“Inspiring birds, inspiring people”

“Migratory Birds for People” – Newsletter no. 40 / June, 2021

"Inspiring birds, inspiring people"

NEWSLETTER no. 40 (June, 2021)

Introduction:

Now finally most of the wetland centres in and beyond our MBP-network will re-open again, we have been able to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day in a more proper way.
In this edition we have some stories about this event.

At this point the way we will meet during our Annual Meeting in Senegal is alas still uncertain. We will keep you posted on this.

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!

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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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!

"Inspiring birds, inspiring people"

NEWSLETTER no. 40 (June, 2021)

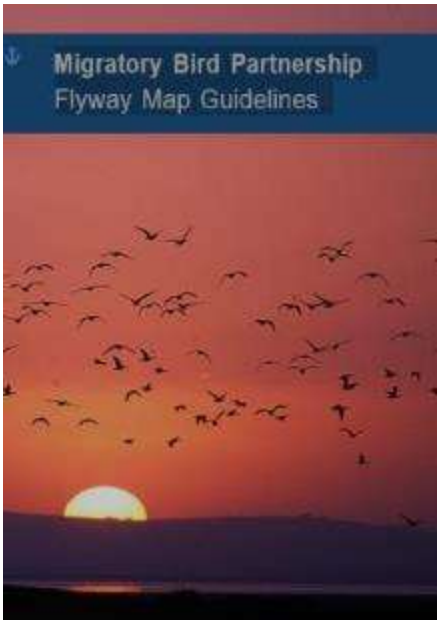
News from the Core Group

Here is a summary of what the MBP core group has been looking at.

Annual meeting 2021

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!
We will keep you all informed, so be aware of new messages e.g. by our 'Newsflash".

Activities guidebook published!



To mark World Migratory Bird Day, we launched a guide to 12 activities you can try with the MBP educational map. Since launching the map at the Annual Meeting in 2019, MBP members have been contributing this experience and ideas to enhance how we make use of the map. We were delayed by the pandemic but now the guidebook is available!
Together we have compiled an attractive guidebook with game instructions, templates, colouring-in sheets, and cut-out cards for the activities. We hope the guide helps you make the most of your map.
If you would like to update the contents or arrange a translation, please get in touch with Connor Walsh at WWT.

Thank you to all who participated in making the guidebook happen. The team-work and sharing of different skills, perspectives, and resources, is what makes our network succeed.

Thank you as well to La Maison du Lac the Grand Lieu who made a video with the map for World Migratory Bird Day!

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MBP centres in Global Birding Big Day

MBP members were represented in one of the largest bird-watching events ever, the Global Big Day.
Staff from Biodiversum Schengen and WWT Washington both took part, as did our 'friends and neighbours' at WWT's Conservation Directorate, BirdLife's Wakkerstroom Tourism and Education Centre, and Benin Environment and Education Society.
See the results of the Global Big Day on eBird.

WWT wetland centres re-open!

All of WWT's wetland centres in the UK have been able to re-open. All still require visitors to book online in advance and observe social distancing, and some indoor sections, such as the 'toad Hall' amphibian exhibit, reopened in late May.
Visitors have been grateful to return, even though they missed out on a lot of migratory bird excitement over winter and early spring.

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Youth Flyway Forum in preparation

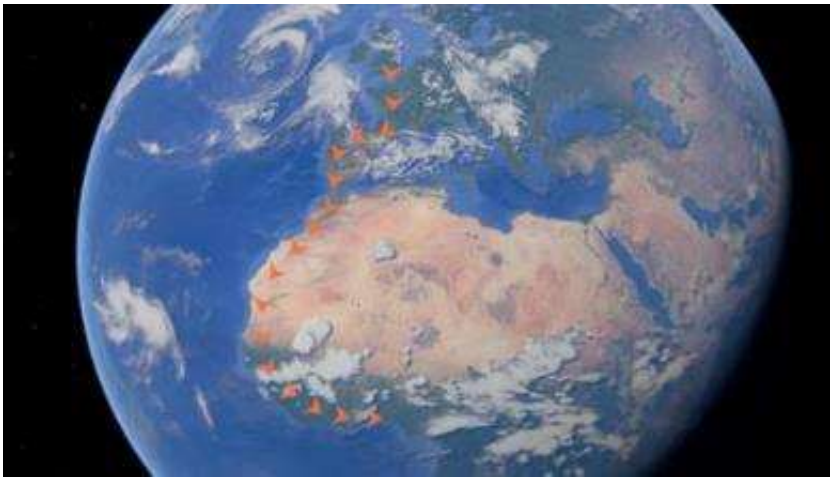
MBP members are helping plan a youth forum for the East Atlantic Flyway. Up to two young people from each country in the flyway could meet online in the second half of the year to share their perspectives on wetlands and develop their wetland knowledge. Youth Engaged in Wetlands (YEW), who presented at the MBP Annual Meeting 2020, are partnering with AEWA, International Wadden Sea School, the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, and WWT.
The Forum is inspired by a successful activity YEW carried out in East Asia – Australasia last year.
The group aims to announce plans in the next few months, and is likely to call on MBP members to help recruit participants for the Forum. Stay tuned!

