

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the **conservation** and **wise use** of wetlands and their resources.

www.ramsar.org

STRP Newsletter

The Newsletter of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATES ITS 90th ANNIVERSARY!

Issue no. 2/2013



This June in Ottawa, Canada, during its World Congress, BirdLife International celebrated its founding in 1922 as the then *International Committee for Bird Protection* (ICBP). In 1993, as BirdLife International, it established a global alliance of non-governmental organizations working to conserve birds and all of nature. This BirdLife Partnership is now active in over 120 countries and territories worldwide.

As one of Ramsar's International Organisation Partners (IOPs), the Convention has long recognized the very significant and continuing contributions BirdLife makes to supporting Ramsar implementation. A great strength of BirdLife's mechanisms is the way in which it works at all scales from local to global, through programmes such as the Preventing Extinctions Programme and Important Bird Areas (IBAs)—with over 12,000 IBAs already identified this is the most comprehensive global inventory of important sites for biodiversity including many which are wetlands—and migratory bird flyways. Through its national partners, BirdLife's "Local Empowerment Programme" supports local groups and communities with the management, monitoring, development and defence of 'their' local IBAs.

Over 600 members and supporters of the BirdLife Partnership gathered for the World Congress, and my participation representing Ramsar provided a tremendous opportunity to meet many of our BirdLife global and national colleagues (including the Scientific and Technical Review Panel's (STRP) Neotropics invited expert, Amiro Perez-Leroux), to learn more about the extraordinary wealth of activities for wetlands being undertaken by the Partnership, and to identify ways of further strengthening BirdLife-Ramsar collaborations.

During the Congress, a new 2020 Strategy was adopted, with four strategic objectives (save species; conserve sites and habitats; encourage ecological sustainability; and empower people for change), IBAs were renamed as "Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas;" and the 2013 edition of the *State of the World's Birds* was launched; as was the first *list of "IBAs in Danger"* based on a level of threats assessment of IBAs in 95 countries and territories. Amongst the 300 IBAs on the list are many wetlands including Ramsar Sites.

I presented Ramsar issues in sessions on *Assessing and understanding ecosystem services for biodiversity conservation*, *How multilateral environmental agreements and BirdLife Partners can strengthen cooperation and Safeguarding the world's IBAs*, as well as in discussions on the Red List and on waterbird flyways, focusing on the East Asia-Australasia Flyway and Yellow Sea and Arctic issues.

Amongst opportunities for further collaboration, we identified: updating the IBAs and Ramsar Sites assessments published in the early 2000s for Africa, Asia and Europe (and extending these assessments to other regions, such as the Americas, for which IBAs have since been identified); using these to work further with governments for more qualifying IBAs being designated as Ramsar Sites; drawing to the attention of governments those IBAs in Danger which are wetlands and Ramsar Sites; assessing BirdLife's ecosystem services assessment toolkit 'TESSA' (currently being trialed by BirdLife's partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific) as a tool for Ramsar Contracting Parties in completing the ecosystem services parts of the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS)—2012 revision; and potential contributions from BirdLife on wetland IBAs, IBA monitoring and IBAs in Danger to the STRP's planned first edition of the *State of the World's Wetlands* report.

We also recognized the value to Ramsar and the work of the Secretariat of finding out from BirdLife Partners in which wetlands (and particularly Ramsar Sites) they are working with local communities under the Local Empowerment Programme.

Congratulations, BirdLife, on your 90th anniversary and for organizing a really excellent Congress. On behalf of Ramsar we look forward to our continuing collaborations.

Nick Davidson

New Ramsar Sites:

- GÜSSING FISHPONDS (GÜSSINGER FISCHTEICHE) — AUSTRIA
- WILDER KAISER — AUSTRIA
- PICCANINIE PONDS KARST WETLANDS — AUSTRALIA
- DULEBY ISLANDS—ZAOZERYE; MOROCHNO; STARY ZHADEN; VYONOSHCHANSKOE — BELARUS
- PARC NATIONAL DE LA RUVUBU; PAYSAGE AQUATIQUE PROTÉGÉ DU NORD — BURUNDI
- SISTEMA DE HUMEDALES CUYAMEL-OMOA; SISTEMA DE HUMEDALES DE LA ISLA DE ÚTILA — HONDURAS
- ANDAKILL PROTECTED HABITAT AREA (ANDAKILL, HVANNEYRI); GUDLAUGSTUNGUR NATURE RESERVE (FRÍÐLAND Í GUDLAUGSTUNGUM); SNÆFELL AND EYJABAKKAR AREA (SNÆFELLS- OG EYJABAKKAS-VÆÐIÐ) — ICELAND
- NOOTO-NORTH TARAWA — KIRIBATI
- TIVAT SALINE (TIVATSKA SOLILA)—MONTENEGRO
- GRUNNFJORDEN— NORWAY
- QURM NATURE RESERVE — OMAN
- LAS PIÑAS PARAÑAQUE CRITICAL HABITAT AND ECOTOURISM AREA (LPPCHEA) — PHILIPPINES
- UMGENI VLEI NATURE RESERVE — SOUTH AFRICA
- NEMRUT CALDERA (NEMRUT KALDERASI) — TURKEY
- MANGROVE AND ALHAFEYA PROTECTED; AL WATHBA WETLAND RESERVE — UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: POLICY AND INFORMATION NEEDS FOR RAMSAR SITES



