



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.

<http://www.ramsar.org/>

STRP Newsletter

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

Issue n. 2/2011

...THE VOICE OF OUR STRP NATIONAL FOCAL POINT IN TURKEY



Elif Okumus, STRP National Focal Point for Turkey.

Turkey joined the Ramsar Convention in 1994 and to date there are 13 wetlands designated as Ramsar Sites covering an area of 179,898 hectares. Nevertheless, the country is home to many more beautiful wetland areas worth such designation.

My direct experience with the Convention started in 2007 when I joined the Wetland Division at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry working as a Junior Environmental Specialist and I was appointed STRP National Focal Point. As a STRP NFP I can say I'm in a lucky position since my work base is the same as the other three Focal Points of the Ramsar implementing authority. Being based in the same Department in Ankara makes the communication and exchange of information a relatively easy matter. In my current daily job I have the opportunity to deal with a broad range of issues from wetland management plans to more specific projects working with a variety of stakeholders.

In February 2010 the Turkish Administrative Authority asked me to attend the STRP mid-term workshops in Gland, Switzerland – that was my first STRP meeting – but it wasn't the last one! At the meeting I had the opportunity to meet with the whole STRP: appointed members, representatives of observer organizations as well as the Ramsar Secretariat – people you normally hear or read about – so it was nice to finally have the chance to talk face to face and get familiar with the work the Panel does. I received a very enthusiastic welcome...and I was the only STRP National Focal Point attending the meeting!

It was the Panel's midterm meeting and hence participants were actively discussing tasks that had already been initiated so it wasn't necessarily easy to immediately grasp the sense of everything! (Were we actually speaking the same language?).

I have to admit that for the first few days I felt a bit nervous and I wondered how I could really contribute to their work and how to make theirs relevant to mine. Nonetheless I kept giving my opinion every time I was asked (many times in fact!) about what I thought to be relevant for my country in relation to this or that topic. By the end of the workshop I found myself fully involved in a number of tasks particularly in relation to the thematic area on Regional Networking. I realized how sharing of information between the Panel and the Contracting Parties is critical to ensure that the Convention guidance is usefully relevant to countries and that STRP National Focal Points play a key role in this. By attending that meeting I finally understood what my role as STRP National Focal Point was and it made me see a clearer picture of what is behind the concept of "wise use of wetlands" and the need to streamline wetlands conservation into the different sectors.

Since then I have attended two more STRP meetings and also the pre-COP European Regional meeting in Slovakia in September. On these occasions I met with few other STRP National Focal Points from Europe and I keep working closely with the STRP task force members on regional networking to find new ways to encourage other STRP NFPs and wetland experts to share their knowledge and to improve the way we communicate. Being involved in such activities makes me feel part of something "bigger" that goes beyond my country's borders and when I need advice for my work, I know that the STRP network often offers an answer for me.

With hindsight I'm very grateful to the Turkish Administrative Authority to support my participation in STRP activities. We, in Turkey, have realized that engaging actively with the Convention's Secretariat and Scientific Panel is the best way to ensure that our needs are heard and addressed for the benefit of healthy wetlands.

Elif Okumus

Elif is an Environmental Engineer and works at the Directorate of Nature Conservation & National Parks, in the Department of Nature Conservation, Wetlands Division in Ankara.

New Ramsar Sites:

- OUM LĀAGAREB; LAC DU BAR-RAGE DE BOUGHEZOU; ILE DE RACHGOUN — ALGERIA
- PALMAR YATAY — ARGENTINA
- DRAGOMAN MARSH KARST COMPLEX — BULGARIA
- FISHPONDS AND MARSHLANDS SOUTH OF LAKE BALATON — HUNGARY
- EL JAGÜEY, "BUENAVISTA DE PEÑUELAS"; LAGO DE CHAPALA — MEXICO
- LAKE NIASSA AND ITS COASTAL ZONE (LAGO NIASSA E ZONA COSTEIRA) — MOZAMBIQUE
- FOURTEEN NEW RAMSAR SITES (N. 1949-1958 AND 1965-1968) — NORWAY
- DONGBAEKOLONGSAN; UNGOK WETLAND; JEUNGDO TIDAL FLAT — REPUBLIC OF KOREA
- IRON GATES NATURAL PARK — ROMANIA
- PALMYRA ATOLL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE — USA

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INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON WETLAND RESTORATION IN BEIJING



Participants' group Photo

The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) wetland restoration, mitigation and management working group has been reviewing the existing Ramsar guidance on wetland restoration to determine if it needs updating and/or expanding.

