What the WLI team did in 2020

A summary of WLI staff and interns' activities in 2020.

The pandemic disrupted almost all work at WWT Slimbridge, where the Head of WLI Chris Rostron, Connor Walsh, and the International Engagement intern Adil Boulahia are based. After a short time working from home, Chris and Connor were placed in a government furlough scheme, meaning they were not able to work on any wetland issues; and Adil continued as part of a skeleton-crew at WWT.

Adil's return home was delayed by pandemic restrictions on travel, but he got safely home and is now delivering communications in a local livelihoods NGO.

After three and a half months, Chris and Connor were able to work part-time, eventually returning to full time work, still from home, in November.

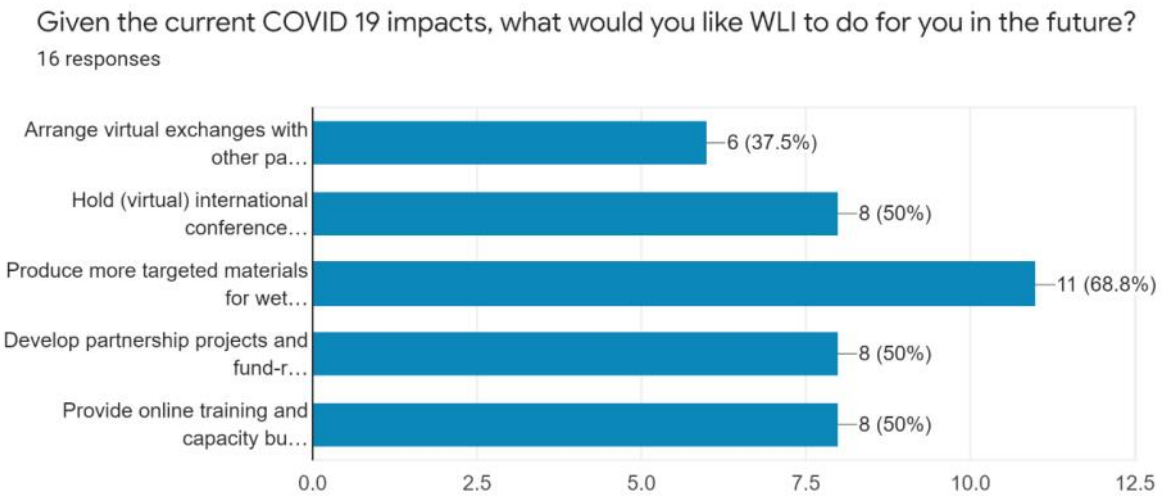
Supporting wetlands at Greta Thunberg rally

At the end of February, WLI's staff and intern took the train to the nearby city of Bristol to show our support for the youth climate strike. Greta Thunberg delivered a typically powerful speech.

Membership surveys

Returning to work, we were keen to know how WLI members were coping. So we ran two surveys: one about how the pandemic affected you and how we could help; the other was a general survey on what being a WLI member means to you. Between the two surveys, we had 42 responses.

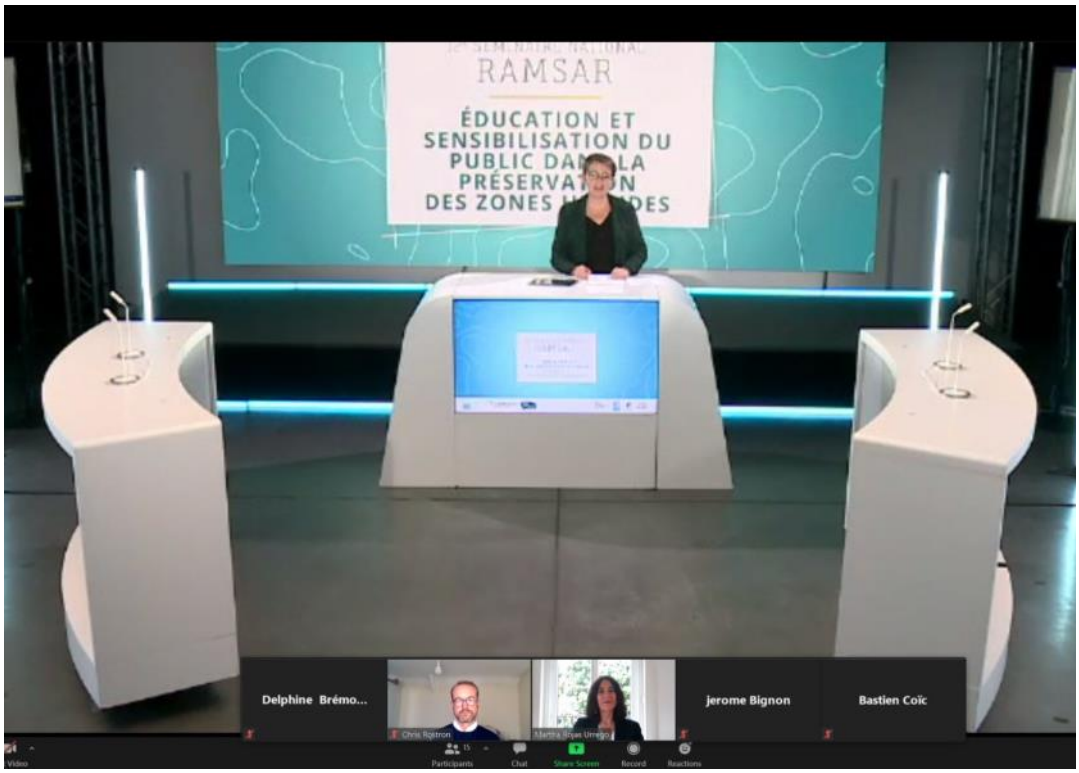
The carbon footprint of our staff and interns in 2020 was 1.1 Tonnes CO2e



Read the summary of the COVID survey on the WLI website.

