

**Sociedad Española de Ornitología – SEO/BirdLife–WWD 2012 activities:**  
**Focusing on tourism and wetlands in the Ebro Delta and in Salburúa (Vitoria)**

On the occasion of World Wetlands Day 2012 SEO/Birdlife (**Sociedad Española de Ornitología**) organised more than 50 events across Spain focusing on this year's theme « Tourism and Wetlands ».

For two of these events, taking place in the Ramsar Sites « Ebro Delta » and « Salburúa » (Vitoria), SEO/BirdLife invited the Ramsar Secretariat to present the topic of tourism in wetlands from an international perspective.

**Ebro Delta**

In the Ebro Delta, rice is the most important crop which is why the delta's flood regime is regulated artificially to promote rice cultivation. SEO/BirdLife is involved in a project focusing on the organic, yet economically viable, production and trading of rice through the foundation of their company, « Riet Vell ». By doing so, they support efforts for protected species, rural development and ecotourism. The future opportunities and difficulties in the development of ecotourism in the delta were discussed by different stakeholders during a one-day seminar organised on World Wetlands Day with the administration of the Natural Park. SEO/BirdLife introduced « Iberaves » - a European Union-funded pilot project for the design and development of international training modules related to bird watching tourism in European protected areas. It provides an online training course for employees of the tourism industry such as hoteliers, travel companies, tour guides, and transport professionals in order to ensure sustainable bird watching tourism that is beneficial to biodiversity as well as to local people. The online course is accessible free of charge at [www.seo.org/iberaves](http://www.seo.org/iberaves). While this project focuses on Spain and Portugal, it can be adjusted to any other European Union country and is the basis of another two-year project promoting responsible and sustainable bird watching tourism for birds and their habitats in the Mediterranean Basin.



Juan Carlos Cirera, Director General of Riet Vell, Ignasi Ripoll, SEO's expert for the Ebro Delta and Jordi Prieto, SEO Barcelona, at one of the information boards installed in the Delta.

### **Salburúa**

The second event took place in the Ataria Interpretation Centre of the urban Ramsar Site Salburúa just outside of Vitoria Gasteiz, the capital of the Basque country and elected as European Green Capital 2012 by the European Commission. Due to a cold front that brought snow just in time for WWD celebrations, this event saw less people attending than anticipated, but was nonetheless very interesting. It included a presentation about the restoration of the Salinas de Añana, a Ramsar Site since 2002. The Salinas de Añana are now subject to a master plan seeking to restore the salt valley's original landscaping, revive its cultural heritage offer benefits to local inhabitants as well as to the environment. Another presentation focused on the activities related to the development of ecotourism in the Ramsar Sites in La Mancha. Ramón Martí (SEO/BirdLife) introduced SEO's new handbook on good environmental practices in ornithological tourism available at the following link, in Spanish:

[http://www.seo.org/media/docs/MBP\\_Turmismo\\_Ornotologico.pdf](http://www.seo.org/media/docs/MBP_Turmismo_Ornotologico.pdf)

Photos of the events and site visit are below.

**All photos by Kati Wenzel, Ramsar Regional Assistant for Europe**



Flamingo colony feeding in shallow water



Jordi Prieto (SEO/BirdLife) summarising the results of the Iberaves Project.





Ramón Martí (SEO/BirdLife) introducing SEO's new manual on good environmental practices in ornithological tourism.



Field visit to the Salburúa Ramsar Site despite the cold weather



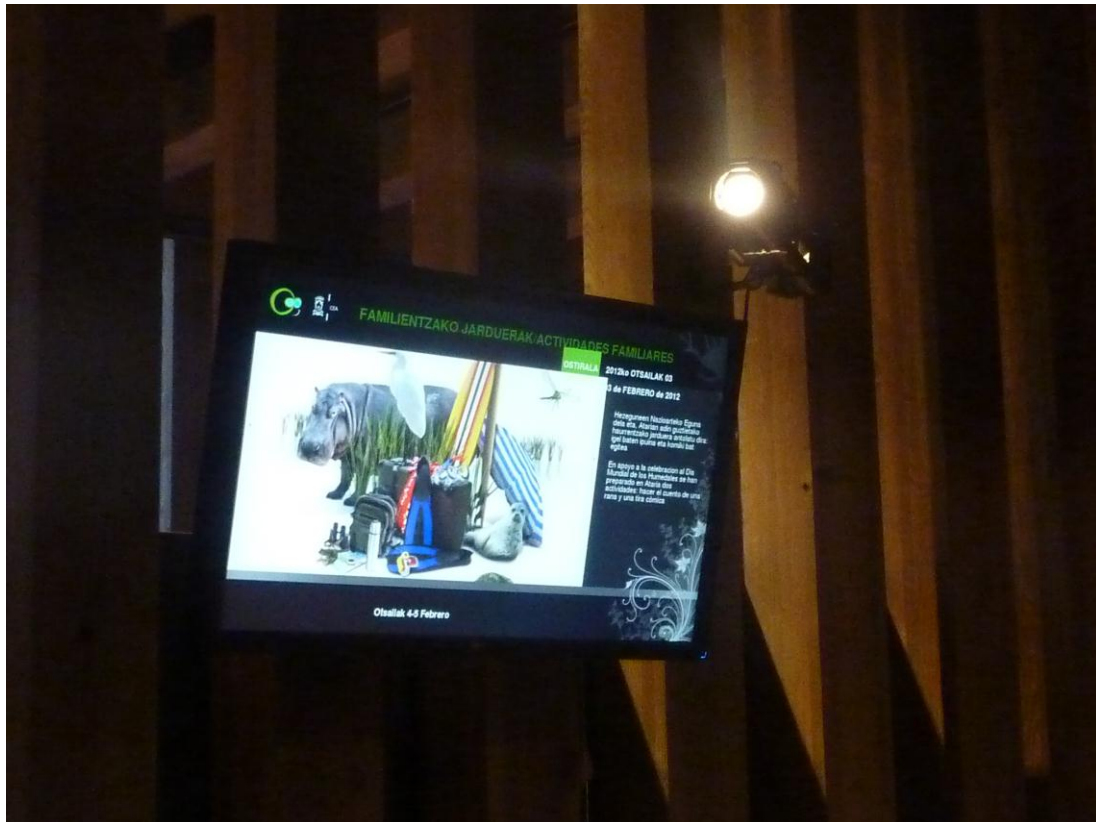
Field visit to the Salburúa Ramsar Site despite the cold weather





Field visit to the Salburúa Ramsar Site despite the cold weather





A screen in the interpretation centre Ataria displaying planned activities related to World Wetlands Day 2012 on tourism and wetlands.