



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

Ramsar and Species Conservation

Issue n. 2/2012



David Stroud working in the field with a colleague taking blood samples of Greenland white fronted geese.

It was interesting that nearly all the Ramsar side-events at COP11 related to one of two broad areas of wetland conservation: issues around ecosystem service provision, or species-related concerns. Within the Convention's implementation, these dual themes have sometimes been presented as antagonistic or at least competitive for attention. Yet this should not be the case.

Early documents from the 1960s show that whilst concern about wetland losses for migratory waterbirds and other wetland species was a key driver for an international treaty, the other multiple values of wetlands were clearly recognised, although not articulated in the language of ecosystem services we now use. Thus, included as the first of eight proposed subjects for an international Agreement or Convention on Wetlands proposed by IWRB in 1965 was:

"1. An agreed statement on the designation and utilization of wetlands ... and upon the need for their safeguarding and management in order to allow their rational use in a fair balance between the interests of nature conservation, hunting and other recreational, educational, scientific and economic needs."

As the Convention has developed, it has retained this dual focus not only on developing its thinking with regard to ecosystem service provision – recognising the huge importance of wetlands for people – but also in stressing the critical importance of wetlands for the conservation of species (biodiversity) per se. Indeed, knowledge of the status of wetland species can inform about other attributes more difficult to assess either locally or at wider scales.

Theunis Piersma and Åke Lindström highlighted how migratory shorebirds can be considered as "integrative sentinels of global environmental change". They stressed

that knowledge of such change in species status:

"... can only be put to good use in a society that appreciates and values intriguing and fragile phenomena such as shorebird migrations, and that takes such 'uneconomical' considerations into account in land-use decisions. In this context, widely publicized and continuously developed public promotion of the factors affecting shorebirds worldwide could be of great and critical help in securing sensible long-term decisions at local, national and international levels."

There are many examples of strong environmental signals that come from species monitoring. Thus for example, the major current population declines of many waterbirds using the Yellow Sea's inter-tidal mudflats as migratory staging areas provides a powerful and readily assessed indicator of the unfavourable conservation status of those wetlands generally – driven especially by losses from continuing land-claim.

In July, COP11 approved a revision of the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) – bringing to fruition a major task for STRP during the two previous triennia. In presenting its proposals to the COP, STRP noted that the revised RIS and proposed associated upgrading of information systems "have the potential to revolutionise our understanding of Ramsar Sites". This is far from hyperbole.

A major element of the revised RIS is the better capture of site-related information on species. For the first time it will be possible to answer simple questions such as "how many Hippopotami are there within African Ramsar Sites?" or "What is the status of this species on Ramsar Sites compared to undesignated wetlands?"

It will take some more years before the species information on existing RIS is transferred and accessible for this sort of analysis but when complete it will result in a hugely powerful tool to inform not only species conservation directly, but also wider environmental assessments.

Whilst information on species at Ramsar Sites is of direct utility for species-orientated initiatives – such as for the work of the Convention on Migratory Species – there is powerful and currently unexplored potential to use it to 'tell stories' for decision makers. In this context, information concerning the migration of shorebirds, for example, should not be seen as information which is intrinsically 'uneconomic' as perhaps Piersma and Lindström did. Correctly interpreted it has potential to be a enormously powerful tool to support wetland conservation decision making.

STRP's challenge is to encourage and support turning this vision into a reality.

David Stroud

David is Senior Ornithological Adviser at JNCC and also STRP National Focal Point for the UK and current STRP lead for the Thematic area on Ramsar Sites.

New Ramsar Sites:

