“Inspiring birds, inspiring people”

The winning photo in a competition in Portugal

“Migratory Birds for People” – Newsletter no. 39 / February, 2021

"Inspiring birds, inspiring people"

NEWSLETTER no. 39 (February, 2021)

Introduction:

The current pandemic has led to the closure of most of our wetland centres.
It has also led to a number of creative actions aimed at ensuring that education, outreach and engagement with our centres remains in town.
You will find inspiring examples of this in this edition.
Some examples of this were also given in our previous edition.

The core group, which meets monthly through ZOOM, also continues to create and support new ideas for the MBP network.

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)

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Rising global temperatures … (article Wetlands International)

New breeding bird atlas of the whole of Europe: a milestone!

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
PS.: your feedback is always welcome!

News from the Core Group

Here is a summary of what the MBP core group has been looking at in the early part of 2021.

Annual meeting

Planning is continuing for the **Annual Meeting 2021**, to be held in **Senegal** later this year.
With so much uncertainty, especially in Europe, we are not ready to confirm details yet, but rest assured we are working on it!

Sharing physical resources

In 2019 we started collecting pre-used binoculars and telescopes in European centres, to help with education and birds survey work in West African member centres.

If the Annual Meeting 2020 had been able to go ahead in Senegal, we would have delivered quite a few.
Instead we have been examining affordable ways to get the optics from Slimbridge to Dakar.
A trial-run of three arrived in five weeks – including delays for Christmas and Brexit – so we can now increase deliveries.

Join-in!

As well as optics, we are adding new resources, **and you are invited to help!**

Would you like to help a particular member centre?

If so, why not donate a birding guidebook to them! Like a mini 'twinning' of centres, you might like to send a copy *of African East Atlantic Flyway Guide: Photographic field guide to waterbirds and seabirds of Africa's Western coastline* direct to a counterpart in West Africa.

The Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI) has produced a photographic field guide to waterbirds & seabirds of the western coast of Africa.

WSFI East Atlantic Flyway Guide

© Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative

You can order it online here, and see the full list of members here.

Our friends at the Common Waddensea Secretariat are already preparing a donation – more news on that, we hope, in the next newsletter. We are also looking into making a simple bird-key, a folding card showing the common wetland species, that can used for education purposes in the region.

East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum

As an international network, we have been inspired by young people, and by our counterparts in other parts of the world.
In particular, **Youth Engaged in Wetlands** and the **East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership**'s good work last year.
(for more info: https://www.facebook.com/youthengagedinwetlands)

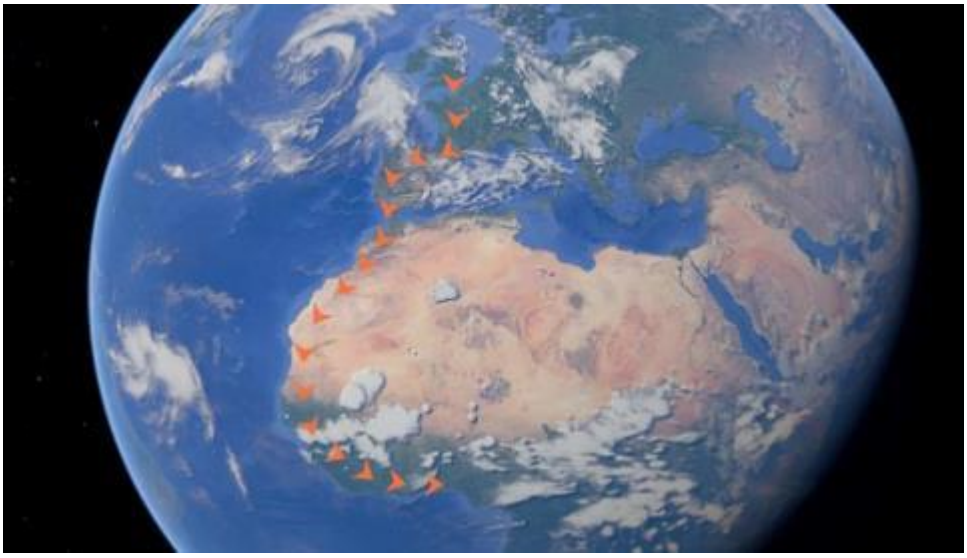
They organised a Flyway Youth Forum (which you may remember we mentioned at the MBP Annual Meeting, a great success, with video messages from Jane Goodall and Martha Rojas Urrego among others.
Over four days, dozens of young people shared wetland conservation perspectives, and built their skills, along with inter-generational engagement.

We were inspired! So we have approached Youth Engaged in Wetlands, along with the International Wadden Sea School and the Africa Eurasia Waterbirds Agreement, to plan something similar for our flyway. It is early days but expect to hear more about this youth flyway forum over the coming years.

Flight of the Osprey is go!

Remember Flight of the Swans? In 2016, WWT's Sacha Dench led an expedition flying the route of Bewick's swans' migration from Russia to the UK, stopping off at some MBP member wetland centres on the way. It was a chance to get media attention and talk about local wetland issues.

This year, Sacha is undertaking the Flight of the Osprey, from Scotland to Ghana. She has created her own NGO, Conservation Without Borders, for this expedition.
She has funding and, pandemic permitting, will set out in August, arriving in Ghana in November.



We are looking into how we can work together with the expedition. We may be able to develop educational materials for classrooms and wetland centres to use; and some centres on the route may also be suitable for a visit from Sacha and her paramotor.
As plans emerge Chris Rostron will be in touch to see whether your centre can take part!

MBP & Eurosite Social Media Guide

Back in 2019, we collaborated with Eurosite to produce a guide to using social media at your centre. That guide introduces the different platforms and the essential principles of social media. Now we are collaborating on the next-level handbook.

Both Eurosite and MBP surveyed our memberships on what type of content you are looking for, and we will start producing the guide this year. Keep an eye out to future editions of this newsletter and – *of course* – the MBP social media for news on when we release it.
Big thanks to Jelke Brandehof at Eurosite for the continuing and fruitful collaboration!

Contributed by Connor Walsh

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

Norway: Fetsund Lenser, Nordre Øyeren wetland centre

Exploration trips with schools

During the autumn of 2020 we managed to complete twenty-two exploration trips with nearby 7th graders to the **new birdwatching tower** in Nordre Øyeren nature reserve (see below).

With many of the Covid-19 local restrictions in place like social distance between us and the students, using hand disinfectants and disinfecting all our equipment after every trip, it was possible for us to complete these outdoor trips with one class at a time.

We focused on specific themes for the trips like the migratory birds, the river delta, insects, flowers, lichens and mosses and added a nature bingo where the aim was for the students to find a variety of plants, birds, insects etc. on their own.

The students were very keen at observing, and spotted roe deer, several species of migratory birds, dragonflies and tracks made by moose, badger and beaver.
One group even saw a foraging badger and a moose!

In a time when most schools did not have options of outdoor learning, being able to join us for a trip to the nature reserve came as a positive addition for the teachers.

