



#### PAST WINNER STATEMENTS

"We as an organisation are extremely proud of having won the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Education ...We continue to work hard in the area of wetland education and outreach and promoting the Ramsar ideals throughout our work... the Ramsar award helps us to establish credibility with our partners..."

Katie Beilfuss, The Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Award Winner 2012

"It meant a great deal to me on a personal level to be given such a tribute from a community of people (the "Ramsar family") who are so close to my heart... In my work now with other Conventions, UN bodies, research institutes, government agencies and NGOs, I am sure that the Award has helped to underline the central importance of wetland conservation in planning for environmentally sustainable futures in general."

Dave Pritchard, Award Winner 2008

"Winning the Award has had the greatest impact on our reputation as a leader of wetland education in our own region. This recognition has allowed us to play a more significant role in guiding decisions about wetlands in the region where we work. But it has also enhanced our reputation as the state and national level, especially from the government perspective."

Tara Ure, Hunter Wetlands Centre, 2005

"It was gratifying to share the recognition with previous awardees - wetland experts that I knew and respected... it encouraged me to keep working and determined to do more in order to do justice to the award."

In 2002 the Convention first addressed the issue of climate change and wetlands... I felt the case to continue to link Ramsar fully with climate change issues was sufficiently strong and was supported by other parties and experts... the dialogue continued... and eventually strengthened the case to address the ecosystem services as part of wise use."

Max Finlayson, Award Winner 2002

## PROFESSOR WILLIAM MITSCH



WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS  
FOR MERIT

Director, Everglades Wetland Research Park / USA

Professor Mitsch is being honoured for his many achievements, including as co-author of the innovative textbook *Wetlands*, which has been described as the "wetland bible" and the "single best combination text and reference book on wetland ecology".

The book has essentially defined the field of wetland science since its first edition in 1986.

In 1992-2012, Professor Mitsch designed, built and managed one of the most productive riverine wetland research laboratories in the world, the Olentangy River Wetland Research Park. In 2008 this 20-hectare wetland site became the 24<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Site in the USA. Its success helped to encourage a 50% increase in Ramsar Sites since then and has been the model for wetland research parks around the world.

In 2012, he became a Professor and Eminent Scholar at Florida Gulf Coast University and Director of Everglades Wetland Research Park in Florida. The laboratory has already established a reputation as a destination for visiting wetland scientists from around the world and a key location to address the restoration of large ecosystems such as the Florida Everglades.

Professor Mitsch was instrumental in organizing two important international meetings related to wetlands (INTECOL Wetland Conference 1992, EcoSummit 2012, which he chaired).

Professor Mitsch is the Chair of the Ramsar Committee USA and is an inspiring teacher to all those who work under his guidance.

We are delighted to present Professor Mitsch with the Merit Award for his trail-blazing work in wetlands and education on the importance of wetlands.

[www.fgcu.edu/swamp](http://www.fgcu.edu/swamp)

## PROFESSOR GEA JAE JOO



WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS  
FOR MERIT

Professor, Pusan National University / Republic of Korea

Professor Gea Jae Joo has worked in wetland conservation and wise use for over 25 years in different fields.

As a teacher at Pusan National University since 1993, he has always taken a strong interest in fostering education of individuals and groups regarding wetlands, their conservation and cultural values. He has published approximately 100 articles, book chapters and books associated with wetlands. He was one of the founders and organisers of the Korea-China-Japan "Kodomo" wetland events (child- focussed events on wetlands and Ramsar Sites).

Professor Gea Jae Joo has been the government representative and a principal advisor to the Republic of Korea government on issues related to Ramsar Sites and the Ramsar Convention. He was instrumental in promoting Changwon as the venue for the Ramsar COP10, and he was one of the drafters of the Changwon Declaration, and of resolutions on rice paddies and agriculture-wetland interactions.

Professor Gea Jae Joo has ensured the broad dissemination of wetland information and wetland culture, and has, in particular, been involved in the development of three wetland education centres in Korea and the establishment of the Ramsar Cultural Centre at Junam and Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia, of which he is Honorary Director.