Workshop participants from Australia and New Zealand
© Hugh Robertson

A workshop on adaptation policy for the management of internationally important wetlands under climate change was recently held in Melbourne, Australia. A joint initiative of Australia's National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF), the Oceania chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists and the Institute for Land, Water and Society at Charles Sturt University, the workshop brought together 25 practitioners from across Australia and New Zealand.

Participants addressed key questions concerning potential climate change adaptation options, their prioritisation, and their implementation.

A key issue arising from workshop discussions was the increasing need for a range of temporal and spatial scales to be considered in wetland policy and management issues, already identified through various Ramsar decisions, but not necessarily easy to implement. Understanding patterns in the number, diversity, representativeness and connectivity of wetlands at larger scales emerged as crucial for setting policy and management targets under climate change. Greater recognition and communication of wetland ecosystem functions, which support a coordinated approach to maintaining ecosystem services, were identified as essential.

Institutional issues, like organisational capacity and complexity, were flagged by workshop participants not only as major constraints to adaptation, but also as potential opportunities for transformation.

Improving linkages and alignment with other sectors was perceived as a fruitful means of increasing the likely success, cost-effectiveness, and political and social support for wetland adaptation action, as well as reducing the risk of perverse outcomes and maladaptation.

While the workshop primarily addressed Australian and New Zealand examples, it was evident that the concepts of adaptation and maladaptation would be of interest to a wider audience and could contribute to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel's (STRP) climate change work area. It was also evident that not all participants were fully aware of the range of opportunities available through the Convention for enhancing wetland conservation and wise use, highlighting again the usefulness of workshops for communication, networking and exchanging ideas, especially about some of the complexities that arise when dealing with ecological change.

Sam Capon, Hugh Robertson & Max Finlayson

REGIONAL INITIATIVE DISCUSSES STRP TASK



On April, the third Meeting of the [Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs of the Americas](#) was held in Montelimar, Nicaragua.

Representatives of 11 Ramsar Contracting Parties, International Organisation Partners and Observer Organisations participated in the discussions.

The meeting's purpose was to review the Initiative's action plan in order to define specific projects for implementation.

There were technical sessions on the impact of infrastructure development on mangroves and reefs and on ecosystem services. As part of these sessions, STRP member Eugenio Barrios presented on task No. 45 of the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), entitled *Environmental Water Allocation for Wetlands*. He presented on behalf of the STRP, the government of Mexico, and WWF.

Besides this discussion, there was an opportunity to conduct a survey of the importance of environmental water allocations and of the type of products and support that the Contracting Parties would like to receive from this STRP task.

Preliminary results of the survey show that most countries do not have a legal instrument to secure water for wetlands, but that many are working on improving their water management legal frameworks. This situation offers a great opportunity to advance water allocation instruments and take advantage of the experiences of the government of Mexico, which has developed environmental water allocation standards. Most Contracting Parties observed that they expect more specific and focused support.

The government of Mexico and WWF offered to provide an environmental flow training course during this year as a part of the Initiative's activities.

Eugenio Barrios

MAINSTREAMING WETLANDS ISSUES WITHIN LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN BURKINA FASO



Ramsar Sites managers

The Ramsar Secretariat's Africa team helped a project on *Enhancement of Local Environmental Governance* in Burkina Faso plan its wetland-related activities.

This was done through the selection of four potential Ramsar Sites, a workshop to validate the process to develop a local land charter and a management plan for "Lac Dem," Ramsar Site N° 1882, and an awareness-raising forum with

local governments and other stakeholders. The Senior Advisor for Africa also trained 15 Ramsar Sites managers on wetland inventory and site management and facilitated the establishment of a network of wetland managers in Burkina Faso.

The overall objective of training the Ramsar Sites managers was to further strengthen their technical and operational skills, so that they can provide ongoing and closer coaching to local communities for the wise use of these critical wetlands, impacted by human activities and exacerbated by climate change.