(for more info: https://www.facebook.com/youthengagedinwetlands)

Flight of the Osprey has been postponed till 2022

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.

Next 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.

Sweden: Naturum Lake Tåkern

Naturum Tåkern is a visitor centre in the county of Östergötland, Sweden. It is one out of 33 "Naturums" 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 the naturum is situated. The buildings of naturum Tåkern are designed by Wingårdhs architects.

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. In autumn, up to 50 000 waterfowl of different species rest at Tåkern.

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 end of May when thousands of Early Marsh-orchids bloom.
Photo: Malin Granlund Feldt

Writer: Malin Granlund Feldt, biologist and nature interpreter

News from naturum Tåkern spring 2021

Covid in Sweden

Sweden has suffered a severe spread of the covid infection this spring. A few weeks ago, we were forced to carry out a personal lockdown in the region of Östergötland, and all attempts to fulfil covid-adjusted activities froze. Naturum Tåkern visitor center is still closed to the public. Only schools and small private groups of maximum 8 persons, the guide included, can visit naturum. Our plan is still to open up in the end of June.

”Guide på vift”

At Easter, we started our Pop-up Roving ranger activities both in the outdoor area of naturum at Tåkern and at Omberg, the popular mountain next to lake Tåkern. The purpose was to answer questions, point out birds, plants, the right path an also other nature reserves and other nice places to visit, without gathering groups or attracting people to a certain spot. Sometimes, too many people at the same time visit Omberg! Our aim is also to tell about the Swedish “Allemansrätten” – the right of public access and keep an eye on facilities, littering, parking of cars and so on. We have no public information about time and place for the “Guide på vift”, it´s a strict pop-up activity on purpose.

Our colleagues at County administrative Board made a Checklist “Krysslista för 287 nature reserves” in Östergötland, all worth a visit, and completely free of charge! It works as a visitor map.
Krysslistan: Krysslista för Östergötlands naturreservat (lansstyrelsen.se)

Naturguidning.se We also tell about our new website for finding your way to the nature in Östergötland, with a calendar for subsidized or free public guided tours in nature.

New website: Startsida - Östergötlands natur- och kulturguidningar (naturguidning.se)
The coming weekend of 22-23 may will be the first weekend in three weeks with Guide på vift at Tåkern and Omberg, due to the personal lockdown which is now cancelled.

”Guide på vift”, kind of Roving Ranger, at Omberg. Photo: Malin Granlund Feldt

Flowers and bees for children

During weekends in April, children in the visitor area outdoors were offered to plant seeds of different flowers rich in nectar, to raise awareness and help pollinators. The activity were complemented with a quiz walk on the same theme along the Board walk, "Strandpromenden".

Digital bird ringing

To avoid personal meetings as much as possible, our society has become digitalized in a profound way. Digital meetings, digital sport and music events, digital study visits and travelling are some examples from my own everyday life. At naturum Tåkern we have also started to offer digital bird ringing. This week we had a booked group visiting naturum by video link (Teams) and took part in both a digital guided tour from our manager Jenny Carlsson and digital bird ringing from nature guides Hanna Hedberg and Sofie Hellman.

Hanna and Sofie is ringing birds online via Teams. Photo: Jenny Carlsson

Ringed sedge warbler through the screen. Photo: Jenny Carlsson

Other digital ways to offer nature interpretation

We have updated our mobile phones and got a tripod, a stabilizer and a mic and started to film unique events in nature. Live guided tours can be our next step. Our colleagues have started to make a podcast. A not so adventurous way to spread nature interpretation is to develop a new website for naturum Tåkern.
We also make plans for the future, on updating the live webcam for example.

/Malin Granlund Feldt and Jenny Carlsson, Naturum Tåkern, Sweden.

