



WLI is recognised as a key implementer of the Ramsar CEPA programme

# WLI Annual Report, 2013

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## Introduction

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2013 saw good progress across the WLI network, with regular communication, new members and increasing links being made with other networks and organisations doing similar things. We think it is vital that the concept of wetland centres as a tool to get people passionate about wetlands is shared as far and wide as possible, and this year has seen some great in-roads to new audiences.

Although the WLI team is small, working with partners allows us to deliver a lot on the ground. So, working with Wetlands International Russia, we have helped to deliver workshops and a new CEPA action plan. Working with the Association of State Wetland Managers in the US allowed us to

hold a WLI North America Webinar. And teaming up with Suncheon City, South Korea, resulted in us holding the 4<sup>th</sup> WLI Asia conference. All very useful development of the network and provision of tools for those working in wetland centres across the globe.

In addition, our relationship with the Ramsar convention continues to grow, now that the WLI manager is part of the Ramsar CEPA oversight panel. Working with the panel meant ongoing support for wetland centres and WLI through the next CEPA Strategy, to be adopted at the next Ramsar Conference in May 2015.

All-in-all the network seems very healthy with many different projects and initiatives being delivered across it. We hope that if you work in a wetland centre or you deliver wetland education that you find the network useful, and of course we welcome any feedback you may have that could help us to improve!

Best regards,

Chris Rostron,  
Head of WLI

## 2. Resources

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## 2.1 WLI web pages

The web site continues to be updated on a weekly basis, with news, resources and new partner profiles added regularly. A major step forward was the translation of most of the web page content into Russian, thanks to Wetlands International Russia. This has created a valuable resource for our partners in Russian-speaking countries, and is kept up to date with help from partners. We also have most of the site in Chinese now, and newsletters are being translated by our partners at Mai Po to make the information accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

We have regional pages for all continents, but pages were developed and updated for our Migratory Birds for People (MBP) project, WLI Russia, WLI Asia and WLI North America initiatives, reflecting the particular projects that have been active. We have even purchased a new domain name, [www.migratorybirdsforpeople.org](http://www.migratorybirdsforpeople.org) to link directly to the MBP pages.

The interactive web page shows details of all our partners, and we have also added resources and information sheets during the year. As the main point of access for our members and those working in wetland education more widely, the web page is the most important resource that we have.



WLI website, Chinese language version

## 2.2 Regular updates and news

As usual, we have been updating the website with news on a monthly basis, with reports from partners, lists of new members, and regional and international news that our members might find useful. We have also been through all our membership forms and asked for updates and amendments, as well as removing those members that are no longer active.

The WLI bulletin is produced twice a year, with more in-depth stories from across the network, normally in March and September. We also produced a joint bulletin with the East-Asia Australasia Partnership on wetland centre activities in the flyway.

We are continuing to use Facebook, as well as MailChimp, an e-mail distribution tool which give our newsletters a more professional feel, and allows us to target part of the audience by region, language or how active they are.



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### 3. Ramsar and WLI

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Ramsar CEPA oversight panel

The WLI manager became an official member of CEPA oversight panel, attending his first panel meeting in April 2013 at the Ramsar offices in Gland, Switzerland. This year, WWT hosted the Ramsar CEPA oversight panel at the London Wetland Centre in December 2013, with the head of WLI playing an active role as one of its members. The panel is made up of wetland education experts, and has an important task to develop the new programme of wetland CEPA activities to be agreed at the Ramsar Conference of the Parties (CoP) in Uruguay in 2015. We are also seeking to find a new name for the CEPA programme that will be easier to understand for the general public.

WLI continues to be one of the key tools in Ramsar's CEPA approach for delivering wetland education and engagement activities on site. Specifically mentioned in Resolution X.8, WLI is also recognised through a wider Memorandum of Cooperation with WWT, its host organisation.

### 4. Priority themes

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Our priority themes remain as follows: wise use of wetlands; climate change; endangered species; and invasive species. Information is available on our website, and we also send out reminders when international wetland-related events and dates occur such as World Wetlands Day and World Environment Day. The themes aim to be relevant to all of the member centres, and act as a support to help get these vital messages out to visitors and the general public. For pictures and stories from our members, take a look at the website.

### 5. Regions

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#### 5.1 Europe

*Migratory Birds for People*. The group met at Lansstyrelssen's Lake Takern visitor centre, which was only recently completed and has an innovative and striking design, clad in reed, the ultimate wetland sustainable building material. The meeting included



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partners from Ramsar, AEWA, Wetlands International and key wetland centres along the East Atlantic Flyway. The meeting gave us the chance to share best practice, discuss new tools such as a standardised audit for wetland centres and making better use of social media, projects for the partnership, and to review and revise our progress to date.

*Russia.* Working with Wetlands International Russia and the Ramsar CEPA manager, we supported two meetings in Russia to develop capacity of those working at wetland centres. The first was a training workshop in Olonets, north of St Petersburg, run by the Baltic Fund for Nature. Here, 15 education staff from wetland centres around North West Russia came together to learn from BFN through structured sessions and workshops, including input from the WLI manager.

