"Inspiring birds, inspiring people"

"Migratory Birds for People" – Newsletter no. 38 / October, 2020

"Inspiring birds, inspiring people"

NEWSLETTER no. 38 (October, 2020)

Introduction:

Since our last MBP-newsletter, which was a so-called theme-edition, all wetland centres have been more or less affected by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore it was decided that we could have an MBP-newsletter sharing the experiences we had during this year coping with this crisis and exchange our creative solutions in these special circumstances. Please, distribute this newsletter also in your staff!
We hope it may inspire you in your work, if only by knowing that your colleagues are in the same situation.

Enjoy reading and stay healthy!
On behalf of the core-group "Migratory Birds for People"-network,

Audrey Cadou and Roelof Heringa (editor team)

Check also our website: ***www.migratorybirdsforpeople.org***
MBP is also on FACEBOOK : ***www.facebook.com/migratorybirdsforpeople***
Our MISSION can also be found on: ***www.facebook.com/migratorybirdsforpeople***
P.S.: your feedback is always welcome!

Contents list

	Page:
• **First announcement MBP Annual Meeting 2020 (on-line)**	**2**
• **Report of a COVID-survey by Wetland Link International (based at WWT-Slimbridge)**	**3**

With contributions from:

• **Finland, Liminka Bay Visitor Centre**	**5**
• **Sweden, Lake Tåkern**	**6**
• **Russia, CEPA-team, St.Petersburg**	**7**
• **Denmark, Vadehavscentret, Ribe**	**9**
• **Germany, Haus Husum**	**10**
• **Netherlands, Terschelling**	**12**
• **Netherlands, Oostvaardersplassen**	**13**
• **Luxembourg, Haff Réimeich, Remerschen**	**14**
• **United Kingdom, Welney Wetland Centre**	**16**
• **United Kingdom, Slimbridge Wetland Centre**	**18**
• **France, Réserve naturelle nationale de Camargue**	**19**
• **Portugal, Tagus Estuary Birdwatching and Conservation Area**	**20**
• **Morocco, Centre d'Information Ecologique Oualida**	**22**
• **Sénégal, Kalissaye Ornithological Reserve**	**23**

Other Flyway news :

• **News from our partner Eurosite**	**25**
○ **Annual meeting 2020 – online**	
○ **Renewal of our Friendship Eurosite - MBP**	
• **Counting breeding birds with a drone**	**26**

- **For the wetland centres in Europe we would like to promote this video from our African partners Wetlands International to show at your wetland centre https://www.facebook.com/170899304431 74/videos/331103478311156**

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT for the MBP-ANNUAL MEETING 2020

Virtual Annual Meeting 2020, 12th of November (p.m.)

We will hold an annual meeting this year, online. We hope this way more of you than usual will be able to participate, including your colleagues and volunteers. We are still planning the content, but we hope to have some open sessions as well as the usual internal review and planning.

The date for the meeting is **12 November, in the afternoon**.
We are sorting out the platform and structure as we speak; keep an eye on your email for updates.

Connor at Slimbridge is coordinating it, and is keen to work together to make a special Annual Meeting.
We have the opportunity to engage more participants than usual, including multiple staff and volunteers from centres, as well as teachers and visitors.

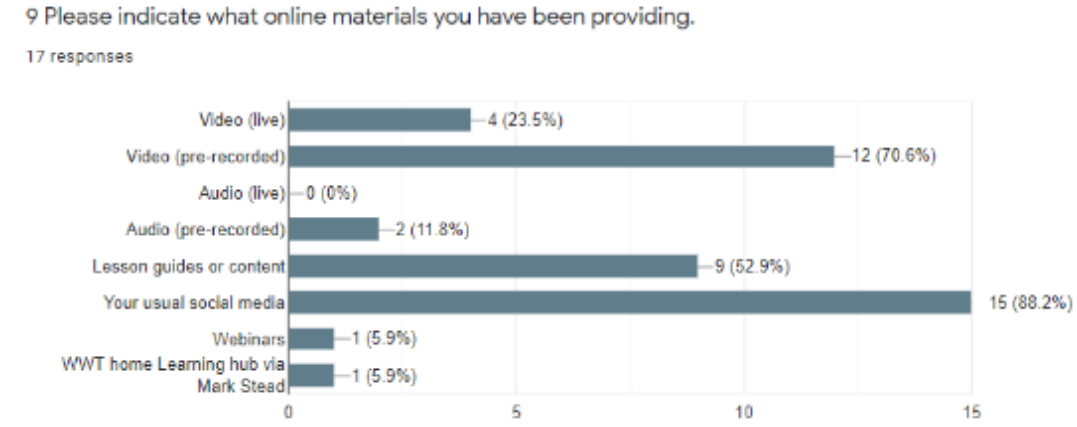
So please email him if you have suggestions or capacity to help!

How to deal with Covid-19 in your wetland centre ?

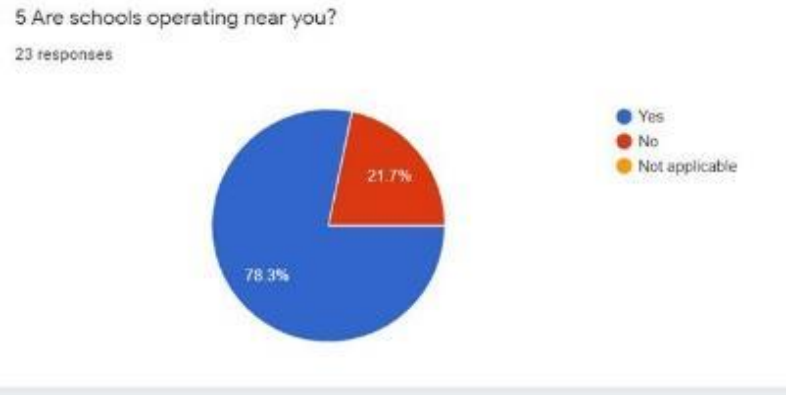
Report of a survey by Wetland Link International (based at WWT-Slimbridge)

