**Media News from the World Wetland Network**

**Embargoed until 16.15 UK time 7 July 2012**

Interviews, photos, audio, video and fly through animations available. [Download links below](#Links)

**Wetland Globes shine spotlight on world’s most vulnerable habitats**

The good, the bad and the ugly of the world’s wetlands were revealed at an official ceremony in Bucharest on 7 July 2012 at 18.15 local time (16.15 UK time).

The Wetland Globe Awards highlight the benefits of good wetland management and, conversely, the costs to both humans and wildlife of unsustainable development.

The World Wetland Network (WWN) developed the Wetland Globes to give a voice to small non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on conservation. They are non-financial awards, given to the wetland itself. This year there were some 2,000 votes from grass-roots NGOs in 270 wetlands around the world.

BLUE Wetland Globes recognise best practice in wetland management; GREY Globes highlight wetlands that are being actively degraded, neglected or are under threat.

The Wetland Globes aim to show that without national protection, short term economic gain and pollution seriously degrade many wetland sites.

In celebrating good restoration and management the Wetland Globes also demonstrate that with the right incentives, it is possible to slow the loss of biodiversity and habitat, by encouraging private sector interests to work with nature rather than against it.

**Chris Rostron, Chair of the World Wetland Network said:**

“It’s all to do with people ultimately. Wetlands not only provide habitats for wildlife, they provide for people’s livelihoods and can create great economic returns if they are managed properly.

“However, if they are not, and they are exploited for short term economic gain, livelihoods are totally destroyed and species become extinct”

**BLUE awards go to wetlands in:**

Madagascar, Japan, Bulgaria, the United States, Peru and New Zealand

**GREY awards go to wetlands in:**

Australia, Colombia, Croatia /Danube, South Korea and Benin, West Africa.

*\* More detail is given below on each project under “Highlights and lowlights”.*

**Chris continued:**

“Of the various awards I would highlight that have engaged local communities and shown that it is possible to benefit commercially and maintain sustainable bio-diverse wetlands.

“In the grey category - and sadly there are a lot more like this around the world - they illustrate how short term thinking can have disastrous knock on effects for humans and animal species alike.”

**ENDS**

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**Interviews, photography, multimedia etc:**

We can organise interviews with Chris Rostron, Chairman of the World Wetland Network, or representatives from the countries and governments who will be receiving the awards. We will also have audio, photographs of sites, photos of a variety of species, excerpts from Google Earth animations and photos from the ceremony

Video of [Madagascar BLUE Globe winner](http://youtu.be/dxVT7ZUiiuU)

Video of [Japan BLUE Globe winner](http://youtu.be/t_UJWYn9ZkI)

Video of [Bulgaria BLUE Globe winner](http://youtu.be/TWXysjqh8WM)

Video of [US BLUE Globe winner](http://youtu.be/mlNmeyzLdjw)

Video of [New Zealand BLUE Globe winner](http://youtu.be/K_RxRQ6lQpY)

Video of [Peru BLUE Globe winner](http://youtu.be/p5OUE9sMXnM)

Video of [Australia GREY Globe winner](http://youtu.be/hFQJiqBuWUY)

Video of [Colombia GREY Globe winner](http://youtu.be/TAxRB-FIF8M)

Video of [Croatia GREY Globe winner](http://youtu.be/IPMMnVgst-c)

Video of [South Korea GREY Globe winner](http://youtu.be/S8W0Jih3CxY)

Video of [Benin GREY Globe winner](http://youtu.be/keUVv_rdNKQ)

**Editors Notes:**

The World Wetland Network (WWN) is a global support network for NGOs working on wetland issues. It is supported by the Fundacion Biodiversidad.

**Web:** [www.worldwetnet.org](http://www.worldwetnet.org)

**Highlights and Lowlights - award details**

**BLUE awards**

**Madagascar, the Nosivolo river complex - over 400 community development projects reap rewards. [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/dxVT7ZUiiuU)**]**

Success results from the “ownership” developed through the full involvement of local communities and local authorities in all activities from the beginning. The people are very aware of the areas’ value and have implemented over 400 community development projects benefitting around 4,000 households. Over fishing has been minimised and river bank re-planting carried out. 105 Local River Committees have been established and some 50 training workshops have been held to reinforce new farming techniques and agriculture, good governance, organisational and institutional strengthening.

The site covers 357,000 hectares and has two river systems, swamps, remnants of rain forests and 19 animal species. The black and white ruffed lemur, greater bamboo lemur and three fish types are on the IUCN critically endangered list and the Madagascan flying fox is on the vulnerable list.

