



Joint Press Release

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World Migratory Bird Day 2014 Spotlights Pioneering Sustainable Tourism Initiative

World Migratory Bird Day 2014 – celebrated in over 70 countries on 10-11 May – focuses on the role sustainable tourism can play in conserving one of the world's true natural wonders: the spectacular movements of migratory birds along their flyways.

Thanks to an innovative new project being led by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and promoted through this year's World Migratory Bird Day, some of the world's estimated 50 billion migratory birds should soon be able to benefit from sustainable tourism development.

This year's commemoration will be held under the theme "Destination Flyways – Migratory Birds and Tourism". *Destination Flyways* is also the name of the UNWTO-led project, currently in its preliminary phase, which aims to develop sustainable tourism at destinations along the world's major migratory bird routes.

Focusing on a selection of eight key sites for migratory birds in Africa, Asia and Europe, the project aims to be a vehicle for both environmental and socio-economic sustainability, benefiting wildlife, local communities and tourists alike.

By providing an adequate framework for sustainable tourism management, diversifying tourism and channelling its revenue back into the conservation of the project sites and the communities around them, *Destination Flyways* will work to safeguard the birds' habitats, while creating job opportunities for local communities along the flyways.

With over one billion international tourists travelling the world every year, generating a global trade income of USD 1.4 trillion and 9 per cent of global GDP, tourism clearly has an immense potential to contribute to sustainable development.

"Tourism is an undisputed generator of national wealth, corporate income and local employment. Managed sustainably, it can benefit people and the planet alike," said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a message to the 20th Session of the UNWTO General Assembly.

The annual World Migratory Bird Day campaign is organized by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) – two intergovernmental wildlife treaties administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). For this year's campaign, CMS and AEWA are partnering with UNWTO and others to highlight the mutually beneficial relationship between tourism and conservation.

"As tourism continues to grow, so too will the pressures on the environment and wildlife. Without proper management and protection, as well as investments in greening the sector, thousands of magnificent species will suffer," said UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

“Tourism has been identified by UNEP as one of the ten economic sectors best able to contribute to the transition to a sustainable and inclusive green economy. This important initiative will help to accelerate the transition to the green economy while protecting tourism – a major source of revenue for many communities – and the thousands of species it spotlights,” he added.

UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said: “Tourism has a major responsibility in advancing biodiversity protection. Every year, millions of tourists are wondered by the world’s wild flora and fauna while travelling. Without such enriching experiences, tourism could not be the vehicle for sustainable growth, job creation and poverty alleviation that it is today.”

“Many people want to experience nature when they travel and there are millions of people around the world who are particularly interested in observing birds in their natural surroundings,” said Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of CMS.

He added: “Bird-watching is an important component of a global multi-million dollar wildlife-watching industry and provides a significant source of income and employment for a growing number of communities, especially in developing countries.”

One of the eight project sites selected for the *Destination Flyways* project is Lake Natron, in the remote north of the United Republic of Tanzania near the Kenyan border. Home to 75 per cent of the world’s population of the Lesser Flamingo, Lake Natron is the only breeding ground for this species in East Africa.

For Lake Natron, tourism can be a solution for conservation, provided that local communities are involved in its development and implementation and derive tangible benefits from it. It is therefore critical to make sustainable tourism a true long-term alternative to other economic activities, such as the proposed mining of soda ash from the lake, about which serious concerns have been raised because of the potential danger to the flamingo population.

“The UNWTO-led Destination Flyways Project, the inspiration for the 2014 World Migratory Bird Day campaign, is a perfect example of how tourism and biodiversity can benefit from each other. On this World Migratory Bird Day, we invite all to help us turn one billion tourists into one billion opportunities to protect the world’s original long-distance travellers,” said Rifai.

Events to mark World Migratory Bird Day 2014 will include bird festivals, education programmes, bird watching trips, presentations, film screenings, the launch of an international photo competition and a benefit concert to raise funds for international nature conservation.

Both World Migratory Bird Day 2014 and the preliminary phase of *Destination Flyways* have been made possible through the generous support from the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB).

Useful links:

World Migratory Bird Day: www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

Statements to mark World Migratory Bird Day 2014: <http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/statements/>

World Migratory Bird Day 2014 Events around the world: <http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/events/>

Destination Flyways: <http://biodiv.unwto.org/content/flyways>

UNWTO Consulting Unit on Tourism and Biodiversity: <http://biodiv.unwto.org>

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): www.cms.int

African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA): www.unep-aewa.org

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The [World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](http://www.unwto.org), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 156 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 400 Affiliate Members. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Flickr](#).

The preliminary phase of the [Destination Flyways project](#) is carried out by the UNWTO Consulting Unit on Tourism and Biodiversity in close collaboration with partners who share sound experience in the field of environmental conservation and tourism. Along Lake Natron in Tanzania, seven other vital bird sites and habitats in China, Egypt, Germany, India, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea and have been shortlisted to be included in the project

The [Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds \(AEWA\)](#) is an intergovernmental treaty developed under the auspices of CMS dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds that migrate along the African-Eurasian Flyway. The Agreement covers 255 species of birds ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle. The treaty covers 119 Range States from Europe, parts of Asia and Canada, the Middle East and Africa. Currently, 71 countries and the European Union are Contracting Parties to AEWA.

The [Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals \(also known as CMS or the Bonn Convention\)](#) aims to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an intergovernmental treaty, concluded under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale. Since the Convention's entry into force, its membership has grown steadily to include 120 (as of 1 May 2014) Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.