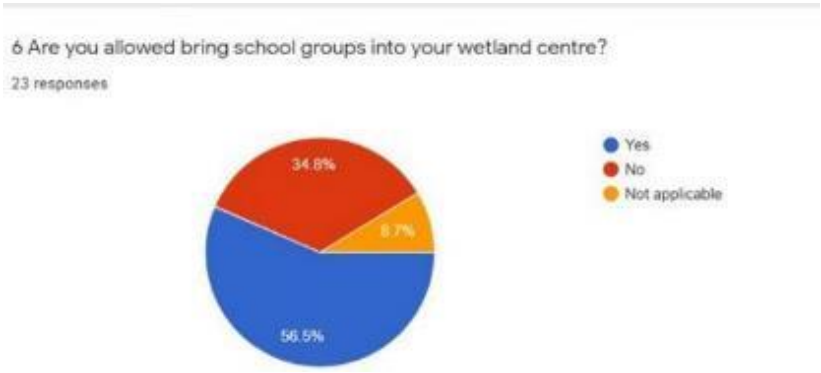
In August, we asked WLI members how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their work. Twenty-three responded. There is some bad news about colleagues losing their jobs, with this affecting 13 % of thge centres that responded. Forty-eight percent of the wetland centres are fully open; 26 % open in a limited capacity, and 26 % are shut.

The strongest call is for digital support, with images, video, and teaching materials suitable for sharing online. Nearly three-quarters have already been doing this, but 43 % still would like materials to share.

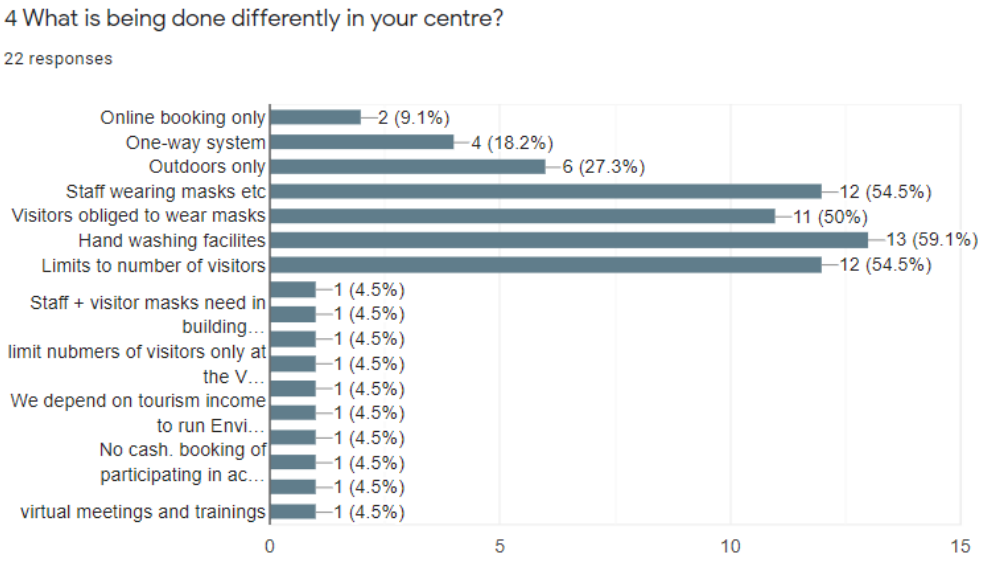


The greatest variability is around school visits:





When it comes to general visitation, some centres have made changes to how they operate. More than half provide hand-washing facilities, are limiting the number of visitors, or have staff wearing masks.



When we initially shared the survey, we also linked to some activities and measures WLI members have taken.
What is happening to wetland education, half way into 2020? How has the pandemic affected your work, and what can WLI members provide collectively to support each other?
When the pandemic spread to Europe, some centres started providing digital engagement, including live narrated webcasts from Urdaibai Bird Centre, lesson guides from WWT, and storytelling from Environment for the Americas.

Perhaps we can share resources, experiences or insights. With concerns over sending children back to school in September, perhaps wetlands provide the opportunity for outdoor learning in a way that can benefit local communities.

Have your say! Please contribute to our short survey to gather your suggestions and news of your situation. If the survey is not available in your country, feel free to get in touch by email.

Connor Walsh
International Engagement Officer

"Inspiring birds, inspiring people"

NEWSLETTER no. 38 (October, 2020)

We received the following contributions from our colleagues in the MBP-network.

Finland: Liminka Bay Visitor Center

The corona situation in Finland is rather calm, so locals, tourists and student groups have been popping into the visitor centre again, but to be on the safe side, we do not arrange any nature guidance at the moment. It would be so nice to support the environmental education work of teachers and kindergarten instructors as usual, so hopefully the corona time will be ending soon!

Lesser White-fronted Goose

La situation de la couronne en Finlande est plutôt calme, c'est pourquoi les habitants, les touristes et les groupes d'étudiants se rendent à nouveau au centre d'accueil des visiteurs, mais pour être sûr, nous n'organisons pas de guidage de la nature pour le moment. Il serait tellement agréable de soutenir le travail d'éducation à l'environnement des enseignants et des éducateurs de maternelle comme d'habitude, alors j'espère que le temps de la corona va bientôt se terminer !This fall we have been very lucky. After 50 years years, 27 **Lesser White-fronted Goose** (*Anser erythropus*) stopped again right next to the Liminka Bay Visitor Centre during their autumn migration!

The Nordic population is critically endangered so WWF appealed to local hunters to stop all autumn goose hunting in the area to prevent any misidentification. Geese usually stay over the night on hunting restriction area but they move around during daytime and dusk in the areas where it is allowed to hunt e.g. Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*).

Response from the hunting organisations was positive, but still some dangerous night hunting was heard in the area. Luckily all Lesser White-fronts continued their journey safely.
Birds left Finland on 19th September and two days later they arrived to Kerkini meadows in Greece! **(see map)**

More info about the species:
https://wwf.fi/en/lesser-white-fronted-goose-life-project/

No Lesser- White-fronted Geese anymore but local habitat managers (=organic beef cattle) are interesting for the kids.