Germany : Nationalpark - Haus Husum

Nationalpark-Haus Husum

Birdrace 2021: 137 species and a lot of fun

Several colleagues and the team of volunteers took part in the annual bird race that was conducted by the "Dachverband Deutscher Avifaunisten e.V." as nationwide event on 8 May.

The aim of this race is to see or hear as many bird species as possible in a certain geographic range (town or county) within one day. The county of North Frisia, where the National Park visitor centre is located, comprises various habitats from seashore and coastal wetlands to woods and moorland and is thus quite rich in bird species and rewarding for both experienced birdwatchers and ambitious newcomers.

The visitor centre's team of volunteers, aged between 18 and 20, embarked on a full day journey devoted to birds and spotted 137 species of seabirds and songbirds.
Special highlights were two black-winged stilts, a Kentish plover, black-necked grebes and Mediterranean gulls.

"Exhausting, but fun and a great result", was the conclusion of Maybrit and the team at the end of the day. The crew will certainly join the birdrace again next year!

Photo: Maybrit and her team racing for bird species at Westerhever Beach ©Luisa Fritsch

Netherlands:

Terschelling

World Migratory Bird Day!

Finally! Last week we celebrated World Migratory Bird Day with groups 5 and 6. It has been a year since we were able to do activities with children. Covid-19 cancelled all school activities, but this year we can slowly do something again.

As usual, we celebrate World Migratory Bird Day at the Geskieker. An organic farm with a view over the mudflats. An ideal place for bird watching. The Godwits, Lapwings, Oystercatchers and Barnacle geese are literally flying around your ears. We also did an energy tapping game, puzzled and finally a quiz in which all information came back.

We hope that we can organize a Skype conversation again next year. Children really enjoy this! And of course it is very educational.

Mission Terschelling

In the weekend of April 24 and 25, Feline and I accompanied a Dutch television crew for filming on the Island. The name of this program is 'Animal Brigade', a pre-school program where children learn to protect nature in a playful way. Every week forest ranger Tim takes two children to go out in the countryside.

This weekend Tim took two island children on a mission. The first mission was to investigate, monitor and protect breeding birds. For this Feline took the film crew to the Boschplaat.
Here the children helped counting bird nests and eggs.

The second mission was to improve the habitat of the **natterjack toad.** The dunes are an important habitat for the natterjack toad.
Because things are not going so well with this toad in the Netherlands, we are taking measures to preserve the species.
During the mission Tim and the island children showed how we can protect the toad even better. Cutting sods, removing beach grass and cutting down small trees to maintain an open dune landscape.

It was a great opportunity to show what Staatsbosbeheer does in terms of management and protection.
You can't start young enough!

Greetings from Terschelling
Feline Zwaan and Wanda Bakker

Netherlands: Oostvaardersplassen

World Migratory Bird Day

Saturday 8 May was all about (migratory) birds, spotting birds and their habitats. The Oostvaardersplassen, part of National Park "Nieuw Land", was the setting for this complete online edition of World Migratory Bird Day.

For the online edition of World Migratory Bird Day, an inspiring and informative online programme was put together for everyone interested in (migratory) birds and bird watching. From the beginner to the average birder, but also for those who are just "discovering" the subject.
The programme consisted of two parts: the live stream and the Do It Yourself workshops.

Live

Live from the Oostvaardersplassen, various guests will be on hand to talk about their expertise and to ask questions. They include chief birdwatcher Nico de Haan and warden Hans-Erik Kuypers. Frank Haven, a researcher of bird migration among other things, will join the discussion about the migration cycle around the National Park. The online event is presented by Camilla Dreef, also a fervent birder, ecologist and presenter of the TV programme Binnenste Buiten. From the comfort of your own living room, you can join an excursion with the gamekeeper through Oostvaardersplassen, learn the best tips & tricks for bird watching, or master the art of drawing birds in DIY films. During and after the event, you can attend workshops.

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BIOBLITZ- programma - Nationaal Park Nieuwland

It is now 29 April and time for a brief review of the progress of the 2021 species year in the Nieuw Land National Park. By now a total of 1230 species have been observed and recorded on the Bioblitz page of waarneming.nl and after one quarter we are already less than 40% away from the target of finding at least 2021 species in our areas Lepelaarplassen, Marker Wadden, Oostvaardersplassen and Markermeer this year.

In this report, we focus on passing the milestone of 200 different bird species, which was reached on 1 May this year.

No less than 200 species! Sounds pretty good right? However, like everything in life, this number is also relative. If you look at the number of bird species observed this year in the whole of the Netherlands (431 species), this is still less than half. For the whole of Flevoland, 222 bird species have been recorded since January 1, 2021, and around 300 different species are observed annually. In this context the number of 250 species within the boundaries of the National Park should be quite feasible. So we are well on the way.

