



**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. 3/2010

## RAMSAR and IPBES...notes from the STRP Chair



The STRP chair builds a rock cairn at Bulguksa Temple, Korea and hopes for a good outcome in Busan

Many of you will have seen the announcements in various news media about the outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea, where it was agreed that a new "Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services" (IPBES) should be established (<http://www.ipbes.net/>). The Ramsar Convention has been participating in the discussions leading up and including the Busan meeting, through the Secretariat and the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair. The outcomes of the Busan meeting can be found in the meeting report ([here](#)).

The IPBES is a significant development in global environmental policy-making. Although much of the detail of its design remains to be worked out in the near future, it will essentially function much like the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) does, i.e. as an inter-governmental body which can provide independent, credible and policy-relevant scientific information to support policy-making and policy implementation. What has made the process of establishing the IPBES quite challenging is that biodiversity is in some ways more multi-faceted: climate change negotiations and policies have been, by and large, focused on mitigation issues through reduction of atmospheric emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases at a global level, and the IPCC delivered its advice to a single convention, the Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, biodiversity issues encompass many species, habitats and ecosystem services and their interactions, biodiversity is managed and conserved at scales ranging from global to highly localized, and there are several

biodiversity-related conventions whose mandates differ significantly in scope and scale. This means that the scientific assessments and knowledge for policy-makers must also be generated and delivered at all scales from global to local, and delivered into a more complex institutional context.

The IPBES process to date has been facilitated and supported by the UNEP Secretariat. This will continue until such time as an IPBES Secretariat is established and can take over. More specific procedures and processes will be discussed and agreed at the first plenary session of the IPBES.

For the Ramsar Convention, it is important to stay involved in the discussions leading up to and during the first plenary. The biodiversity-related Conventions are considered to be key stakeholders, since many potential implementation mechanisms for biodiversity policies are embedded in the Convention texts and obligations. We need to ensure that the design of the science-policy interface within the IPBES can effectively meet our needs for wetland-related biodiversity information at all the relevant scales, to best serve our Contracting Parties in implementing the Ramsar Convention. What assessments would we need? What issues would they address? What would be the scale and focus of assessments? How would the biodiversity and wise use of wetlands be addressed in assessments? Where would the data come from to underpin the assessments? Who could provide appropriate wetland-related data and information? What would be the relationship between the STRP and the IPBES working groups? These are all questions that we need to think about and discuss in STRP and with our Contracting Parties in order to make the most constructive inputs to the design and implementation of IPBES processes and mechanisms.

Getting to here has been a long process, and frustrating at times. The Busan outcomes represent a significant milestone now, towards effective delivery of independent, high-quality scientific information and knowledge on biodiversity into policy-making at all levels. This can only improve policy making, and hopefully implementation too. The example of the IPCC shows us that this can be done, with enough political will, efficient working procedures and active participation of the scientific community.

### New Ramsar Sites:

- ESTUAIRE DU RIO DEL REY—CAMEROON (20/05/10)
- PARQUE ANDINO JUNCAL-CHILE (22/05/10)
- VANKALAI SANCTUARY-SRI LANKA (12/07/10)
- FIVE RAMSAR SITES IN SPAIN: 1-PARAJE NATURAL LAGUNA GRANDE, 2- RESERVA NATURAL COMPLEJO ENDORREICO DE CHICLANA, 3- RESERVA NATURAL COMPLEJO ENDORREICO DE PUERTO REAL, 4- RESERVA NATURAL COMPLEJO ENDORREICO DE LEBRIJAS-LAS CABEZAS, 5- RESERVA NATURAL LAGUNAS DE ARCHIDONA.

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Heather McKay, STRP Chair

### ADVISORY MISSION EXAMINES MINING CASE IN CONGO



From the left: Noël Watha Ndoudy (National Expert), Alexia Dufour (Ramsar Secretariat), Dave Pritchard (STRP) Roseline Ognimba (Congo's Admin. Authority) , Sergey Dereliev (AEWA).



Loémé river, future water extraction site for the potash plant

In COP10 Resolution X.26 the Convention drew attention to increasing global pressures on wetlands from extractive industries, a subject on which African Parties in particular had been expressing concern. The Resolution encourages a range of good policy and operational practices.

In June a Ramsar Advisory Mission (funded by the Swiss Grant for Africa) was invited by the Government of the Republic of Congo to examine a case in point concerning a mine currently under development for the extraction of potash, which may have implications for the lakes and marsh systems of the [Cayo-Loufoualeba Ramsar site](#).

Although the mine itself is outside the site, plans for upstream water abstraction and a connecting gas pipeline had been cause for concern.

