

## **Migratory Birds and Flyways**

2,000 species of bird, 20% of all known species, make regular seasonal movements. Many travel thousands of miles between their breeding places and their wintering grounds.

But more than 40% of these migratory species are declining, and nearly 200 are now classified as globally threatened. They face many dangers: destruction and degradation of habitats, loss of critical stopover sites such as coastal wetlands, illegal hunting, poisoning and pollution, and collisions with badly-sited infrastructure like power lines and wind turbines.

Analyses of the data that BirdLife compiles for the IUCN Red List show that migratory birds have become more threatened since 1988, with 33 species moving to more serious threat categories, and just six improving in status. Many of these declining species were once common, and their arrivals and departures are significant cultural events throughout much of the world.

Their disappearance from the landscape was unthinkable 30 years ago, but is now a real prospect without concerted action from BirdLife's Migratory Flyways Programme.



## Programme

- *International collaboration is the only answer*

BirdLife's Flyways Programme coordinates the work of BirdLife Partners in the three main global flyways:

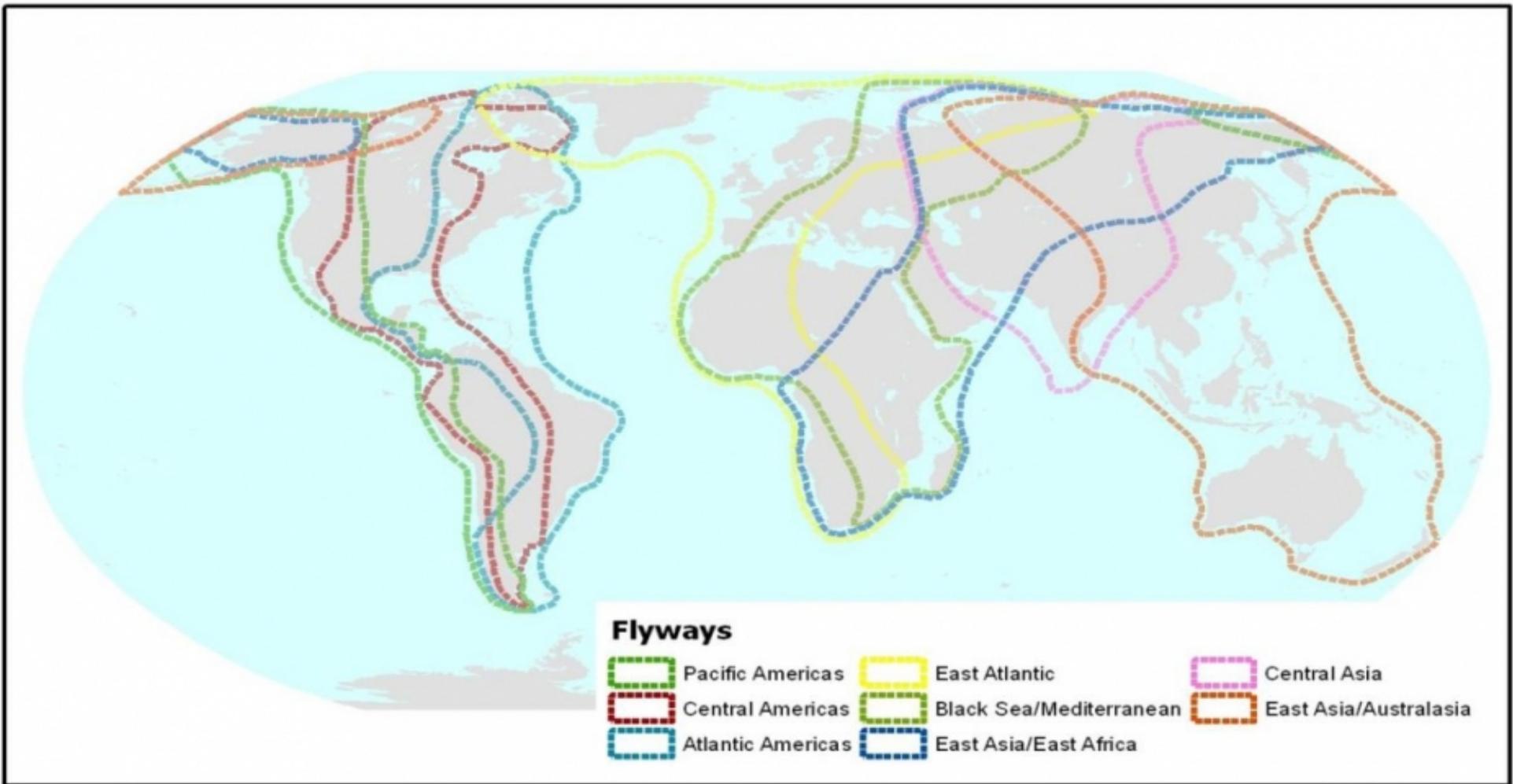
The Africa-Eurasia Flyway, which connects the breeding grounds of Europe and northern Asia with the wintering grounds in Africa, and includes vital stop-over sites in the Middle East and Mediterranean.

