

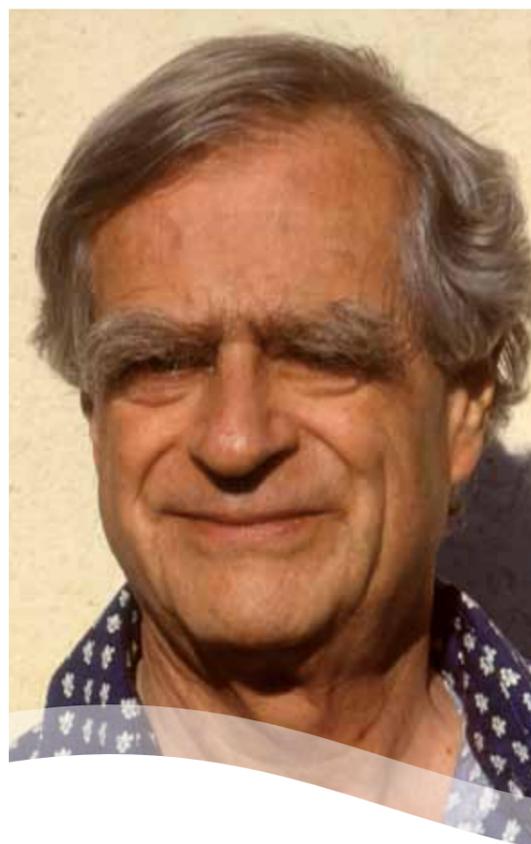
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Thymio Papayannis

Thymio Papayannis is being honoured for his inspired leadership in the field of wetland conservation, wise use and the cultural value of wetlands, in Greece, the Mediterranean and globally, and for his work with the Ramsar Convention for over 25 years.

Often in close cooperation with Luc Hoffmann, he initiated actions to protect key wetlands and (co-)founded important research institutes and organisations, such as WWF Greece, the Society for the Protection of Prespa, MedINA (the Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos), the Greek Biotope Wetland Centre (EKBY), and the Delos Initiative on sacred natural sites. Within the Mediterranean region, Mr Papayannis was a driving force in the creation of the MedWet Initiative; he has been involved in its implementation as MedWet coordinator for the first 10 years and is still involved as an advisor.

Thymio Papayannis' work and his books have contributed significantly to an overall better understanding and awareness of Mediterranean, and global, wetland issues. In particular, he has made a major contribution through the incorporation of cultural values into the work of the Convention, a field which he has pioneered. For him, "wise use of wetlands and of their resources and services implies a lengthy process of evaluation, integration, experimentation and feedback processed through the human intellect. It is a concept that bonds human beings with wetlands and ensures the harmony of this relationship. As such it is broader than sustainable use and we should maintain it as a leading objective of the Ramsar Convention." Thymio Papayannis is a visionary leader who personifies the Ramsar Recognition of Achievement Award.



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Luc Hoffmann

To recognize one of the founders of the Ramsar Convention, the 40th Anniversary Honorary Ramsar Award is given to Dr Luc Hoffmann - for his lifetime engagement in the cause of wetland and environmental conservation.

Luc Hoffmann inspired and participated in the first steps towards the creation of an international treaty for wetlands, from the MAR project in the early 1960s to the signature of the Convention in 1971. Since then, Dr Hoffmann has followed the progress of the Convention as it grew and reached maturity.

In parallel, Luc Hoffmann has been a leading figure in the conservation of such iconic wetlands as the Camargue in France, Coto Doñana in Spain, Prespa (Albania, FYR of Macedonia and Greece), and the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania, and he founded or supported other conservation organizations such as the Tour du Valat biological station in the French Camargue, the Fondation du Banc d'Arguin (FIBA), and the MAVA Foundation, WWF and Wetlands International,...

The breadth of his vision inspired him to safeguard these jewels of nature and to build the structures and the understanding among individuals and institutions to ensure their long-term preservation. In his view "wetlands play an important part in the functioning of nature but they can only play this part if they are wisely used. Therefore wise use is as important as preservation".

Dr Hoffmann has most significantly influenced the Ramsar Convention. He is an example of humanistic values coupled with an extraordinary commitment and determination. It is impossible to do justice to his immense contribution in a few words - the 40th Anniversary Honorary Ramsar Award is a tribute from the Ramsar community to this visionary man.