Ramsar France annual event

Chris Rostron took part in the Ramsar France national webinar in December, talking about the importance of wetland centres in engaging local people and appearing on a panel with the Ramsar France CEPA focal point and the Secretary General of Ramsar, Martha Rojas Urrego.



Migratory Birds for People Annual Meeting

The East Atlantic Flyway initiative, Migratory Birds for People (MBP), had intended to meet at Saloum in Senegal. But the pandemic and staff furlough disrupted this plan at many levels. We compromised, and used the circumstances as a learning opportunity.

We held half a day of online activity. We started with live birding from EVOA in the Tagus Estuary. After a lunch break we said hello to MBP members from Nigeria to St. Petersburg. In total about twice as many people took part as in any previous Annual Meeting.

We heard from three external speakers on new ways we can engage the public; and then six MBP members presented their experiences of 2020 and hopes for 2021. We were able to have our usual planning session for the coming year, and engage with campaigns: banning lead gun shot over wetlands in the EU, and opposing an airport planned for the Tagus Estuary, in Portugal.

We learned that hosting a virtual meeting, while lacking some of the personal connections, can still inspire and encourage wetland educators. We hope to progress to a hybrid online/real-world meeting for 2021 in Senegal.

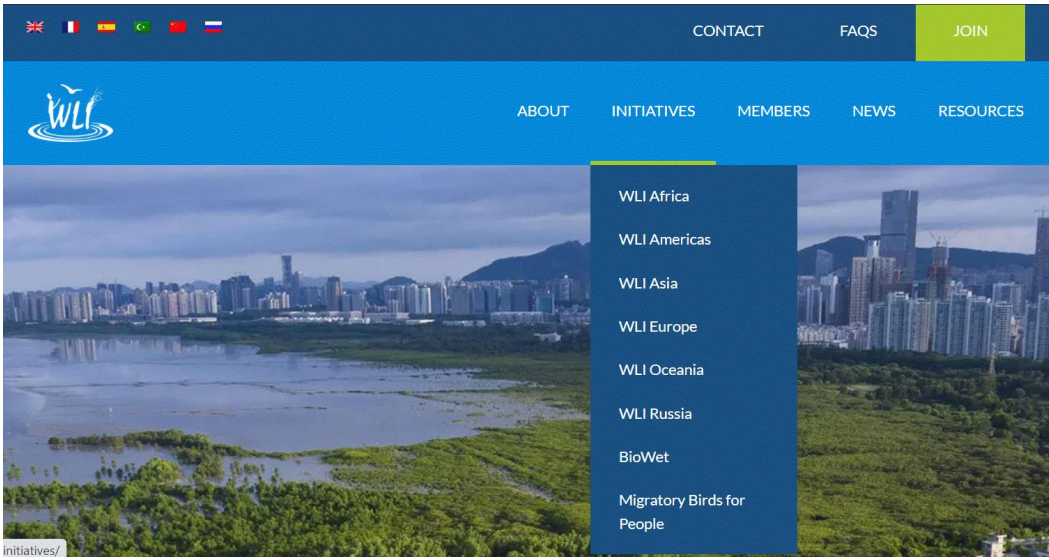
Other video conferences and presentations

Both Chris Rostron and Connor Walsh contributed to China's Mangrove Conservation Foundation launching their new Guide to Developing a Wetland Education Centre. It was also an opportunity to learn about wetland centres in the region and how they have responded to the pandemic.

Connor Walsh took part in three online conferences and workshops. At the annual workshop of the International Wadden Sea School he introduced the educational map resource of Migratory Birds for People, and learned about the approaches to outdoors education in Denmark; at the Ramsar Norway wetland centre workshop he introduced some of the novel approaches centres have taken to cope with COVID 19, and learned about how the Ilene visitor centre used a high-tech remote webcam.

New website launched

In November we re-launched our website, with a more modern appearance and simplified navigation. The website has a new colour-scheme and larger images. We are using the opportunity to update member profiles, so we are starting to contact individual WLI members about the information we have on file.



Ramsar Wetland Cities

We continue to support city accreditation, and Chris Rostron was part of the scoring panel working to select the next round of Ramsar Wetland Cities. In addition, the group will produce an updated draft resolution for Ramsar COP 14. Chris has also been working with the Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia to support development of a new Draft Resolution on education and wetlands.

EAAFP flyway youth forum

Chris Rostron was on the organising committee for the first flyway youth forum, bringing together young people from countries across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and taking part as a facilitator in part of the online forum. The group has produced a statement promoting youth engagement and we hope to do something similar for our MBP flyway initiative.

Looking forward to 30 years of WLI!

WLI was set up in 1991, and has achieved a lot since then. We are planning to celebrate the 30th anniversary in 2021. Firstly, we will develop a wetland centre accreditation scheme, to highlight the great work being carried out by our members. Secondly, we will produce some materials for WLI members – we would like your feedback on what would be most useful. This is likely to be an easy to use map or poster that is relevant to the work most of our members do. Finally, we aim to hold an event at Ramsar COP 14 to mark the anniversary.

Two new members joined WLI in 2020.

Our website had thirteen thousand users.

Our Facebook page grew to 1,301 followers.
Our Twitter account now has 662 followers.

We sent 40 mass emails in three languages.

We produced two Bulletins in 2020:

Bulletin 1, Bulletin 2.

For more information on WLI, please contact:

Chris Rostron, Head of WLI
WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre
Gloucestershire
GL2 7BT
UK

Or visit the website at www.wli.org.uk

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

The WLI network is coordinated by WWT