At the end of the workshop, the Ramsar Sites managers committed to conduct wetland inventories within their zones and develop action plans to manage wetlands in collaboration with local, regional and national stakeholders by May 2014.

The workshop helped to set up the network of Ramsar Sites managers in Burkina Faso, so that they can more readily interact and communicate at national, regional and international levels. This network will be completed and updated on a regular basis to take into account all active skills on wetlands management and expertise in Burkina Faso.

Paul Ouédraogo



PROGRAMA REGIONAL DE HUMEDALES ALTOANDINOS



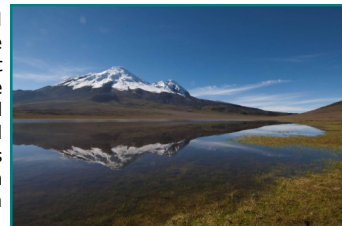
Humedales Altoandinos, Chile, © Amiro Perez-Leroux

El programa regional de Humedales Altoandinos de BirdLife International implementa acciones de investigación, gestión y conservación en el marco de la Estrategia Regional de Ramsar sobre la Conservación y Uso Sostenible de los Humedales Altoandinos en: Argentina, Lagunas Altoandinas y Punañas de Catamarca y la Meseta del Lago Buenos Aires; Bolivia, Lagos Poopó y Uru; Ecuador, Parque Nacional Llanganates y Perú, Lago Junín.

Este programa apoya el cumplimiento de los objetivos de la Estrategia Regional al aportar información fundamental sobre el estado de los servicios ecosistémicos en estos sitios, implementar acciones prioritarias de los planes de manejo de los sitios y apoyar la elaboración de dichos planes en otros sitios, promover alternativas económicas sostenibles a las comunidades locales, generar interés por la conservación de los humedales entre las autoridades locales y la población general, mediante un programa de educación ambiental en escuelas locales, y por último apoyar la creación del Parque Nacional Patagonia que protegerá la población del Macá Tobiano *Podiceps gallardoi*, especie críticamente Amenazada. Para obtener información adicional sobre la iniciativa regional y sus proyectos individuales visite: <http://birdlifeamericasnewsletter.org/2013/03/index.html>.



HIGH ANDEAN WETLANDS PROGRAM



Antisana Volcano, Ecuador, © Murray Cooper

BirdLife International's regional High Andean Wetlands Programme implements research, management and conservation actions within the framework of Ramsar's Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands (HAW) in: Argentina, High Andean and Punañas Lagoons of Catamarca and Lake Buenos Aires' Plateau; Bolivia, Lakes Poopó and Uru; Ecuador, National Park Llanganates; and Peru, Lake Junín.

This Programme helps fulfil the objectives of the HAW by: providing fundamental information about the state of ecosystem services at these sites; implementing priority actions listed in the management plans of these sites and supporting the creation of such plans; promoting sustainable economic alternatives within local communities; generating interest in wetland conservation among local authorities and the general public, through an environmental education programme in local schools; and supporting the creation of the Patagonia National Park, which will protect the population of Macá Tobiano *Podiceps gallardoi*, a critically endangered species. To obtain more information about the regional initiative and its projects visit: <http://birdlifeamericasnewsletter.org/2013/03/BOLETIN%20INGLES.html>.

Amiro Perez-Leroux



LA ALIANZA DEL MANGLAR



Mural día de los humedales © Grupo Jaragua

La Alianza del Manglar (la Alianza) es una iniciativa regional liderada por 13 socios de BirdLife International que tiene como objetivo apoyar la conservación, restauración y gestión sostenible de los ecosistemas de manglar en el Neotrópico.

Fue establecida en el año 2010 y sus objetivos son: facilitar el conocimiento e intercambio de experiencias; promover el aprendizaje y desarrollo colectivo de capacidades; incidir en la protección de los manglares; ejecutar acciones sobre el terreno en Áreas Importantes para la Conservación de las Aves (IBAs) y aunar recursos para asegurar la conservación en el largo plazo.

La iniciativa incluye a Bahamas, Belice, Ecuador, México, Panamá, Puerto Rico, República Dominicana, Estados Unidos, El Salvador y Territorios Europeos de Ultramar.

