



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

WLI Annual Report, 2014





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1. Introduction



Dear Wetland Colleague,

As everyone knows, a network is only as strong as its members – and luckily, we have some very enthusiastic and energetic people belonging to the WLI network! Wetland education and engagement work attracts a certain type of person, and it is always a pleasure to spend time with them. From working with colleagues developing a new wetland centre at a water town in China, to electrical storms interrupting our MBP team meeting in the famous Camargue wetlands of southern France, and even a workshop with Latin American colleagues in a wetland oasis in the Atacama Desert, it is a privilege to work with such dedicated people across the globe.

This year we saw another 25 wetland centres join the network, bringing us almost to 300 wetland centre partners, and we aim to go past this number in 2015. All regions saw activity between partners, and further moves to create some more autonomy for WLI Asia and WLI South America and the Caribbean. We are also actively working with more regional networks too, which all goes to strengthen the Wetland Education Centre approach even further.

Work with the ERF (Environment and Ecosystem Research Foundation, RoK), Ramsar and many other wetland centre partners resulted in the launching of a new Handbook on Best Practice for Planning, Design and Operation of Wetland Education Centres – an essential tool for anyone planning or working at a wetland centre. This built on our existing WLI Wetland Centre Manual, and is the sum of the experience of many WLI members, a great achievement.

We are looking forward to an active and successful 2015, including the Ramsar COP12, and hope to continue working with and for wetland centre staff across the globe.

Best regards,

Chris Rostron,
Head of WLI



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2. Resources

2.1 WLI web pages and social media

The web site continues to be updated on a weekly basis, with news, resources and new partner profiles. It is the key contact point for WLI and its members, and we hope is a useful tool for them. Over 7,000 sessions took place on the site this year, looking at nearly 44,000 pages. We hope that means that a lot more people than just the WLI members took advantage of the information and resources on the site.



We also now have a facebook page, for WLI as well as for Migratory Birds for People. The WLI facebook page has 248 'likes' and we regularly update with stories from local partners and WLI global news. Please look us up!

2.2 Updates and bulletins

WLI produced regular monthly updates and two six-monthly bulletins. We also produced information updates on activities across the network as and when we received stories or information.

2.3 Priority Themes

Using the key themes of World Wetlands Day, World Migratory Birds Day and issues around invasive species, we continue to promote these essential elements of wetland conservation and awareness-raising. The website pages are regularly updated, and we included case studies of World Wetlands Day activities at wetland centres across the globe.

3. Ramsar and WLI



The WLI manager attended several Ramsar meetings this year, in preparation for the Conference of the Parties that is happening in June 2015. As well as the meeting of key partners, hosted at WWT's London Wetland Centre, the WLI manager attended the European Ramsar pre-COP meeting at Kufstein, Austria in October, giving a presentation and running a workshop on CEPA and wetland centres.

WLI also worked on the Draft Resolution on CEPA, as part of the CEPA oversight panel, which will be discussed at the COP. WE hope that this will maintain the existing focus



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on wetland centres, and also aim to create a new database of wetland centres that can be collected through Ramsar’s reporting mechanism.

4. Regions

4.1 Europe and Africa

The Migratory Birds for People (MBP) network continues to work, with its energetic steering group, and a growing number of wetland centres represented. We are still keen to develop a project around sharing of data and engaging local people, but it has been a slow process to identify significant funding required.

In the meantime, we have continued to produce 4 newsletters per year thanks out Dutch colleague Roelof Heringa, and host our annual meeting in the Camargue, thanks to Jérémiah Petit and the team at Scamandre Wetland Centre. The meeting brought together 15 of our core members from across Europe and Russia, to update on their work and plan for future activities and fund-raising. Despite the late summer storms cutting the electricity in the middle our presentations, we managed a successful and invigorating meeting! Key outcomes of the meeting included:

- Updating on projects at each of the participants centres.
- Work on identifying key areas of work for the network based on shared migratory birds species and education/awareness raising activities on site.
- Visit to Scamandre and Tour du Valat centres
- Colleagues at the Urdaibai Bird Center in Spain will host the next meeting, on the 14th/ 15th of September 2015.



WLI Russia. The network is developing after the meetings in 2013, and the core group continues to meet regularly by Skype. The Smolensk Wetland Centre, based in north western Russia, has committed to taking on the lead role for WLI Russia, and hosted a planning meeting in October with colleagues attending from wetland centres across Russia. Wetlands International Russia has also been very supportive, working with colleagues at Khakassia to help translate the Handbook on Best Practice in Wetland Centre Planning, Design and Operation into Russian (available early 2015).