Contributed by Henning Flørenes, Nordre Øyeren wetland centre

Sweden: Naturum Lake Tåkern

NATURUM LAKE TÅKERN

Naturum Tåkern is a visitor centre in the county of Östergötland, Sweden. It is one out of 33 naturum in Sweden which all have the mission, from Swedish Nature Protection Agency, to be a gateway to the nature and culture of the national park or nature reserve where it is situated. Naturum Tåkern is situated at the bird lake Tåkern.
The lake with shallow water, reedbeds, shore meadows and thin strip of forest is protected as Nature Reserve since 1975, and as Natura 2000 and Ramsar site. Lake Tåkern is very important for resting migratory birds. In total 278 species of birds have been seen, and about 130 of them breed in the lake.

Inside naturum Tåkern, we have experienced guides, exhibitions, film, laboratory, small café and shop. Outside in the visitor area there is a bird tower, walking trails, nature playground and grilling areas. We offer nature interpretation in many forms, such as guides tours, pond-dipping, self-guiding u-turn rounds and much more.

Naturum Tåkern snowy and cold winter 2021
Photo: Malin Granlund Feldt

Current situation and Year of outdoor life

This February, Sweden is experiencing the longest and coldest winter period for years.
The temperature in Östergötland was below -10 degrees for many weeks, and we had a sparkling white landscape covered with snow and ice on the lake.
It´s a challenge to keep water running in older houses and farms.
This year is nominated as the Year of Outdoor life in Sweden, "Friluftslivets år 2021", and the year started fantastic for those who love skiing and skating. We wish to arrange different kinds of outdoor activities in our program, but planning right now is also frozen.

In normal years, we open our Naturum at winter holiday in February, with mammals, predators, and traces of wild animals as theme, but not this year. Naturum Tåkern is closed until April, at least. We don't plan for any specific guided tours, lectures, or events. This feels very strange and sad. Our biggest driving force to work as nature interpreters at the Naturum is to share nature with our visitors, especially children and school classes and people not very familiar with spending time in the nature.

Footprint of grey heron	Bridge at the reedbed	Footprint of red squirrel

Roving rangers "Guide på vift"

We hope we can act as roving rangers outdoor in the visitor area, if we are allowed to meet people outdoors. This plan also includes Omberg, a very popular small mountain nearby that attracts almost too many visitors.
As a roving ranger, "Guide på vift" we can answer questions about nature, show some flowers and nature objects, help find the right path, tell about the Swedish "Allemansrätten" – the right of public access and keep an eye on facilities, littering, parking of cars and so on.

If we cannot meet people in person, we need to come up with other ways to share nature. Right now, we are working with a new webpage for www.naturumtakern.se with more information on the lake and naturum Tåkern visitor centre.
We are also working with a strategy for social media, with plans also for short films to show different animals, plants, phenomenon, and other nature events.

Marketing naturum in a wider context is also on our agenda, to attract more people post-corona.
After 9 years since the inauguration of naturum Tåkern, we finally take the time to work through and update our school programme, both how to reach the schools and what to offer.
We work out different themes and connect them to the school plans. Some themes we already finished are: "Swarms of Live" about animals and biodiversity, "Free as a bird" about birds, species and behaviour. We also work on the themes "A sense for nature – for nature beginners", "Ecosystem services" (called something better) and "Right of public access for children".

The need of nature interpretation

Finally, we understand better all the time that we are all needed to spread knowledge and raise awareness. We need people to learn what changes to make, to stop species from becoming extinct, stop habitat loss, hunting, trading, invasive species and climate change.
Today me and my colleagues of County Administrative Board of Östergötland learned from a digital lecture how light pollution threatens many species of bats. All the lights from towns can change whole ecosystems by attracting insects, birds and bats from their natural habitat.
In that aspect, we need a darker future.

(Added by editor: For example: Red light does not affect bats activity)
Article in Dutch on Website Dutch institute: https://nioo.knaw.nl/nl/pers/rood-licht-be%C3%AFnvloedt-activiteit-vleermuizen-niet
Can easily be translated by Deepl Translator!

Malin Granlund Feldt and Jenny Carlsson, naturum Tåkern

Sweden: Naturum Getterön

Newsletter from naturum Getterön in Varberg, Sweden

To be able to share our ideas for 2021, I will have to start telling you about last year.

Naturum Getterön managed to stay open most of 2020, though with reduced opening hours.
Instead of cancelling activities, they were adjusted to be distance friendly activities.

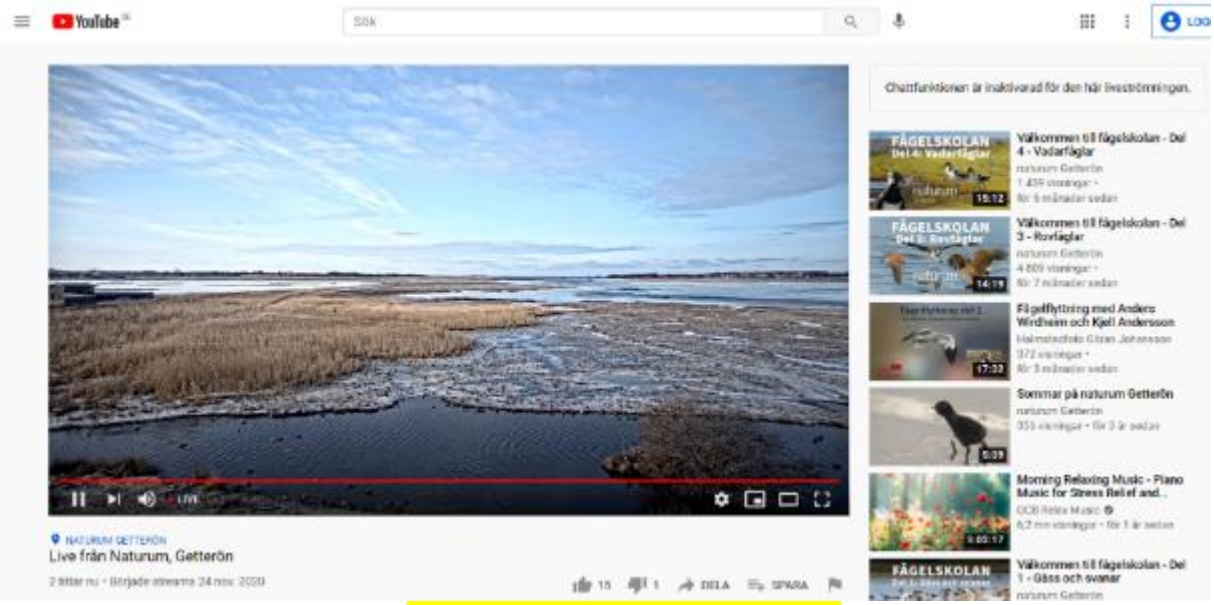
A table was placed in the garden, just outside naturum's entrance, with boxes of things-to-do.
In this way the number of visitors inside of the visitor centre were reduced.

Another adjustment to the pandemic situation was to go **digital**.
Instead of offering lectures in the conference room we recorded the lectures and posted them on our Youtube channel, our webpage, and other social medias we use.