To help inform its review work, members of the working group have opportunistically participated in five wetland restoration workshops over the past year (in Avignon, Johannesburg, Volgograd, Seattle and Beijing), to help gain initial clarification regarding the usefulness of Ramsar's existing wetland restoration guidance, and to seek input into determining whether or not the guidance needed updating or extending.

In June 2011, STRP members and invited experts Max Finlayson, Rob McInnes and Kevin Erwin were able to attend a wetland restoration workshop in Beijing and, while representing their own institutions, were able to draw advice from the workshop discussions to inform the Ramsar STRP working group.

Read the rest of the article [here](#).

BRIEFING NOTE ON CURRENT AVIAN INFLUENZA DEVELOPMENTS

There have been several recent developments on the bird flu front so that the Task Force on Avian Influenza has recently developed a briefing note. This is being circulated to various fora and the Convention on Migratory Species is presenting it as an INF paper to their forthcoming Conference of the Parties that will be held in Bergen, Norway from 20 to 25 November 2011.

The Scientific Task Force on avian influenza and wild birds has prepared this briefing note on recent developments related to this disease, notably the announcement of recent genetic changes and the release of a major Hollywood film 'Contagion' which has as its scenario the pandemic spread of an influenza type virus. This may also create a resurgence in media interest in the disease and the Task Force suggest that it is thus a timely reminder for relevant organisations' public relations personnel to be well briefed in the issue and current developments. The briefing note will be helpful in this regard, and is available [here](#).

For more information also read <http://www.cms.int/avianflu/index.htm>

David Stroud



STORY FROM A STUDENT OF STETSON UNIVERSITY AT THE RAMSAR SECRETARIAT

This past summer I had the privilege of serving as an extern at the Ramsar Convention Secretariat. This unique opportunity not only introduced me to the inner workings of a multilateral environmental agreement but also to the Ramsar community, a dedicated group of people from all over the world working towards the wise use of wetlands.

I first became familiar with the Convention in my capacity as a Biodiversity Fellow at Stetson College of Law and have become increasingly engaged since.

My involvement with the Convention has been possible thanks to a Memorandum of Cooperation between Stetson and the Ramsar Secretariat. This memorandum provides students service opportunities to help further the goals of the Convention. Students have participated in a variety of projects for the Secretariat and the STRP, including: providing comments to the Rwanda Environment Management Authority on a draft marshlands law, researching cooperative management structures for transboundary wetlands, and

researching wetlands laws and policies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It was because of this working relation that I was able to spend part of my summer at the Secretariat. During my time in Switzerland, I helped prepare an information paper about the diversity and benefits of National Ramsar Committees (NRCs). As part of my work, I consulted with the Senior Regional Advisors and contacted National Focal Points across the Ramsar Regions. The main challenge of this project was to find information about the operations and experiences of NRCs.

Prior to this experience my understanding of the Convention and its goals was very abstract. This opportunity allowed me to see how the Convention can be implemented at the national level, through the hard work of individuals, and how many sectors of society it permeates.

I hope to remain part of the Ramsar community for many years to come.

Marcela Bonells



Marcela Bonells is an intern in the Office of General Counsel at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Biodiversity Fellow at Stetson University College of Law in Florida, USA.

RAMSAR DRAFT RESOLUTIONS AT THE UPCOMING STANDING COMMITTEE

The members of the Standing Committee will gather in Gland in only a few weeks for their 43rd meeting.

The week is expected to be very busy. Indeed, in addition to the regular review of the Convention's activities, financial issues and administrative reform, the SC members will have to discuss and approve the proposed Draft Resolutions for consideration by COP11.

All agenda papers are available [here](#).

Among the topics of the scientific and technical Draft Resolutions prepared by the STRP: "wetlands & energy issues", "wetlands and health", "tourism and wetlands" and "principles for urban planning". Also proposed to SC43 are two integrated frameworks, one for wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication and

the other one for avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for wetland losses.

