network - See if there is appetite for European MBP partners visit 	CR, GA, MLGL and Blandine Melis	Ongoing
More materials available in multiple languages	Increase French language communications (Newsletter, website, social media). Possible increased funding from WWT to cover this.	CR	Ongoing
Produce guidance on social media	Facebook – continue to use and promote		Ongoing
	Short document summarising Jelke's talk and giving advice to partners	Malin, Edorta, Leo (CR)	?
Multilingual guidance	Produce short guidance on multilingual interpretation / centre comms	CR and JB	End 2017
Waddensee connections	<p>Continue regular contact with Gerold Luersson</p> <p>Dutch partners to join the trilateral government meeting in 2018</p> <p>Check with Husum and Vadehavet on activity (GL)</p> <p>Suggest new MBP members from wetland centres of Waddensee (GL)</p>	GL, Suzanne	Mid 2018
Report back from MBP annual meet 2017	<p>Produce short report and list of actions</p> <p>Produce short film based on interviews and footage from the meeting</p>	CR; PG	November 2017