We also produced a mini-series called **Fågelskolan (School of birds).**
Each episode is about one bird group, for example waders. What identifies the bird group, which birds within the group are possible to see in our reserve, etcetera. It's something we use in our everyday pedagogy.

(see also: http://getteron.com/fagelskola/)

Lastly, we asked ourselves, how do we reach our visitors at home? How could we make the nature reserve available for them?
We decided to try **live streaming from our reserve**. We put two cameras up on the naturum building. One is directed on the feeding place for eagles (see link under the picture) and the second one is showing different parts of Getterön's nature reserve.
Camera number two is movable and is managed from a computer at naturum.



See: https://youtu.be/zT6dGx9CuZ8

For 2021 we will continue using different medias and technology to make information and activities more available. Last year made it possible to develop the things I mentioned.
We see these investments as permanent and we are eager to develop it further. Currently a new webpage is under construction. Also new elements in the exhibition are under development where we plan to use technology which hopefully can be linked to our website in the future.

The school tours last year taught us to only have one school at a time at naturum. The planning was easier, the tour itself got better and other visitors didn't take much notice of the school class. We will continue with this kind of schedule for schools.

Naturum Getterön closed in November 2020 due to harder restrictions in Halland county. We still haven't opened, and we don't know when it'll be possible to start up again. Meanwhile we do our best to plan summer activities and be ready to re-open when the pandemic situation allows it.

Hope you all stay healthy!
Linnea Henriksson
February 4th 2021

(Note from editor: you can also watch the Getterön nature reserve at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kh1uiy-LCI)

Sweden: Naturum Hornborgasjön

Lake Hornborga – Sweden

In Sweden the corona-pandemic has resulted in a lot of regulations. We have not been under lock-down, but that doesn't mean we have been free to do as we want. The visitor centre by Lake Hornborga has been closed since beginning of November. We could not arrange the yearly "eagle-watch" that we usually have in January.
But people have come to our nature reserve anyway, just to enjoy winter and be out on skates and skies on the frozen lake.

The cranes will come

Now we are trying to prepare for our high season which will be upon us in a few weeks, without knowing if we our aloud to open for the public or not.

Photo: Josefin Nilsson

In the end of March we know, that regardless of the pandemic, the cranes will return to Sweden and Lake Hornborga. That usually means around 150 000 visitors during just a few weeks.
It will probably be less people this year, but on the other hand, the pandemic has resulted in a new love for outdoor activities in Sweden. Everything is closed so a lot of people go out in nature instead.
So we think there might be a lot of visitors coming anyway to see and welcome the Swedish spring and the cranes.

Meeting visitors outdoors

If we can´t meet our visitors indoors in our centers, we will have people working outdoors with giving out information, answering questions and helping people to keep distance.
During the last year we have been working a lot with information, both on site and digital.
One way of doing this is that we have our own **corona-distance-logo**. A crane can be 2 m in wingspan so the logo reminds us to "keep a crane-distance" to each other.

(***Illustration:*** *corona-distance logo by Josefin Nilsson)*

This spring it will only be ok for cranes to dance cheek to cheek!

Best Regards, **Sofie Stålhand**
Visitor centre manager by Lake Hornborga

Netherlands: Terschelling

Short message from Wanda Bakker this time:

Good to learn that there is monthly contact with the core group.
It would be great to see each other again in a meeting, but I'm afraid that this will take a while.

It is also good that there is **an app group** with each other. That way we can have regular contact and we can read from each other what everybody is doing.

Next time, Terschelling will be there again!

Wanda Bakker, warden Terschelling

Netherlands: Oostvaardersplassen

It is 'migratory bird madness' in the Nature Reserve Oostvaardersplassen this winter!

Boswachter Hans-Erik Kuypers in Oostvaardersplassen

On December 16, I wrote a blog post about the 40,000 birds that were counted in the area by volunteers Henk Hupkes and Jos Scholten. (see below)
Unprecedented numbers of lapwings and golden plovers with a sea eagle here and there. The Oostvaardersplassen as a set table for migratory birds with a floor full of worms and insects.
Yesterday, I received the count data from early February and the numbers are impressive again.

40.000 Birds!

16th of December 2020

Migratory birds visit the Oostvaardersplassen in large numbers.
The bird census at the end of November provides a good illustration of the attraction that the wet grasslands and rougher areas in Oostvaardersplassen have for migrating birds.

The sky is dark with birds

Each month, birders Henk Hupkes and Jos Scholten take a day to count all the birds and their numbers in certain parts of the grassy area of Oostvaardersplassen.

The large numbers were counted mainly among the lapwings (12,750) and golden plovers (10,885), and in third place the teals (4379).

The relatively mild autumn with a large number of rain showers caused the Waterlands, a grassland area of some 300 hectares, to flood. A low dike around this area retains the water, making the ground swampy and soft. Water birds and waders can easily find food (snails, worms, insects and plants) and use it to build up their strength during migration. When the temperatures really drop and the frost starts to settle in the ground, most birds will migrate to the warmer south.

Another wonderful observation is that goldfinches are now profiting in large numbers from the seeds of the rough herbs that have developed in the small fenced areas. These areas are not grazed, which has

allowed the herbs to flower and set seed. We expect to see this happening more often outside the temporary fencing as well, when the rough herbs get a bigger role in the vegetation.

Flocks of goldfinches at the fenced areas (photo: Henk Hupkes/Jos Scholten)

Although the number of 63 species is respectable for a day of counting, it is not a record number; at an earlier count a number of 78 species was counted. This does not alter the fact that it is very cool to see in the list of species 3 white-tailed eagles and 2 **kingfishers.**

It is and remains a fascinating area where you are always surprised by new observations and how nature follows the changing seasons. The complex interplay of plants, animals and terrain conditions creates a dynamic in the area that will not get boring quickly.

(Photos : Henk Hupkes & Jos Scholte

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Count with the "New Land National Park 2021 Species Year"!

5th of January, 2021

photo: Alex Westerhof

This year is the opportunity to put known - but also new - species of plants, animals and all other life in nature on the map. Together with its partners, National Park New Land organises the 2021 Species Year. You can enter your observations throughout the year.

Photo: Wim Brink

In this youngest national park of the Netherlands, has never before been such a large-scale inventory of animals and plants that live there.
Of course, many observations, especially of birds, are recorded in **Oostvaardersplassen,** and also at **Marker Wadden and Lepelaarplassen.**

But we would like to get an even better idea of the natural wealth of the area by organising the 2021 Species Year. Now is the opportunity to also record observations for many other species groups within one year!

Many 'species organisations' have already enthusiastically signed up to participate in the count this year. We are very happy about this, because with these experts and volunteers we will be able to put the first species 'on the map' from the beginning of 2021. We are looking for all species: animals, plants, but also 'life at the micro-level' such as soil and water creatures and insects. You are welcome to help count the numbers at the Marker Wadden, in the Oostvaardersplassen, Lepelaarplassen and the Markermeer.

How can you participate?

For more information about how you can participate, visit the website of the Nationaal Park Nieuw Land or click on the QR code below to download the Obsidentify app and follow the steps.

The registered species can be followed directly via Waarneming.nl . On 4 January 168 species had already been spotted, including 104 different species of birds.