For a few specific Draft Resolutions, such as "Future scientific & technical priorities for the implementation of the Convention", SC members will be invited to provide advice and also to request the Secretariat to prepare a further version of the DR that incorporates any recommendations from Contracting Parties;

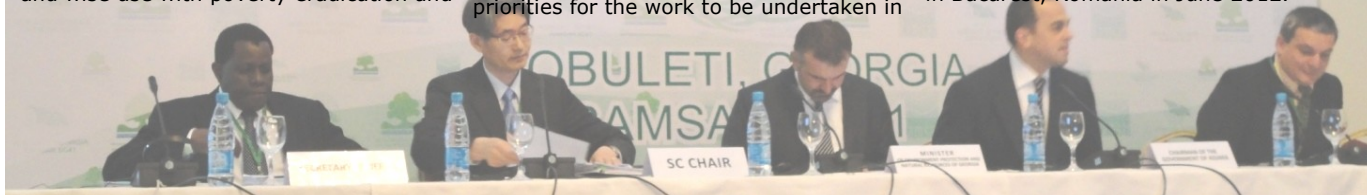
This DR and its annexes (Doc. SC43-19) currently include the proposals from the STRP both on its own future tasks and priorities and on scientific priorities for the Convention's implementation (which may be led by others with STRP support and advice). COP11 preparatory regional meetings are being used to gather Contracting Parties' views on the scope and priorities for the work to be undertaken in

the coming triennium, and at the same time to identify any other tasks that they would wish to be undertaken in addition to those proposed.

Feedback from Contracting Parties on future Scientific and Technical priorities is very important as it will determine the range of activities that the STRP, the Secretariat and other key players will carry out in the next triennium.

The secretariat has developed a simple **"priority task" form** to support Parties in providing their advice back to the Secretariat. The form can be downloaded [here](#).

SC43 is the last meeting before the 11th Conference of the Parties that will be held in Bucharest, Romania in June 2012.



STREAMLINING PROCEDURES FOR DESCRIBING RAMSAR SITES AT DESIGNATION AND SUBSEQUENTLY– RECENT PROGRESS

As part of the STRP's major work to review and make proposals for streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites at designation and subsequently has been outlined in previous STRP Newsletters. Since the last Newsletter, these proposals were presented to, and well received by, Standing Committee 42 in May.

The Standing Committee requested that the proposals to be considered by COP11 be made available to Contracting Parties as soon as possible to allow the longest time for their consideration. To that end, a web-site has been created at <http://ris-2012.wikispaces.com> which contains (in all three Convention languages):

- background information on the proposals and STRP's rationale for suggesting revisions to the Information Sheet structure and format;
- the accompanying draft Resolution;
- the draft Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) – 2012 revision;
- the draft Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance – 2012 revision;
- a number of 'worked examples' of the 2012 revision of the RIS for different types of wetland; and
- a Frequently Asked Questions page (<http://ris-2012.wikispaces.com/Frequently+Asked+Questions>) which

provides further explanation about the proposed revisions.

This is a major 'package' of materials made available in preparation for the COP. National Focal Points are strongly encouraged to familiarise themselves with the proposals, the adoption of which would be a major advance in the way that the Convention handles data and information on listed Ramsar Sites.

To further assist Parties to understand and become familiar with the proposed revisions, presentations are being made to all forthcoming regional meetings. **'Hands-on' workshops** demonstrating the anticipated new on-line reporting tool currently under development for Ramsar by the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre were held at the **European and African meetings in September and October 2011** respectively. There was considerably enthusiasm for the proposed revisions, and in particular, the potential streamlining that would come from on-line RIS submission. Participants acknowledged this would be a major step towards delivering COP8's request for electronic mechanisms to report on Ramsar Sites – an issue that unfortunately has not been possible to develop until now. **The concluding statement from the African Regional meeting recommended that COP10 adopt both the 2012 revisions of both the**

RIS and the Strategic Framework.

Feedback on any aspect of the proposed revised procedures would be gratefully received by David.Stroud@jncc.gov.uk.

David Stroud



Photos from the pre-COP11 European and Africa Regional Meetings.

A FACEBOOK PAGE FOR THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS



Photo: © Sibley JP

The Ramsar Secretariat has launched in August the official **Facebook** page dedicated to the Ramsar Convention: <http://www.facebook.com/Ramsar-ConventionOnWetlands>.

Our new presence on the social media network intends **to increase the awareness on the Convention's work and on the importance of preserving wetlands to all public**. For this reason our Facebook wall is open to share news, comments and thoughts on wetlands and the urgent need for protecting these vital ecosystems.

You will also find all information and web links related to our major conferences and the Secretariat's activities.

