

## 2012 World Wetland Day celebrations, Myanmar

The 2012 World Wetland Day celebrations in Myanmar was memorable as it was the first time that the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Forestry (MOECA) had jointly organized the event with an NGO, the 'Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association' (BANCA). The celebration was held in the capital, Nay Pyi Daw on 2 February, and also included a workshop to discuss the possible designation of the Gulf of Mottama as the country's second Ramsar Site. The event was attended by representatives from a cross section of government ministries, national and international NGOs, and other stakeholders.



Registration for the WWD event

The WWD celebrations was opened by Mr. Tin Tun, the Deputy Director-General of the MOECA, who described wetlands as being a fundamental life support system for people and explained the important ecological services that they provided. This was followed by a range of presentations including an update of the work of the Ramsar Convention (Lew Young, Ramsar Secretariat), a history of work on waterbirds and wetland conservation in Myanmar (Simba Chan, BirdLife International), and wetland management issues in Myanmar (San San Nyunt, MOECA).



Opening presentation by Mr. Tin Tun (Deputy Director-General, MOECAF)

The meeting then heard national and international speakers give presentations on the importance of the Gulf of Mottama. With its large and dynamic tidal flats, the area important as a migratory route and nursery ground for commercially important fish populations in the Bay of Bengal and thus, supports the livelihood for local fishing communities. The site also lies along the East Asian – Australasian Flyway and surveys in recent years have shown that it supports more than 150,000 wintering waterbirds, including a number of threatened species, especially more than 50% of the world's population of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

MOECAF along with local and international NGOs and consultants have already begun to work to protect the site. This includes reducing the hunting of the wintering waterbirds through education programmes; improving the management of the local fisheries by introducing a licensing scheme, confiscating prohibited fishing gear, and establishing village groups to enforce the new practices. Work on drafting the Ramsar Information Sheet has also started.



Participants in the WWD venue