The goal

(news after first month of inventory)

The aim of the 2021 Species Year is to count and map at least 2021 plants, animals and mushrooms this year. With the 2021 Species Year we want to pay attention to the diverse life that is present in the National Park. Not only the most visible species, such as the white-tailed eagle and the various birds that are characteristic of NP Nieuw Land, but also species that are not so obvious, such as snails, lichens, insects and mushrooms.

Now, one month later, 533 species have been counted by 363 different observers. As far as I am concerned, that number is far beyond expectations. To be honest, I didn't dare make any expectations and when we set the target of 2021 species, we had some discussions whether it would be realistic and achievable. Time will tell.

What makes the project really fun is the involvement of both nature organisations, species experts and the 'regular' visitor, and the enthusiasm we encounter every time people add a species to the ever-growing list.

If you look at the observations (via the project page on www.waarneming.nl) you can see that the group of birds (still) carries the most weight. From the first days onwards, countless birds were recorded and the

counter remained at over 100 species for a long time. Then it apparently becomes more difficult to add new bird species to the list.

The aim is to raise awareness among visitors and other interested parties of the diversity of animals and plants (and fungi) present in the young National Park.
A year in which specialists and regular visitors (of all ages) are invited to go out and investigate, observe and register species.

A tool for this is the registration via the app **Obsidentify**: You take a photo of, for example, a bird and upload it via the app. This app immediately registers your observation and you also get a suggestion which bird this is.
We have written two blogs about this app with all possible references.
For MBP it is nice to know that this year we already have counted 135 different species of birds.
See also at: https://waarneming.nl/bioblitz/bioblitz-nationaal-park-nieuw-land-2021soortenjaar/

The public engagement is quite good and I think this could really be a theme for other National Parks on the East Atlantic Flyway (migratory birds and public awareness).

Hans-Erik Kuypers (warden Oostvaardersplassen)

Belgium, Uitkerkse Polder

Hoping for a fresh restart!

Because of the Corona-situation there is not much news to contribute.
We are eager to organise something - however small - but it is all still so uncertain and without a precise timetable for the restart….

Here is what's in the pipeline for the upcoming Easter holidays from 3 to 18 April, in an attempt to offer a fun yet nature-educational Corona-proof program for families with children:

- For families with children (target group: 3 - 12 years) we are offering a Corona-proof "Wild Outdoor Things Walk" during the Easter holidays (3 to 18 April):

This is a follow-up to the wild outdoors walks launched last year by Natuurpunt in Flanders: see https://www.natuurpunt.be/pagina/wilde-buiten-dingen-wandelingen.

- Along the Kievitspad (1 km walking route around the visitors' centre Uitkerkse Polder), a series of signs with nature activities have been hanging since last summer

a sample photo of such a sign):

  - Take a walk barefoot
  - Listen to nature with your eyes closed
  - Find a figure in the clouds
  - Balance on a tree
  - Spot a bird with binoculars
  - Whistle with natural materials

During the Easter holidays we would like to supplement these to 10 do-activities, bundled on a checklist on which you can tick off each activity with a dirty mud finger. These will be the four additional activities:

- Take the most beautiful picture of nature
- Take 5 different ticklish animals on your hand
- Look at a ticklish animal under the magnifying glass
- Enjoy your own spot of rest in nature

In addition, we invite the children to romp around in our nature playground "De Kievit" with climbing ropes, climbing logs and a willow tree hut.
New (since this week!) is **a play kitchenette,** to bake delicious sand cakes.:) **=>**

We would like to bundle all the do-activities on a print-friendly checklist on our website www.natuurpunt.be/bezoekerscentrum-uitkerkse-polder. In addition, we will then mention what participants need to bring themselves in order to carry out the activities independently:

- binoculars
- magnifying glass
- Towel (barefoot walk)
- camera (nature photo)

Finally, on the checklist we would refer to the complete Natuurpunt checklist with "50-things-you-must-do-for-you-12", see www.natuurpunt.be/50dingen.

During the opening hours of the visitor centre, participants will be able to collect a paper checklist with all 50 things to do after completing all the activities along the Kievitspad.

With kind regards,

Anneleen Lybeer

Staff member of the Uitkerkse Polder visitor centre
Kuiperscheeweg 20
8370 Blankenberge
050-42 90 40
W www.natuurpunt.be/bezoekerscentrum-uitkerkse-polder
E uitkerksepolder@natuurpunt.be

Natuurpunt Beheer vzw, Dienst Beleving, Coxiestraat 11, 2800 Mechelen
info@natuurpunt.be, www.natuurpunt.be, ON 0409.423.736
RPR Enterprise Court Antwerp, department Mechelen

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Belgium: Nature centre "het Zwin"

1. White Stork transmitter project

The Zwin Nature Park is home to an important breeding population of White Storks *(Ciconia Ciconia)*. The population in the Park itself holds 13-14 pairs. Further pairs breeding in the wider area.
The total regional population, one of the largest and most important in Belgium, counts 45-50 pairs. As the Park is very important for the conservation of this species in Belgium and also because the White Storks are very popular among the visitors of the Park, the Zwin Nature Parks pays great attention to these birds.
This attention includes close **monitoring** of the population. This monitoring includes the ringing of all young birds in the nest every year, and since 2019 also the use of transmitters on the back of a small number of young storks in the nest.
The transmitters do not work with satellites, but they make connection to the mobile phone network.
A total of seven young storks have so far been fitted with transmitters: three in 2019 and four in 2020.
An important specific question of the transmitter project was to investigate to what extent our storks make use of waste landfills. It is foreseen that these open landfills will close in the near future in Spain.
We are curious what the effect will be on our storks.

The transmitter project is still very recent, and we are only beginning to learn a lot. Nevertheless two years of data have already revealed very important and very interesting information. We have been very lucky so far with the survival rate of both birds and transmitters.
Five out of seven birds are still alive. Two died in their first winter, but even for these birds we were able to track their first southward migration and a large part of their first winter.
For two birds we have been able to cover also their first northward migration, their first summer, their second southward migration and their second winter.

What did we learn so far?

Here are some examples of interesting things we have learned already.

- Even though some of the older adult breeding birds remain to winter in the area around the Zwin Nature Park, all young birds that were fitted with a transmitter migrated south in August.
- No birds have crossed the Sahara desert to go and winter in the Sahel zone of western Africa.
- Four birds crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into Africa, but they remained to winter in northern Morocco. The other birds wintered in Spain.
- Waste landfills are very attractive to White Storks on migration and in winter, with most birds spending most of their foraging time at such sites.
- The first northward migration is late and slow for birds in their second calendar year, having no rush to reach a breeding site. These first summer birds spend their first spring and summer roaming between several sites, which may lie hundreds of kilometre's apart.
- One of two birds visited its natal site in the Zwin Nature Park for more than one month and a half in summer. The other bird did not visit.

The Zwin Nature Park will continue to put transmitters on new birds in 2021 and in following years, and we will of course keep on tracking the birds that are already wearing a transmitter. We hope to get many more fascinating data that will reveal insight in the life and movements of our storks.

