

World Wetlands Day Celebration

February 2, 2013

Report from the United States Department of State

Summary: The United States Government celebrated World Wetlands Day in 2013 by organizing wetlands cleanups, presentations, film viewings, tree plantings and social media campaigns in the United States and at U.S. Embassies and Consulates around the world. The U.S. Department of State's Office of Conservation and Water organized a group of employees and their families to clean up a wetland at a National Park in Washington, D.C., and over a dozen other U.S. embassies and consulates, including in Accra, Baghdad, Bangkok, Beijing, Durban, Guangzhou, Hanoi, Hong Kong, Islamabad, Kolkata, Moscow, Santo Domingo, and Surabaya, hosted World Wetlands Day celebrations.

World Wetlands Day Celebrations at U.S. Department of State, Embassies, and Consulates Worldwide

Accra, Ghana – On 2 February U.S. Embassy Officers, local students, and local NGOs collaborated together to undertake a wetlands cleanup at the Densu Delta, a Ghanaian Ramsar site. Thirty volunteers from the U.S. Embassy in Accra, along with an additional 30 high school students from the Lincoln International School and members of the Ghana Wildlife Society and the Friends of Ramsar Sites, participated. The activity included a cleanup, nature walks, and as well as a chance to learn about the interaction between the local communities, the neighboring salt harvesting company, and the wetlands from local experts.



U.S. Embassy officers, local students, and local NGOs clean up Densu Delta, a Ghanaian Ramsar site, in celebration of World Wetlands Day 2013. Photo credit: U.S. Department of State.

Baghdad, Iraq – U.S. Embassy Baghdad commemorated World Wetlands Day on January 31 with a screening of the film *Paradise Lost* and a roundtable discussion that underscored the need for Iraq to integrate marsh protection into a more comprehensive and systematic approach to water resource management. The U.S. Embassy’s Minister-Counselor for Economic Affairs convened the event, which included representatives from the Government of Iraq responsible for water-related issues, NGOs, the United Nations, and other foreign missions. The USAID Mission Director hosted joined a roundtable discussion focused on Iraq’s once-fabled marshes’ long-term conservation, its significant gains since 2003 in re-flooding and restoring them, and the challenges remaining. U.S. Embassy Baghdad achieved significant exposure for the event online through a pro-active social media outreach campaign using Facebook and other resources. Traditional media was also present.

Bangkok, Thailand – On 2 February the U.S. Regional Environmental Hub team partnered with the Thai Department of Marine and Coastal Resources to visit a mangrove forest just outside of Bangkok where they planted trees and undertook a trash cleanup, live Tweeting during the event.

Beijing, China – On 5 February U.S. Embassy Beijing published an editorial focused on the role of wetlands in environmental protection, with a special emphasis on the benefits that healthy wetlands provide, in the *Beijing Science and Technology*, a weekly magazine, and *China Environment News*, a daily paper, with the links to the online versions shared via U.S. Embassy social media platforms.

Brussels, Belgium- On 1 February the U.S. European Union Mission-Brussels undertook a day-long wetlands-themed social media effort as part of their “Green Friday” social media campaign. The U.S. Mission posted wetlands-themed information roughly hourly to Facebook and Twitter throughout the business day.

Durban, South Africa – On 1 February the U.S. Consul General and staff visited the Durban Green Hub and participated in a guided “clean up walk” through the Beachwood Mangroves Nature Reserve, a 76 hectare Natural Heritage Site and the largest saltwater mangrove community in Durban. While they picked up trash, they participated in a scavenger hunt, taking photos of specific items (e.g., types of mangroves, crabs, and flowers) along the way. The Durban Green Hub briefed them about its work and that of NGO Durban Green Corridor to preserve Durban’s natural habitat, and the group participated in a community picnic.

Guangzhou, China – On 2 February U.S. Consulate Green Team Members visited the Yingzhou Ecological Park in Guangzhou with NGO Guangzhou Wetlands Association. Officers picked up trash from the stream and streambed during a canoe trip in the park and encouraged other visitors to the park to do the same. The U.S. Consulate’s Environment, Science, Technology and Health section also created multiple microblogs, which were well received.

Hanoi, Vietnam – U.S. Embassy Hanoi co-produced a video on the importance of wetlands conservation with Vietnam’s Ramsar focal point agency, the Biodiversity Conservation Agency, which aired on Vietnamese television on 2 February 2013.