We are delighted to present the Merit Award to Professor Gea Jae Joo for his support to the key principles of Ramsar and his championing of the importance of culture in wetlands.

[www.pusan.ac.kr](http://www.pusan.ac.kr)

## TOUR DU VALAT



WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS  
FOR MERIT

Director, Jean Jalbert / France

The Ramsar Convention owes some of its earliest foundations to the Tour du Valat. The visionary philanthropist, Dr Luc Hoffman created the research centre in 1954.

Its mission remains the same today - to halt and reverse the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands and their natural resources and promote their wise use. When Dr Hoffman realised the importance of the team's work, he believed it was necessary to promote their findings to other wetland campaigners, researchers and scientists globally and to share knowledge and create some form of standardization of the methods and practices to ensure best practice. In 1971, the Ramsar Convention was born.

The Tour du Valat research centre still continues to develop integrated research and management programmes, which promote exchanges between scientists and wetland users. One of its most successful and historic achievements was the repopulation of the Greater Flamingo in the Camargue. This population continues to thrive to the present day, and a large part of the Tour du Valat estate, located in the Camargue Ramsar Site, is classified as a Regional Nature Reserve.

The Tour du Valat library is a unique documentation centre in the Mediterranean region, specialised in wetland ecology and visited by many scientists, students and teachers. It was one of the institutions, which participated in the creation of the MedWet initiative in 1991, and it has contributed to the implementation of Ramsar principles across the whole Mediterranean basin.

We are delighted to recognize this globally important centre's achievements on behalf of all those involved in the conservation and management of wetlands.

[www.tourduvalat.org](http://www.tourduvalat.org)



## RAMSAR WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS 2015







## INTRODUCTION

The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards will be presented on 3 June 2015 in Punta del Este, Uruguay at the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP12).

This year, the Ramsar Awards are presented in three categories, Wetlands Wise Use, Innovation and Young Wetland Champions. On this occasion, the jury has also conferred a Merit Award to recognize three individual's outstanding achievements in the wetlands community.

The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards have been presented at all the Meetings of the Conference of the Parties since 1999. The Awards recognize and honour the contributions of individuals, organisations and governments around the world towards achieving the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

This year, the three 2015 award winners will receive the Evian Special Prize, of US\$10,000, generously donated by the DANONE Group, as part of the support to the Ramsar Convention from the "DANONE-Evian Fund for Water". They will also receive a beautiful photographic image from Charlie Waite, an internationally recognised landscape photographer. The Merit Award winners will receive a Limited Edition print from the celebrated artist Jeremy Houghton. At Ramsar we are delighted to be working with both of these highly-acclaimed artists.

The "DANONE-Evian Fund for Water" is a partnership between the Ramsar Convention and the DANONE Group that provides vital support to the Convention in taking action for the wise use of wetlands for our future.



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:  
Danone and the Danone Livelihoods Funds / Evian /  
Charlie Waite / Jeremy Houghton

## GISELLE HAZZAN



WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS  
WISE USE

### Manager, Ein Afek Nature Reserve / Israel

Gissele Hazzan is being recognised by Ramsar for her significant contribution and bold approach to restoration, conservation and management of a key wetland area in an otherwise dry country.

Ms Hazzan has demonstrated the importance of wetlands to both local communities and at a national and international level. Using Ramsar principles, she has proved that it is possible to reverse the damage done to a wetland when it has not been managed effectively.

The Ein Afek Nature Reserve (EANR) is the last remnant of the Acre Valley wetlands, which were drained in the 1920s. Pumping from the aquifer began in 1960 for drinking water and agriculture, resulting in severe dehydration of EANR. In 2002, Gissele Hazzan became the new Manager of EANR, the first Arab woman to be manager of a nature reserve in Israel. She has changed the EANR's entire water management by initiating actions at different levels, with full participation of local stakeholders, from weir operation to promoting new legislation. By changing the management of EANR from stop-gap temporary measures to carefully planned long-term projects, Ms Hazzan has saved the EANR ecosystem and made the wetland a vital resource once again. The Ein Afek Nature Reserve is now important for not only nature conservation but also eco-tourism, wetland education and ecological research.