- PARC NATUREL DE LA VALLÉE DE SORTENY (PARC NATUREL DE LA VALL DE SORTENY) - ANDORRA
- HUMEDALES DE PENÍNSULA VALDÉS - ARGENTINA
- SITE RAMSAR NTOKOU-PIKOUNDA; SITE RAMSAR ODZALA KOKOUA; SITE RAMSAR VALLÉE DU NIARI - CONGO
- JIZERA HEADWATERS (HORNÍ JIZERA); SPRINGS AND MIRES OF THE SLAVKOV FOREST (PRAMENNÉ VÝVĚRY A RAŠELINIŠTĚ SLAVKOVSKÉHO LESA) — CZECH REPUBLIC
- ÎLE D'EUROPA (TERRES AUSTRALES ET ANTARCTIQUES FRANÇAISES) - FRANCE
- NALSAROVAR BIRD SANCTUARY - INDIA
- LESSER ARAL SEA AND DELTA OF THE SYRDARYA RIVER - KAZAKHSTAN
- TANA RIVER DELTA - KENYA
- NAMDRIK ATOLL — MARSHALL ISLANDS
- PUERTO PRINCESA SUBTERRANEAN RIVER NATIONAL PARK — PHILIPPINES
- LAGOON OF PATEIRA DE FERMENTOS AND VALLEYS OF RIVERS ÁGUEDA AND CÉRTIMA - PORTUGAL
- MUI CA MAU NATIONAL PARK - VIET NAM
- COMPLEXE DES ZONES HUMIDES DES CHOTT EL GUETAYATE ET SEBKHET DHREIA ET OUEDS AKARIT, REKHAMA ET MELEH ; BARRAGE MLAABI - TUNISIA

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**General
Matters**
WETLAND ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH MONITORING NETWORK IN CHINA UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The China Wetland Ecosystem Research Monitoring Network (CWERMN) is under construction! Some 23 wetland monitoring stations have been approved and some already built. Besides, another 27 wetland monitoring stations are expected to be approved by 2020. The CWERMN aim to cover all wetland types present in China, giving priority to Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

The wetland monitoring stations are managed by institutes, universities, or nature reserves under the broader coordination of the Institute of Wetland Research, Chinese Academy of Forestry (IWRCAF), which played a critical role in the establishment of the CWERMN. CWERMN is a new platform for wetland research that also offers opportunities for international cooperation.

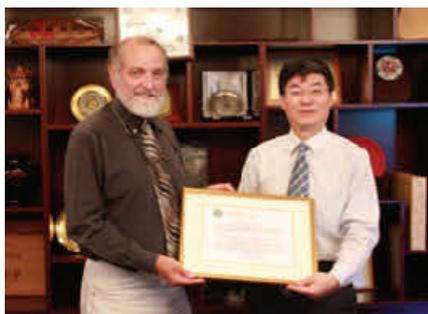
From 11th to 29th September 2012 Prof. Max Finlayson, Ramsar's STRP member and an advisor to CWRMN met with Prof. Lijuan Cui,

the director of IWRCAF as well as STRP invited expert; after a visit to the wetland monitoring station of Zoige in Sichuan Province, Prof. Finlayson and Prof. Cui discussed the progress of wetland monitoring stations construction and long term criteria necessary to monitor wetlands in China.

Academic activities, such as seminars, training sessions and field works were organized for IWRCAF staff during this period to promote better understanding of ongoing work and best practices.

At the end of the visit, Prof. Finlayson was honoured "visiting professor" by the Chinese Academy of Forestry (CAF) for his significant contribution to IWRCAF and CWRMN and to the development of wetland research for future cooperation between China and Australia. Congratulations Max!

Prof. Lijuan Cui



Prof. Finlayson awarded CAF's "visiting professor".



Field work in Zoige.



Lecture on wetland management and restoration.

NEW CGIAR INITIATIVE ON WATER, LAND AND ECOSYSTEMS

Sustainable management of the natural resource base supporting agriculture is one of the strategic objectives of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

The CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE), which is being led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), one of the Ramsar IOPs, is an ambitious ten-year initiative that aims to deliver effective solutions for food security and environmental protection.

The program combines the resources of 14 CGIAR centres and numerous external partners and focuses on natural resource management. It will address the three critical issues of water scarcity, land degradation and ecosystem services.

As part of this initiative an Ecosystem Service and Resilience Advisory (ESRA) Group has just been established and held its first meeting in Montpellier in October. The group agreed that in the context of poverty alleviation, research is needed to determine:

- i) how exactly different ecosystem services support the lives of the poor;
- ii) how mixed use landscapes can be managed to provide a range of different services and increase resilience; and
- iii) what the long-term and short-term trade-offs and synergies are associated with social and economic development.

In the future the group will meet regularly to guide and synthesise relevant research being conducted within the WLE program.



Professor Max Finlayson, the STRP lead on Climate Change is an external advisor to the ESRA group.