La Alianza contribuye al alcance de los objetivos de la Iniciativa Regional para la Conservación y Uso Racional de Manglares y Corales de Ramsar mediante los siguientes aportes: mecanismo de facilitación de información; apoyo técnico-financiero a proyectos comunitarios en tres países del Caribe; información técnico-científica sobre especies de aves clave, sitios prioritarios y legislación de importancia para los manglares; reuniones con Coordinadores Nacionales de Ramsar y soporte técnico en la identificación/designación de nuevos sitios Ramsar; apoyo en campañas de concienciación de sitios Ramsar con manglares en peligro; ejecución y socialización de acciones de Comunicación, Educación, Concienciación y Participación (CECoP) en manglares y Elaboración y difusión amplia de materiales informativos y de comunicación.

La Alianza conducirá un estudio piloto de evaluación de servicios ecosistémicos en los manglares de un IBA en República Dominicana.



THE MANGROVE ALLIANCE



Gerson taking measurements © Grupo Jaragua

The Mangrove Alliance is a regional initiative led by 13 partners of BirdLife International. Its objective is to support the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems in the Neotropics.

It was established in 2010 and its objectives include: facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences; promoting learning and collective capacity development; contributing to mangrove protection; implementing on-the-ground actions in Important Bird Areas (IBAs); and pooling resources to ensure long-term conservation of mangroves.

The initiative includes countries like the Bahamas, Belize, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, México, Panamá, Puerto Rico, United States, and European territories overseas. The Mangrove Alliance helps fulfill the objectives of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs Ecosystems through: an information exchange mechanism; financial and technical support to community projects in three countries in the Caribbean; scientific and technical information on key birds, priority sites and legislation critical to mangroves; meetings with Ramsar National Focal Points and technical support for identifying/designating new Ramsar Sites with threatened mangroves; implementation and dissemination of Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) actions in mangroves; and broad dissemination of communication and information materials.

The Mangrove Alliance will soon conduct a pilot study to assess mangrove ecosystem services in an IBA in the Dominican Republic.

Laura Perdomo

SWS ANNUAL MEETING: RAMSAR SECTION



Almost 500 wetland scientists from 17 countries assembled on the shore of Lake Superior in Duluth, Minnesota, USA, in June to attend the annual meeting of the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS).

At the meeting, the SWS Ramsar Section organised a symposium on *Understanding how wetland science supports international wetland policy*. Comprising seven formal presentations and a plenary discussion session, the symposium attracted in excess of 60 participants.

Rob McInnes, Chair of the SWS Ramsar Section, chaired the first session in which Nick Davidson, Ramsar Deputy Secretary General, started proceedings by providing a broad review of *The role of science in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention*.

The following contributions were comprised: STRP Chair, Roy Gardner, summarised the processes involved in *Developing a framework for avoiding, mitigating and compensating for wetland loss and degradation*; Randy Milton, STRP Member, introduced *The implications for wetland science in Joint Ventures*; Kevin Erwin reviewed *Wetland mitigation and compensation, local and international perspectives*; Max Finlayson, STRP invited expert, spoke on *Climate change and the implications for the Ramsar Convention*; Stanley Liphadzi, STRP member, gave an overview of *Wetland Science's Impact on policy in South Africa and Africa*; and Jan Pokorny presented on *The direct and indirect role of wetlands in the climate change debate*.

The lively plenary discussion highlighted several important issues including the need to involve science at all levels, from citizens to academic institutions to intergovernmental organisations, in wetland policy discussions.

It is hoped that the conclusions from the symposium will be published in a peer-reviewed article in due course.

Rob McInnes

THE STRP AND IAC EXPLORE AVENUES FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

One of the Ramsar Convention's newest partners is the [Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles](#) (IAC).

The IAC, which has 15 parties, promotes the protection, conservation and recovery of sea turtle populations and their habitats, including wetlands. (Green turtles, for example, rely on mangroves.) [A Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the Ramsar and IAC Secretariats was signed in Bucharest at Ramsar COP11.

Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) Chair Roy Gardner attended the 6th IAC COP, which was held this June in the Galápagos, Ecuador, as an observer. In developing its work programme for the next two years, the IAC COP agreed to consider how it might provide input to the *State of World's Wetlands and their Services to people report (SOWWS report)*, STRP Task No. 18, through its Scientific Committee or other appropriate means.

The relevant data would relate to status and trends of sea turtle populations in the region; status and trends of sea turtle nesting and foraging habitat (e.g., mangroves, sand); and drivers of population and habitat trends. It is not clear, however, what data are readily available, and the information may likely be limited to a particular species in a particular area.

The IAC work plan also included the task of identifying and, where appropriate, informing the relevant Party, Ramsar Secretariat and Ramsar STRP when the ecological character of a Ramsar Site providing sea turtle habitat has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the

result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. The Netherlands spoke strongly in favour of this point.