In addition, to celebrate 40 years of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Secretariat has created a dedicated website with an **online photo gallery** showcasing the beauty of wetlands in the world. We invite the public to contribute to this gallery and to the next photo mosaics by sending us directly a maximum of three beautiful pictures of wetlands.

If you wish to contribute with your photos to the Online Photo Gallery, you may do so by visiting <http://www.40thramsar.org/> and while you are there, you may wish to 'Like' us on Facebook!

Virginie Pirens

NATIONAL RAMSAR/WETLANDS COMMITTEES

There are a variety of mechanisms to assist Ramsar Contracting Parties implement the Convention at the national level. Among those are the National Ramsar Committees (NRCs) or National Wetlands Committees.

For example, in the framework of the Convention's Strategic Plan, some NRCs have played a key role in promoting **Wise Use (Goal 1)** by, among others, assisting with the development and implementation of National Wetland Policies and management initiatives and helping to prepare National Reports for triennial meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP);

Similarly, NRCs have been instrumental in encouraging the designation and maintenance of Wetlands of International Importance, also called **Ramsar Sites (Goal 2)** as well as in fostering **International Cooperation (Goal 3)** by exchanging information with Ramsar Site managers in neighboring

countries and helping to designate and manage Transboundary Ramsar Sites (TRS) or other transboundary wetlands;

A number of documents officially adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, such [Recommendation 5.7](#), encourage their creation and many Parties have voluntarily established NRCs to help them deliver the goals of the Convention.

The graphs on the right provide a regional overview of the number of Contracting Parties that have indicated in the COP10 National Reports (2008) having, not having or partly having a NRC.

Because the government structures, needs, and capacities within each Party differ, NRCs vary considerably from country to country in composition, structure, scope, and functions. Thus, **there is no single model or formula for creating the perfect NRC.**

"THERE IS NO SINGLE MODEL OR FORMULA FOR CREATING THE PERFECT NATIONAL RAMSAR COMMITTEE"

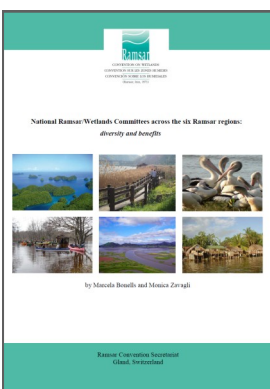
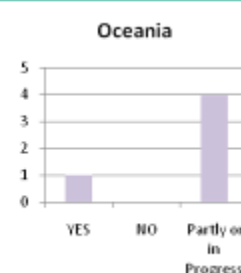
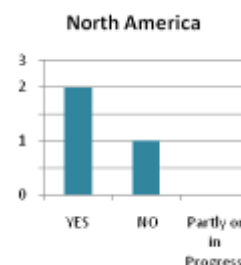
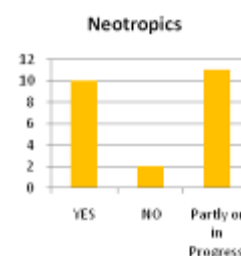
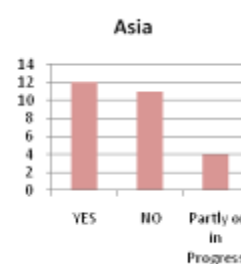
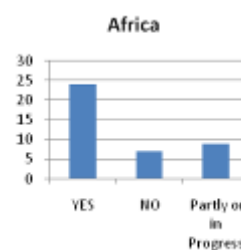
INFORMATION PAPER ON NATIONAL RAMSAR/WETLANDS COMMITTEES ACROSS THE SIX RAMSAR REGIONS: DIVERSITY AND BENEFITS

The Secretariat of the Convention regularly receives requests from Parties and other entities (e.g., NGOs) requesting advice on how to create or revive an existing NRC or equivalent body. While establishing uniform guidelines for the creation of a NRC would not be practical, given the social, political, and economic differences within countries, Parties would benefit considerably from learning about the experiences and practices of existing NRCs.

In response, the Ramsar Secretariat has prepared an information paper that illustrate some of the diverse approaches Parties have utilized to create and operate NRCs;

The Paper examines the experiences of six NRCs from Africa, Asia, Europe, Neotropics, North America and Oceania, that, like many other NRCs around the world, have helped deliver the objectives of the Convention and effectively promote the wise use of wetlands; the paper reviews their different structures, composition, decision-making processes, as well as successes and obstacles in delivering the goals of the Convention; based on the case studies' analysis, review of existing documents and the experience of the Secretariat's regional teams in working with Ramsar Contracting Parties, the Paper also provides a set of common principles of best practices in the creation and operations of NRCs.