Picture: Ulla Matturi/ Parks & Wildlife Finland, Metsähallitus
Heli Suurkuukka

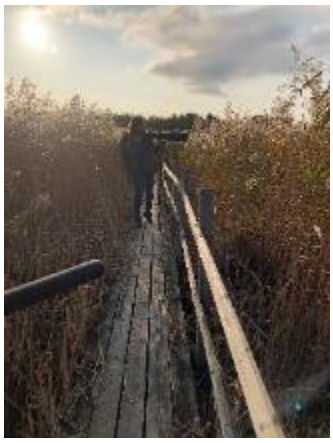
Sweden: Naturum Lake Tåkern

Naturum Tåkern, Glänås, Väderstad, Sweden

COVID-19 situation: Sweden in general

First of all, I would like to give you a picture of Sweden during the strange last 6 month of Corona pandemic. Life has changed for many persons, especially elderly people who have been forced to keep distance and sometimes been isolated from other people during long periods. Also many jobs have changed. Many have lost their job, at least temporarily, and others have worked at home and still do.

For myself, working at the Naturum (wetland centre) and as a gardener, much has stayed the same. My youngest daughter is 10 years old, and she has been to school as normal. But my two older children in high school stayed at home and had education in front of their laptop. Since a few weeks now, they are back in physical school.



Many people in Sweden have spent a lot of time outdoors during last 6 months. Hiking and outdoor life in general are now very popular, and we notice a great increase in people visiting protected nature and walking trails. Some places have been a bit too crowded, with traffic jams at parking places and littering as a consequence.
On the whole, the trend is very positive! I hope people will continue the outdoor life and that this will help them to reconnect to nature and give a bit of understanding of all the amazing ecosystem services we gain from nature.

Naturum Tåkern

Naturum Tåkern visitor center is normally open to the public daily between April to September, and early this spring we decided to keep open like planned, from 10 am to 5 pm every day. However, at the same time maximum number of visitors were restricted to 50 persons, and we ask them to keep a crane wingspan between visitors, about two meters. All spring we cancelled all program activities: no guided tours, no lectures, no thematic days and so on. We didn´t cancel prebooked school visits, but almost all schools had restrictions not to travel so they could not come, although primary schools kept open throughout Covid-19 and still are. During all that time, we guides acted as roving rangers several time per day, to meet people outdoors instead, on a distance, and still be able to answer questions, point out birds and flowers and more.

From July we started with 'Corona adjusted guided tours', indoors and outdoors. Max. 10 persons per group, distance, washing hands and use of hand alcohol. We recently celebrated the day of the **bearded reedling** (Panurus biarmicus). Tåkern fieldstation showed bird ringing and we held short and long guided tours to hear and see wild birds in the reedbeds.

At this point, we close down Naturum except for Saturdays and Sundays because of the end of season. Birds are plenty!
Some 50 000 waterfowl are resting at lake Tåkern in September. Coots, pochards, gadwalls are typical. About 20 000 greylag geese and about 6000 cranes stay a few weeks more. Thousands of mute swans swim on the lake. A few white tailed eagles are spotted every day. The great white egret is now a common sight, but few in numbers.

There are still flowers in bloom on the shore meadows, as **Devil's-bit Scabious** (Succisa pratensis){left} and **Dune Gentian** (Gentianella uliginosa) {right}.

Greetings from Sweden!

Malin Granlund Feldt, Nature interpreter

Russia : CEPA-team, St. Petersburg

A new approach in Russia!

Why BFN's Naturewatch Baltic Programme nearly did not change work plans during the months of the pandemic.

Since the latest MBP meeting in Autumn 2019, we were thinking, how BFN education team can modify the general approach on how we work. The Naturewatch Baltic Programme was initially mostly focused on work with school teams and teachers. After becoming members of WLI and MBP we already managed to focus more on wetlands in general and developed several wetland exhibits around St.Petersburg.
Currently, the main project we have, **RiverGO**, is aimed at identification of wildlife hotspots around **Vuoksi River** and also on raising public awareness around these identified values.

Vuoksi connects lakes of Saimaa in Finland and Ladoga in Russia and is a huge wetland system with many peat bogs on the catchment area as well as numerous reed beds along the river itself. While it is relatively accessible by boat, people can see this nearly 100km long river at just several good viewpoints, and thus one of our tasks become to start wide broadcasting via social networks of what we can be proud of in the region, and why this area should be considered as an area of particular research interest.

We also are currently preparing the **WildVuoksi** app for major smartphone platforms, which will help users to identify most of the typical plants and animals that can easily be seen near our rivers, not only Vuoksi.

Finally, we are now developing the wetland exhibit about Vuoksi, which will be permanently located in the most visited tourist destination near Vuoksi - an ancient Korela fortress.
Indeed, we had to cancel many face-to-face meetings, festivals and travels, but we hope that next year we will spread the word about Vuoksi by finishing these activities.

During this autumn we do however arrange some **outdoor classes**, like these school visit to a peat bog.

We are now @**natwatchspb** on Instagram and @**baltic_nwb** on Twitter, so follow us to see how RiverGO project is developing and just have a look at how the nature of Karelian isthmus look like right now.

Evgeny Genelt-Yanovskiy & Yulia Danilova

Denmark: Vadehavscentret, Ribe

The Wadden sea centre - the entrance to the World Heritage Wadden Sea.

The year 2020 has been a tough year with a lot of uncertainty for the Wadden Sea Centre and for the whole of Denmark.
The lockdown of Denmark in March was something no one could foresee and showed that a modern society is also vulnerable when pandemics occur. One cannot separate human medicine and veterinary medicine in a global world.
The shutdown meant 350 group cancellations and almost all staff were repatriated.
Lots of new budgets were made, board meetings over Zoom and the centre aimed at a million deficits.

The Danish government then started with aid packages with salary compensation, operating compensation and a "summer package", when Denmark reopened in June so that Danes could come to the museum for half price. The Danes could not travel away from Denmark and the Danes had to explore and experience in their own country.
Many Danes discovered that they actually have a fantastic country - 🙂.