IAC COP Chair Alexis Gutierrez, IAC Secretary pro tempore Veronica Caceres and STRP Chair Roy Gardner

Roy Gardner

CHINA IS ASSESSING THE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES OF LACUSTRINE AND MARSH WETLANDS



China has initiated the valuation assessment of ecosystem services for lake and marsh wetlands, supported by special funding projects from the Forestry Non-profit Industry Research Grant, which will run from January 2012 to 2014. Cui Lijuan, who works at the Institute of Wetland Research, Chinese Academy of Forestry (CAF), oversees the project.

The project will: (1) select 14 typical lacustrine and marsh wetlands as the sample sites; (2) develop an evaluation index and valuation methods on wetland ecosystem services; (3) ascertain the total value of China's lacustrine and marsh wetlands by scaling up from 14 typical lake and marsh areas; and (4) develop an information platform to monitor and assess the ecosystem services of lakes and marshes and to improve wetland management.

Up to now, ecological and economic data for 14 typical lacustrine and marsh wetlands have been collected, the values of the main ecosystem services of 14 study areas have been estimated and an ecosystem services evaluation index system has been built.

Next, an analysis of the drivers of change in ecosystem services, as well as scaling up the ecosystem services of lacustrine and marsh wetlands in China, will be developed by building a model for scale transformation using Meta-analysis.

Finally, the ecosystem services valuation of China's lacustrine and marsh wetlands will be published in 2014.

Cui Lijuan

RAMSAR AND UNESCO TEAM UP ON WETLANDS AND CULTURE



Lake Sevan Ramsar Site in Armenia is a cultural hot-spot © Tobias Salathé.

With the endorsement of Ramsar's Standing Committee, during its 46th meeting in April 2013, a new Ramsar Culture Network (RCN) has been inaugurated (see [DOC. SC46-10](#)). The Network is coordinated by a small but dedicated [working group](#), lead by Dave Pritchard, STRP invited expert, and Thymio Papayannis.

During a [meeting](#) at UNESCO's headquar-

ters in Paris in May, the group, along with their UNESCO colleagues, agreed on a pragmatic, results-oriented programme of cooperation on wetlands and culture.

The common aim is to make sure that the extensive experience already available at UNESCO will be fully integrated into the work on wetlands and culture.

The Network will bring together and create synergies among organisations and individuals that can contribute to an approach to the conservation and wise use of wetlands that integrates cultural and natural aspects, and, thereby, achieves greater effectiveness in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

Members of the Network will be kept informed of all activities concerning culture and wetlands, and they will provide information on relevant matters — and they are expected to contribute to the RCN's activities, as appropriate and as their capacity allows.

Communication within the RCN will be carried out through email, supplemented by information to be posted on the '[culture](#)' section of the Ramsar website. The coordinators of the RCN have prepared an Action Plan for 2013-2016 and will aim to implement it with the Network members, benefiting from financial support by the MAVA Foundation.

If you are interested in the history, archaeology, traditions, and beliefs, relevant to sustainable wetland management, then you are a potential candidate to share your experience with the RCN.

Please contact Ms Irini Lyratzaki at the Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (Med-INA), ilyratzaki@med-ina.org, who acts as the secretary for the Network. She will be happy to tell you more about how you can best contribute your expertise and wisdom.

Tobias Salathé

RECENT MEETINGS BROADEN COOPERATION ON WETLAND VALUES

The Ramsar Culture Network (RCN) has been helping to strengthen cooperation between the Convention and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), involving not only the latter's World Heritage Centre, but also the Man and the Biosphere Programme, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, and (in this International Year of Water Cooperation) the International Hydrological Programme (IHP).

Presentations given at two recent meetings by the Ramsar Culture Network's Joint Coordinator, Dave Pritchard, have explored the relationships between the ecological and cultural values of wetlands, and approaches to this which (in a context of ecosystem services) provide a basis for more successfully integrating approaches to management.

The first of these was the inaugural meeting in Paris of an IHP-led component of the "MedPartnership" Global Environment Facility (GEF) project, which aims to produce a detailed source document on the management and protection of groundwater-related coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean, including information on services, mapping, status and trends, pressures and recommended actions.

The second meeting was at an international conference on *water landscapes* held in Vitoria-Gasteiz in Spain. This conference explored a range of historical, physiographical, cultural and ecological aspects of water-dominated landscapes, ranging from deltas and rice terraces to inland waterways and desert oases.

Again a range of UNESCO-related, other UN and national bodies were represented and delegates visited the ancient (and still functioning) inland saltworks valley of Añana, which is already a Ramsar Site and has now been nominated for potential inscription in the World Heritage list. A conference proceedings volume is planned.