**Japan, Marayama-gawa - emblematic species returns and business thrives [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/t_UJWYn9ZkI)**]**

The activities of NGOs, local people, and local government to restore this 12 km river area have succeeded in providing key habitat to the endangered species of “Kounotori”, or Oriental white stork. An imaginative organic farming method has also been implemented supporting biodiversity. The rice is able to be sold at a higher price bringing better economic returns for the farmers.

The core activity of releasing the Oriental white stork, a species categorised by IUCN as endangered, has engaged local people not only in conservation, restoration, and creation of habitat, but also in the improvement of the life and culture of local people. Local people and the government are also promoting eco-tourism, as well as environmental education. There are plans to increase the area of stork habitat and more large-scale wetland projects are envisaged.

**Bulgaria, Pomorie Lake - 15 year programme sees species return and new visitor centre built. [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/TWXysjqh8WM)**]**

The area is coastal lagoon connected to the Black Sea by an artificial canal, with associated salt marshes, reed beds and salt pans. The Green Balkans NGO has implemented a long-term plan that includes sea salt production, the extraction of medicinal mud and the restoration of nesting habitats for water birds. The site is important for breeding, wintering and migrating birds along Europe’s second largest flyway. 270 bird species have been recorded and nesting pairs of Sandwich terns have jumped from just 6 to 1500. Pomorie Lake Visitor Centre is in operation promoting the natural values of the wetland and delivering educational work on site.

**United States, Wisconsin - over 10,000 acres of Lake Superior habitat - mining on hold for the time being [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/mlNmeyzLdjw)**]**

Bad River and Kakagon “slough” - lagoons and marshy pools, inlets and backwaters, these wetlands are managed by the Bad River Tribe and are a fantastic example of people living in harmony with their environment

The area has huge cultural importance to the tribe, which has worked for generations to protect and manage them in a sustainable way. It is an important site for migratory birds, including least 2 state threatened species (yellow rail and Le Conte’s sparrow) as well as a spawning ground for many fish species. Kakagon is currently threatened by proposed mine development, and although local campaigning helped defeat a Bill in the state legislature that would have facilitated this mining, it will take continued collaboration of many NGOs with the Bad River tribe to protect Kakagon from future threats.

Mike Wiggins, Bad River Tribal Chair said

“The area sustains the physical well-being of our community with foods such as wild rice, fish, cranberries, waterfowl, venison, and medicines. From an Anishinabe (Chippewa) perspective, the wetlands ecosystem is a tangible representation of our values of caring for the environment. The international recognition is an honour for us the recognition sends a message about the importance of wetlands complex”

**New Zealand, Whangamarino Wetland - success in working together [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/K_RxRQ6lQpY)**]**

One of the largest bog and swamp complexes in New Zealand with immense species diversity, a large number of exotics and eighteen species of fish. There are also a number of threatened species. Repairs to Whangamarino weir were completed in summer 2010 and weed control, monitoring of animal and fish pests is ongoing.

The Arawai Kākāriki wetland restoration programme has highlighted the need to do more to increase community awareness and appreciation of the value of wetlands. Wetlands can suffer from ‘diffusion of responsibility’ with many agencies, overlapping responsibilities, working in isolation, or assumptions that another party will take the lead. This project has seen government agencies, local Maori and other communities working together to help restore and maintain this magnificent wetland’s values.

**Peru, Pantanos de la Villa, Lima - good governance helps education and tourism [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/p5OUE9sMXnM)**]**

This protected, highly biodiverse wetland is fed by the main river system of Lima. It was recognized as a Ramsar Site in 1997. It directly benefits more than 10,000 local people and indirectly about 8 million Lima citizens through its recreational activities and environmental education programmes. There are many different species of resident and migratory birds including gulls, terns, ibis, osprey and egret.

There were specific potential threats to the wetlands from urban activities. Through creating partnerships and task groups with public organisations; companies, factories, local people and other interested parties the Municipal Authority has managed to dramatically improve the management of this fragile ecosystem. The resulting involvement of local people in the management of the wetland has led to an increase in environmental awareness and faster response to illegal activities. Future plans include the investment of $1.5m for tourism and to improve facilities and education for the 35,000 annual visitors to the area.