For me, it is especially nice to look back at the past 4 months. Who was here in the winter and who were the early returners? Did we have many odd ducks and wanderers?
The last few weeks, the reports on returning breeding birds have been going fast. In the winter, it is still easy to recognise sounds; with a handful of bird sounds, you can do a lot. Now, you really have to do your best to distinguish between a 'tjlip' and a 'pwieeet', and then again to place the not-so-ordinary birds in the list. Almost impossible to do.

Fieldfare / Photo: Erna Koelman

Most of the breeding birds are back now and I am very curious what new species we can discover in May. Maybe a stray here and there or a late-arriving breeding bird. The wintering birds are moving north again. As usual, the barnacle geese leave the Oostvaardersplassen in mid-May and seek their breeding grounds in Nova Zembla and northern Sweden.

Of course, we will keep you informed of the comings and goings of the birds in the National Park. Otherwise, take a look at the Bioblitzpagina for all the species that have been recorded in recent months.

We have now counted 224 different species of birds in the area (28,000 ha). With recent newcomers like golden oriole and black woodpecker.

Nice to be able to keep track of when the species are back in the country!

Hans-Erik Kuypers (warden Oostvaardersplassen)

Luxembourg: Biodiversum Remerschen

Great Crested Grebe: successful broods

The symbolic bird of *Haff Réimech* and the Biodiversum Nature Centre has had a successful start to the breeding season: some of the 18-20 breeding pairs already have fledglings and are carrying them out.

One pair had set up their nest very freely and attracted many visitors and photographers who were lucky enough to follow the pair from the building of the nest to the hatching of the young birds. Already on the first day, the young birds swam short distances and climbed onto the back of the female. There they found shelter from pikes. A total of four fledglings hatched.

The male brought small fish and to stimulate digestion the young birds were fed with small feathers. This behavior is rarely observed as the Great Crested Grebes like to hide in the reeds with their young.

Crested Grebe young feathers (by: Patric Lorgé)

The Great Reed Warblers and Common Terns have also returned from their African wintering grounds and are colonizing the reed beds. Only the Little Bitterns do not seem to like the cold temperatures of this month of May and are still difficult to observe.

Let's see what Spring and Summer will bring, maybe a new breeding bird, we will keep you updated !

