WLI's Review of 2024

A summary of Wetland Link International staff and volunteers' activities in 2024

View on wli.wwt.org.uk for links to related stories!

End of an era, and new Head of WLI

Chris Rostron, Head of WLI for 16 years, moved on to lead the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Mediterranean. November saw Tina Redshaw take over as the new Head of WLI. Meet her here!

Dear WLI members

Very best wishes for a Happy and Healthy New Year. I don't believe it's too late to be wishing a Happy New Year to all of you! Working from Cambodia as I do, I have two New Year celebrations behind me, and one more to go!

Whilst I have now been in the role since late 2024, I thought the Annual Review was an opportune moment for me to introduce myself to the WLI network, and to tell you how delighted I am to be WWT's International Engagement Manager. I have big boots to fill, after Chris Rostron's lengthy tenure in this position.

For the past almost 25 years, I was a British diplomat working primarily in East and South East Asia. Working in China on three separate occasions, I covered political and economic, trade and investment, climate change and environment issues, including sustainable cities. I was British Ambassador to Timor-Leste for 3 years shortly following independence, and again British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia between 2018-2022. Throughout my diplomatic career I have worked with governments and NGOs on climate change, nature and environmental conservation, on women's economic empowerment and leadership and on youth skills development. Before becoming a diplomat, I worked in international development in China, Mongolia and South East Asia for the UK's volunteering agency Voluntary Service Overseas. I have substantial experience of leading multi-cultural teams, mentoring and coaching, delivering training,

building and maintaining stakeholder networks and lobbying, advocating and influencing.

Having grown up on the south coast of England, where the gentle rolling chalk hills of the South Downs meet the sea, I loved spending time in nature from a young age and am drawn always to being close to water. Forest and coastal walks, hiking in the Himalayas, cycling and exploring less-trodden paths are essential ingredients to restoring my batteries and to my sense of wellness.

At the same time as looking back to achievements in 2024, I am excited about our activities in 2025. Of course, the Convention on Wetlands COP15 will be a highlight for many of us, offering the opportunity to highlight not just the importance of wetlands, but to also highlight the brilliant work of wetland centres and the people who work in and for them.

I look forward to working with all of you, our members, to provide more opportunities to connect, share experience and knowledge, and to raise even greater awareness of the wonders of wetlands. Only working together can we achieve our high ambition to protect, restore and conserve wetlands and their abundant biodiversity.

WLI Asia-Oceania Conference

Building on their great tradition of WLI Asia, RRC-EA brought over a hundred of you together with Diyasaru Park in Sri Lanka for the first WLI Asia-Oceania Conference. On the WLI and WLI Asia-Oceania websites you can read a full report, see PowerPoint presentations, and photos!

Small Grants year two

We once again ran a Small Grants programme for WLI members, supported by Eversheds Sutherland. We had a fund of GBP £24,000, but thirty of you applied, requesting a total of £88,000, so more were disappointed than we awarded grants. By the end of 2024 we had distributed grants to Angola, Portugal, and Taiwan.

East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum

We again co-organised the East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum, with the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative and Youth Engaged in Wetlands. The youth participants received bespoke training on participative or citizen science.

Wetland Learning Hub

WWT's Wetland Learning Hub opened a regionally specific course for the Indo-Burma region, and started the groundwork for a course tailored to people in West Africa, with partners PRCM.

MBP Annual Meeting

WLI members in the East Atlantic Flyway worked on a six-year outline and one year work plan for the regional network Migratory Birds for People (MBP).

Ramsar CEPA

The core team continues to be a voice for wetland wetland visitor centres on the Convention on Wetlands CEPA Oversight Panel. Chris Rostron was Deputy Chairperson and representative of the International Organisation Partners. He represented the CEPA OP at the Standing Committee in May, presenting the new CEPA workplan, and making links with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, the Standing Committee members and the secretariat.

WLI and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements

At the Africa Eurasia Migratory Waterbird Agreement, we provided insight to their CEPA work at an online workshop.

Chris Rostron and Connor Walsh both served on the CEPA Working Group of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership.

Team assistant

Khouloud Belhadj finished her stint as team assistant and moved to BirdLife Malta. María Elisa Sánchez joined the team and has worked across the WLI website, YouTube channel, and Flyway Youth Forum.

Volunteer Dave Rogers has continued to apply his analytical thinking to WLI member profiles on the website.

Consultancy

WWT's Wetland Engagement Advisory Services is proud to highlight its recent work to enhance wetland conservation efforts globally. A notable example includes a one-time free consultancy opportunity with WLI member Lake Nakuru Centre, where Wetland Engagement Advisory Services developed and delivered a monitoring and evaluation framework for CEPA-based sessions.

We're also thrilled to announce the launch of the Wetland Engagement Advisory Services website, a dedicated platform to showcase our expertise and consultancy offerings. The site demonstrates how Wetland Engagement Advisory Services can create bespoke solutions tailored to organizations striving to make a meaningful impact in wetland conservation.

Visit the new site to discover how Wetland Engagement Advisory Services can support your work and contribute to a brighter future for wetlands and the communities that rely on them.

Webinar

For the WLI webinars this year we fell short of our target of three per year. Following the WLI member survey in 2023, we aimed to make the webinars more frequent by making them less formal and structured. We managed one short webinar on the theme of making an app for a wetland visitor centre.

Twelve new members joined WLI in 2024.

Our Facebook page grew to 1,682 followers.
Our X now has 1,048 followers.

We sent 51 mass emails in three languages.

We produced two Bulletins in 2024: March, September.

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

For more information on WLI, please contact:

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

The WLI network is coordinated by WWT