Note: the birds all have a colour ring which can be read at a reasonable distance with telescope or binoculars.
Sightings this way are also very interesting and many thanks for providing them to us.
https://www.zwin.be/nl/operatie-ooievaar.

2. Placement of MOTUS-tracker

In 2020, the Zwin Nature installed a so called 'MOTUS-tracker' on the roof of the visitor centre.
The MOTUS tracking system (https://motus.org/) is a system that was originally set up in Canada, but is now also being spread more widely in Europe and elsewhere in the world. In recent years, this new system has really taken off. It involves the use of radio transmitters that are so small that they can be placed on even the smallest bird species.
They can also be placed on organisms other than birds, such as bats. In fact, they are so small that they can even be placed on large insects such as dragonflies. The system works differently from that with GPS transmitters, which make contact via satellite. Radio transmitters send out signals that make contact with fixed receiving installations. Every time a bird equipped with a radio transmitter passes near a receiving installation, it will be registered. Especially for birds flying at a certain height, the range is considerable (the higher, the further the range): the receiver system can pick up the bird up to 15 km away.
This is a revolutionary system for tracking small birds and bats that move over long distances during their migration, but it is dependent on the availability of receiving equipment. The system will work better and better as more reception systems are installed. It is to be expected that the use of this system will be further expanded in the future, as a result of which more and more birds and bats will fly around with such a radio transmitter.

The system is especially good during migration periods when it picks up migrating animals passing within range of the receiving station. In the autumn of 2020 six different animals were picked up by the MOTUS-tracker in the Zwin Nature Park: three bats (all three Nathusius's Pipistrelle that had been tagged in the Netherlands) and three birds (Sedge Warbler, Northern Wheatear and Eurasian Skylark, all fitted at various sites in northern Germany). Of course, none of these animals were seen in the field, but they were picked up by the MOTUS-tracker when they passed the Zwin sometime during the night, on migration.

A fascinating new system that could be worth exploring for other sites. The system will work all the better if more and more receiving stations will be available throughout Europe.

Contributed by Wouter Faveyts, Zwin Nature Park

Luxembourg: Biodiversum Remerschen

KIND REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:

I am looking for opportunities for further training or capacity building in the management of wetlands and reed beds, maybe in relation to species and bird conservation. Or are there possibilities to get an insight into bird ringing or special monitoring programmes?

Are there any centres that offer training or workshops in these fields that we could join?

Thanks, Patric Lorgé

Email: Patric.Lorge@anf.etat.lu

Ban on lead shots in wetland areas.

The European Commission has published the final text of the lead shot ban in wetlands

(starting date is 15 February 2021 - 20 days after publication).

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0057&qid=1611917764606

This means that Member States of the European Union need to implement the ban by 15 February 2023 at the latest. Only exception is when the MS total surface is >20% wetland area. These countries need to implement the ban by 15 February 2024 at the latest.

MS have to report to EC before 15th August 2021 if they will implement by 2023 or 2024 and they have to report to the EC about the changes in the national legislation. As this is a text of EEA relevance, it should (pending confirmation) also apply to Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, as they are part of REACH.

shared by Patric Lorgé

United Kingdom: Slimbridge

Update from WWT Slimbridge

All WWT's visitor centres have had to shut, due to national and regional lockdown restrictions.
The one WWT site in the UK without a visitor centre building or entrance fee has remained open.

Steart Marshes (which some of you visited during the 2019 annual meeting) has open footbaths serving an important function for local people to exercise.

For the remaining nine locations, doors are closed to the public but reserve management and animal care work continues.

Chris Rostron and Connor Walsh, who lead WWT's involvement in MBP, are both still working full-time from home.
This is the case for most of the Conservation Directorate and other departments that do not engage directly with visitors.

Contributed by Connor Walsh

Spain: Urdaibai Bird Center

We have lots of news from the Urdaibai Bird Center!

Despite it being an unusual year due to lockdowns and restrictions, we had very positive visitor numbers in 2020.

25.092 people were able to come and enjoy the birds from the centre´s observatories.
This was a 10% increase on figures from 2019. However, actually visiting the centre was not always possible. During lockdown we offered online streaming on the nature in Urdaibai using the camera we have in the marsh.
These programmes were a welcome window on nature for many during the long months of confinement. They attracted a staggering **290.114** people.

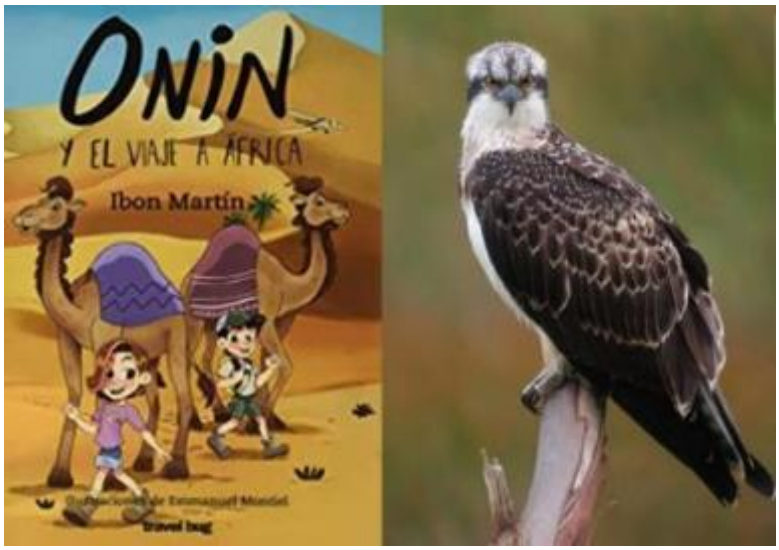
As so many people have become avid followers of the nature in Urdaibai through our online broadcasts, we decided to celebrate World Wetlands Day with a special programme.

The focus was on the importance of wetlands and their conservation and we gave a detailed explanation of the recovery project in the marsh here.

Of course the birds were the stars of the show and viewers enjoyed snipes, coots, spoonbills, cattle egrets and more. Figures for visitors of the feathered type are also positive!

As we all know, the world of birds is full of surprises.

Here at the Centre we received a fantastic surprise a short while ago. Last year we were visited by Ibon Martin the writer of a series of **children´s books called Onin.** During his visit to Urdaibai Bird Center, Ibon was fascinated by the story of Cousteau, an osprey from our recovery programme.
Little did we know that it had inspired him to write a new Onin adventure.
A few weeks ago we received a parcel and to our surprise, it contained an incredible book about the character Onin and her adventures helping the osprey Cousteau on his migratory journey to Africa.



Contributed by Edorta Unamuno

Spain: Regional Park of Las Salinas de San Pedro

WORLD WETLANDS DAY IN THE REGIONAL PARK OF LAS SALINAS DE SAN PEDRO

For more than 10 years we have been celebrating **World Wetlands Day** in the Regional Park of Salinas y Arenales de San Pedro del Pinatar, raising awareness of the value of these ecosystems for society and nature.

However, this year, which marks 50 years since the Convention on Wetlands was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar, the current health emergency situation due to COVID-19 prevents us from carrying out activities in person to celebrate this day. For this reason, the outreach and awareness-raising work that we carry out from the Information Service has been transferred this year to the digital media.

