

World Wetlands Day 1997 -- Update on Activities

This report on activities around the world held in observance of the annual World Wetlands Day (WWD), 2 February 1997, has been constructed from reports by Wetlands International - Asia Pacific and information supplied directly to the Bureau.

AMERICAN SOMOA: A television broadcast of "Wetlands: a Source of Life", produced by the American Samoa Coastal Management Program, was aired in both Samoan and English.

AUSTRALIA:

- *Wetlands Australia* published a special edition for WWD with news of both regional and global events.
- **NSW:** The Wetlands Centre at Shortland, Newcastle, presented a special day for the public in collaboration with other local groups. Events on offer included guided walks, displays, schools' art competition, film festival and international food and wine tasting.
- **South Australia:** The Federal Environment Minister visited key wetlands, including two Ramsar sites, and launched the new federal wetlands policy. WWD was featured on local television by presenter Rob Morrison.
- **Victoria:** The Victorian Wetland Trust celebrated with a photographic competition and a field trip to Melbourne's Werribee Sewerage Farm, part of which is a Wetland of International Importance where some 250 bird species have been recorded.

[See also the [2 February press release](#) announcing Australia's new Wetlands Policy, reproduced on this site, and the Wetlands, Waterways and Waterbirds Unit (Environment Australia Biodiversity Group)'s Bulletin Board for Australian and International activities for their World Wetlands Week, beginning on World Wetland Day, 2 February, and running through to the 9th.]

BANGLADESH: Inauguration of Wetland Research and Education Centre at Netrokona. A one-day seminar was held in conjunction with this event. The Nature Conservation Movement, with the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, held a discussion meeting and photo exhibition.

BOLIVIA: A exhibition on wetland conservation and the Laguna Colorada Ramsar site was shown in La Paz as part of a Ramsar public awareness campaign, and an interview on Ramsar issues with local representatives of Spain's EFE press agency was aired on national radio and carried in two national newspapers.

CANADA: Delta, Canada, and the Burns Bog Conservation Society conducted special tours of the Delta Nature Reserve, and the mayor, Beth Johnson, proclaimed World Wetland Day for the Corporation of Delta.

CHINA: There were feature articles on the front page of the *People's Daily* and a live TV programme on wetlands.

FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: The National Ramsar Committee of Macedonia celebrated World Wetlands Day with a ceremony and seminar at the Biological Institute in Skopje, attended by guests from the Ministries of Urbanism,

Building and Environment Protection, Development, Foreign Affairs, and Education; Macedonian television, radio, newspapers, and magazines; scientific institutions, and NGOs. More information from Branko Micevski of the Bird Study and Protection Society of Macedonia and President of the National Ramsar Committee (fax +389 91 228 141).

HONG KONG: WWF-Hong Kong organized a Wetland Art Day for children at Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve. Activities included painting, clay model making, reed grass dyeing, t-shirt painting, face painting, etc. - all with a wetland theme.

INDIA: WWF India reports an Open Discussion on World Wetlands Day, attended by some 4,000 people, as part of the country's first Birding Fair held on the bank's of Jaipur city's lake, Jal Mahal, in Rajasthan state. Gauhati University organized special lectures and an outing to Deepor Beel Sanctuary. Eco-Club of Harinavi, West Bengal, disseminated WWD information to the media. NEWS, a Calcutta-based NGO, gave a WWD slide presentation with discussion. Darbhanga University held a special programme on the wetlands of North Bihar.

INDONESIA: WWD activities were organized by the members of the National Wetland Committee and the Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation in the Ministry of Forestry, with help from the Wetlands International Indonesia Programme and the Ministry for the Environment. Activities included a TV broadcast on WWD by the Ministers of both Forestry and Environment and the Director General of Forest Protection, interviews with the ministers, and press releases. A highlight was an art competition for schoolchildren organized by the Bogor Agricultural University and Wetlands International. Info from the secretariat of the National Wetland Committee (trio@dephut.cbn.net.id).

IRELAND: Wexford Wildfowl Reserve celebrated with a WWD afternoon at the reserve. The event was attended by one of Irish TV's most successful children's wildlife artists and covered on national radio and television. A particular theme of the afternoon was WWD activities in other countries around the world.

JAPAN: Kushiro City Museum organized a wetland hike entitled "Nature Conservation in Winter"; the participants traveled to the start by train, to avoid taking individual cars. The museum also held a photo exhibition about the natural history of the Kushiro wetland. The Japanese Association for Wild Geese Protection held a number of activities in Miyagi, Japan, and established a web page which chronicled their activities (<http://www2m.meshnet.or.jp/~wwd/>).

KENYA: WWD celebrations were held at the National Museums of Kenya, and progress was announced on a National Environment Action Plan and a policy on the sustainable use of wetlands (from the Daily Nation on-line edition, 3/2/97).

MALAYSIA: The Wetlands International - Malaysia Programme held a family-oriented two-day event at a local shopping centre. There was also a variety of wetland exhibits as well as contests for children. The *New Straits Times* published a special WWD edition of its monthly supplement *Wetland Wonders*, which is produced by Wetlands International - Malaysia Programme. A 30-minute documentary on mangrove conservation was shown on national television.