Solar panels on the roof

At the Wadden Sea Centre, as in the country's shops, we got plexiglass up in front of the reception, hand alcohol was provided in all rooms and we are trying to unify the centre's logistics. The activities in our Sky Room with many touching activities were changed. There are max requirements for the number of guests and students in all our rooms and today there are bandages in the centre's cafe.
All our groups today may only be under 49 people plus guide = 50. We have hired extra staff to make smaller groups. When we ride in buses with groups, everyone must wear a bandage. We have completed 530 trips for many different groups, in 2019 we completed a total of 1086 trips. This means that we will reach about 650 trips in 2020.

The Danes have wanted to go on a trip this year, which means that almost all of our trips have been fully booked. And had we been more employees we could have made many extra trips.

Our bird courses are fully booked and we are already in the process of planning 2022 bird courses.
In the spring, we started the construction of our last building, a building we call the boathouse, which will, among other things. accommodate kayaks and bicycles and our wheelchairs for seabed activity. On the building we have put a stork nest and in the south gable a hole has been made for the barn owl and inside we have the breeding box.

We have put up **a sign on the highway** that points to our beautiful centre.
And we won another architecture award AZ Awards 2020 - Environmental Leadership.

The expectations for the year are that we land on 70,000 guests against the usual 93,000.

Klaus Melbye, Director of the centre and nature guide.

Germany : Nationalpark - Haus Husum

Nationalpark-Haus Husum

After a lockdown of two months the visitor centre re-opened at the end of May.
Following the regional regulations for museums and exhibitions, the number of visitors at a time is limited, all visitors have to register, to wear a mask and to follow a one-way course through the exhibition. Disinfectant is offered and visitors are asked to use it before touching interactive elements.

The entire counter has been equipped with plexiglass screens. The experience so far is very positive: Visitors are happy about the possibility to visit the exhibition, to get information about the National Park and to book guided tours. Only a few visitors do not enter the centres when asked to register.
However, overall the numbers of visitors are considerably smaller than usual.

Wadden Sea Explorer

Initiated by WWF Germany's Wadden Sea office in the Nationalpark-Haus Husum and right on time for the increasing demand to experience nature on your own, with your family or small group of friends, a new offer for self-guided tours has been published: The Wadden Sea Explorer.
Available online and as app the tour guide offers a range of route suggestions on the mainland and islands. At numerous waypoints, among which visitor centres wherever there is one along the route, visitors learn a lot of interesting facts about the nature and culture of the respective region: www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/explorer

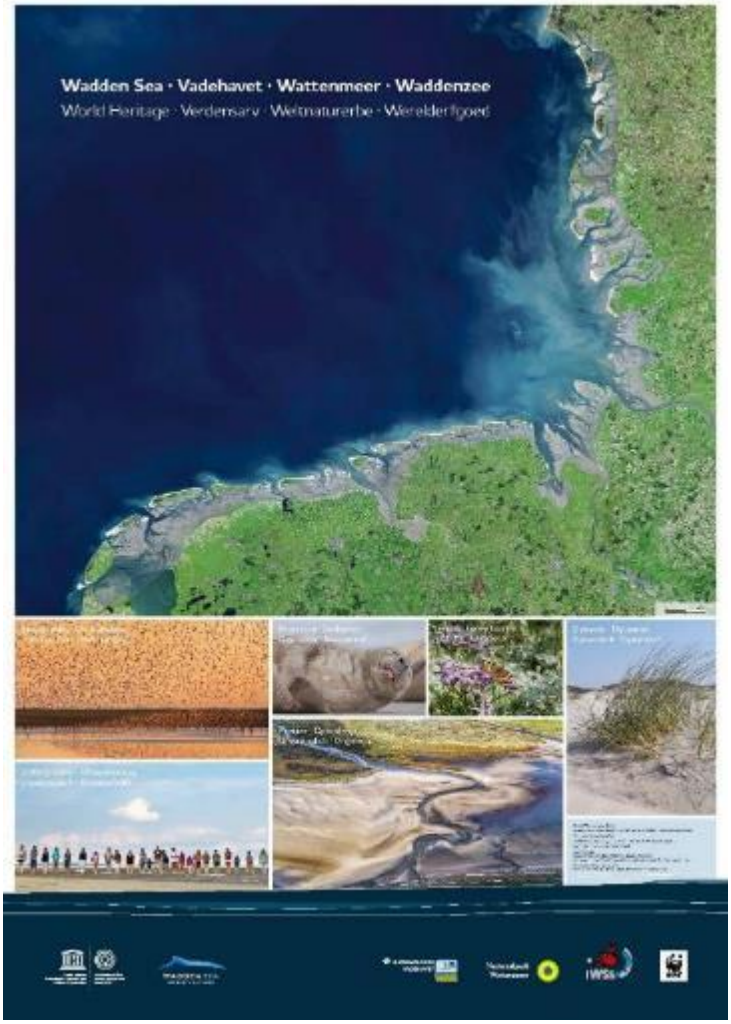
International Wadden Sea School

New poster:

The Wadden Sea from above!

A fascinating satellite image combined with impressions of the Wadden Sea World Heritage - the new poster invites to discover the unique nature area, which is the habitat for about 10 million migrating waterbirds.

- Available for download at www.iwss.org/resources,
- Printed copies can be ordered under the same link from mid-October.



Anja.Szczesinski, WWF

Netherlands: Terschelling

Excursions à Terschelling

I'm Corien and I'm Wanda's niece. At the moment I work as an intern for Staatsbosbeheer and I was allowed to tell you about the work we are doing.

After the stop we had because of COVID-19 we were finally allowed to start again with our excursions. Especially with the island school children. We took the school children outside with us to experience what is happening with the island.

School excursions

The oldest groups of the primary schools on the island went on an excursion with us to Oosterend to talk about the moving sand dunes. In the past, people thought that it would be safest for the land to have small but high dunes. But now we know that it's important to let the sand move from the beach to the inland. So that the dunes can keep growing with the sea level rise and to create a buffer against heavy storms.