Read the Paper [here](#)



About the Paper's Authors

Marcela Bonells is a Biodiversity Fellow at Stetson University College of Law in Florida, USA. During her externship at the Ramsar Secretariat in summer 2011, Marcela worked closely with Monica Zavagli, Ramsar's Scientific & Technical Support Officer and other Ramsar staff on the preparation of this paper.

The paper will be published in the Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy (2011), © Taylor & Francis;

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER.....

Sharing experience of existing National Ramsar/wetlands Committees is the best way to learn from each other!

If you would like to share the story of the Committee you are member of or familiar with, please download this [Template](#), complete it in consultation with the other Committee's members or Ramsar Admin. Authority and send it to the Ramsar Secretariat (stp@ramsar.org).

We hope that the new dedicated section on National Ramsar Committees in the [Ramsar website](#) will soon become populated with experiences of Wetland Committees from all over the world!

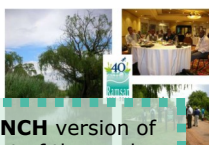
For any query, please contact stp@ramsar.org

Monica Zavagli

Announcements

Atelier de Ramsar des Comités Nationaux du GEST et d'Autres experts des Zones Humides en Afrique

Compte rendu / Rapport de la Réunion



The **FRENCH** version of the report of the workshop for STRP African NFPs is available in the Water Research Commission's report series and it can be downloaded [here](#) !

4TH EDITION OF THE RAMSAR HANDBOOKS



Each handbook brings together, subject by subject, the various relevant guidelines adopted by the Parties, supplemented by additional material from COP information papers, case studies and other relevant publications in order to illustrate key aspects of the guidelines. The handbooks have been published in PDF format in the three working languages of the Convention (English, French, and Spanish); in addition, some volumes have been translated into Russian and Arabic, when circumstances have permitted.

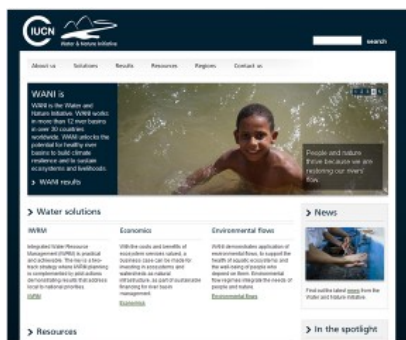
This **4th edition of the Ramsar handbooks** replaces all previous editions of this series.



WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2012 "WETLANDS AND TOURISM"

The World Wetlands Day theme for 2012 is Wetlands and Tourism and will be the warm-up for the strong focus on tourism at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, COP11, which will take place in June 2012, in Bucharest, Romania – a chance for us to help all our WWD actors focus their attention on tourism in and around wetlands. WWD 2012 is an opportunity to use the campaign Wetlands and Tourism to look at the value of your local wetlands from the perspectives of tourists and local community members, and to examine the benefits of sustainable tourism on wetland ecosystems. [Read more.](#)

Look [here](#) for the World Wetlands Day package of materials.

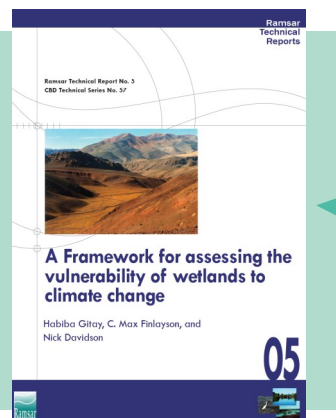


The IUCN Water Programme launches its new Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) website!

WANI unlocks the potential for healthy river basins to build climate resilience and to sustain ecosystems and livelihoods. The website is a source of case studies, toolkits and much more.

Visit: www.waterandnature.org

Ramsar Technical Report No. 5, A Framework for assessing the vulnerability of wetlands to climate change, is now published and available for [download here](#). The report is in line with the Ramsar/CBD joint work plan and has been published jointly with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as CBD Technical Series No. 57.



RELEASE OF "GOOD COASTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE PACIFIC: EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD"

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), with support from the French Government, released: "Good coastal management practices in the Pacific: experiences from the field"; the report presents a series of 17 case studies of coastal management initiatives from a wide range of countries and territories throughout the Pacific region. Learn more and download the report [here](#).