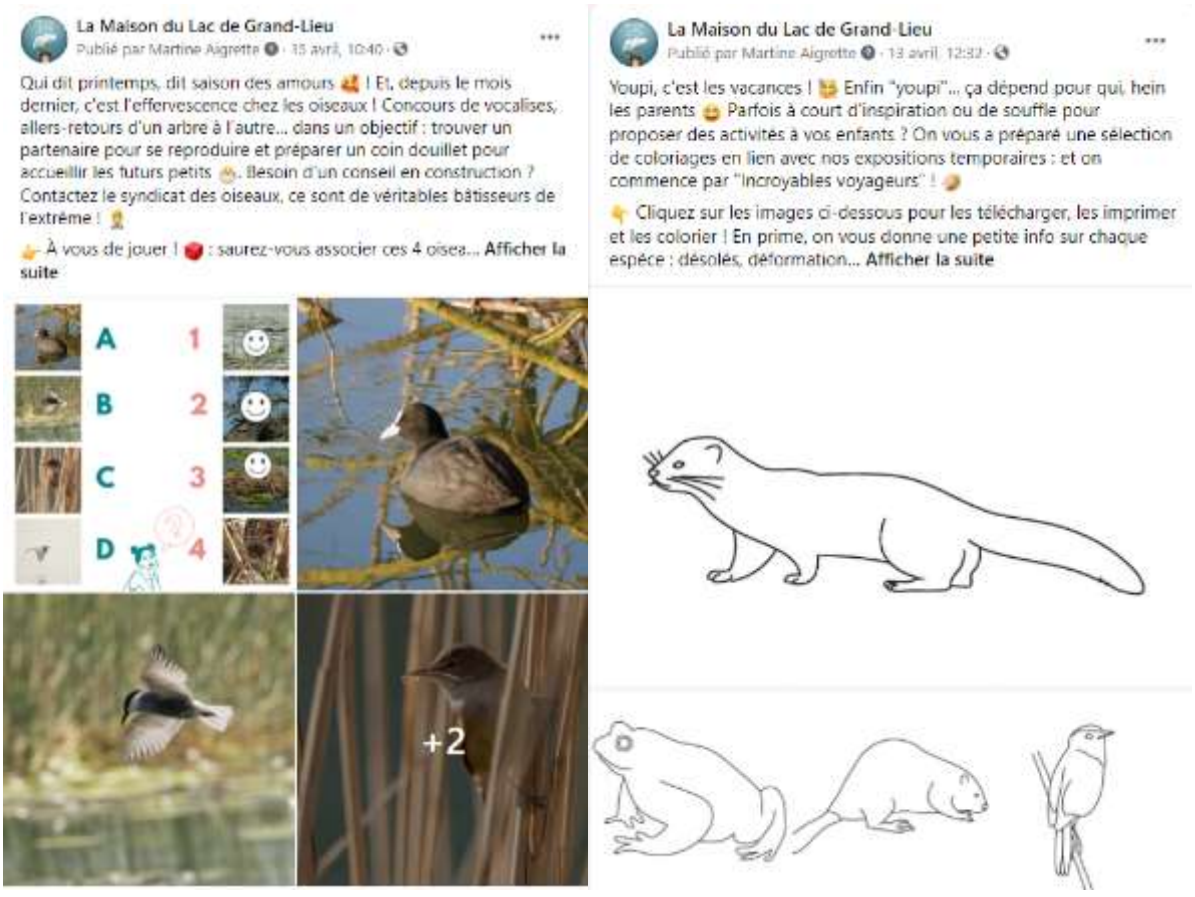
Patric Lorgé, Isabelle Zwick

France: La Maison du Grand Lac de Lieu

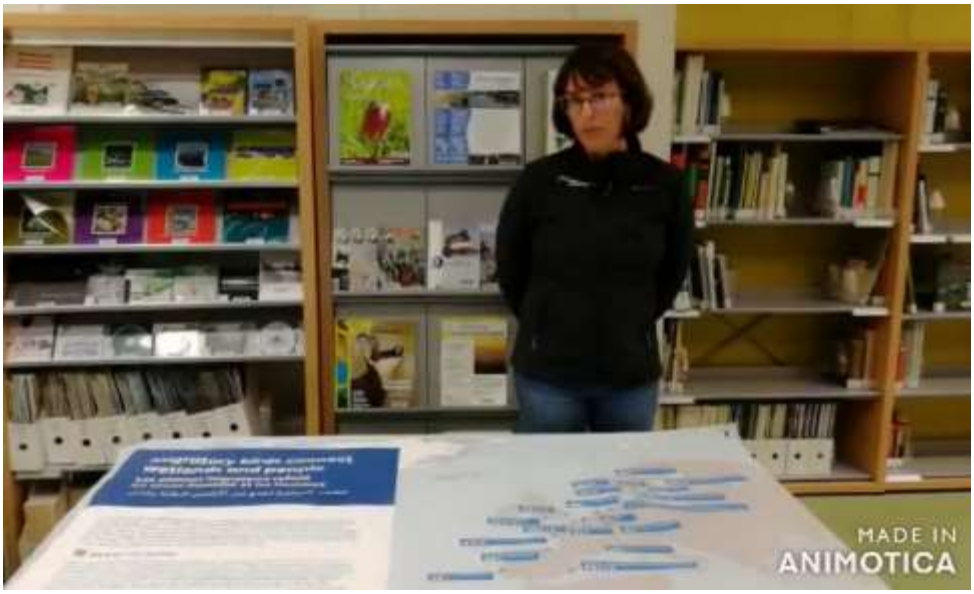
Reopening on May 19!

Due to the COVID-19, the Grand-Lieu Lake Centre has been closed since October 30, 2020. So it is with the greatest of pleasure that we will finally host the public again from May 19.

Like most of you, during this six-month shut-down period, we have maintained contact with the public through the creation of digital contents: articles, interviews, games, colouring, photos, videos and tutorials for all ages. These contents were posted on our Facebook page and on our website.



For the World Migratory Bird Day, we made a video to present the MBP flyway map for a Facebook post.



During winter, the center expansion was carried out. The Grand-Lieu Lake Centre has a larger reception hall, an additional seminar room that can accommodate up to 60 people and a covered playground in the garden to shelter visitors from the sun or the rain.

The temporary exhibition 'Representing wetlands: between fascination and repulsion' is installed and impatiently awaits the visitors' come back! Actually, the reservation schedule is quite full for school groups! We are also working on the scenographic renewal of permanent exhibitions scheduled for 2022.