With the youngest group, we had an interactive walk through the forest and dunes were we did various assignments related to autumn. Thereby were the children encouraged to search for objects like pinecones, branches, and berries to create an artwork.
And we played a game were two children pretended to be a jay bird that needed to catch his acorns (the other children)

We hope, despite the new COVID-19 developments, that we may continue our educational program for the rest of the year. On the island we are lucky that we can easily organise an excursion outside.
A short walk from school and we are already in the woods or dunes. And outside we can keep a good distance.
This week we will be on tour with group 3 and 4 of the primary school.
Then we have "a hibernation" and start again in the early spring.

Our staff has made several 'lessons'. You may find one about SPIDERS in the attachment of this newsletter. Please, let us know whether you are interested in receiving other lessons.

Greetings from Feline, Wanda and Corien!

Netherlands: Oostvaardersplassen

1. Corona time in Oostvaardersplassen.

From March onwards, reports of the Coronavirus outbreak in the Netherlands became increasingly fierce. Staatsbosbeheer closed its offices and everyone was asked to work from home as much as possible. An exception was made for our nature reserve for the management team. After all, we are dealing with animals (Konik horses, heck cattle and red deer) for which we are responsible.

In the period between March and June we were therefore always working with a small group of wardens to feed the heck cattle and carry out management.
We also planted a large number of trees and shrubs in the period between March and the end of April. This work could not be completely taken over by contractors and that meant that we were sitting on and behind the tractors ourselves to push the plants into the ground.
In practice, dealing with Corona meant: keeping a distance, drinking coffee outside, a lot of outdoor work and digital consultation. Luckily the weather was not too bad and the outdoor work was absolutely no punishment.

It also turns out to be difficult to enforce the agreements we made among ourselves to combat the Corona virus. Regularly we have to remind each other of the rules and our responsibility towards each other. Now that the numbers of infections are on the rise again, the virus is back on the agenda, but it remains extremely difficult to carry out the work in accordance with the rules.
Think of excursions and meetings, where the 1.50 metre standard can easily be broken. It all takes a very long time and everyone is looking forward to lifting the measures.

One positive point about the first Corona wave was that nature immediately became more visible. The tranquillity in forests and parks due to the lack of recreational activities and visitors had the effect that animals showed themselves more and birds were more audible. As wardens, we felt privileged to be able to work in nature and experience this exuberant wildlife.

2. Updated implementation of Natura 2000 measures:

In order to optimise the habitat for birds in Oostvaardersplassen, we are implementing three projects:

- The swamp reset. We have already written about the reset, in which the water level in a large part of the marsh is lowered in order to allow the reed vegetation to expand. We are now two years down the line and we can see that this is working well. The large lakes ("Grote Plas") have become smaller due to the retreating water and on the banks the marsh endive is expanding. In the following years the reed gets the chance to settle on these dry banks and after a while the water can slowly build up again. The reed marsh is the ideal biotope for various wetland birds such as bearded reedling, but also the increasingly numerous white-tailed eagles.

- The development of wet grasslands and water features in parts of the grassy part of Oostvaardersplassen. By flooding more grasslands (200 ha) periodically (in the winter period) a larger area will be created where migratory birds can forage. These inundated grasslands are enormously nutrient-rich with insects, larvae and snails coming to the surface and therefore easily accessible for the birds' beaks.

- Creating fish migration routes and fish passages for three-spined stickleback through the grassy area of Oostvaardersplassen. This stickleback is staple food for **spoonbills**, egrets and other birds.

The construction of connections between the Lage Vaart (a canal in the polder) and the Oostvaardersplassen will create migration routes with spawning places for the three-spined stickleback.

The three projects are now being implemented and we hope to see the first results in two to three years' time. It is, of course, exciting because the plans have been made on the drawing board and we will only know in a while whether nature will develop according to the plans.
That is also the beauty of nature development, which is so characteristic of the New Land National Park.

Kuypers, Hans-Erik
29th September 2020

Luxembourg: Biodiversum Haff Réimeich, Remerschen

Actionbound

https://en.actionbound.com/bound/haffreimech

Actionbound Biodiversum / Haff Réimech

Actionbound was released in 2012, in which users can create their own digital treasure hunts, mobile adventures and interactive guides and make them publicly or exclusively available to an audience.
The Actionbound app is available for mobile devices with Android and iOS operating systems.
The basic idea was to merge the current technologies, which are particularly popular with young people, in one application, based on classic pedagogical methods. The resulting edu-game combines elements such as participation, movement, peer-to-peer learning, mobile internet and augmented reality with current educational learning principles. (source Wikipedia)

During the Covid Shutdown from March 2020, visitors had no access to the Biodiversum visitor centre and could only book limited guided tours to the *Haff Réimech*. The nature reserve though was accessible for private visits. However, many visitors came to visit nature during these difficult times.
The Biodiversum and natur&ëmwelt team was called upon to provide something to offer as part of the government's "Holidays at Home" campaign and at the same time to draw attention to the conservation efforts.
We decided to use the App Actionbound and to provide visitors with an exciting Bound in the Haff Réimech.

The basic requirement is the use of a smartphone and to use the App Actionbound.
BirdLife Luxembourg purchased 500 licenses so that visitors can use the Bound free of charge from July 2020.
The Bound *Haff Réimech* / Biodiversum guides visitors on a length of 3 km starting from the Biodiversum through the protected area *Haff Réimech*. Visitors have to find the path indicated in the Bound by means of a map and GPS.

At 6 virtual stations, the participants have to answer questions (question/answer, multiple choice, making a selfie, whistling birdsong, ...). After answering the questions, the participants get instant feedback whether their answer was correct or incorrect and what the correct answer was like.
In this way, visitors can visit the area without a guide and take part in a virtual tour. Biodiversum gets feedback on the number of visitors using the App.
We use Actionbound from now on also to lead school classes though the nature reserve for example if they want to use for team-building activities.

Curious to know if other Centers use Apps like "Actionbound" or others ? Your contact is very welcome

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Bird Ringing Camp 2020

BirdLife Luxembourg organised a bird ringing camp in Haff Réimech nature reserve in August 2020.
Due to administrative regulations about bird ringing, the camp was shortened, but we visited Schlammwiss ringing station.
There the 18 young ringers were able to ring such interesting species as **Aquatic Warbler**, Wryneck and Bluethroat.