Thus, through our publication on social networks, we wanted to highlight the importance of the benefits provided by the Salinas de San Pedro wetland.
The way to get closer to the classrooms has been through **an online talk** for the students of the IES Dos Mares secondary school in San Pedro del Pinatar, with whom we have talked about the consequences that the unsustainable use of water has on wetlands and the alternatives we have to help in their conservation.

In addition, this year we have been lucky enough to celebrate this special day by **releasing two flamingos** that had been treated at the El Valle Wildlife Recovery Centre, where they were admitted last summer due to some injuries.

Once they had recovered from their injuries, they were in good condition to be released, choosing for this event one of the most unique natural spaces in the Region of Murcia, the Regional Park of the Salinas de San Pedro.
This year's Wetlands Day 2021 has been different from other years, we have not been able to organise activities to enjoy the wetlands, but we have been able to raise awareness of the importance of conserving these ecosystems.

Contributed by Marià Ciller

Portugal: Tagus Estuary Birdwatching and Conservation Area

PhotoEVOA Temporary New Exhibition

World Wetland Day, 2 February, last chance to choose!

Throughout 2020 we were selecting the best photographs of each month, published in @Grupo Fotografia at EVOA, which will be displayed in an exhibition at the EVOA premises.
But we have a final hobby for these talented photographers and for our community!

In this album are all the finalist photographs so that everyone can choose and vote for their favourite (s).

The one with the highest number of reactions until February 2nd - World Wetlands Day, will be considered the winner.
The winning author will be known on the 2nd of February and will be able to compose a small exhibition, with 6 additional photographs, also to be displayed at the EVOA facilities.

Considering this year's theme: **Inseparable: Water, Wetlands, Life**, which emphasizes wetlands as a source of drinking water, encouraging actions that contribute to their restoration and prevent their destruction, we believe that the dissemination of these moments that through of photography are eternalized in time, they constitute in themselves an extraordinary means to raise awareness for the preservation and valorisation of these ecosystems.

Due to the current situation, the physical opening of this exhibition will be announced on a date to be defined later, but we could not fail to disclose all these wonderful images.
We thank all participating photographers and sharing with us absolutely extraordinary photographs!

The winning photo was from José Flor, one of EVOA members, was taken in November, is **a Bonelli's eagle trying to catch the teals at EVOA shallow lagoon.**

Webinar: Students and Wetlands: always together!

More than 200 teachers saw - direct or after the date- in this webinar about how they could engage their students to environmental actions even during pandemic times, only with distance learning.
We gave some ideas of activities, and we showed what we can do in our virtual classes:
Barn Owl mysteries, Song Games, and other activities.

We use the **World Wetland Day** as an example of sensibilization, we talked about what we can do as teachers and as individuals to help the wetlands, like reduce the water used at home, use the food wisely.

All the best,
Sandra Paiva Silva

Morocco, Centre d'Information Ecologique Oualida

Renovation and makeover of the Centre d'Information Ecologique Oualidia *for the next reopening....*

Introduction

In Morocco, as in other countries around the world, the health situation is increasingly stable, and normal life is gradually returning to normal, with precautionary measures being taken. This has allowed us to continue with some of the activities that were on stand-by due to the health crisis and to be able to organise a few awareness campaigns for small groups, after it had been impossible to organise events and welcome visitors to the Oualidia Ecological Information Centre for several months.
On the other hand, we have made progress in establishing our strategy and the actions to be implemented very soon for the rehabilitation of the centre in order to prepare it for a new reopening.

Micro-project "Strengthening the activities of the Walidia Information Centre".

Within the framework of the dual project "Sustainable management of wetlands in the Mediterranean" (FGEF) and "Civil society organisations and wetlands" (AFD), a partnership has been established

between Tour du Valat and GREPOM/BirdLife Morocco for the implementation of the project entitled **"Strengthening the activities of the Walidia information centre".**

The project aims to Strengthen the role of our Ecological Information Centre in Oualidia in environmental education and raising public awareness of the importance of wetlands and their biodiversity.
This involves renewing and updating the permanent exhibition in the information area, which should host awareness-raising and information activities on various themes related to the conservation of wetlands.
Through the centre's various programmes, the project aims to train and inform schoolchildren and to develop eco-gestures among citizens with regard to natural heritage, in the sense that the local population and visitors will be able to appreciate the issues that threaten the ecological systems of the Sidi Moussa-Walidia complex.
To consolidate this role, the design of different activity programmes for (schoolchildren, visitors, summer visitors) is planned.
More details will be communicated in future newsletters as the project progresses.

In order to reinforce the number of educational and awareness raising actions carried out at the Walidia centre on wetlands and their biodiversity, awareness raising campaigns and small group visits to the centre were planned within the framework of the micro-project, and our VBN-reinforcement project (BirdLife / The Netherlands) on different occasions while respecting the necessary barrier measures.

On the occasion of the celebration of World Migratory Bird Day :

During this period, it was not easy to welcome visitors to the centre, so we opted for a visit to a school and the organisation of a pedagogical awareness-raising action that took place on 16 October 2020 in a primary school for the benefit of 20 pupils and teachers. After presenting the Oualidia Information and Education Centre and its role in raising awareness, we held an interactive session on the importance of wetlands for migratory birds, and a game on bird migration was the opportunity to explain to the pupils this phenomenon and the different types of migration.
At the end of the session the pupils visited a photo exhibition of Walidia's birds..

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A TV report

On 23 December 2020, GREPOM organised a workshop for about twenty pupils and their teachers, with the presence of the headmaster of a school. The participants benefited from a visit to the CIEO, during which they were able to discover more closely the phenomenon of migration and the role that wetlands play for migratory birds.

The second part of the day was dedicated to an outing to the Oualidia saltworks to observe and initiate the identification of birds using the new waterbird identification guide that has just been published by GREPOM/BirdLife Morocco.

This event was covered by the French TV channel TF1, and the report was broadcast on the TV news at 8 pm, on January 3rd, 2021 to make discover the natural and tourist potentialities of Oualidia.
During this visit, the president and the head of the CIEO took the opportunity to present the various awareness activities, guided tours and field trips organised by our Centre.

On the occasion of the celebration of World Wetlands Day

On the occasion of World Wetlands Day, and in the framework of our micro-project, and our VBN reinforcement project (BirdLife/ The Netherlands) the CIEO hosted a visit of a small group of school children. The visit was attended by 19 pupils accompanied by their teachers who benefited from a presentation on the importance of wetlands, a guided visit to the different educational exhibitions at the centre, as well as an excursion to the saltworks of Oualidia to introduce the young participants to bird watching, using our simplified identification guides.

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

Other Flyway news

News from our MBP-partner : EUROSITE:

The Secretariat supports the Eurosite members, and Board and Council, to implement Eurosite's Strategy.
We coordinate and develop the network activities and organise training opportunities for European site managers. Being the first point of contact for partners, collaborators and others, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

Presenting: HARM SCHOTEN, new director for Eurosite.