The Mission was undertaken jointly with the Convention on Migratory Species and the Agreement on African-Eurasian Waterbirds: led by the STRP's Dave Pritchard, the team included Sergey Dereliev (representing CMS/AEWA) and Alexia Dufour from the Ramsar Secretariat, as well as national experts from Congo. Meetings included government officials, the mine operators, and local communities who live in the Ramsar site and depend on its fish resources.

The Mission also discussed a range of other issues relating to the management of Cayo-Loufoualeba and the implementation of the three Conventions in Congo more generally. A final report is expected in the autumn, and will be posted on the Ramsar website.

*David Pritchard*

STRP EXPERTISE TO ASSIST THE RAMSAR SECRETARIAT AND CONTRACTING PARTIES TO ADDRESS CHANGES IN THE ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF RAMSAR SITES AND OTHER WETLANDS

### ADVISORY MISSION IN NORWAY REVIEWS ROAD DEVELOPMENT

While the STRP continues its work on issues of mitigation and compensation for loss of wetlands, a practical example featured in a Ramsar Advisory Mission in April, when Dave Pritchard (STRP) and Tobias Salathé

(Secretariat) visited the [Åkersvika Ramsar site in Norway](#). This river delta and lake system is already bisected by a highway (the E6) which is due to be upgraded, and the Mission reviewed alternative route options and proposals for compensation.

The option of "on-line widening" in some cases is preferable on the basis that it involves minimal environmental disruption. Unusually in this case however the Mission considered that another alternative, involving construction of a new section of road on a line further east, would be preferable in terms of the internationally important values of the Ramsar site (although having impacts on other nationally and locally important values, such as farmland); since it offers the prospect

of removal of the existing carriageway and restoration of that part of the wetland. The report of the Mission is expected soon.

*David Pritchard*



Mission Experts

## STRP EXPERTISE FOR WATER LEVEL DECLINE IN CHINA

The Jiangxi Provincial Forestry Department in P.R. China, invited the Ramsar Convention Secretariat to form a team of experts to visit the [Poyang Lake Ramsar site](#) from 12 – 17 April 2010. This was due to concerns that the normal de-

cline in winter water levels of the lake has been occurring much earlier and this period of decline was lasting longer than previously.

Two STRP members Max Finlayson and Matthew McCartney, were part of the team that review the

environment of Poyang Lake and the proposed Poyang Lake Water Control Project. A full report of the visit has been produced ([here](#)).

*Ramsar Secretariat*



Flock of Critically Endangered Siberian Crane wintering in Poyang Lake (photo by Mr Ji Wei-tao)

## MEDITERRANEAN REMOTE SENSING: PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

Mapping, monitoring and assessment of wetlands by airborne or satellite "earth observation" techniques is an increasingly important component of Ramsar Convention implementation in many parts of the world. In collaboration with the Convention and a network of partners and Contracting Party governments in the south and east Mediterranean basin, the European Space Agency has embarked upon its second "Globwetland" project to help in applying these techniques for Ramsar-related

purposes. This is envisaged as a regional pilot for potential global application, in the context of the proposed "Global Wetland Observing System" being developed by the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP).

On 4 May Dave Pritchard (STRP thematic lead on inventory, assessment, monitoring, indicators and reporting) represented the Convention at a meeting of the project team in Brussels, for a wide-ranging discussion on the project's scope and methods. The

meeting clarified several ways in which the project will support Parties with the analysis and reporting of Ramsar's indicators of effectiveness, in particular those relating to trends in ecological character of Ramsar sites. Further progress was reported to the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee meeting (MedWet/Com 10) in Corsica, from 30 May - 4 June 2010 (more about it [here](#)).

*David Pritchard*



## SOCIETY OF WETLAND SCIENTISTS CREATES A RAMSAR SECTION

Do you remember that in our previous STRP Newsletter we announced the intent of proposing to the Board of the Society for Wetland Scientists (SWS) to establish a Ramsar Section? Well, at its June 2010 annual conference in Salt Lake City, USA, the SWS Board of Directors agreed to create a "Ramsar Section" of the Society. George Lukacs, a member of Ram-

sar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) was instrumental in taking the idea for a Section and making it a reality. George will serve as the Section's inaugural Chair. Participation in the Section is open to any member of the SWS. Development of the Section will facilitate accessing the wetland science and technical expertise of the SWS members' network, providing input

into the work of the STRP both through the existing Work Areas and also the identification of new emerging issues not yet on the STRP's "radar" and assist with the development of science-based guidance for Parties. Read more [here](#).