News from the Lake:

After reaching very high water levels in winter, the Grand-Lieu Lake is going through a period of drought this spring with a water level close to that of July!

Winter level

Spring level

Audrey Cadou

Spain: Urdaibai Bird Center

World Migratory Bird Day

Here at the Urdaibai Bird Center we celebrated World Migratory Bird Day with a special Live Streaming programme. There was a ringing demonstration in which viewers were able to see species such as the reed warbler, which is breeding in the Urdaibai marshes.

A large part of the programme was dedicated to Roy and Landa the pair of breeding ospreys which have made it back safe and sound from Africa. Their long awaited arrival was great news for everyone at the center. Even more exciting is the fact that the pair now have 3 eggs and chicks are expected for the end of May. The family can be followed on our Osprey Webcam and this is generating a great deal of interest from the public both at home and abroad.

In addition to the working on projects involving the ospreys, we are taking part in a ringing campaign to determine the distribution of the Iberian chiffchaff in the Basque Country. The Aranzadi Society of Sciences has organized this study as numbers have been on the decline. In order to share all the interesting activities we are involved in, we are organizing a volunteer programme for June, July and August. We think it´s a great opportunity for anyone who is interested in learning more about the environment or ecotourism.

Link to the Migratory Bird Day Live streaming:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdFkgQvo2DQ
Link to osprey web cam:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOW1K1JhFSQ
Link to Volunteer Programme Info:
http://www.birdcenter.org/en/news/news

Spain: Regional Park of Las Salinas de San Pedro

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY IN THE SALT FLATS OF SAN PEDRO

World Migratory Bird Day is an international event that we celebrate every year, on the second weekend of May, in the Salinas de San Pedro Regional Park, with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of migratory birds and the need for international collaboration to conserve the habitats through which they travel.
"Sing, fly, soar – like a bird!" is the slogan chosen for this year's celebration, focusing on bird song and flight as a way to inspire people of all ages to connect with nature and watch birds wherever they are.
The Regional Park has joined the celebration with a guided tour along this wetland where different dynamics were developed to learn how to identify them. During the tour, the participants carried out citizen science by recording the 23 bird species observed on the website www.ebird.org, thus joining Global Big Day.

Finally, a common curlew that had been cared for at the Wildlife Recovery Centre in Murcia was released.

World Migratory Bird Day is an especially ideal time to observe the migratory birds that arrive in spring at the Salinas de San Pedro to increase their families. Different types of gulls, terns, terns, avocets and plovers, among others, nested last spring in this protected area; in total there were 2,482 pairs of 20 different species. Some of them settled for the first time in this wetland, such as the little moorhens and a colony of ardeids made up of cattle egrets, little egrets and kingfishers.

Nigeria, Finima Nature Park

World Migratory Bird Day 2021

The Finima Nature Park joined the world to commemorate the world migratory bird day which was held on the 8th of May 2021 with the Theme "**Sing, Fly, Soar – Like a Bird!**

