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# MIGRATORY BIRDS FOR PEOPLE PROGRAMME STRATEGY PLAN, 2017+



‘Inspiring birds, inspiring people’

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 2009 Staatsbosbeheer, Wetlands International and Wetland Link International have initiated a network of visitor centres along the flyway of migratory birds related to NATURA 2000 wetland sites. The project aims to develop an active network of visitor centres along the East Atlantic Flyway, to tackle four key issues that we identified as: the lack of joint work and communication between wetland centres, the need for more people involved and attached to wetlands, the need for more and better tools and stories to communicate the importance of a network of wetlands for migratory birds, and the requirement to improve the conservation status of wetlands along the flyway. We see wetland engagement (CEPA) as a vital tool in changing perceptions of wetlands, and improving their protection.

Without a sound understanding of why wildlife and sites should be valued, local communities and decision-makers will not help to save and protect wetlands and their wildlife. Conservation professionals may be well-trained and enthusiastic, but this has to be communicated more widely. CEPA has been identified as a key action for many multi-lateral environmental agreements such as Ramsar and the Convention on Biological Diversity, plays a complementary role to the EU Birds and Habitats directives, which focus more on technical aspects of wildlife conservation, and forms a central part of the Nature 2000 network across Europe.

More visitor centres were invited to take part in this developing programme, as the programme developed through regular skype meetings and phone contact. Partners met during a 2-day workshop in Aiguamolls de l'Emporda, Spain (25/26 January 2011) to set up the outline for a project proposal. In September 2011, several of the MBP programme partners, met in Brussels for a workshop to discuss the way forward. This document – the action plan – contains the results of that workshop.

Thereafter, annual meetings took place at the Uitkersepolder, Belgium in 2012, the Lake Takern wetland centre in 2013, the Syndicat Mixte de Scamandre, Camargue, France in 2014, at the Urdaibai Bird Center, the Basque Country in 2015, at Amager Centre, Denmark 2016 and in Biodiversum Remerschen, Luxembourg in 2017. Most of these were also supplemented by core group meetings.

## NETWORK



The MBP partners are working together because they see the following benefits of developing a network:

- It is a tool to forward the goals of flyway conservation, helping to protect birds and the wetlands they depend upon (Ramsar/ N2000);
- It is a way to connect wetland centres, building on the Wetland Link International network;
- The network can be used to acquire more knowledge and improve wetland centre management;

- By sharing experiences and expertise the centres can improve communication to the general public and increase outreach (to local communities) by communicating similar messages;
- The programme can be used for obtaining resources (e.g. EU funds and more local resources) for projects and actions;
- A network will lead to more cooperation between nature practitioners;
- Sharing tools and materials will improve and increase what can be done and communicated in each individual centre.

#### CURRENT NETWORK

The current network consists of 27 partners (as of October 2017). A coordinating group has taken the lead to work on project development and communication. This group is planning to continue securing support for programme actions and is keen on enlarging the partnership further, see next paragraph.

The core group is made up of the following organizations:

- Lake Tåkern – Lansstyrelsen (Sweden) and Tåkern Field Station;
- Oostvaardersplassen – Staatsbosbeheer (Netherlands);
- Urdaibai Bird Center (Basque Country)
- Maison du Lac de Grand Lieu, France
- Eurosite
- Wetlands International, Africa
- Wetlands International, Netherlands;
- Wetland Link International

#### FUTURE NETWORK

The goal is to have an active network of organizations owning or managing visitor centres located near or in Ramsar, Natura 2000 or other internationally important wetland sites covering the East-Atlantic flyway, including Russian and West-African partners. Several criteria were developed (see below) that each partner needs to adhere to. The MBP programme does not limit the number of people from each organisation or centre that wants to participate in the network. However, the geographic range is limited to the East Atlantic Flyway.