Salinas de Añana © Fundación Valle Salado de Añana

Dave Pritchard



SCOPING STUDY FOR A STATE OF THE WORLD'S WETLANDS ASSESSMENT UNDERWAY

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has tasked its Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) with facilitating a State of the World's Wetlands assessment report (SOWW). Broadly, this will synthesise the best available scientific evidence on the status and trends in wetlands and the services they provide to society, drawing on and complementing the recently launched TEEB for Water and Wetlands report, amongst others. One of the major challenges in compiling a SOWW report is that much of the data are scattered across published and unpublished sources, and the full extent of the evidence base is unknown.

To help address this, the United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), as an observer to the Ramsar STRP and as a centre of expertise in biodiversity and ecosystem assessments, has recently recruited an intern to compile information on status and trends in the extent and condition of wetlands worldwide.

Under the guidance of STRP member Matt Walpole and Ramsar Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson, Cambridge University graduate, Matthew Dixon, is undertaking a systematic search of the literature and following up with authors and other expert sources in order to extract quantitative, time series information on wetland change over time.

The hope is that this initial screening will identify sufficient information to attempt some pilot analyses as an early step towards a full SOWW. It will also inform the likely scope of the SOWW and identify where the major information gaps are likely to be found. Any information, published or otherwise, on wetland status and trends would be gratefully received. If you can help, or would like further information, please contact Matthew Dixon (matthew.dixon@unep-wcmc.org).

Matt Walpole

NEW SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL (STRP) PLATFORM LAUNCHED

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is pleased to announce the much anticipated launch of its new Platform.

The Platform was launched on 31 July 2013, and it is now live at <http://strp.ramsar.org/>.

Redevelopment of the STRP platform was initiated during the 2009-2012 cycle with the development of full functionality carrying over into the 2013-2015 cycle.

The main purpose of the new Platform is to improve the STRP's efficiency, transparency and communication in providing guidance to Contracting Parties and better engaging with the whole Ramsar community.

The new Platform will replace the old Support Service (SuSe), a web-based platform developed in the 1990s to facilitate the Panel's international work, which is largely conducted electronically. However, that Service was no longer fit for purpose to efficiently help deliver the work of the Panel, and it lacked a public interface for those seeking additional information about the work of the STRP.

MAIN COMPONENTS

As reported in the [previous issue of this newsletter \(1/2013\)](#), the STRP Platform comprises:

- the STRP Portal, which is the public interface of the Site, where the whole Ramsar constituency and the general public will have access to the latest STRP news, events and publications; and
- the STRP Workspace, which is a password-protected space to facilitate the work of the Panel. STRP Members, STRP National Focal Points, Ramsar Secretariat Staff, Observer Organisation representatives and other wetland experts will have access to the Workspace.

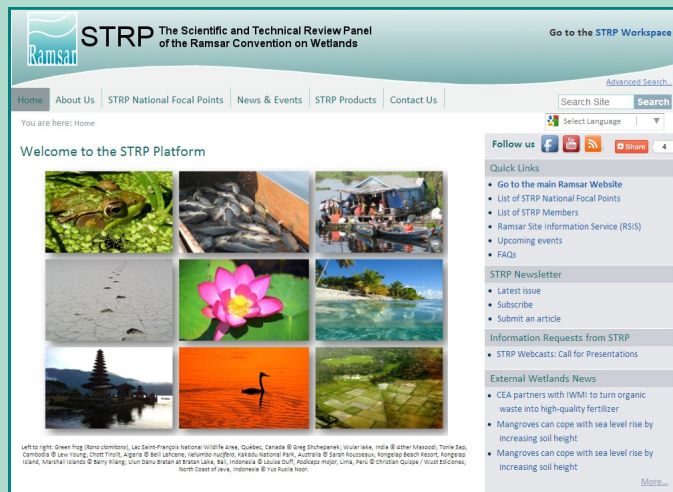
MAIN FEATURES

Through its public interface ('the STRP Portal'), Ramsar constituents and others will be able to directly contribute to, and engage with, the work of the Panel in multiple ways, including:

- Information Request:** this feature will enable the STRP to place requests for information, such as journal articles, case studies, surveys, etc., related to a particular task from STRP National Focal Points and the general public.
- STRP news and activities:** this page contains the latest STRP and wetland-related news and activities, including STRP members' participation in and contributions to meetings, workshops and events.
- STRP Newsletter subscription and submissions:** visitors to the Platform will now be able to subscribe to the quarterly STRP Newsletter with the click of a button and submit articles or announcements for publication in forthcoming issues.
- Calendar of events:** this tool will enable visitors to stay up to date on all upcoming STRP and wetland-related meetings and workshops.
- Visitors to the website will also be able to submit additional **Frequently Asked Questions** not currently listed there.
- Google translate:** through this feature, Ramsar constituents will be able to translate the contents of the site to their language.