On 6 July 2012, five laureates will be honoured at the opening ceremony of the Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar COP11), in Bucharest, Romania. The 2012 winners will receive the Ramsar trophy created by the late sculptress Verena Darmon and a certificate.

For this fifth edition, the Ramsar Awards are given in three categories of Education, Management, and Science, to the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Ms Augusta Henriques, and Prof. Tatsuichi Tsujii, respectively. The jury has also conferred a Recognition of Achievement Award to Mr Thymio Papayannis. Finally, as 2011 marked the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Convention, the Standing Committee decided to honour one of the founding fathers of the treaty, Dr Luc Hoffmann, with a 40th Anniversary Honorary Ramsar Award.

Presented at meetings of the Conference of the Parties since 1999, the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards recognise and honour the contributions of individuals, organizations, and governments around the world towards promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

As in previous editions, the three 2012 awards for Education, Management and Science are complemented by the Evian Special Prize, a cash award of USD10'000 to each laureate, generously donated by the DANONE Group, as part of the DANONE/Evian Fund for Water in support of the Ramsar Convention.

The DANONE/Evian Fund for Water is a partnership between the Ramsar Convention and the DANONE Group for the purpose of supporting the Convention in taking action for the wise use of water resources and for maintaining their quality.



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Education



The Wisconsin Wetlands Association

The Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) is a leader in promoting education, participation and awareness of wetlands and the Ramsar Convention in the United States. WWA receives the Ramsar Award in recognition of its outstanding achievements with innovative and long-term initiatives in the field of wetland communication, as well as for its significant contribution to the identification of priority sites for Ramsar designation.

Founded in 1969, WWA – the oldest statewide wetland conservation organization in the USA - is a non-governmental organisation that is dedicated to the protection, restoration, and enjoyment of wetlands in the State of Wisconsin, through science-based programmes, education and advocacy. For several years, WWA has incorporated the messages and values of the Ramsar Convention in their wetland conservation, communication and awareness activities. WWA's "Wisconsin Wetland Gems" programme is central to the organization's activities and has led to the identification of sites that meet the Ramsar criteria. One of these, the Kakagon & Bad River Sloughs tribal area was designated for the Ramsar List on World Wetlands Day (2 February) 2012.

WWA's strength also lies in strong communication and awareness programmes focused on engaging the participation of local communities and government bodies, and collaboration with native communities.

"We find that wetlands are often a forgotten resource... These realities have inspired our work toward inspiring a change in the perception of wetlands from 'wastelands' to 'treasures'" says Katie Beifuss, spokesperson for WWA. "WWA is thrilled that our work to promote wetlands has received this prestigious recognition. We are honoured and energized by the award, and hope our work will inspire others across the region, nation, and beyond to work on behalf of wetlands".

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Management



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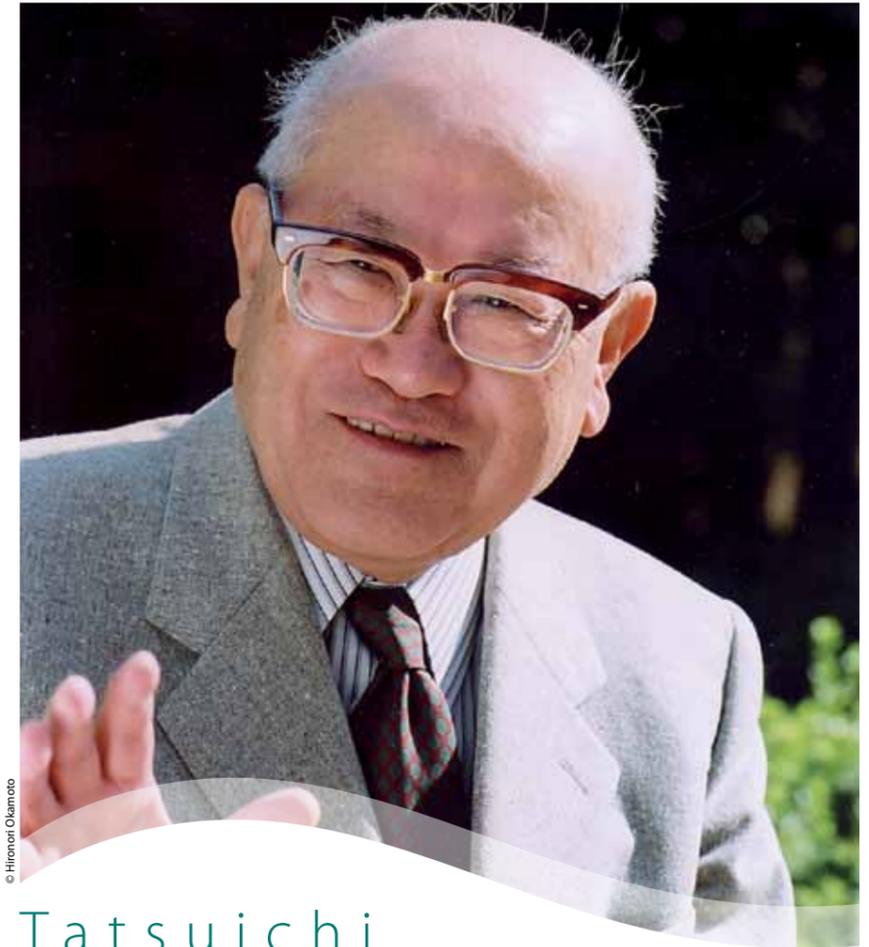
Augusta Henriques