*Nick Davidson*



Kevin Erwin (left) and Nick Davidson (right)

## CLIMATE ADAPTATION OPTIONS FOR THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN



Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson, and workshop co-organisers Brendan Edgar (NCCARF) and Max Finlayson (ILWS) discuss workshop recommendations.

WETLANDS IN THE BASIN ARE ALREADY UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE FROM PAST AND CURRENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, INCLUDING WATER ALLOCATIONS, AND A CURRENT PERIOD OF DROUGHT

In mid-July 2010 a group of 18 wetland and water management experts met in Canberra, Australia to review options for coping with adapting to a changing climate in the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB), south-east Australia's major river catchment. The workshop was co-organised by Prof Max Finlayson, STRP's wetlands and climate change expert member, and Brendan Edgar of Australia's National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF), with DSG Nick Davidson participating.

"Wetlands in the Basin are already under intense pressure from past and current management practices, including water allocations, and a current period of drought," said Max Finlayson, introducing the workshop. "Climate change is expected to exacerbate

all these issues and further complicate how we manage our wetlands with large parts of the Basin, particularly in the south-east, expected to be warmer and drier in the future."

The workshop reviewed issues and opportunities for how to best maintain wetlands and their ecosystem services in such a changing and variable environment, within the context of the current development of a "Murray Darling Basin Plan" under the framework of Australia's 2007 Water Act. Recommendations from the workshop include the preparation of a case study of the experiences in the MDB on predicting, managing and adapting to global change, including the changing climate, and including in relation to Ramsar commitments on wise use and the

maintenance of ecological character. The workshop also identified the need to a) better assess the range and distribution of all types of wetlands throughout the Basin; and b) to better assess the range and value of ecosystem services currently and formerly delivered by difference wetlands in the Basin.

In addition, a range of related issues emerged from the workshop discussions relevant to the STRP's current tasks concerning defining ecological character, including at the point of Ramsar site designation, and how best to respond to maintaining ecological character in a naturally highly variable water environment and how this relates to establishing 'limits of acceptable change' in ecological character of such wetlands.

*Nick Davidson*

## ARE FRESHWATER BIODIVERSITY VALUES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS COMPATIBLE WITH WATER MANAGEMENT NEEDS?



Survey members in action



In the face of climate change, land development and demographic increase, degrading water quality and decreasing water quantity are two major issues facing many Pacific Islands. The Cook Islands are not an exception. Surveying freshwater biodiversity in the rivers and streams of Rarotonga became a real challenge for the team of freshwater fish and crustacean experts from the French Natural History Museum and the New Zealand Department of Conservation trying to help the Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust to

update their biodiversity database. Although several new species were found, the survey also showed that maintaining minimum flows during the dry season could become a real challenge. Water supply for the local population and increasing number of tourists have led to many water planned intakes resulting in a decrease of the water volume in the lower parts of the catchments. Most of the native species are migratory species and they require minimum flows to make their journey up the streams before they reproduce. The lack of

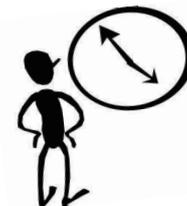
water during the dry season could jeopardize the survival of some of these species. In some catchments, degradation of water quality and pollution from piggeries and septic tanks was also observed.

Awareness among the local communities and environmental groups has led to a two day environmental forum held by the Department of Environment in July that enabled a useful exchange of information between stakeholders.

It was an important step ahead!

*Philippe Gerbeaux*

## COUNTDOWN TO RAMSAR COP11



Spring 2012 - period in which the 11<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Conference of the Parties will take place - might still sound distant, but the clock has already started ticking for our Scientific and Technical Review Panel!

Indeed, most of the many anticipated STRP products to COP11, will need to be **finalized** for submission to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee (SC42) by **April 2011**.

The period between now and April 2011 will be the only actual time window in which STRP National Focal Points could substantially contribute to the Resolutions and other materials the Panel is preparing for COP11. The ability to influence COP11 materials will be increasingly less as we go through next year. Our Six Regional Networkers will support the Panel's Members and STRP National Focal Points in exchanging information and requests.

The anticipated STRP products to COP will be presented in one of following forms:

### 1-COP11 Draft Resolutions

### 2-COP11 Draft Resolutions with annexed guidance

### 3-COP11 Information Papers (on scientific and technical issues)

For a provisional list of anticipated products from the work of the STRP 2009-2012 have a look [here](#)

Particularly for Resolutions and related annexes, the Drafts will need to be ready for review and sign off for finalisation at the next STRP 16 meeting (14-18 February 2011).