Back at Haff Réimech, the fabulous bird migration was a subject and we used **MBP-migration map** to visualize migration routes of different species.

Isabelle Zwick & Patric Lorgé

United Kingdom, Welney Wetland Centre

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in all of us making changes to our lives, most of which we assume will be temporary, but for an extended period of time. Here in the UK, we had what seemed like a very fast progression from widespread awareness of the virus to full-scale lockdown.
Specifically at WWT Welney we had just come out of one of the wettest winters in recent years, where **much of our reserve had been flooded** from November-February.

The MBP-certificate proudly at the entrance of the wetland centre!

As water levels began to recede in March and we were getting ready to enjoy spring and become busy with the management involved in breeding season, we had to close our doors to visitors and volunteers and most of our staff were put onto furlough from April.
Even though people could not visit the site, the wildlife carried on as if nothing had changed.

As a charity we rely on the support of members of the public and funders to carry out our conservation work. Keeping that link to our supporters, as well as the teams of staff and volunteers, who could not be on site, was crucial to maintaining good relations.

With only two people on site during the lockdown period, we were concentrating on essential management tasks and communicating with people. Through weekly emails, website updates and social media posts we tried to bring the wetlands to people, rather than people to the wetlands.
For many staff, volunteers and some members it was difficult to not be able to visit a place that they may have been coming to every week. Around the centre it was very strange to not have people connecting with the wildlife and wetlands.

Essential tasks that we needed to do were make sure the site was secure and to keep the equipment from falling into disrepair. Managing water levels to reduce winter flooding, reveal the wet grassland beneath, but not let it dry out too much.
Welcoming back **herds of cattle** – we now have almost 500 cows grazing the 1,300 acres. *(see photo with cattle and the wetland centre in the background)*
Doing what monitoring we could, breeding bird surveys, recording returning Project Godwit birds. Then preparing the site for the return of visitors.

The highlight of our breeding bird season was the fledging of three **black-tailed godwit** chicks, but this highlighted the threat that these birds still face and the work that still need to be done to protect their wetland homes.

Through our online communications – where we would have been talking about events, we now prioritised talking in more detail about how the wetlands work, what seasonal highlights were happening and how people could connect more with the wildlife from their own homes and local spaces. A lot of hands-on tasks such as the head-starting of black-tailed godwits, monitoring work of specific species, and engagement activities could not take place, and this is still the case for many of our events.

Once guidelines permitted open spaces and venues to allow visitors back, and we had risk assessments in place, we were able to open WWT Welney as well as the other sites in England on 10 June. It was fantastic to have people back on site once again, even though we have a new way of welcoming visitors with social distancing, hand sanitising and daily site capacities to work with.

We are now looking forward to the autumn and winter seasons and helping people to continue connecting with nature. As through this pandemic there seems to be greater awareness of how important nature is to the lives of everyone, and how everyone try to live more sustainably from now on.

Emma Brand,
WWT, Welney Wetland Centre

Why Wetlands are Nature's Super-Systems | WWT : Link to YOUTUBE ⬇

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Mm2tMIcEYE&utm_source=Supporter+enewsletter+%28October+2020%29&utm_campaign=7a25105209-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_10_09_01_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_516ea3fd25-7a25105209-221311394

United Kingdom: Slimbridge

Update from WWT Slimbridge

The impact of COVID19 on many visitor centres has been devastating, with nearly three months of our centres closed to visitors completely.
We have seen a drastic drop in income as well as many of our colleagues having to stay at home.
Thankfully, the UK Government's furlough scheme has meant staff are paid, even though unable to work.

Now we are adapting to the virus. All visits must be pre-booked so that we can control number of visitors on site and collect contact details. Guidance about social distancing, training for staff, enhanced cleaning and changes to our centres have all taken place.

Bird watching hides are now open, as are the outdoor playground areas, but with a limit to the number of people allowed in.

Visitors at the "Estuary-tower" overlooking the Severn-estuary

Kiosks opened before restaurants, one-way systems are in place and we sell a range of masks and hand-sanitisers in our shops and new on-line shop. We also ordered masks with the WWT logo on them, which we sold at our shops.

One positive aspect is that people are keen to visit an out-door attraction, whilst many in-door attractions are shut or severely limited in numbers they can accept. Getting outdoors and visiting a wetland is a great escape for many people, particularly our urban centres.

Despite being shut for a while, we have lost very few members, and we hope that with changes we've made, we can continue to safely welcome visitors to our sites. Our members have also donated generously to an emergency appeal.

Connor Walsh / Chris Rostron

France: Réserve naturelle nationale de Camargue

News from the Société Nationale de Protection de la Nature - Réserve Naturelle Nationale de Camargue

Changes in the way we welcome the public have been imposed on us in the general context of the health crisis. We manage 3 reception sites open to the public:

1. **la Capelière – Maison de la Réserve de Camargue**
2. **Salin de Badon** and its 4 km of nature trails in the heart of the Camargue reserve;
3. **The Gacholle lighthouse** which is run by our volunteers.

The sanitary measures to be applied in front of Covid-19 imposed us the closure of Salin de Badon and the lighthouse.
However, to make up for this lack of welcome, we decided when we reopened in June to propose an **innovative programme of activities** for the summer period in order to carry out our actions to raise awareness of nature protection, which at the same time allows us to participate in the dynamics of eco-tourism revival at the local and departmental level.

Thus we have created an **investigation game** of the Escape game type entitled "Threat in the Reserve!

"The aim was to help people discover the SNPN, the Camargue Reserve and the natural environment in a fun and participative way. This animation was a great success, which earned us an article in the local press and leads us to repeat the experience for the All Saints' Day holidays! (see photo)

In addition, we offered unusual guided tours such as sunrise on the coast or a walk on the coast in the early morning. But this action was a little less successful, certainly due to a lack of communication with the tourist relays. A point to be improved for next time!