We welcome your ideas on how we can continue improving the Platform, as well as any wetland related-news, events and activities from your region.

The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Support Officer Marcela Bonells is responsible for maintaining and administering the STRP Platform. For any queries related to the Portal, please contact her at: strp@ramsar.org.



Screenshot of the STRP Portal



Screenshot of the STRP Workspace

SPECIAL THANKS

The Panel and the Secretariat would like to thank Monica Zavagli, former Scientific and Technical Support Officer, along with last cycle's STRP members and representatives of International Organisation Partners (IOPs), who played a crucial role in the design and redevelopment of the Platform.

The Panel is specially grateful to Wetlands International, a Ramsar IOP, for hosting the old SuSe and providing technical support throughout the years.

Marcela Bonells

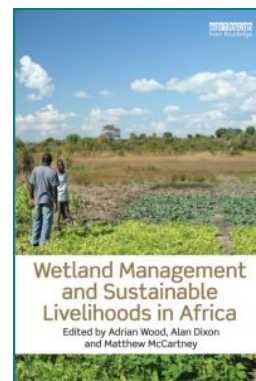


RAMSAR WELCOMES ITS NEW SECRETARY GENERAL!

The Ramsar Convention welcomes Dr Christopher Briggs as its new Secretary General. He will be the fifth Secretary General to the Convention and will succeed Mr Anada Tiéga, who has served the Convention for the past six years. Dr Briggs' appointment was approved by the Ramsar Standing Committee during its 46th meeting held in Gland, Switzerland, in April 2013. Click [here](#) to access the full story.

AFRICAN WETLANDS, AGRICULTURE AND LIVELIHOODS

The authors of a new Earthscan book, *Wetland Management and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa*, argue that the management of wetlands in Africa needs to be more people-focused. In Africa, agriculture is a commonly associated feature of wetlands, with many types of wetland supporting a wide range of activities and providing for the livelihoods and wellbeing of large numbers of people. Wetland agriculture is important for poverty reduction and food security. However, there is little recognition of its current extent, its value to poor communities, or its future potential. A major constraint is the lack of knowledge of government planners, managers of natural resources and local communities of the diverse benefits that wetlands provide and how they can be utilized for agriculture in a sustainable manner. Frequently, agricultural activities (cultivation and grazing) are perceived as major threats but with limited and, often misconceived, understanding of actual impacts and trade-offs with other ecosystem services. The authors argue that wetlands provide development opportunities and that wetland policies need to promote an appropriate balance of economic, social and environmental interests. To fully realize the opportunities that wetlands provide, local communities need to be given more power and incentives to sustainably manage these important natural resources for both current and future generations. More details of the book can be found at: www.routledge.com/books/details/9781849714129.



Matthew McCartney

THE FIRST PUBLICATION ON WETLANDS EDUCATION IN CHINA



Getting to Know Wetlands by Cui Lijuan, STRP member, has been published by the Higher Education Press in China. This is the first publication on wetlands education for middle and primary schools. The book's contents include: the definition of wetlands, wetland-dependent organisms and fauna, wetland distribution in China and the world, Beijing's famous wetlands, wetland landscapes, wetland functions, wetland 'diseases,' the Ramsar Convention and wetland conservation in general.

The purpose of the book is not only to inspire young people to take good care of wetlands, but also to enhance public awareness of wetland conservation.

The book uses cartoons and photos to make wetland knowledge more intuitive and attractive. For instance, the functions of water supply and microclimate regulation are likened to a drinking fountain and an air conditioning system, whilst problems like the lack of water resources and eutrophication of wetlands are assimilated to anaemia and high blood cholesterol.

The book shows the diversity of wetland ecosystems and the beautiful landscapes they make up, the role of wetlands in nature and society, the traumas caused by unwise use of wetlands and the best measures of wetland protection and restoration, in ways that bring emotional resonance to the presentation of the material and are thus especially suitable for the education of young

Cui Lijuan



MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION: RAMSAR AND CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL



The Ramsar Convention and Conservation International (CI) have signed a [Memorandum of Cooperation \(MOC\)](#) to provide a framework for collaboration over the many goals that they share for the monitoring, conservation and wise use of wetlands around the world.

Former Ramsar Secretary General Anada Tiéga signed the MOC at the 46th meeting of the Convention's Standing Committee in Gland, Switzerland. This agreement follows Ramsar's recent invitation to CI to attend the 17th meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP). This was a considerable honour for CI, enabling the organisation to collaborate on many aspects of the STRP 2013-2015 Work Plan.