Hong Kong – On 2 February U.S. Consulate families visited the Mai Po Reserve, a Ramsar site in Hong Kong, led by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Hong Kong’s Regional Wetlands Project. WWF explained their work in preserving and restoring the wetlands in Hong Kong, and the challenges faced at the Mai Po Reserve in particular. During their tour of the Reserve, Consulate staff and families spent time in a bird hide to view an amazing wide variety of birds, some of which were rare species.



U.S. Consulate Hong Kong staff and families visit Mai Po Reserve Ramsar Site in Hong Kong in celebration of World Wetlands Day 2013. Photo credit: U.S. Department of State.

Kolkata, India – On 2 February the U.S. Consul General led a U.S. Government visit to the East Kolkata Wetlands, a Ramsar site, in partnership with the Hyatt Regency Kolkata, local NGO South Asia Forum for the Environment (SAFE), and the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority. Students, community fishers, and urban stakeholders participated in a guided tour and nature walk around the wetland, as well as in workshops and educational activities which encouraged them to engage in efforts to protect this natural sewage recycling system, considered vital for sustaining Kolkata’s huge metropolitan area. The participation of Hyatt representatives emphasized the important role businesses play in promoting sound environmental practices. The U.S. Consulate donated, and officers and students planted, 100 trees of various types, including mango, guava, jackfruit, bakul, sundari and others. Media coverage in English and Bengali outlets potentially reached six million people, and U.S. Consulate social media platforms shared information with their more than 100,000 Facebook fans and 1,000 Twitter followers.



Consul General Thompson addressed an audience of students and community members at the East Kolkata Wetlands on World Wetlands Day 2013. Photo credit: U.S. Department of State.

Moscow, Russia – On 2 February U.S. Embassy Moscow partnered with the NGO World Wildlife Fund for a discussion on “Wetlands: Their Significance and Conservation Issues.” The NGO spoke about Russian wetlands, as well as bird biodiversity, in the peat bogs, and U.S. Embassy Officers spoke about U.S. Government programming relevant to wetlands in Russia. The U.S. Embassy supplemented the activity with social media and followed up with a blog.

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic – On 3 February U.S. Embassy staff participated in a beach cleanup with the Clinton Curtis Band and members of the public to culminate a week of activities with the environmentally-themed musical group.

Surabaya, Indonesia – On 4 February the U.S. Consul General and local officials hosted an event bringing together U.S. Consulate officials, local government, the NGO community, and civil society. The event was marked by the ceremonial release of a land turtle and “papar” fish on the banks of Brantas River, Wringinanom village, Gresik, East Java, by the Consul General and local officials. The U.S. Consulate’s efforts received media coverage from multiple outlets.

Tblisi, Georgia – On 4 February U.S. Embassy Officers visited Kolkheti National Park in Western Georgia in partnership with the Integrated Natural Resources Management in Watersheds (INRMW) program and brought together 24 students from eight schools in Senaki and Khobi municipalities. The students represented eight of the 37 eco-clubs created under the INRMW program. At a workshop on wetlands for students and teachers in Kobuleti, U.S. Government officials discussed the importance of wetlands to local communities’ human health and economic stability, raising awareness of the value and importance of wetlands in Georgia, as well as the importance of endemic flora and fauna species for global biodiversity.

Washington, D.C., United States –A group of fourteen staff members and family from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs celebrated World Wetlands Day on February 2, 2013 by collecting trash and recyclables in the wetlands of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in Washington, D.C. The Memorial Park is on an island in the Chesapeake Bay estuary, with swamps and a protected fresh-water tidal marsh connected to the Potomac River. The offices’ efforts complemented other Department World Wetlands Day celebrations at a dozen U.S. Embassies and Consulates around the world, including in Accra, Baghdad, Bangkok, Beijing, Durban, Guangzhou, Hanoi, Hong Kong, Islamabad, Kolkata, Moscow, Santo Domingo, and Surabaya, with additional posts conducting social media outreach to raise public awareness about the value of wetlands to society.



U.S. Department of State employees and family cleaned up part of Theodore Roosevelt Island National Park in Washington, D.C. to celebrate World Wetlands Day 2013. Photo credit: U.S. Department of State.

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