**GREY Awards**

**Colombia, Lago de Tota - naked protests and lack of concern for biggest lake in country [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/TAxRB-FIF8M)**]**

Apart from becoming famous for naked protests, Lago de Tota is the largest lake in Colombia at 12km long with 5 islands and 2000 million cubic metres of water. It provides water to around half a million people in the region has had 116 bird species recorded -some endangered or at risk of extinction (notably the Bogota rail and Apolinar’s wren) The last sighting of the now-extinct Colombian grebe was at Tota

The lake is suffering from a combination of sewage and pesticide pollution, impacts of nearby industry, increasing encroachment of agriculture, caged fisheries spreading disease (leading to extinction of the grease fish) and over-abstraction. The fact that local authorities undervalue the lake has a knock on effect with the surrounding population who see the lake as a never ending resource.

**Croatia, Kopački Rit - severe implications for the Danube - the largest river in Europe [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/IPMMnVgst-c)**]**

The Croatian Danube Regulation Project threatens 50,000 ha of protected areas of outstanding natural value in Europe.

Within that area is Kopački Rit. Unique in Europe, it is an inland delta situated in the central section of the Danube floodplain. The mosaic of lakes, marshes, wet grasslands, reed beds and forests floods each year for up to three months. It is an important migration and wintering site for waterfowl, visited by 15,000 geese and up to 50,000 ducks. It is also home to the European otter and fire-bellied toad and is the most significant fish spawning ground in the central and upper Danube.

Under the Regulation Project, there are plans to “canalise” the river with major structural works over a 53km stretch. The project contradicts the international protection commitments and ecological needs of protected habitats and species and threatens to undermine the proposed five-country trans-boundary Biosphere reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”.

**South Korea - Four Rivers Project - dredging, damning and concrete destroying the environment [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/S8W0Jih3CxY)**]**

Four of South Korea’s major rivers and their wetlands - a total area of 8,000 ha – have been damaged by a government project. Some 570 million cubic meters of sand and gravel from a total 691 km of the rivers has been dredged. Sixteen dams have been created. Sand banks have been totally removed and concrete-paving laid along the banks.

The government say that the rationale behind the works is economic - enabling better navigation. However, damns are obstructing natural flow leading to degradation of water supply. The project has failed in one of its main aims, which was to create more capacity to store the rivers' water. It has been implemented prior to proper environmental evaluation and the long term value of the wetlands destroyed. The wetlands are also home to many endangered species such as white-naped cranes and hooded cranes, whose numbers have declined from 3,000 to 1,000 since the Four Major Rivers Project started in 2009.

Local campaigners say that the completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment before the project plans were finalised demonstrates a lack of concern for the wetland system. They say the major rivers are already showing incredible damage and claim a natural disaster resulting from the project is inevitable. They want to prevent further engineering of the river and to start restoring the habitats.

**West Africa, Benin - Lac Nakoué - degradation and slow destruction - an all too familiar problem [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/keUVv_rdNKQ)**]**

Lac Nakoué is situated on the coast of Benin, connected to the Atlantic Ocean via the Cotonou channel. The influence of the tide and the mixing of salt and fresh water have supported diverse wildlife: with mangroves, swamps,grasslands, and lagoons providing habitats for 23 types of fish and 168 bird species including rare ducks, egrets and herons.

However, high population growth and intensive exploitation has caused habitat to degrade rapidly which has affected animal land migration routes. Poaching and illegal wildlife trade pose another serious threat to wildlife.

Wetlands have been drained for agriculture and fertilizer and pesticides cause pollution. In addition, fishing has lead to loss of bank-side vegetation and invasive species being introduced to the ecosystem.

It is hoped to work with local communities to get protected status for the lake. Without more sustainable management of the wetland, it is in danger of becoming too degraded to support either people or wildlife.

**Australia - Towra point - threat from development and disjointed management [**[**video**](http://youtu.be/hFQJiqBuWUY)**]**

Towra Point is a wetland located within 16km of Sydney’s City Centre. It includes salt-marshes, mangroves, open woodland and mudflat with sea grass. Towra Point was listed by Ramsar in 1984 as a major breeding, feeding and roosting area for shorebirds, including at least 34 species of migratory bird. It also provides critical habitat for a range of commercially and recreationally important fish and shell fish species.

Despite its immense value Towra Point is under severe pressure. There is greatly accelerated erosion as a result of dredging, (for access and development of Port Botany). Multiple ownership and varied management is causing habitat fragmentation. Invasive weeds and feral animals are also posing a threat to the shorebird species. Local NGOs are calling for a joined up management plan and implementation for the whole area as a nature reserve.

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**For more background:**

(There are many grass roots movements that get involved - just take a look at the “naked” protest about Lago de Tota, Colombia <http://www.defensalagodetota.info/2012/03/lago-de-tota-al-desnudo.html> or

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzyHgzQkBl0>