There will be many opportunities for collaboration, including the Watershed Health Index being developed by CI. CI is also noted as a source of advice and scientific information for the STRP's work themes focused on wetland monitoring and assessment, climate change (especially through links to the [Alliance for Global Water Adaptation](#), co-led by John Matthews at CI and the World Bank), and ecosystem services/benefits.

Importantly, this MOC serves as a step along the path towards CI possibly becoming a formal International Organization Partner of the Convention.

CI has already contributed to Ramsar's work on identifying and recording Ramsar Sites. CI-Madagascar has played an important role in the designation of [Ramsar sites in Madagascar](#), including the Kinkony and Mandrozo Lakes in 2012 and a long section of the Nosivolo river in 2010. In March 2013, Ian Harrison (CI/International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)) represented Ramsar's interests at a Key Biodiversity Area Criteria and Delineation workshop organized by IUCN's Joint Task Force on Biodiversity and Protected Areas (story available in the [previous issue](#) of this newsletter).

Ian Harrison

- [Second Meeting of the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel \(MEP\)](#), Cape Town, South Africa, 27-30 August 2013.
- [World Water Week 2013](#), Stockholm, Sweden, 1-6 September 2013.
- [Society of Wetland Scientists \(SWS\) European Chapter Meeting](#), Padova, Italy, 1-4 September 2013.
- [Sixth Annual International Ecosystem Services Partnership Conference 2013](#), Bali, Indonesia, 26-30 September 2013.
- [Asia Regional Workshop on Scientific and Technical Support for Implementation of the Ramsar Convention](#), Changwon City, Republic of Korea, 7-11 October 2013.
- [Seventeenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice \(SBSTTA\)](#) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, Canada, 14-18 October 2013.
- [Wetland Link International \(WLI\) North America Workshop](#), Oak Hammock Marsh, Manitoba, Canada, 28-30 October 2013.
- PAGES expert workshop on ecosystem character baselines and historical records, Melbourne, Australia, 4-9 November 2013.
- [Ninth Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas](#), Suva, Fiji, 2-6 December 2013.
- [Second Session of the IPBES Plenary \(IPBES-2\)](#), Antalya, Turkey, 9-14 December 2013.

Publications

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- Finlayson, C. M. (2013). [Climate change and the wise use of wetlands: information from Australian wetlands](#). *Hydrobiologia*, 708:1, 145-152.
- McCartney, M., et al. (2013). [Agricultural water storage in an era of climate change: assessing need and effectiveness in Africa](#). 37 pp. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI).
- Moore, P., et al. (2013). [Review of Statutory and Customary Law in the Xe Champhone Ramsar Site, Lao PDR: Implications for a rights-based approach to conservation](#). 82 pp. Vientiane, Lao PDR: IUCN.
- Rebelo, L-M., et al. (2012). [Challenges to the Integration of wetlands into IWRM: the case of the Inner Niger Delta \(Mali\) and the Lobau Floodplain \(Austria\)](#). *Environmental Science and Policy*.
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (2013). [Water and Biodiversity-Natural Solutions for Water Security](#). 95 pp. Montreal, Canada: CBD.
- McInnes, R. J. (2013). Recognizing Ecosystem Services from Wetlands of International Importance: An Example from Sussex, UK. Wetlands, DOI 10.1007/s13157-013-0458-1.

Useful links

List of STRP National Focal Points [Click here](#)

List of Ramsar Administrative Authorities [Click here](#)

List of CEPA National Focal Points [Click here](#)

List of STRP Members [Click here](#)

STRP Platform <http://strp Ramsar.org/>

The Ramsar Sites Information Service <http://ramsar.wetlands.org/>

Ramsar's International Organisation Partners (IOPs):

BirdLife International www.birdlife.org

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) www.iucn.org

IWMI (International Water Management Institute) www.iwmi.cgiar.org

Wetlands International (WI) www.wetlands.org

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) www.panda.org

This newsletter has been prepared by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat in collaboration with STRP members and Observer Organisations with the purpose of keeping STRP National Focal Points and other STRP friends informed about the progress of the Panel's work during the 2013-2015 cycle and to provide you with useful information on wetland conservation for the implementation of the Convention in your own country, as well as to enhance our STRP network throughout the regions.

Previous editions of the STRP Newsletter are posted on the main Ramsar website. You can view them [here](#).

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Photos: Front page-left: Telchac Puerto, Yucatán, Mexico © Alejandro Pacheco Moreno; right: Ramsar Site: Elnija reserve, Belarus © Sozinov Oleg.

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