Criteria for new partners:

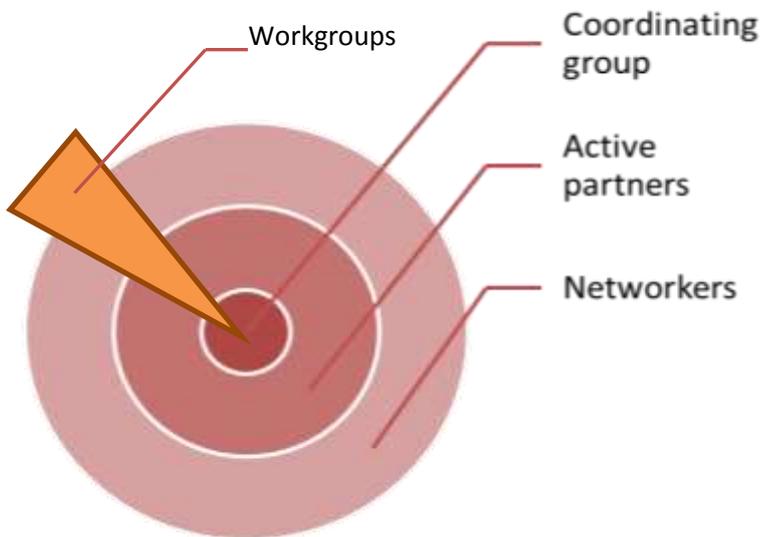
- Own and/ or manage an internationally important wetland site on the East-Atlantic flyway;
- Own and/ or manage a visitor centre located near or in the wetland site;
- Run an active programme of public engagement (CEPA, Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness), creating a better public understanding of the importance of wetlands for migratory birds.
- The wetland site attracts migratory birds of international importance;
- Willing to invest resources (time and funds) in the MBP programme and network;
- Actively participate in and communicate with the network community;
- Believe that the MBP programme and network is an added value.

#### CORE VALUES

To create an effective network, that will provide all the benefits described above, each partner in the network should be selected on the basis of the partner criteria. But, equally important, the coordinating group needs to make sure that the network remains an interesting platform, providing an added value for its partners, and it should be well-organized. Therefore, the MBP network should observe the following core values:

- The MBP programme deals with the East-Atlantic flyway and its migratory birds and habitats;

- The MBP programme provides a platform for networking, sharing experiences and communication;
- The MBP programme actively applies for funding to further develop the programme and network;
- The MBP programme provides an added value to its partners, by offering a relevant network and by sharing science, materials, and tools;



- The MBP partners have a shared goal;
- The MBP programme is organized with clear roles, responsibilities and objectives.

#### STRUCTURE

The MBP programme is structured along four layers: the coordinating group, active partners, networkers and work groups.

The **coordinating group** acts as the lead for the MBP programme. They support the programme by taking an active role in programme actions and development. The composition of the coordinating group will

vary in time, and can contain 5-10 members. The coordinating group is responsible for the following issues:

- organizing networking events at least once a year, preferably on site;
- lead and assist with the development of funding proposals;
- attract and engage new partners;
- develop a platform for networking and sharing (e.g. a website or other tool);
- provide relevant (and scientific) information about migratory birds and the flyway;
- developing the MBP newsletter four times a year;
- coordinate social media messaging;
- help coordinate the working groups.

The coordinating group meets at minimum once a year in a face-to-face meeting. Furthermore, they have regular contact through e-mail and (Skype or tele)-meetings at least six times per year.

The **active members** are a group of partners that actively participate in programme components. They (help) organize events, actively provide information to the MBP network and platform, they (help) develop materials and tools for sharing, they (help) develop funding bids and they offer support to the coordinating group.

The **wetland centres (WLI)** form the largest group of the network, and as a minimum they are members of the Wetland Link International network. They provide input to the MBP newsletter, they use the developed tools and materials and provide feedback, they communicate and network with each other via the platform or networking events and they are responsible for updating their WLI/MBP membership profile.

The **workgroups**. The working groups are formed *ad hoc* and are based on a specific topic or project, related and relevant for the MBP programme. Workgroups can include and attract people from outside the MBP network. Workgroups are responsible for communication and sharing of their results via MBP platforms (website, newsletter, events, etc.).

# PROGRAMME OUTLINE

## MISSION

“An effective network of visitor centres across the East-Atlantic flyway connecting people to birds and promoting the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats”.