Summer Escape Game at the Gacholle lighthouse

Contact : Livia Vallejo (Technicienne)

Portugal: Tagus Estuary Birdwatching and Conservation Area

Planned Tagus airport: we're going to court

Alongside seven Portuguese NGOS, and supported by legal charity ClientEarth, we have filed a court action with the Lisbon Administrative Court, arguing that the Portuguese authorities failed to properly consider the severe impacts of the future Montijo Airport on an internationally protected nature site before giving the project the green light.

The new airport would be within the Tagus estuary, Portugal's most important wetland. The site has gained multiple international nature protection statuses because of the hundreds of thousands of birds there, including thousands of migratory wetland birds that congregate for the winter or on their journey between Northern Europe and Africa.

Protected migratory birds and habitats in the Tagus will be permanently disturbed if the airport is constructed. The safety of aircrafts, people and birds would also be threatened by the risk of "bird strikes", while the health of people and nature would be affected by higher levels of noise and pollution emitted from increased air, road and river traffic.

The planned airport

Joaquim Teodósio from SPEA said: "An estuary of this size is an ecosystem of enormous complexity that cannot be replicated. Considering this project will have negative impacts across practically all sectors, from public health to nature conservation – a more ill-suited location could not have been chosen. The Tagus is the worst possible place to install an airport. It simply makes no sense."

With this legal action, the groups are aiming to annul Montijo Airport's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which approves the development. In this case, lawyers consider that the Portuguese authorities

have failed to carry out reliable assessments and have instead simply proposed to 'relocate' the birds that would be affected by restoring marginal areas of the protected area to compensate any negative impacts from the airport. Failure to fully assess the environmental impact of a project, and jumping to suggesting that birds can and will simply inhabit nearby salt flats instead, is a clear breach of EU and national laws.

In Portugal, the construction has been met by public and political outcry. Environmental groups in Portugal have also expressed their disapproval, with scientists citing the construction as a "crime against nature".

In the Netherlands, thousands of people have signed a petition against the construction, as it would seriously threaten the migratory **black-tailed godwit, the Dutch national bird.**

ClientEarth wildlife lawyer Soledad Gallego said: "The Portuguese government is bound by law to protect the birds and habitats that depend on this unique natural area for survival. Approving this airport would severely deteriorate this important wetland. The Portuguese authorities have failed to consider that this project would adversely affect the integrity of this irreplaceable nature reserve. Persevering despite the unnecessary risk it poses to nature is a blatant breach of EU and national nature laws and cannot go unchallenged. Montijo Airport could have far-reaching consequences felt well beyond Portuguese borders. Failure to consider this will cause irreversible damage to nature, people and the climate."

Organizations who filed the legal action

- SPEA
- Almargem
- ANP/WWF Portugal
- A Rocha Portugal
- FAPAS
- GEOTA
- LPN
- ZERO

SPEA formally sent letters from 15 conservation leaders worldwide, along with a petition signed by over 40 thousand European citizens, to the Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa and President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, all with one message: **stop Tagus airport**.

The letters from conservation leaders in Europe and Africa are joined by one from the government of the Dutch region of Friesland, and come alongside a petition launched by BirdLife Netherlands which was signed by 40 thousand citizens. These messages reflect the international concern the planned airport is raising. If it goes forward, the airport in the Tagus estuary threatens protected birds like the Black-tailed Godwit, Holland's national bird, which many European countries have invested thousands of euros to protect.

The planned airport, which is a breach of national and European laws, is also a serious threat to people who, from Northern Europe to Africa, depend on migratory birds.
This international support underlines the importance of the legal action we have filed to stop this project.

Institutions who sent support letters

- BirdLife Belarus (APB)
- SOS-Forêts, Ivory Coast
- BirdLife Estonia
- Organização para a Defesa e Desenvolvimento das Zonas Húmidas, Guinea Bissau
- President of the Administration, Friesland Province, The Netherlands
- Vogelbescherming (BirdLife Netherlands)
- Føroya Fuglafrøðifelag, Faroe Islands
- Fuglavernd (BirdLife Iceland)
- Latvijas Ornitoloģijas biedrība (BirdLife Latvia)

- Nature Mauritanie
- Nigerian Conservation Foundation
- Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków (OTOP) – BirdLife Poland
- RSPB, UK
- Association Nature Communautés Développement (NCD), Senegal
- Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening – BirdLife Sverige, Sweden
- Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" (BirdLife Tunisia)

(contribution from internet open sources with kind help from Ian Barber (RSPB) / Roelof Heringa)

Morocco, Centre d'Information Ecologique Oualida

GREPOM/BirdLife Maroc

COVID-19

From GREPOM the message that the health situation in Morocco is complicated. It was suddenly impossible - for the safety of visitors - to organize events and welcome children and public at the Oualidia Ecological Information Center during these last months.
On our part at this time of health crisis, we take the opportunity to reflect on the rehabilitation of the centre and for the creation of new awareness material in the hope of welcoming bird lovers again.

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In the framework of the project Safe Flyways - reducing energy infrastructure related bird mortality in the Mediterranean, co-funded by MAVA and VBN (BirdLife Netherlands), GREPOM/BirdLife Morocco is committed to contribute to the mitigation of the impacts of energy structures and more specifically power lines on birds along the East Atlantic Flyway.

The objectives of this project:

- To build up and strengthen the expertise of a network of Moroccan ornithologists in terms of identifying sensitive areas (black spots) in terms of mortality of birds in contact with power lines;
- Identification of sensitive areas and black spots of electrocution of birds in Morocco.

- Raising awareness in the energy sector (ONE and others at local and national level) of the risks of collision and electrocution in Morocco

GREPOM intends to implement this project in collaboration with the Department of Water and Forests, the main state agency in charge of wildlife conservation in Morocco, and with the technical support of IUCN-Med.

Best wishes,

EL OUAZZANI Nour El Houda,
Chargée de conservation, **GREPOM /BirdLife Maroc**

Sénégal , Centre d'Education de Kalissaye

Kalissaye: a Community commitment for the benefit of marine turtles

The Kalissaye Ornithological Reserve (ROK) was created by decree 78-809 of 28 July 1978. The ROK is the only wetland of international importance located in the southern part of Senegal. It is also registered on the IBA label.
The Kalissaye Ornithological Reserve is an Education, Awareness and Partnership Centre (CESP) recognised by Migratory Bird for People and a member of Wetland Link International.
Since the year 2014, the ROK has undertaken a partnership with the various schools and colleges of the Commune of Kafountine.