We are delighted to award to Ms Hazzan the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for her continuing work to bring to life the principles of 'Wise Use'.

[www.parks.org.il](http://www.parks.org.il)

## OCEANIUM



WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS  
INNOVATION

### Director, Jean-Christophe Henry / Senegal

In 2006, Oceanium's plan to restore a highly degraded mangrove forest was realized when it started a partnership with Danone's Livelihood Fund and was able to begin the large scale task of replanting mangroves along the west coast of Senegal.

The Livelihoods Funds is a private sector initiative that supports projects with technical inputs and funds and provides returns to the investors and to local communities. With global warming and sea-level rise, Oceanium is a crucial project as it supports improved livelihoods and demonstrates to other coastal communities globally that it is necessary to work with nature to ensure that the environment and wetland-dependent populations can continue to prosper and grow economically.

The mangroves, which once grew in abundance on the west coast of Senegal, have been slowly disappearing through human intervention, rising sea level and drought. The local population saw their income and food sources disappearing as the aquaculture of prawns and oysters which had prospered amongst the mangroves dwindled, and the rice fields could no longer produce a crop due to the brackish water that was flooding inland.

Jean Christophe Henry, Director of Oceanium and his team began the task of educating the local communities - with "Plante ton Arbre" (Plant your Tree), the logo of the project. With the cooperation of local populations, Oceanium has conducted massive reforestation campaigns since 2006. Today, more than 150 million mangrove trees have been planted in approximately 500 villages in the Sine Saloum delta and in the Casamance. This result makes it the largest example of mangrove reforestation in the world. In total, almost 12,000 hectares of mangrove have been restored by the people of Senegal.

We are delighted to recognize the innovation and numerous other achievements of Oceanium by awarding the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Innovation.

[www.oceaniumdakar.org](http://www.oceaniumdakar.org)

## FUNDACIÓN HUMEDALES BOGOTÁ



WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS  
YOUNG WETLAND CHAMPIONS

### Director, Jorge Emmanuel Escobar Moreno / Colombia

This wonderful group of dynamic, hard-working and inspiring young people have set a precedent for people of all ages around the world on how they can get directly involved in environmental campaigning at a local level, and also have an impact at a regional level.

The Foundation started in 2011 and is dedicated to rescuing Bogotá's wetlands from industrialization and development, and to highlight the constant threats that they are under. The group have greatly increased the awareness of the local population, who now acknowledge the significance of the wetlands in their region.

The Foundation's website has become the main medium of information on wetlands in Bogotá. The Foundation has a network of volunteers who write and film and publish wetland news to promote wetland conservation through active citizenship.

Other activities include a World Wetland's Day cycling event, an environmental fair in 2013 (with over 15,000 visitors), documents providing information on the wetlands of the Bogotá river catchment, a "green social media" event, demonstrations and events in defence of particular wetland sites, environmental education, free courses on wetlands featuring the Ramsar Convention and its implementation and organization of community-building events such as cleaning-up and restoring wetland areas, eco-tourism and observation of migratory birds.

We are delighted to reward the Fundación Humedales Bogotá for their grassroots leadership and success with the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Young Wetland Champions.

[www.humedalesbogota.com](http://www.humedalesbogota.com)



## RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the global framework for the conservation and wise use of all wetlands.

The Convention was signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and entered into force in 1975. Since then, 168 countries, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded and become "Contracting Parties" to the Convention.

Wetlands are among the world's most diverse ecosystems. They are vital for human survival. They are cradles of biological diversity and are indispensable for the countless benefits or "ecosystem services" that they provide to humanity, ranging from freshwater supply, food and building materials and biodiversity, to flood control, disaster risk reduction, and climate change mitigation.

However they continue to be degraded and converted to other uses. Since 1900, over 64% of the world's wetlands have been destroyed, mostly because they are too often viewed as wastelands to be converted for other uses.

The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands. It includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases, beaches, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves, coral reefs and coastlines, and all human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.

Managing wetlands is a global challenge. The Ramsar Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

[www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)