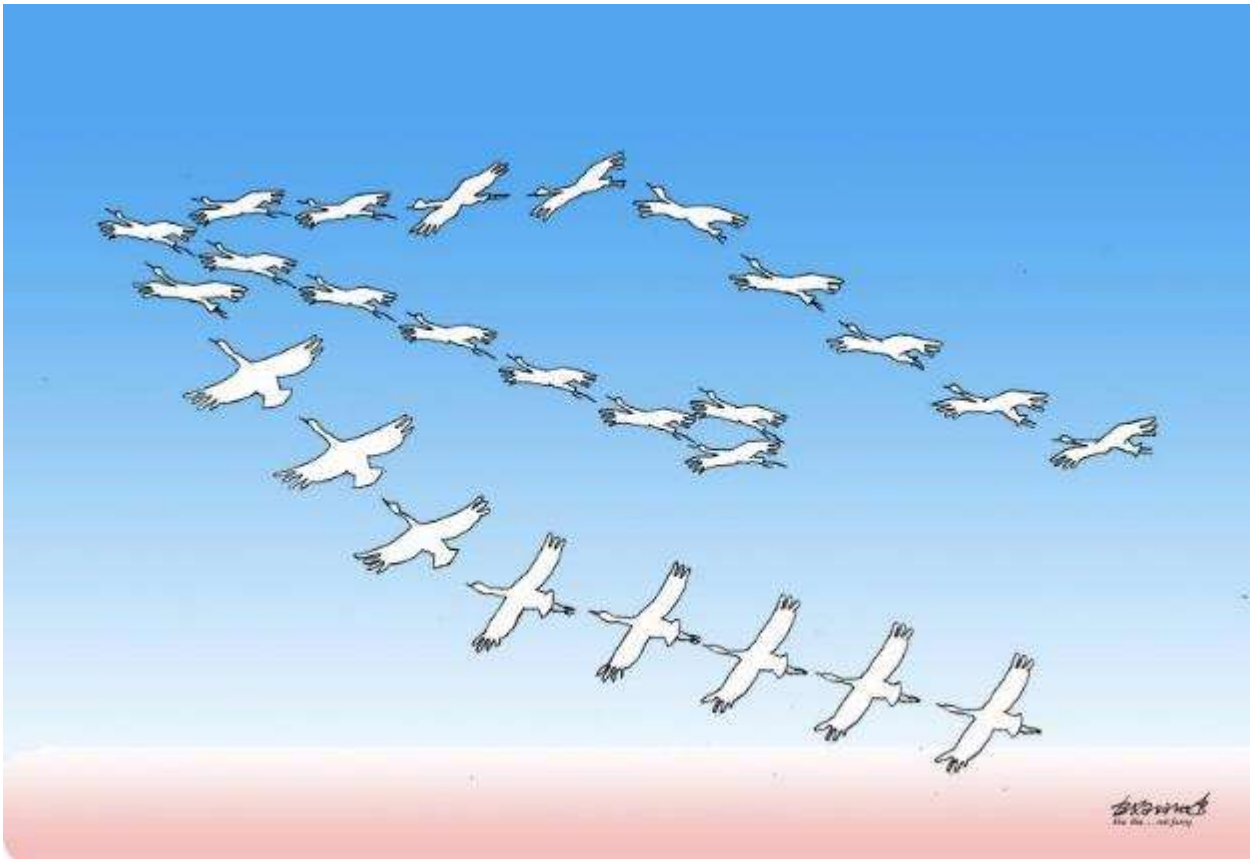
The theme highlights the importance of conserving and restoring the ecological connectivity and integrity of ecosystems that support the natural movements of migratory birds and that are essential for their survival and well-being.

The Finima Nature Park Bird Club along with students from the Federal polytechnic of oil and gas Bonny Island carried out series of activities which included Bird watching and tree planting to mark the event.

Twenty-eight bird species were sighted during the outing. These include White-faced Whistling Duck, White throated Bee-eater, Blue breasted Kingfisher, Woodland Kingfisher, African Jacana, Spur-winged Lapwing, Water thick-knee, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, African Sacred Ibis, Striated Heron, Village weaver, Ethiopian swallow, Barn Swallow, Singing Cisticola, among others.

The event was rounded up with a tree planting exercise in different locations in the island.

Contact : Usman Shittu, (Nigerian Conservation Centre)



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!

Eurosite published a special item at their website for World Migratory Bird Day 2021 about the conservation of Montagu's Harrier.

World Migratory Bird Day 2021: sing, fly, soar — like a bird!

While what seemed like an everlasting winter slowly turns into a cold and wet spring, our migratory birds are not slowing down and are arriving in full force. Yellow wagtails, barn swallows and common redstarts are finally colouring our landscapes again and filling our skies with joyous chatter and song. The migrants eating insects are surely followed by the ones eating other birds and voles: our migratory raptors soaring from Africa crossing deserts and seas.

Tomorrow, 8 May 2021 is World Migratory Bird Day, and in addition to that, for Eurosite member the Dutch Montagu's Harrier Foundation it is also the start of a new season of breeding harriers. Together with volunteers they will be searching the province of Flevoland for breeding pairs since these birds are among the most vulnerable breeding raptors. In particular, the volunteers will be on the look out for breeding hen harriers, their rare cousin the Montagu's harrier, and the declining nephew the marsh harrier. When these pairs are located, in due time a protective fence will be placed around their nests to protect the birds against ground predation and risks caused by agricultural activities.