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4.3 The Americas

WLI N. America continues to meet as a core group, and held a second webinar in July, based around the Handbook on Best Practice at Wetland Centres, hosted by the Association of State Wetland Managers and attended by around 50 people. Discussions have also started with the US EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) about bringing together American Wetlands Month, Ramsar's World Wetlands Day and the WLI network activities. We hope to carry out a joint event in May 2015.

WLI worked with colleagues at the Wetlands Institute, New Jersey, to submit a bid to the US Peer to Peer project, aiming to encourage positive cooperation between organisation in the US and Russia that share similar areas of interest. The bid was successful, and we have put together a programme, starting with a call for suitable wetland centre partners from both countries. These will be selected in January 2015, and followed by exchange visits between three centres in each country, and a final conference in October 2015.

WLI Latin America and the Caribbean. After much planning, working with the Centro de Estudios de Humedales and the Fundación Kennedy, we held a conference in Pica, in the Atacama Desert of Chile. The event brought together 40 wetland professionals, all working with local communities, education and wetland centres. The four day event included case studies and sharing of best practice, workshops on how to increase the capacity of and communication between wetland centres and local groups, and plans for the forthcoming Ramsar COP, to take place in Uruguay in June 2015.



encouraged and supported.

Key outcomes of the meeting included:

- That there is currently insufficient support and networking between wetland centres/project across the Latin America and Caribbean region.
- That Ramsar and WLI are relatively unknown, and the concept of wetland centres needs to be broader to include relevant projects (less focus on a built facility).
- Need to work more with existing networks such as WLI and CREHO to address these issues.
- Local community involvement is a key component of wetland conservation and should be



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The Centro de Estudios de Humedales (CEH) agreed to take on a lead role for the WLI Latin America and the Caribbean region, working from their office in Pica, Chile. WWT Slimbridge also hosted three colleagues from Chile for a month (from the Fundacion Kennedy and Universidad Chileno-Britanico de la Cultura) who supported development of the WLI regional approach.

Finally, the WLI manage spent 10 days in Colombia working with colleagues from local NGOs and the University of Boyacá, on the subject of Lake Tota. The trip included field work, workshops with local people, and close work with students and professors at the University. There are no plans to create a wetland centre at the lake, to help deliver sustainable solutions to issues of pollution, over abstraction of water and caged trout farming.

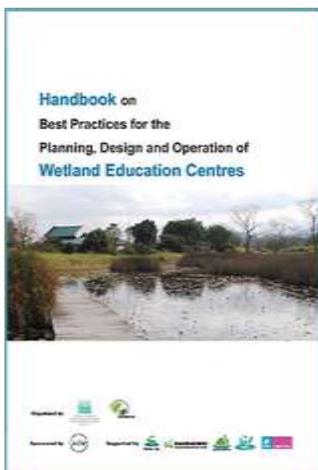


4.4 Asia / Oceania

WLI Asia is one of most active networks, and continued to see activity across the region. Working with East Asia Australasia Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), the Ramsar Regional Centre East Asia (RRC-EA), Wetlands International China, and key local wetland centres, we have been developing the 5th WLI Asia conference, planned at Hengshui Hu, China, in 2015.

The RRC-EA is planning to take more of a role in the co-ordination of the WLI Asia network, and we hope that this will provide a regional resource that can support the development of WLI Asia. We have also made contact with new staff at the Ramsar Regional Centre West Asia, based in Iran, and hope to work more closely with them to support their regional CEPA activities.

Finally, colleagues at Mai Po and Guangdu wetland parks translated the Handbook on Best Practice at Wetland Centres into simplified and traditional Chinese respectively. This will make the Handbook much more widely accessible, and add to the tools available to our colleagues in the region.



5. Future planning for 2015

One of the major events coming up in 2015 will be the 12th Ramsar Conference of the Parties (COP12) in Uruguay, in early June. A revised Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) resolution will be discussed, based on work through the Ramsar CEPA oversight panel. We are also planning a side event at the COP to promote the wetland centre concept.

As mentioned previously, we will also be supporting the US-Russia exchange visits, with a total of six wetland centres (three in each country) taking part, and a final conference in the US in October.



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The 5th WLI Asia conference is due to take place in China, in late 2015, and we anticipate that this will be an excellent opportunity not only to develop the regional network with the Ramsar Regional Centre, but also to work with Chinese colleagues as part of their ambitious plans for new wetland centres across the country.

Finally, the WLI Latin America and the Caribbean network is set to become much more active, and we continue to work closely with the Centro de Estudios de Humedales in Chile. This region has been less active than the others, so this is a great opportunity to really boost support available for those working in wetland education on site.

6. Contacts

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