The last chance to get a Draft Resolution from the STRP's work to COP11 will be in about September 2011, a month before the 43<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, but ideally the aim would be to have as many of the COP11 DRs and guidelines available for discussions at the pre-COP regional meetings – although that will in turn depend on the timing of these regional meetings.

The table below provide a summary of the timelines for the different expected products:

Type of product	Timelines
<b>Draft Resolutions (including any annexed guidance for Parties)</b>	Ready by <b>January 2011</b> for review and sign-off at STRP16 (14-18 February 2011)  finalization by <b>mid-April 2011</b> for SC42 consideration (16-20 May 2011).  <b>September 2011</b> would be the last chance to submit COP11 DRs for consideration by Standing Committee
<b>COP11 Information Papers (COP11 DOCs)</b>	Timing for these documents is a bit more flexible because do not need to be provided to Standing Committee.  If an Information Paper provides background or the rationale for a Draft Resolution, it should be made available at the time all official COP11 documents are issued by the Secretariat <b>three months prior to COP11</b> (i.e., in <b>January 2011</b> ).  Other COP11 Information Papers could reach the Secretariat not later than about <b>one month before COP11</b> .
<b>Ramsar Technical Reports (RTRs)</b>	Final draft texts of RTRs that need to be available by COP11, should be received by the Secretariat by the <b>end of summer 2010</b> .

DRAFT RESOLUTIONS AND RELATED ANNEXED GUIDANCE WILL NEED TO BE READY FOR REVIEW AND SIGN OFF FOR FINALISATION AT THE NEXT STRP 16 MEETING IN FEBRUARY 2011

When will COP11 Draft Resolutions (DRs) be available?

When will COP11 Information Papers (DOCs) be available?

What are the implications for the timing of regional COP11 preparatory meetings?

have a look [here](#).

## 16<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE STRP

In the time leading up to the 11<sup>th</sup> COP, we will have one more opportunity for a full working meeting of the Panel in this 2009-2012 cycle. The 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the STRP, to be held in February 2011, is already near, and as we develop the agenda for what will no doubt be another very busy week, the focus of the meeting will definitely be on deliverables associated with the COP timelines. Accordingly, we expect that priorities for our agenda, in each of the thematic work areas, will be centered on:

- 1) finalising those products from various tasks in our work program which must be ready in time to feed in to COP processes, including Draft Resolutions, guidance to be annexed to Draft resolutions, and COP Information Papers to support specific COP agenda items.
- 2) discussion of any recently emerged or new emerging issues that may require attention in the next STRP work plan;
- 3) preparation of the Draft Resolution on future scientific and technical priorities, in which we need to consolidate, for each thematic area, ongoing work which continues into the next cycle and any new priority work recommended by STRP for the next cycle.

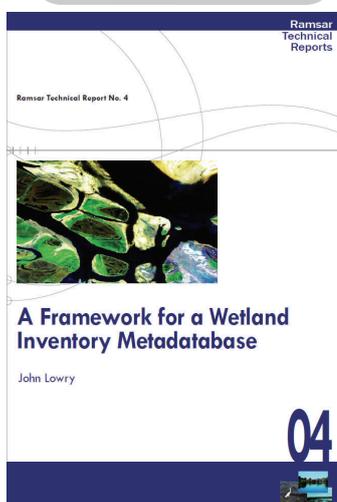
- 4) discussion of the outline and proposed content/issues to be covered in the STRP report to COP11. This is our opportunity to explore some of the big strategic issues facing the Convention in the future, as well as to report back to the Contracting parties on progress with the work plan in the 2009-2012 cycle.

Nick, Monica and your (friendly, helpful) Chair and Vice-Chair will be working up the draft agenda for STRP16 in the near future and we will be in touch with the thematic leads and task leads in order to begin preparations for STRP16. We expect that much of the week of STRP16 will be spent in plenary as we focus on the priorities mentioned above, and reconcile our interconnected and highly interdependent tasks and deliverables in the different thematic areas. However we will also attempt to provide opportunities for thematic working groups and task groups to meet in parallel as far as time allows. We expect that the next meeting of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB) of the biodiversity-related conventions will be held in Gland on the Sunday before STRP16. If we can persuade all or most of the chairs to attend, that provides us with a great opportunity to consider possible linkages with programs in other Conventions in our future work.