Secondly, Wetlands International Russia held a 3 day seminar at the Park of Birds, just outside Moscow, with 50 participants from wetland centres across Russia, as well as representatives from the Russian government, Ramsar and the WLI manager. The meeting gave a chance for centres to share what they are doing in terms of education, then to look at developing a CEPA action plan for Russian wetland centres which will be adopted in 2014. Wetlands International is leading a work group to develop this action plan.



## 5.2 Asia-Oceania

The fifth WLI Asia IV conference took place in April this year, and was hosted at Suncheon City, as part of the launch of their new international wetland centre. Suncheon already has a major wetland centre on



its internationally important Suncheon Bay area, and was concerned that the bay was becoming over-used by the millions of visitors that come every year, attracted by the beauty of the bay and the hooded cranes that appear during migration.

The conference attracted delegates from across the region, and included representatives from EAAFP (East Asia Australasia Flyway Partnership), Wetlands International and WLI member wetland centres from Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Russia, Japan and many more. Key outcomes of the conference include:



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- An urgent need to create a local 'Asia' office for WLI Asia, with staff and resources to build the network.
- Preparation for the WLI Asia Conference V, to be held in China in early 2015.
- Explore the opportunity to develop WLI Asia as an 'association'
- Developing resources, including training manual for wetland centres, evaluation methodology, best practice sharing, and sister wetlands programme
- Volunteer management programme to develop guidance in improving volunteer support.

For more information on the outcomes and presentations at the meeting, check the [WLI website](#).

WLI also developed closer ties with the EAAFP, as we have many issues and members in common, despite WLI's focus on wetland centres and EAAFP on migratory birds and their flyway. The Head of WLI visited EAAFP's offices in April, and discussed opportunities to work together, as well as attending some meetings with local people and school groups. WLI is now a member of the EAAFP CEPA group feeding into their approach to engage and involve people along the flyway. As part of this, WLI and EAAFP produced a joint newsletter focussing on wetland centres' role in flyway conservation.

With the 2015 WLI Asia conference planned to be held in China, we are working to build links with Chinese partners and wetland centres. A visit to WWT's Slimbridge centre from a Chinese delegation that included the Chinese Government

Ramsar Focal Point, Ms Fang Yan, was a great way to build relations between WWT, WLI and the Chinese State Forestry Association. We are now working with the WLI Asia steering group and Wetlands International to progress the planned conference.



**Tongli Wetland Centre, China**

Finally, the WLI Manager had the opportunity to visit some wetland centres in and around Shanghai, as well as to take a short course in Mandarin to help with development of the initiatives. Visits to Chong Ming Dong Tan wetland centre, and a new centre being developed at Tong Li were a great insight to how wetland centres are developed and run in China.

### **5.3 The Americas**

After much planning, and working with partners from across the region, we held a WLI North America webinar. We had originally intended a face-to-face meeting, but given the costs and time involved, it seemed to make sense to work with the Association of State Wetland Managers to hold a webinar. The approach was very successful, with nearly 50 participants from Canada and the US taking part, as well as the CEPA manager of the Ramsar Convention, Sandra Hails. Key issues that arose were how to engage



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the ‘non-usual’ groups, using a broad range of approaches to formal education, and hearing from some leading wetland centres.

It was also agreed that we need to develop the steering group to grow the network, continuing our planning with key partners, developing the WLI North America web pages, and organising future webinars around topics such as the new wetland centre manual, evaluation of wetland education activities, and practical tasks such as ‘how to build a boardwalk’.

Working through our partners in Chile, at the Fundación Kennedy, we are continuing to plan a conference to strengthen the WLI Neotropics partnership. We have submitted a funding bid to hold the event, and the Fundación is actively exploring ways of accessing private sector funding. We are now working with another organisation, the CEH (Centro de Estudios de Humedales) in the North of Chile, and they will play an active role in co-hosting the WLI meeting. We have great hopes that this event will really kick start the network in the Neotropics.



## 5.4 Africa



Centre de Chami, Mauritania

Although Africa remains one of our less well-developed networks, we are building ties with colleagues in North and West Africa in particular. The three centres on the coast of West Africa in Mauritania, Senegal and Guinea Bissau have now completed membership profiles, and we are working closely with Wetlands International West Africa through the Migratory Birds for People programme. As part of the MBP flyway approach, we hope to invite our WLI West Africa colleagues to the annual meeting next year, to firm up the ties between the wetland centres. Indeed, last year our colleagues at the Getterone Naturum

Visitor Centre held a winter fair and raised money to support the work of their counterparts in West Africa.



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## Future planning for 2013

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Much of our work is ongoing and done in partnership with those working across the world. We are fortunate to have active and committed partners that share the vision of wetland centres that deliver effective and exciting environmental engagement work onsite. Our key areas for work next year include the following:

- Continuing work with the Migratory Birds for People partnership to find funding for a major project across the network and to develop the involvement of our West Africa partners.
- Developing the WLI Asia V conference, creating a regional WLI Asia post, and the WLI China network in particular.
- Supporting development of the WLI Russia network, including finalising the CEPA action plan for European Russia
- Working as part of Ramsar's CEPA Oversight Panel to prepare the CEPA plan for the next Ramsar COP.

## 7. Contacts

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For more information on WLI, please contact the [head of WLI](#), WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre, Gloucestershire, GL2 7BT, UK, or check our website at [www.wli.org.uk](http://www.wli.org.uk)