Experience

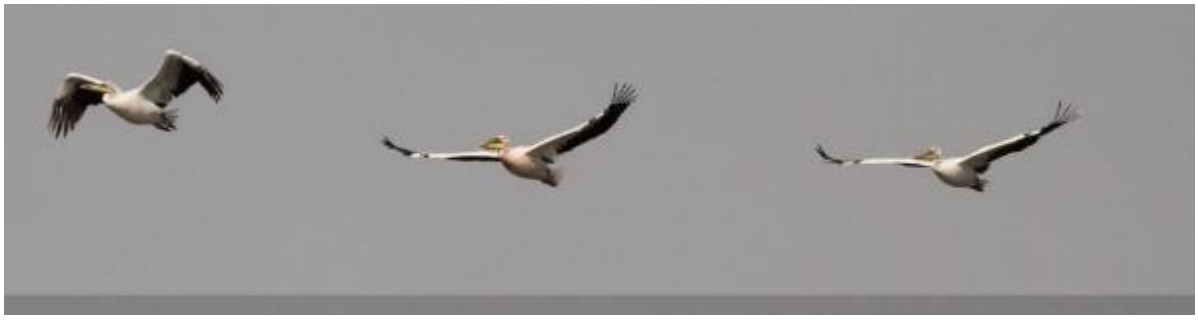
Harm is a Dutch native who started working at Eurosite on 1 January 2021.
Before taking on his role as Eurosite's Director, he worked at the Dutch BirdLife partner 'Vogelbescherming Nederland' for over a decade in the leading position as Head of the Nature Unit.
Harm was in charge of advocacy, capacity, strategic development planning, communication, and fundraising for the conservation of Natura 2000 areas. His work focused on large-scale nature restoration projects through cooperation with various stakeholders, business partners and governments.

Before his time at the VBN, he worked as a Senior Policy Officer at the Witteveen+Bos - a Dutch consultancy specialised in Strategic and Environmental Impact Assessment - and the independent research organisation TNO. Harm has been a Council Member of Natuurmonumenten for eight years, and is currently serving as the Board Chair of A Rocha Nederland, the Dutch branch of the renowned international Christian nature conservation organisation.

"Every day I am inspired by the beauty of nature and people surrounding me. I am a keen naturalist with a particular passion for birds and insects. When I see a hoverfly hovering in the warm sunlight, it reminds me of being part of something higher. I love diversity in nature, but even more so in humankind.

With differences in language, culture, gender etc. Eurosite is a true expression of varieties.
I hope to continue Eurosite's successful trajectory as a leading network for conservation practitioners in Europe.
Together with our members, strategic partners and with the Secretariat, we will take Eurosite's Reach, Relevance, Resilience and Recognition to the next level!"

Contact: hschoten@eurosite.org



Rising global temperatures driving birds from the tropics faster and at greater scale than anticipated

Researchers have discovered that waterbirds around the equator are sensitive to global warming and are reacting more quickly than birds from regions with a more moderate climate.

This is partly because in the hottest regions they are already at the maximum temperature threshold, so even a small increase is fatal. In less heat-intense regions, the range at which the birds can survive is greater.

Higher temperatures are being recorded all around the world in the last years and impacts on thawing of arctic permafrost, melting of the polar icecaps, increased frequencies of forest fires and crippling droughts is now better known. What appears to be less well understood is the impact of these higher temperatures are having at species living in warm climes, such as the tropics, and which hold the highest biodiversity.

Populations of waterbirds decreasing at lower latitudes

An international team of researchers from Universities of Bath, Cambridge, Debrecen and Santa Clara, the National Audubon Society and Wetlands International and the University of Queensland (UQ) in Australia have found that with rising global temperatures, populations of waterbirds were found to decrease at lower latitudes (closer to the equator), while they increased at higher latitudes. The movement from the equator is in the direction of both poles.

The research team reviewed more than 1.3 million records collected since 1990 from 390 species of waterbirds at 6,822 sites in a wide range from the equator. The data was collected by thousands of volunteer counters through the International Waterbird Census co-ordinated by Wetlands International and Christmas Bird Count managed by the National Audubon Society. The birds studied included a wide range of ducks and geese, shorebirds, pelicans, flamingo, herons, storks, ibises, cormorants and cranes.

UQ ARC Future Fellow Dr Tatsuya Amano, who led the research said: "Earlier global reviews of species' responses to climate change have rarely included species and studies in the tropics – being largely conducted in Europe, North America, Australia and the Arctic. As a result – although tropical species have long been predicted to be more vulnerable to increasing temperature – there was little empirical evidence on how climate change really affects species abundance in the tropics. But, from our research, this is overwhelmingly clear – 69 per cent of the tropical species show negative responses to temperature increases."

Mixed groups of herons feeding in a shallow coastal wetland in Sri Lanka.
Photo credits Mr Sudheera Bandara.

An invaluable dataset

The global dataset of waterbird abundance is the fruit of invaluable, long-term survey efforts in over 100 countries by a large volunteer network and covers regions for which there is little information on climate change impacts. Waterbirds can be observed and monitored relatively easily, offering an early proxy for climate change impacts on other species. They help in assessing the status of biodiversity in wetland ecosystems, which has been lost at higher rates than other ecosystems.

Dr. Taej Mundkur, Coordinator of the International Waterbird Census at Wetlands International, who was part of the research team, hopes that this fresh evidence will help strengthen the case for real action on a warming climate. He said: "Many of these waterbird species move around locally while others are migratory and annually move between countries and continents. Thus these large species shifts and loss can have serious consequences, not only for local biodiversity, but also on the ecology and productivity of the coastal and inland wetlands they utilise and for human well-being across the world".

"This research helps fill in the gaps a little, but it would be great to see it receive even more research attention, especially in the tropics. This would provide crucial evidence for a more effective allocation of limited resources for the conservation of species and ecosystems most threatened by climate change, and for assessing how climate-driven changes in biodiversity may affect human societies," Dr. Mundkur added.

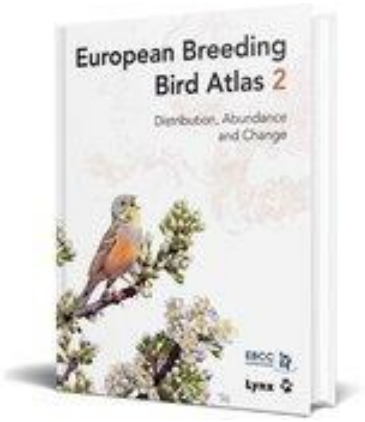
Researchers at work conducting counts in Sri Lanka. Photo credits Taej Mundkur.

Translating ecological requirements into national policies and landscape plans

The study confirms the predictions of earlier research led by Wetlands International with BirdLife International and the Universities of Kassel, McGill, Lausanne and Wisconsin, that waterbird species breeding in Africa and the Middle East will suffer major losses of suitable wetland habitat across their ranges and would be adversely affected by climate change. In practice, this means that we need to better integrate our understanding of ecological requirements of waterbirds into national policies and landscape scale plans for land use and water management.

New breeding bird atlas of the whole of Europe: a milestone!