The Ramsar Award for Management is given to Ms Augusta Henriques of Guinea-Bissau for her central role in the foundation of the NGO Tiniguena ("This Land is Ours") in 1991, and for her leadership and work with communities towards the creation of a Community Marine Protected Area at Urok Islands, in the Bijagós Archipelago - an area rich with mangroves and tidal flats, home to many birds and other species, such as marine turtles and manatees.

Putting Ramsar principles at the heart of her work, Ms Henriques has carried out exemplary work with local communities to maintain the local culture and allow it to evolve, while ensuring sustainable livelihoods, for instance through replenishment of the fish stocks. She has involved stakeholders at all levels of society, including women and youth. Dialogue between all villages of the archipelago is one of the keys to this success, as it has helped community members to reach a common understanding of the rules for access and use of the area. Central to Ms Henriques' work are the empowerment of local populations in the management of their natural resources, the successful inclusion of government institutions, exchanges with similar projects in the region, and fundraising with international institutions.

Ms Henriques has established successful partnerships with the authorities in Guinea-Bissau, and with international organisations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wetlands International, WWF, and the Banc d'Arguin Foundation (FIBA). She has played an important role in establishing a network of coastal and marine protected areas in West Africa, and a programme for their conservation. Her innovative approach, determination and dedication make Ms Henriques a major figure of environmental conservation in Guinea-Bissau and in West Africa.

Science



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Tatsuichi Tsujii

Professor Tatsuichi Tsujii is awarded the Ramsar prize for Science for his lifetime contribution to wetland science and conservation, in Japan and internationally. For 50 years, Prof. Tsujii has been a leader in wetland conservation in Japan, notably in the restoration and management of the famous Kushiro-shitsugen Ramsar Site and World Heritage Site in Hokkaido, and in the designation of many other Ramsar Sites in Japan. His was a crucial role in raising awareness of wetland values in Japan, at a political and public level. In addition to his academic career, Prof. Tsujii has held many high-level positions in governmental, non-governmental, and scientific governance bodies, an example being his chairmanship of the Nature Conservation Committee of the Central Environment Council of the Government of Japan. He was also instrumental in organizing Ramsar COP5 in Kushiro, Hokkaido (1993).

Prof. Tsujii made a strategic contribution to the restoration of Chilika Lake in India and over the years he has made important contributions to the work of several international scientific organisations, such as Wetlands International, the International Mire Conservation Group, the International Ecological Congress and the International Peat Society. In this regard, he says that "International cooperation is ... needed for wise use of our world's wetlands".

In his work, Prof. Tsujii has adopted a holistic approach, linking science to management and wise use, as well as connecting conservation to heritage and cultural values. Putting his principles into practice, he has been very active in training, raising awareness (CEPA activities), and in involving stakeholders. Perhaps this statement best summarizes his engagement: "I suppose that scientists must use their academic careers to better society."