*Heather MacKay*

### Announcements

### RAMSAR TECHNICAL REPORT ON WETLAND INVENTORY - NOW AVAILABLE



The importance of knowing where wetlands are, and what characteristics they have, has long been recognized by the Parties to the Ramsar Convention as providing the vital basis for many aspects of implementing the Convention successfully. A Framework for a Wetland Inventory Metadatabase provides an important contribution to achieving this goal and is now available as a Ramsar Technical Report in PDF

format (English only). The metadatabase standard was developed for the Ramsar Convention by the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (eriss, Darwin, Australia), in particular John Lowry, and Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP).

In addition, French and Spanish translations of the first RTR, Guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity, published jointly with the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2006, are newly available as well; see [here](#).

The new report can be found at [http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/lib\\_rtr04.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/lib_rtr04.pdf)

### NEW "WORLD MANGROVE ATLAS"



New world mangrove atlas shows the critical importance of mangrove forests and the alarming rate of their loss despite positive restoration efforts by some countries.

The first global assessment of mangroves is the output of a joint project implemented since 2005 by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the International Society of Mangroves and other or-

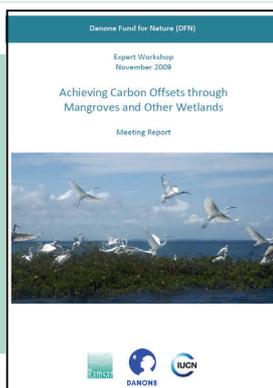
ganizations from forestry and conservation sectors and from across the United Nations. It includes a new and comprehensive map and account of mangrove forests. [Read the press release](#)

## TRANSLATION OF KEY RAMSAR DOCUMENTS INTO ARABIC

In response to the adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the Cairo Statement, elaborated during the 'Regional Technical Meeting on Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Arab Region' held from the 22 to 25 June 2009 in Cairo, the Ramsar Secretariat is pleased to announce the completion of translation of the first set of documents as requested by the participants of this meeting who included representatives of the member countries of the League of Arab States as well as concerned regional and international organizations, academics and other wetland experts.

The documents available are:

- 1- [World Wetlands Day 2010 Leaflet](#)
- 2- [Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015](#)
- 3- [Ramsar Convention Manual \(4th Ed\)](#)
- 4- [Handbook 1 - Wise Use of Wetlands](#)
- 5- [Handbook 2 - National Wetlands Policies](#)
- 6- [Handbook 14 - Designating Ramsar Sites](#)
- 7- [Handbook 16 - Managing Wetlands](#)



"Achieving Carbon Offsets through Mangroves and Other Wetlands" – expert workshop report now AVAILABLE. Read more about it [here](#).

## "NEGOTIATE – Reaching Agreements Over Water"

IUCN Water Programme announces a new toolkit in the Water and Nature Series. NEGOTIATE is a vital new resource for those interested in designing, leading, or participating in negotiation and consensus building on sustainable water resources management. [More](#)

### Upcoming Meetings

#### ◆ 7th SER European Conference on Ecological Restoration

23-27 August 2010, Avignon, France

Our STRP lead for Wetlands Restoration, Kevin Erwin, will be there to run a special session on identification and assessment of good existing guidance and case studies for the restoration of wetlands in the context of the work being undertaken to implement STRP Task 9.2 on the update and expansion of the Ramsar guidance. The session will take place on Friday 27th August 10.30-12.30

#### ◆ 'Review of the Regional Wetlands Action Plan for Pacific Islands' Ramsar/SPREP Workshop.

2-6 August 2010, Nouméa, New Caledonia

#### ◆ 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity

18-29 October 2010, Nagoya, Japan

#### ◆ City Biodiversity Summit

24-26 October, Nagoya, Japan

### Publications

- Manuel de gestion des aires protégées d'Afrique francophone. Triplet P. (2009) Awely, Ministère de l'écologie, 1234 p. Download it [here](#)
- Peatbogs and Carbon– A critical Syntesis. Richard Lindsay (2010) Download it [here](#).

- The Ruvu Basin, a situation analysis. IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Programme, 2010. Download it [here](#).
- The Wami Basi, a situation analysis. IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Programme, 2010. Download it [here](#).

**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](http://www.eflownet.org)

*Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs):*

- BirdLife International [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)
- IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)
- IWMI (International Water Management Institute) [www.iwmi.cgiar.org](http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org)
- Wetlands International [www.wetlands.org](http://www.wetlands.org)
- WWF [www.panda.org](http://www.panda.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.

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send to [strp@ramsar.org](mailto:strp@ramsar.org)

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The previous editions of the STRP Newsletter are posted on the main Ramsar Website. You can view them [here](#). Photos on the front page: left: *Ghodaghodi Lake Area* Ramsar site in Nepal, right: *Vadret da Roseg* Ramsar site in Switzerland.