European Bird Census Council, Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland



4-DEC-2020 -

Some 120,000 birders went into the field, from the Azores to the Urals. With one goal: to have a new overview of all breeding birds of the whole of Europe, after some thirty years. The results are summarised in the new European Breeding Bird Atlas (EBBA2), a book that was presented on 3 December. What are the major shifts and what else stands out?

This atlas is the successor to the previous reference work, which was published in 1997 and mainly contained data from the 1980s. The new breeding bird atlas is based on counts from 2013 to 2017. Under the leadership of the European Bird Census Council (EBCC), bird organisations from all over Europe joined forces to collect data on a scale of 50 x 50 kilometres and process them in a scientific manner. This also made a comparison with the previous atlas possible.
A huge task, for which the vast tundra's up to the Urals were specially visited.

Gone and appearing

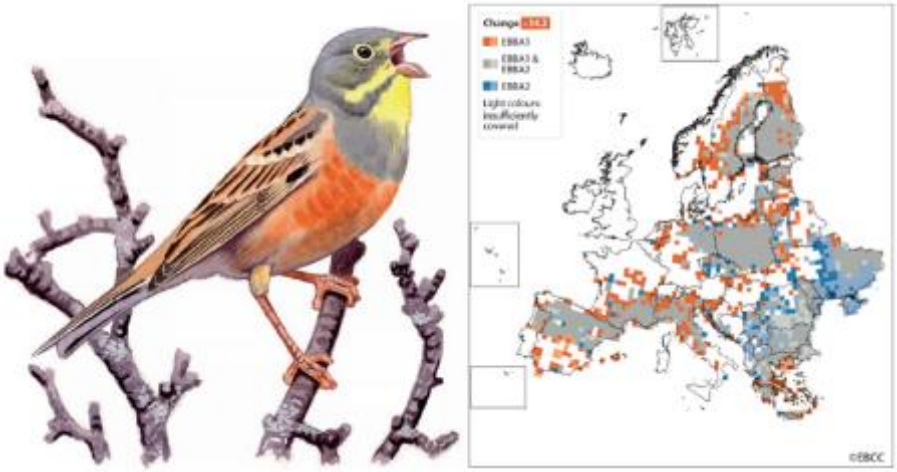
Despite the obvious changes in European landscapes and climate, the number of species that have completely disappeared is fortunately limited. These include the Fighting Quail, which was previously found in Spain. The number of new breeding birds is also limited. One example is the house martin, which settled in southern Spain.

Major changes

Nevertheless, big changes can be seen. Based on the comparisons, it is clear that 35 percent of all native species have expanded their range. Examples that also occur in the Netherlands are the black-headed gull and the cattle egret. On the other hand, 25% of the species have declined. Examples include the ruff and the ortolan, which features on the front cover of the book. The data also show that since the last atlas, the average location of the areas has moved northwards by 28 kilometres, which means one kilometre per year.

Spain's Sergi Herrando, one of the coordinators, says: "Regions in the north of our continent have gained species, while in the south there are losses. One group that stands out are the farmland birds. In the Mediterranean region, in western and central Europe, there are major losses."

This is consistent with existing information on the decline of many farmland birds due to land use intensification. As a result of the shift in acreage northwards, the species richness of forest birds is increasing in northern and eastern regions.



Ortolan in European Breeding Bird Atlas 2

(Source: Szabolcs Kókay; EBCC)

How many species?

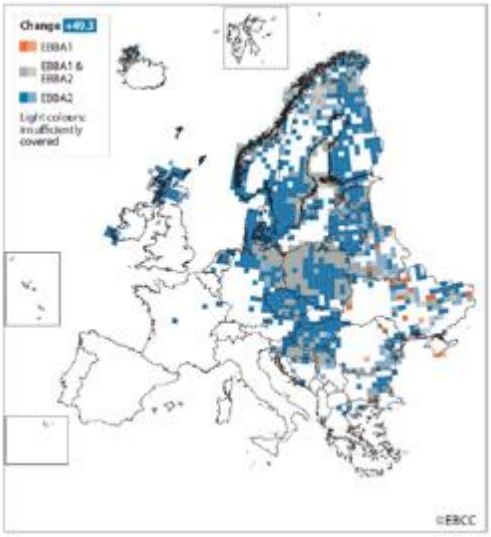
During the fieldwork 539 native bird species were identified as breeding. 59 of these are found mainly in Europe (almost endemic) and 40 species are found only in Europe (endemic).
There are only a few species that are found almost everywhere, such as the white wagtail and the cuckoo; they were found in more than 85 percent of all surveyed 50x50 kilometre squares. However, more than half of the species are found in less than 10 percent of all surveyed pens. These are species with a relatively small distribution area, such as the Caspian mountain grouse. This means that quite a few countries and regions in Europe have a special responsibility for one or more species.

Many exotic species in the Low Countries

In Europe, 57 exotic species breed. The species diversity of these non-indigenous birds is particularly large in the Netherlands and Flanders. Ruud Foppen, chairman of the EBCC during the project, says: "The Low Countries are quite clearly and remarkably a hotspot for exotic species.
Take the water game species, for which our region is an eldorado thanks to the mild winters, water-rich areas surrounded by nutrient-rich farmland. Apparently, many exotic species can reproduce here. The origin of these populations is largely due to escapes or deliberate releases from water game collections.

Protection works for marsh birds

Petr Voříšek, coordinator on behalf of the Czech Society for the Protection of Birds, explains that protection policies help: "Many species that are endangered in Europe show a decline in their distribution, but there are positive stories indicating the success of protection.
Nowadays, well-protected species such as the white-tailed eagle are expanding rapidly. We are also seeing this in other wetland species, such as the bittern and the avocet.



Bald eagle, a breeding bird that after centuries of persecution and decades of poisoning is now making a big comeback (Source: Eugeny Kobli; EBCC)

Citizen science from Azores to Urals

EBBA2 gives us a new reference for the European area that has never been mapped so thoroughly before, from the Azores to the Urals. It is also one of the largest citizen science projects ever, involving as many as 120,000 birders. Verena Keller from the Swiss Ornithological Institute was the project leader and is the first author of the book. She says: "This atlas was only possible thanks to the commitment of our large network of partners from all over Europe and thanks to the many volunteers who selflessly made their observations available, all for the sake of this great cause. This is European cooperation at its best.

This project would not have been possible without the efforts of the many observers, national coordinators and experts who contributed to data collection and interpretation and thanks to financial support from sponsors. From the Netherlands, data from the Vogelatlas (2013 to 2015) were included.

EBBA2 in a nutshell

- 596 breeding birds
- 120,000 observers
- 48 national partners
- 5 years of fieldwork
- 5,110 pens of 50x50 kilometres counted
- 11,075,000 square kilometres counted

The book

- 556 species descriptions
- 69 additional species described in an appendix
- 689 maps showing distribution on a 50x50 kilometre basis
- 222 model maps with information on 10x10 kilometre basis
- 446 maps showing changes in distribution
- 568 colour illustrations by 46 illustrators
- 348 species authors
- 960 pages

Text: European Bird Census Council & Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland
Photo: Nadejda Grosu / Maps: European Bird Census Council / Drawings Szabolcs Kókay; Eugeny Koblik