Upcoming Meetings

- **International Environmental Forum for River Basin Organizations**, 26-28 October, Bangkok, Thailand
- **Ramsar's 43rd Standing Committee**, 31 October-4 November 2011, Gland, Switzerland
- **Ramsar's pre-COP11 Regional Meeting for Asia**, 14-18 November 2011, Jakarta, Indonesia
- **Ramsar's pre-COP11 Regional Meeting for the Americas**, 5-10 December 2011, Kingston, Jamaica

Publications

- ❖ *UNEP 2011*. Taking steps towards marine and Coastal ecosystem-based management. An introductory Guide. [Available here](#)
- ❖ *Holt, C., Austin, G., Calbrade, N., Mitchell, C., Stroud, D., Wotton, S. & Musgrove, A. (2011)*. Waterbirds in the UK 2009/10. The Wetland Bird Survey. *BTO, WWT, RSPB & JNCC, Thetford*. 185 pp. [Available here.](#)
- ❖ *Musgrove, A., Austin, G., Hearn, R., Holt, C., Stroud, D. & Wotton, S. (2011)*. Overwinter population estimates of British Waterbirds. *British Birds*. 104– 364-397 [Available here.](#)
- ❖ *Mitchell M., Francis I., Griffin L., Stroud D., Thomas H., Weegman M., Fox A. (2011)*. Greenland White-fronted geese: investigation causes of low reproductive output in Greenland. Spring 2010 fieldwork. 77 pp. [Available here.](#)
- ❖ *Nick Romanowshi (2011)*. Wetland Weeds: causes, cures and compromises. A comprehensive guide to wetland weeds covering both natives and introduced species. [Available here.](#)
- ❖ *Dean-speirs T., Scott N., Robertson H., Suggate R. (2011)*. The Ramsar Convention in New Zealand—Analysis of COP10 Decisions. Department of Conservation. [Available here.](#)
- ❖ *Alexander et Al. (2011)*. Opportunities and Challenges for Ecological restoration and REDD+. [Available here.](#)
- ❖ *Keith P., Marquet G., Lord C., Kalfatak D.; Vigeux E. (2011)*. Vanuatu freshwater fishes and crustaceans. Available in french, English and Bislama. For information contact: meunier@mnhm.fr

Useful links

List of STRP National Focal Points Click here	Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs):
List of Ramsar Administrative Authorities Click here	BirdLife International www.birdlife.org
List of CEPA National Focal Points Click here	IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) www.iucn.org
List of STRP Members Click here	IWMI (International Water Management Institute) www.iwmi.cgiar.org
STRP Support Service http://www.wetlands.org/strp/	Wetlands International www.wetlands.org
The Ramsar Site Information Service http://ramsar.wetlands.org/	WWF www.panda.org
The Global Environmental Flows Network www.eflownet.org	

Get in touch with the STRP Regional Networker for your region:

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Asia: Rebecca D'Cruz (dcruz.rebecca@gmail.com)
Europe: Rebecca Lee (rebecca.lee@wwt.org.uk)
Neotropics: Montserrat Carbonell (poikilotermo@gmail.com)
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Oceania: Philippe Gerbeaux (pgerbeaux@doc.govt.nz)

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER AS WELL! SEND US ARTICLES AND OTHER INTERESTING NEWS RELEVANT TO WETLANDS IN YOUR COUNTRY AND REGION IN ANY OF THE CONVENTION LANGUAGE!

send to strp@ramsar.org

This newsletter has been created by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat in collaboration with STRP members and Observer Organizations with the purpose of keeping STRP National Focal Points and other STRP friends informed on the progress of the Panel's work during the 2009-2012 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](#)

Acknowledgements: special thanks for the contributions to this newsletter go to Elif Okumus (Turkish STRP NFP), Marcela Bonells (Stetson University's Fellow), David Stroud (STRP), Philippe Gerbeaux (STRP), Heather MacKay (STRP Chair), Virginie Pirens (Ramsar Sec.), Sandra Hails (Ramsar Sec.), Lynn Sorrentino (Ramsar Sec.) and Monica Zavagli (Ramsar Sec.).

Photos on the front page: left: Lake Ulug Kol Khakassia in the Russian Federation, © Kolbasov K.; right: Okavango Delta in Botswana, © Alicia Wirz.