NEPAL: The Director General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, advised the Bureau on 3 February that the following activities had been held in celebration of 2 February. More news is expected as the different field offices report in:

- National Radio broadcast a message on WWD on 2 February from the Minister of Forest and Soil Conservation, appealing for the conservation and wise use of Nepal's wetlands.

- Nepal Television broadcast the 1993 Ramsar video *The Wise Use of Wetlands*, in the Nepali language, also on 2 February.
- The Minister of Forest and Soil Conservation formally released a number of publications from the IUCN Nepal Country Office and an electronic database on Nepal's wetlands.
- The King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) organized an awareness programme at Taudaha, an ancient lake in Kathmandu valley, and signed an MOU with Bird Conservation Nepal for management of the area.
- The Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness, the Lumbini Crane Sanctuary, and IUCN Nepal is conducting an art competition, with the participation of the International Crane Foundation (USA) on "The crane: the bird of peace" in Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha.
- Royal Bardia National Parks and the WWF Nepal Programme are undertaking awareness programmes and bird count activities in Ghodagodi tal in the Kailali District.
- Royal Chitawan National Parks and KMTNC's Nepal Conservation and Research Training Center is undertaking an awareness programme and student art competition in Bees Hazar Lake, Royal Chitawan National Park.
- The Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Parks and People Project initiated biodiversity monitoring activities in the Reserve, a Ramsar site.

IUCN-Nepal reports that, in addition to the above activities, the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists is assisting in mobilizing print and electronic media to popularize the essence of WWD, and the Environment and Public Health Organization delivered a talk programme on a high altitude sacred lake Gosain Kunda. More info from Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha, Programme Coordinator, IUCN-Nepal (iucn@mos.com.np).

PAKISTAN: WWF-Pakistan held a seminar and slide presentation in Karachi and stamped their WWD '97 logo on all outgoing mail, which received wide local press coverage. A documentary on Pakistan's wetlands was shown on TV.

THE PHILIPPINES: The Department of Environment and Natural Resources held a 3-day celebration at the Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Center, a Ramsar site, Lapu-lapu City.

SPAIN: Spurred by a press release from Amigos de la Tierra [Friends of the Earth], several national newspapers published articles on WWD and various aspects of wetland conservation, highlighting the value of wetlands, the situation of Spanish sites, and actions to protect them. In addition, Amigos de la Tierra presented a poster on the Network for the Coordination of the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the East Atlantic Flyway, which will be widely distributed all along the flyway.

SWEDEN: The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency celebrated WWD with an open day for the public at their "Eagle Restaurant", where eagles of two species are fed throughout the winter.

THAILAND: The Yad Fon Association, an environmental NGO, organized a children's camp with a WWD theme by the Trang River.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: The Ministry of Agriculture, Land & Marine Resources' Wildlife Section commemorated WWD with a series of lectures on the theme of "Benefits of

Wetlands to the Human Population" delivered to 17 different primary schools, and initiated an essay competition on the benefits of wetlands with the prize of a boat trip to the Caroni Swamp for the class from the winning school. The Wildlife Section also hosted a well-attended Open House for the public, which included a poster display, slide shows and films on wetlands. A press release on WWD and the importance of wetlands was published in the national newspapers. For info, contact Nadra Nathai-Gyan, Head of the Wildlife Section (fax +809 645 4288).

TUNISIA: The Minister of the Environment opened an all-day seminar, with a great deal of media interest, to kick off World Wetland Week in Tunisia.

TURKEY: On 2 February, in a press conference and speech on national television, the Minister of Environment emphasized the importance of wetlands for human life and nature and described ongoing and planned national and international activities on behalf of the wise use of wetland in Turkey. In addition, a Turkish translation of the Bureau's press release on WWD was distributed to the national press. Further information, Halis Gökalp, Director General of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Environment (fax +90 312 286 2271).

UGANDA:

- For 2 February, mass media programmes have been slated to focus on important national and local wetland issues, and a press release has been issued to publicize the day. Uganda TV is running an infomercial and the Minister of Natural Resources was expected to address the nation on TV and radio on the eve of WWD.
- In addition, a wetlands open day is planned for 18 February in Kampala and will feature a public lecture, video and slide shows, and an exhibition of wetland products.

UNITED KINGDOM: The Environment Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales jointly issued a press release designated a new Ramsar site, Midland Meres and Mosses, in honor of World Wetland Day. The Government also pledged £10,000 for use in the "Involving Local and Indigenous People in the Management of Ramsar Wetlands" project (see the project proposal).

UNITED STATES: Not much has been learned of WWD activities in the USA, where a terrible winter has made many wetlands difficult to celebrate, but both government agencies and NGOs have for some time been gearing up to celebrate National Wetlands Month for all of May.

VENEZUELA: Authorities in Venezuela publicized the first WWD in 1997 and initiated the governmental process for having World Wetlands Day officially recognized at the national level for 1998.