The East Asia-Australasia Flyway, which connects north-east Asian breeding grounds with wintering grounds in south-east Asia and Australia, and includes the vital stop-over sites in China and the Korean Peninsula.

The Americas Flyway, which connects North American breeding grounds with wintering grounds in the Caribbean and Central and South America.

"The BirdLife Flyways Programme is working on the ground to protect chains of Important Bird Areas that are critical for migratory birds, and to reduce threats along these routes."

Working with national and regional governments in Mediterranean Europe and North Africa, BirdLife has already made significant steps in controlling and reducing unsustainable hunting of migratory birds. BirdLife Partners are helping governments with their renewable energy strategies by compiling "sensitivity maps" showing where wind energy developments can be located to minimise the impact on migratory birds.



The long-term objectives of the Flyways Programme are:

To save flagship globally threatened migratory species from extinction, and through this to address key threats and conserve key sites and habitats which will be beneficial to a wider set of migratory species

To address landscape-scale barriers to migration, especially illegal and unsustainable hunting and the proliferation of poorly-planned energy and power transmission infrastructure

To conserve networks of critical stop-over sites, through action on the ground by IBA Local Conservation Groups, and demonstration of approaches to habitat conservation that can be scaled-up for wider, landscape-level application

To build capacity for flyway-scale conservation, including the strengthening of local and national capacity at critical points on the flyways, and the strengthening of collaboration and support between BirdLife Partners in the north and south

To understand and address the wider land-use issues facing migratory birds through targeted research and advocacy work, and to strengthen the global and regional policy and financing mechanisms for the conservation of key habitats for migratory birds.



## Progress

We've set the global agenda for flyway conservation

As a key partner in the Wings Over Wetlands project which operated throughout the Africa-Eurasia Flyway, BirdLife helped usher in a new era of international cooperation in the conservation of migratory species.

With the cooperation of 11 national governments and BirdLife Partners along the Rift Valley and Red Sea flyways, BirdLife's Migratory Soaring Bird project aims to protect the key migratory bottlenecks used by 1.5 million storks, cranes and raptors. Best practice guidance has been drafted for energy production and infrastructure, and a sensitivity map is being prepared combining data on bottleneck sites, migration pathways and the movements of species considered sensitive to wind farms, power lines and other developments. There has been significant progress in influencing wind energy development in Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and Lebanon.

In November 2012, with significant BirdLife input, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) adopted a resolution (Resolution 10.10) which, for the first time, essentially sets out a global agenda for flyway conservation. BirdLife also ensured effective resolutions on agrochemicals, power lines, climate change, extractive industries, and renewable energy. BirdLife provided much of the scientific information underpinning the new CMS Raptor MOU, which develops guidelines for national strategies for bird of prey conservation, and is working especially closely with the BirdLife Soaring Birds project.