## VISION

Inspiring birds, inspiring people

## PROBLEM ANALYSIS

After some planning using a problem analysis approach (Miradi), the MBP Programme identified three major problems:

### 1. Lack of information and stories about the (importance of the) flyway;

- Better up-to-date flow and exchange information of migratory birds flyways needed.
- The information available needs to be better quality; sometimes it is presented in a foreign language, or developed in a country with different cultural ideas or it is presented too scientifically and using ‘in-crowd’ language;
- The presentation of the information needs to appeal to the general public. Visitor centers should use up-to-dated communication tools and be open to using new media;
- Furthermore, visitor centers need better access to good stories, or know of ways how to present it effectively. There should be an infrastructure which allows for networking and sharing of materials, tools and best practices. People should know who or which organization to approach or where such information can be obtained.

### 2. Centres are internally focused;

- Centres are often focused internally because sharing is not a priority due to high workload. Attitudes need to change and resources found to build networking into internal planning, time allocated for it in projects and decision-makers made aware of the benefits of sharing and networking.

### 3. Flyway in unfavourable conservation status.

- Migratory birds depend on a healthy flyway, but in some countries the habitats for the birds along the route are in poor condition. This undermines the conservation status of other sites along the flyway. Increased capacity and funds are the best solutions to improving the state of poor habitats. For all partners (and African countries particularly), there is a lack of capacity and access to new tools and resources, but MBP aims to improve this situation.

## STRATEGIES

To tackle these problems, the MBP Programme identified four strategies. Within each strategy there are several objectives and several actions. The ‘Action Plan’ chapter describes the strategies and related actions in more detail.

### 1. Public Communication Strategy;

This strategy addresses the involvement of more people by higher quality of the available stories and information. It includes translation of material, adapting material into a clearer language fit to communicate with the general public and adopting new methods for communicating, e.g. using social media and online communities.

This strategy addresses the fact that current presentation tools are out-dated. Actions in this strategy include development of touch screens and other interpretation techniques, using webcams and bird tracking, and also improvement of guided walks and talks.

**2. Capacity Building for Staff Strategy;**

This strategy focuses on the sharing of information between centres and nature practitioners. It includes actions like developing best practice guides on communication practices, translation of materials, organizing on site events to share knowledge, social media workshop, and is partly met by on-site experience from member visits to each other, or at the annual meetings.

**3. Network Development Strategy and communication;**

This strategy looks at the further development of the MBP Partnership. It's important to let people know the MBP network exists and that sharing is beneficial. Actions include managing the programme web pages as part of the wider WLI website, distribution of the newsletter, improving the WLI / MBP database, and expanding the network.

There are also specific actions for developing the network in Africa. This includes actively looking for new partners, acquiring funding and sharing experiences with African counterparts.

**4. Funding Strategy;**

Many of the actions can be implemented without extra funding, but some require extra financial resources. The funding strategy will focus on looking for appropriate funding possibilities and forming project teams to develop applications. It should look not only at external, programme-wide resources, but also local direct and in-kind resources.

**5. Habitat and Species Strategy;**

Providing practical help/support for managing sites for migratory birds and their habitats.

# Action Plan

## 1. PUBLIC AWARENESS STRATEGY

This strategy addresses the involvement of more people by higher quality, better focus and presentation of available stories and information. It assumes that if visitor centres can improve the quality and presentation of the information (through exchange, translation and adaptation of current material, and the development of new stories) and use of more modern communication methods (social media, online community), then more information will be available. Centres can then improve the promotion of the importance of the flyway and more people will become involved and aware of the unique features of the flyway, the international aspects and the importance of each individual site, particularly the one nearby.

Through coordinated actions on development of coherent interpretation plans as well as exchange of experience and info-materials and footage, the quality and outreach of the information program of individual centres will grow and have a larger impact on visitors' attitudes and their connection to the flyway.