That these birds need protecting was once again cruelly demonstrated when the last breeding Montagu's harrier female in Flevoland was assumedly shot last year. She died on her nest that contained three young chicks. Due to commendable attentiveness of volunteer Johan Janssens who observed the distressed male 'Abe', nothing short of a miracle happened and one of the chicks survived. After recuperating in bird sanctuary 'de Fûgelhelling' it was fostered in another nest in the Dutch province of Groningen, where volunteer Hilvert Huizing visited the chick regularly to leave supplementary food. All these efforts combined resulted in the young harrier successfully fledging weeks later. Where raptor persecution turns out to not only be a thing of our past but sadly still occuring today, we still have this small victory to celebrate. With it comes an even greater victory, because protecting migratory and farmland birds is in essence a story of collaboration with hundreds of volunteers, farmers, site managers, researchers and everyone else contributing in any way. Although harriers may not sing like the yellow wagtails, swallows

or redstarts, they surely fly and soar unlike any other. They crown our farmland with their hovering presence and urgent calls and even when their return is far from guaranteed we will be waiting with open arms every time. **Happy World Migratory Bird Day!**

[Photo: GPS-tagged Montagu's harrier 'Margot' in Flevoland in 2020. © Rob Dekker]

7 May 2021 | Jelke Brandehof

Other Flyway news

Greenchoice and Wetlands International kick-off their partnership on Earth Day to restore Guinea-Bissau's mangroves

Wetlands International News 22 April 2021

Dutch sustainable energy supplier Greenchoice and Wetlands International, the international NGO dedicated to protecting and restoring wetlands, launch a joint project in Guinea Bissau to restore one of the country's largest mangrove areas to its former mangrove glory, removing carbon directly from the atmosphere and making a positive contribution to the local biodiversity and community in the process.

With more than 3000 km2, Guinea-Bissau has the second-largest mangrove area in Africa. But much of this has been lost as a result of felling and burning for rice cultivation. In recent years, tens of thousands of hectares of these rice fields have been deserted, as farmers switched to cashew nut production outside the mangrove zone or migrated to the city.
At the same time, scientific bodies and NGOs from across the world have warned that it is only with healthy ecosystems that we can boost biodiversity, enhance food and water security and people's livelihoods – and counteract climate change.

Wetlands International estimates that 2500 ha of restored mangroves may store up to 1,000,000 tons of CO2 in the growing mangrove trees and soil over a timeframe of 30 years. Alongside this, the team expects expect that with the return of mangroves, bird diversity will increase and manatee, dolphin and otter populations will thrive. Around 1000 people will directly benefit through jobs, restoration work and biodiversity monitoring.

Catalysing climate ambition

Greenchoice supplies its customers with renewable electricity but also sells natural gas. As a bridging plan to the phasing out of natural gas, it has been compensating its customers' natural gas consumption by purchasing carbon credits from existing forest projects. Simultaneously Greenchoice stimulates its customers to reduce their gas use.

Greenchoice recently embarked on a novel strategy to enable as much impact for climate, community and biodiversity as possible by playing a catalyst role. They will now also help initiate new projects to secure and restore an amount of carbon equivalent to the carbon footprint of all the natural gas sold to customers but without claiming this carbon impact via credits.

This means that the gas footprint of clients is no longer offset directly and a continued incentive remains in place for clients to reduce their emissions. Moreover, these voluntary projects may contribute to countries' efforts to achieve their climate targets under the Paris Agreement. Greenchoice has introduced the term 'forest compensation' instead of 'carbon offsetting' or 'carbon neutrality' for the gas it sells to emphasise positive impact for climate, community and biodiversity.

Ruben Veefkind, strategy and CO2 projects manager at Greenchoice, said: "The urgency of the climate change and biodiversity crises means that action must start now. This involves safeguarding and restoring wetlands as well as transforming the energy sector. We aim to be a catalyst that leverages further climate action by pioneering novel solutions and sharing our knowledge and experiences."

Ecological mangrove restoration

While many mangrove restoration projects rely on mangrove planting, the Guinea-Bissau project will create the right hydrological and socio-economic conditions for mangroves to grow back naturally, using a more effective restoration method called community based Ecological Mangrove Restoration. Mangroves restored in this way survive and function better than planted mangroves.

Together, Greenchoice and Wetlands International will demonstrate best practice on the ground and support a larger group of associated partners to scale up by developing, financing and implementing landscape level restoration plans.

Ibrahima Thiam, Director of Wetlands International in Coastal West Africa, said: "the collaboration with Greenchoice will enable us to accelerate our support for communities in Guinea-Bissau and strengthen the role they play in managing and restoring this critical ecosystem. We hope it will also serve as a leading example for governments and companies throughout West Africa".

Pieter van Eijk, Programme Head Coasts & Deltas at Wetlands International said: "Mangroves are vital to the resilience of the planet in many ways, from taking carbon out of the atmosphere to community resilience, buffering storms, and acting as the nurseries for of the sea. But we are losing them fast.
With Greenchoice, we have a fantastic opportunity to achieve impact on the ground by restoring and safeguarding wetlands for nature and people, while combatting climate change."