## Places

### Protecting and restoring key sites

Living on the Edge (the African-Eurasian Flyway). Led by VBN (BirdLife in the Netherlands), and funded by the Dutch Postal Code Lottery and the British Birdwatching Fair, this initiative is promoting the conservation of migratory birds and sustainable livelihoods in the Sahel (Africa immediately south of the Sahara), through site action, research, communications and advocacy, in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal and Mauritania. Action is now underway at twelve sites, and fieldwork is filling the gaps in knowledge about migratory bird distributions and habitat use, and helping guide forest replanting/regeneration interventions (such as the Great Green Wall project, which aims to restore a continuous belt of forest from Africa's Atlantic coast to the Red Sea).

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway has more waterbird species listed as Near Threatened or Globally Threatened than any other major flyway. Rates of species decline of up to 8% per year are among the highest of any ecological system of the planet. The countries along the Flyway are going through a period of dynamic economic growth, and more than half the coastal wetlands that migratory birds depend on to rest and feed have already disappeared under urban, industrial and agricultural developments. With funding from the British Birdwatching Fair, BirdLife Partners along the flyway are working with governments and agencies and with other NGOs to identify conservation action at critical sites for migrating shorebirds, to improve the quality of data on the bird populations that use the flyway, and to raise awareness throughout the region of the threats to migratory birds and the value of coastal wetlands to birds and people.

In 2013, again with BirdFair funding, the BirdLife Americas Partnership will begin an ambitious project to link conservation work at grassland IBAs in North and South America for the benefit of a suite of long distance migrants. This project will build on work pioneered by BirdLife Partners in the Southern Cone grasslands of South America, which has encouraged a growing number of ranchers to readopt traditional cattle-rearing practices which benefit these and other grassland-dependent bird species.



## **Policy and science**

We are the global authority on birds and the sites they use

The BirdLife Partnership has a strong scientific foundation on which to implement its Flyways Programme. BirdLife International is the global authority on the conservation status of all bird species, and BirdLife's World Bird Database (WBDB) is the main repository for information on trends in the population of bird species, their use of habitat (including its seasonal importance), and the threats they face. The WBDB also includes data on 12,000 Important Bird Areas, the species that use them, the condition of each site, their protection status, and factors that may affect them in the future.

In partnership with other international organisations and conventions, BirdLife created the Critical Site Network Tool, which provides national and regional planners, governments and agencies with easy access to comprehensive data on more than 3000 sites used by waterbird species throughout the Africa-Eurasia Flyway.

The Flyways Programme is supported by staff at BirdLife's regional and global secretariats. Their responsibilities include coordinating and helping link the Partners' activities along the chain of IBAs into a cohesive flyways conservation effort; promoting financial and legislative instruments to protect migratory birds along their flyways; advocating sustainable practices at landscape level to support migratory species; coordinating research into migratory routes and the ecological needs of migratory birds for more effective conservation; and helping Partners raise funds for their Flyways conservation efforts.

BirdLife is building the migratory bird conservation capacity of Partners along the flyways, empowering them to protect, manage and monitor key breeding, stop-over and wintering sites (IBAs), to promote national legislation to regulate hunting and trapping, and minimise the impacts of barriers to migration like wind farms and powerlines, to raise public awareness of the wonders of migration, and to build networks of Local Conservation Groups and engage the public more widely in work to conserve migratory birds.



## **People**

A worldwide network of citizen conservationists

BirdLife has experience around the world, at many hundreds of sites, of conservation approaches that work. It is well placed to learn from and build on this experience to advance IBA conservation along the flyway. No other organisation, governmental or non-governmental, has the capacity to advance a site conservation agenda on this scale.

Existing networks of IBA Local Conservation Groups are already showing considerable success in conserving key sites along the flyways.

Launched by BirdLife in 2006, the citizen science project Spring Alive helps children across Europe and Africa learn about the incredible journeys undertaken by migrating birds, and the threats and challenges they face en route, by encouraging them to record and celebrate the arrival of five iconic migratory birds (Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo, White Stork and European Bee-eater).

<http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/programmes/migratory-birds-and-flyways>