Strategy	Public Awareness Strategy	Actions
<b>Objectives</b>	To raise public awareness of the importance of the network of wetland sites for migratory bird conservation. To provide shared communication tools designed to better engage visitors and the public.	
<b>Indicators</b>	1.1 Each centre has access to MBP audit of facilities, qualities and needs 1.2 Each centre shares extra migration-related stories to present to the general public which are clear, simple and relate to the flyway; using a variety of communication methods 1.3 Amount of facebook page likes, tweets, twitter accounts related to the programme, hits on the website etc. 1.4 Number of activities (related to specific project bid) 1.5 Joint events and campaigns supported such as World Migratory Bird Day 1.6 Make stronger links to other regional networks (MedWet, AEWA, NorBalWet)	Ongoing  Online platforms to share information (chat, films, documents) using web page and social media  Reviewed annually. Training provided as needed  Develop as and opportunities and/or bids arise  World Migratory Bird Day (Florian Kiel); World Wetlands Day

## 2. CAPACITY-BUILDING STRATEGY FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This strategy focuses on the sharing of information between centres and nature practitioners. It includes actions like developing a best practice guide on communication practices, translation of materials, organizing on-site events to share knowledge, and a social media workshop. The assumption is that if centres have more information available to them and they know where to find it and with whom to network, they will be focused more externally.

Strategy	Capacity Building for Staff	Actions
<b>Objectives</b>	Create better framework and tools to share experience	
<b>Indicators</b>	2.1 Regular communication between centres	Minimum 4 newsletters, 1 face to face site meeting, 6 virtual meetings of core group

	2.2 Amount of information available in shareable formats (website, partner profiles, good practice bank).	Share on website, facebook and via file-sharing sites such as weshare or dropbox
	2.3 Number of people gaining experience through visits and MBP meetings	Annual meeting report
	2.4 Training work	Delivered at annual meeting largely

### 3 NETWORK DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This strategy looks at the further development of the MBP Partnership. It's important to let people know the MBP network exists and that sharing is beneficial. Actions include setting up a programme website, development of the newsletter, improving the WLI/MBP database, and expanding the network.

The Africa network is growing but still undeveloped, and requires more work in identifying centres and developing the links between them and their European counterparts.

Strategy	Network Development Strategy	Action
<b>Objectives</b>	To expand the numbers of active MBP partners, as well as strengthen links between them and develop joint projects	
<b>Indicators</b>	3.1 Numbers of active partners	WLI database; skype / annual meeting
	3.2 Strategic coverage of partners along the flyway	Africa (Birdlife and WI); Baltic (BFN); UK (CR); North West Russia (BFN); Denmark (Ellen)
	3.3 Amount of activity between partners (defined above) particularly in Africa	See newsletters
	3.4 Develop the Africa contacts	Work with Africa colleagues to identify opportunities

### 4 FUNDING STRATEGY

Many of the actions can be implemented without extra funding, but some require extra financial resources. The funding strategy will focus on looking for appropriate funding possibilities and forming project teams to develop applications. Another important action is improving the story around the MBP Programme to better explain the need for this programme to funders. It's important to show how the sites are ecologically connected.

Strategy	Funding Strategy	
<b>Objectives</b>	Create plans for likely projects to seek funding for	
<b>Indicators</b>	4.1 Develop joint project approaches, including lead partners, shared issues and planning delivery	All to input to development of joint flyway project idea
	4.2 Submit bids to local, national and European funders as appropriate	Identify lead partner for joint project.
	4.3 Include local funding / projects / resources as match funding and support	All to identify existing/planned projects and/or available resources that could help

## 5 SPECIES AND HABITAT STRATEGY

Although MBP is largely focussed on wetland centres and the delivery of CEPA activities on site, it is recognised that there is a clear goal to improve the biodiversity associated with these centres. We will not delivery purely species / habitat conservation work, but much of the CEPA and joint project work that we envisage will positively impact on biodiversity.

<b>Strategy</b>	Species, habitat and site	
<b>Objectives</b>	Deliver improved sharing of data that leads to better conservation work Use flag ship habitats and species to seek funding and support joint activities Support practical habitat / management improvements that will benefit migratory birds species	
<b>Actions</b>	5.1 Key species identified for the network 5.2 New actions to support wetlands and their species taken 5.3 Construction of hides, area of habitat managed, boardwalks, signage etc.	Updated as required Report at annual meeting and in newsletter Reported at annual meeting and in newsletter