More details of the WLE initiative are available at <http://wle.cgiar.org/>

Matthew McCartney



A NEW JOINT WORK PROGRAMME STRENGTHENS CMS-RAMSAR PARTNERSHIP



The Secretariats of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and Ramsar have decided to renew the formal foundation of their long-standing collaboration.

The [new Joint Work Plan \(JWP\)](#) for the period 2012-2014 concentrates on tangible goals. It was endorsed by the 38th meeting of the CMS Standing Committee preceding CMS COP10 in November 2011 and by Ramsar's contracting Parties at COP11 in July 2012.

Relevant CMS instruments were involved in the drafting the JWP which will serve as a basis for additional plans between Ramsar and CMS daughter agreements. Many Resolutions adopted by CMS COP10 relate to the work of Ramsar and are therefore reflected in the JWP.

The plan covers a wide array of activities ranging from managing species populations and wetland ecosystems to the joint implementation of information, outreach and capacity building initiatives. The two organizations are joining hands, for instance, to further promote the use of existing critical site networks, including Ramsar Sites, to achieve their goals. They also intend to cre-

ate synergies to better address impacts of climate change on biodiversity.

In addition, they will tackle specific challenges such as the emergence and spread of animal diseases. In accordance with CMS Res.10.22, which highlights the importance of the [Ramsar manual on animal disease in wetlands](#), a new Scientific Task Force on Wildlife and Ecosystem Health was established. It continues the efforts of the Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds.

Ramsar remains a key partner for conserving flyways on a global scale. The World Wetlands Day and World Migratory Bird Day campaigns will benefit from mutual support of both partners.

The collaboration will not entail significant extra cost. If needed, both organizations will jointly seek external funding. While strengthening their coordination and cooperation to conduct joint activities, the two Convention Secretariats expect to maximize efficiency and available funds.

Laura Cerasi



CBD-RAMSAR WORK ON THE ROLE OF BIODIVERSITY IN THE GLOBAL WATER CYCLE

At the request of the 10th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, the CBD Secretariat and the Ramsar Secretariat established an expert group, under the leadership of STRP, to review available information and provide key policy relevant messages on maintaining the ability of biodiversity (= **ecosystems**) to support the water cycle.

The group was established in July 2011 with a flexible composition and is still operational. The progress report of the work has been submitted for the information of CBD COP11 held in Hyderabad, India in October this year. To read the draft report click [here](#).

The work is intended to be formally published in early 2013.



FIJI'S NATIONAL WETLAND STEERING COMMITTEE: AN EXAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Fiji has clearly been taking systematic steps towards ensuring the conservation and wise use of their wetlands and is an example for others in the region.

In this Pacific's "Large Ocean Island State" characterized by a wide range of coastal wetland types, such as mangrove forests, sea-grass beds, tidal flats, coral reefs and rich biodiversity, central and local government agencies, NGOs, academics and individual experts, as well as the private sector have been engaging in the management of wetland resources under the effective leadership of Fiji's National Wetland Steering Committee (NWSC). Read the full story by Lew Young [here](#).

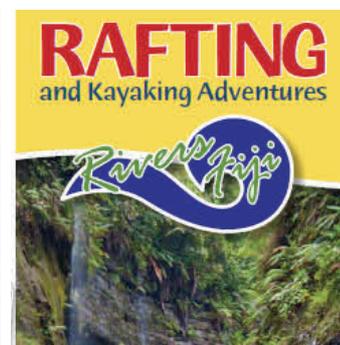
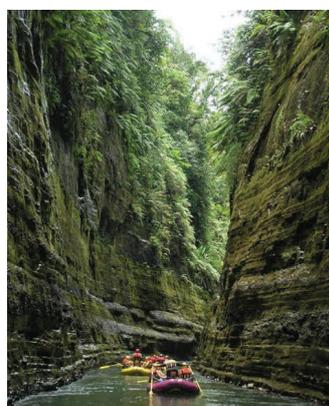
Fiji's National Wetland Steering Committee is also featured in our Ramsar webpage dedicated to Ramsar National Committees. Read more [here](#).