These Schools and Colleges have been set up as Environmental Education Centres which are active in sanitation, clean up, awareness raising and celebration of international events such as World Wetlands Day, Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Environment, Dolphins, Sea Turtles. The involvement of Schools and Communities in the conservation effort has enabled the ROK to be the winner of the Conservation Award in 2016. In 2017, the ROK extended its partnership to the Local Council for Artisanal Fishing (CLPA), which brings together all the players involved in fisheries production. The CLPA's involvement has made it possible to cover a group of actors whose impact is significant on conservation in general and particularly on the capture of marine turtles and mammals such as manatees and humpback dolphins.

It is in this context of openness that the French Committee of the IUCN agreed to support the Kalissaye Ornithological Reserve through the Small Initiatives Programme (PPI) to consolidate the biological recovery of laridea and marine turtles while strengthening governance.
This project, which started in February, has carried out several monitoring, surveillance, cleaning, sanitation, training of environmental education centres, capacity building and support for community organisations in oyster and poultry farming.
The clean-up and sanitation of marine turtle breeding areas and awareness-raising among stakeholders has helped to reduce anthropogenic threats. This has increased the attractiveness of the Kalissaye Ornithological Reserve and has resulted in more than 20 turtles returning to lay their eggs.

This laying of eggs was accompanied by surveillance operations, securing and monitoring nests against predators (stray dogs, monitors) and fishermen.

The surveillance, protection and monitoring of nests was reinforced by the students' advocacy on the occasion of the celebration of World Sea Turtle Day. The theme of this day was "The survival of Marine Turtles, a challenge for the conservation of Biodiversity" and provided an opportunity for the students to discuss with fishing stakeholders the use of monofilaments and their consequences on the dynamics of Marine Turtles. Thus, the pupils organised several groups for exchanges and awareness raising. The women fish product processors also contributed to raising awareness by participating in advocacy on the banning of monofilament nets and the collection of sea turtle eggs.

For more information contact us at rok.kalissaye@gmail.com or whatsapp 00221 77 655 96 91.
You can also follow us on facebook: kalissaye reserve

Other Flyway news

News from our MBP-partner EUROSITE:

Eurosite Annual Meeting 2020: 'Zooming' in on European natural site management — from plan to action

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 crisis, the planned Annual Meeting 2020 in Cyprus will be postponed to 2021.

However, the good news is that this year will not go by without an Annual Meeting, be it an online edition.

On **30 October** we will kick off with the Annual General Meeting for Eurosite members,
and **from 2 to 5 November we invite all who are interested to join us online** to learn more about practical nature site management in Europe. After the conference, participants will leave with concrete tips, tricks and tools to take home to their natural sites, especially with regards to management planning and implementation.

Please keep an eye on the Eurosite event page and our communication channels, because registration will open soon!

Best wishes on behalf of the whole Secretariat,

Jelke Brandehof
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Counting breeding birds with a drone

Article provided by Society for Bird protection Netherlands (Vogelbescherming NL)

1-JUL-2020 -
It is summer now, but the breeding season is still in full swing in the Wadden Sea area. Especially in breeding colonies it is the busiest. From the air, the breeding colonies of common terns, avocets and other birds are mapped with drones.

It is currently the busiest in breeding colonies in the Wadden Sea area. Common terns fly in and out with fish. avocets search for food with their chicks. A drone flies up and down with a camera. Because, as it

turns out, most breeding colonies can be counted much better from the air than in the traditional way, by observers with viewers from the ground. It is just not possible to count all species properly with a drone.

Many species of breeding birds, such as avocet, oystercatcher and common tern, have been declining for years in the Wadden Sea area.
That is why Vogelbescherming coordinates the multi-annual cooperation programme Wij&Wadvogels. For this project many protection measures will be taken to improve the breeding areas of these species. In order to measure their effectiveness, the numbers of breeding birds, among other things, will have to be properly counted. One of the new techniques used is the use of drones. But how reliable are drone counts? And are they disturbing for birds?

To answer these questions, a consortium of the University of Groningen, Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland and the Fieldwork Company counted breeding colonies at thirteen different locations last spring, in two ways: from the air with a drone and from the ground, by observers with viewers.
Calibration
In recent years, many managers in the Wadden Sea area have already gained experience with drone breeding bird counts. The results are promising, but have not yet been standardised. Counting birds from the air with a drone often yields more birds than during a ground count. This is probably because there are no plants in sight and few nests are missed from the air. This means that counts with drones and ground counts cannot be compared with each other one on one. That is why the drone counts in this project are directly linked to soil counts, so that both methods can be calibrated with each other. This is important in order to be able to keep a close eye on the number of coastal breeding birds.

Tadpole sensitive to disturbance, black-headed gull not
Research is currently focusing on seven breeding birds: black-headed gull, great tern, common tern, herring gull, lesser black-backed gull, spoonbill and avocet. Some species, such as the great tern and the black-headed gull, remain stoically attached to their nests when a drone skims thirty metres across the colony.

On the other hand, species such as **avocet** are sensitive to disturbance. Researcher Annelies van Ginkel of the University of Groningen says: "With every drone flight, even at a height of sixty metres, avocets fly from their nests, even though most of them return to their eggs or chicks within two minutes. For these disturbance-sensitive species, drone counting does not seem to be a suitable method, because birds have to stay on their nests to be able to count them".

Avocet (source: Jankees Schwiebbe)

The research can determine the best method of counting breeding colonies for each species. A protocol for responsible professional drone use in and around breeding colonies of shorebirds will also be developed.

This research is financed by the Wadden Fund, the Wadden provinces and the Ministry of LNV and could be carried out thanks to the support of the site management bodies in the Wadden area: Natuurmonumenten, Staatsbosbeheer, Groninger Landschap, Province of Groningen and Landschap Noord-Holland.

Text: Vogelbescherming Netherlands