Fiji's National Wetland Steering Committee meeting

In Fiji, A very good example of private sector participation is given by [Rivers Fiji](#), a private tourism company that helped to establish Fiji's first Ramsar Site, the Upper Navua Conservation Area (UNCA).

The land of the Site is owned by a number of villages who have leased the management of the site to Rivers Fiji that is now managing it for conservation. They also organize rafting tours down the river following responsible practices, such as returning a percentage of the income from the tours back to the villagers, providing employment to the villagers and educational activities for the children, and they also carry out general maintenance of the site and the track leading into it.



Rafting down the Upper Navua Ramsar Site (© Rivers Fiji)

THE ECONOMICS OF ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY (TEEB) FOR WATER AND WETLANDS REPORT TO BE LAUNCHED ON WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2013

The work of the TEEB initiative has helped raise awareness of the importance and value of the benefits people gain from ecosystems in general.

Enhanced availability and access to such information is a key to supporting well-informed decision-making on the future fate of the natural environment. But as yet there has been no single source of information on the value of natural infrastructure of wetlands and the services, especially water-related services, which they deliver.

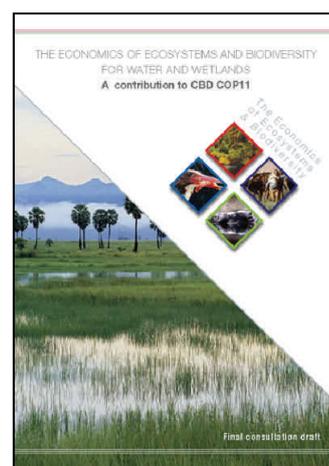
This important new report, commissioned by the Ramsar Secretariat from the TEEB, with funding support from the Norwegian, Swiss and Finnish Governments and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is designed to fill that gap through a synthesis of the TEEB findings that relate to water and wetlands. It finds that in many cases the value of naturally-functioning coastal and inland wetlands is even higher than that for other systems, and stresses the need to transform our approach by putting wetlands and their water-related services at the heart of water management in the transition to a resource efficient, sustainable economy.

A final consultation draft of the report was launched at CBD COP11 in Hyderabad in October 2012, and the core writing team,

which includes Ritesh Kumar (Wetlands international's STRP member) and Ramsar Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson is now being finalized.

It is being planned to launch the English version of full report and its summary report as part of World Wetlands Day 2013 celebrations in Geneva on 1 February 2013, linked to 2013 also being the UN International Year for Water Cooperation, and a number of other launch events both linked to WWD 2013 and other events later in 2013 are anticipated.

During the course of 2013 it is planned to issue the summary report and its key messages in other languages (French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian), and a capacity-building and outreach programme to support uptake of the report's findings is being developed.



Nick Davidson

Announcements

RELEASE OF THE 5TH RAMSAR BRIEFING NOTE



The new Ramsar Briefing Note, **Evaluating the risk to Ramsar Sites from climate change induced sea level rise**, together with its web map service and data sets developed by and available from the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) of Columbia University, present a preliminary assessment of coastal Ramsar Sites across the world that are at risk of inundation as a consequence of sea level rise.

The findings summarized in this illustrated 18-page paper provide a first supporting tool for site managers and local authorities in assessing adaptation strategies to climate change; they also underscore the importance of having accurate geospatial data on boundary locations of all Ramsar Sites for use in such spatial analyses that can contribute to site management planning and monitoring and climate change adaptation measures.

The authors of the new Briefing Note are Alex de Sherbinin, STRP observer for the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) in collaboration with Allison Lacko and Malanding Jaiteh (CIESIN). Download the PDF [here](#).

Ramsar Briefing Notes n.2 "Wetlands and water storage: current and future trends and issues", and n.4 *The benefits of wetland restoration*" are newly available in French and Spanish as well as English. Download the PDFs [here](#).



WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2013



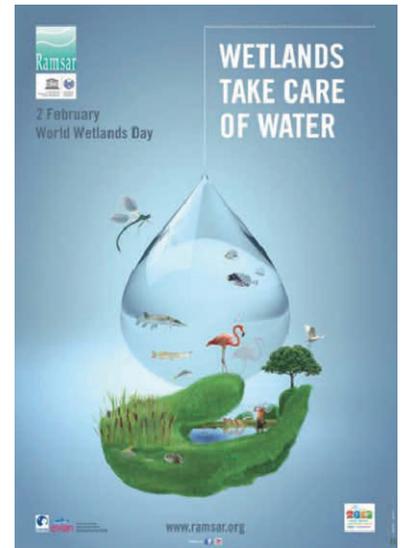
For WWD 2013 Ramsar have joined hands with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme who have a lead role for the International Year of Water Cooperation and they have partnered with us in the production of our poster and leaflet.

Our Theme is **Wetlands and water management**, and

our Slogan is **Wetlands take care of water**.

What have we produced for WWD 2013? As usual we have a poster, sticker and leaflet on the theme, as well as something for children and a wetland cartoon for you to share and customise.

Read more about WWD2013 and download our material [here](#).



THE RAMSAR CONVENTION IS SEEKING A NEW SECRETARY GENERAL

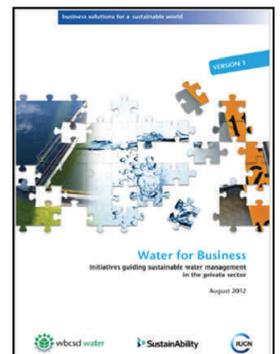
Applications for the appointment as Ramsar Secretary General are invited from all interested and suitably qualified persons.

The deadline for applications is **15 January 2013**.

More information and online application for this post are available on the IUCN website [here](#).

NEW GUIDE IDENTIFIES MOST EFFECTIVE WATER TOOLS

Water for Business, a new guide specifically designed for businesses to help them identify water tools and initiatives most suitable for business needs and environmental sustainability was released few months ago by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), and SustainAbility. Read more about it and download the guide [here](#).



Upcoming Meetings

- Ramsar Regional Center's workshop on Ecosystem Management of Wetlands, Ramsar, Iran. 15-17 January 2013
- 1st plenary meeting of the IPBES, Bonn, Germany, 21-26 January 2013
- 17th meeting of the Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), Gland, Switzerland, 25 February – 1 March 2013
- 16th Conference of the Parties of CITES, Bangkok, Thailand, 3-14 March 2013
- 46th meeting of Ramsar's Standing Committee, Gland, Switzerland, 8-12 April 2013

Publications

- McIvor, A.L., Möller, I., Spencer, T. and Spalding, M. (2012) [Reduction of wind and swell waves by mangroves](#). Natural Coastal Protection Series: Report 1. Cambridge Coastal Research Unit Working Paper 40. Published by The Nature Conservancy and Wetlands International. 27 pages. ISSN 2050-7941.
- Murray, Nicholas J., Phinn, Stuart R., Clemens, Robert S., Roelfsema, Chris M., Fuller, Richard A. (2012). [Continental Scale Mapping of Tidal Flats across East Asia Using the Landsat Archive](#). Remote Sens. 4, no. 11: 3417-3426.
- Monika Dittrich, Stefan Giljum, Stephan Lutter, Christine Polzin (2012) [Green economies around the world ? Implications of resource use for development and the environment](#). Vienna.

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 Support Service <http://www.wetlands.org/strp/>

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

The Global Environmental Flows Network www.eflownet.org

Ramsar's International Organization 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 www.wetlands.org

WWF www.panda.org

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

Africa: Stanley Liphadzi (Stanleyl@wrc.org.za)

Asia: Rebecca D'Cruz (dcruz.rebecca@gmail.com)

Europe: Rebecca Lee (rebecca.lee@wwt.org.uk)

Neotropics: Montserrat Carbonell (poikilotermo@gmail.com)

North America: Randy Milton (miltonqr@gov.ns.ca)

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 LANGUAGES!

send to strp@ramsar.org

This newsletter has been prepared 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 issue go to David Stroud (STRP), Heather MacKay (STRP Chair), Dave Pritchard (STRP), Laura Cerasi (CMS), Prof Cui (STRP invited expert); Matthew McCartney (IWMI), Nick Davidson, Lew Young and Monica Zavagli from the Ramsar Secretariat.

Photos: Front page - left: Ba Be Ramsar Site, Viet Nam © Ba Be National Park; right: Gaulosen Nature Reserve part of the Trondheimfjord Ramsar Site © Tobias Salathé.