

World Wetlands Day 1999: Activities reported

ARGENTINA. Jorge Cappato, Fundación Proteger in Argentina, sends us his organization's press release sent to numerous important environmental mailing lists in Latin America, and [here is the Spanish text](#). Also, in the far south, Bruce Johnson of Fundación Inalafquen (bruce@impsat1.com.ar) reports that the foundation mounted a public exhibit in the Patagonian town of San Antonio Oeste for a full week at the height of the tourist season there.

AUSTRALIA. The Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC) held a week of activities focused on the issue of Wetlands Under Threat in the Far North, beginning with a media launch on 1 February at Cairns Central Swamp and various other activities throughout the week. For info, contact Nicky Hungerford (cafnecc@internetnorth.com.au). Jillian of Environment Australia reminds us that an overview of WWD activities in Australia is available at <http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/envirom/wetlands/bulletin/wwd99.html>

AUSTRALIA bis. Abbie Spiers and Max Finlayson of the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (*eriss*) in Jabiru sent us a brief report on [WWD activities at the Kakadu National Park](#).

AUSTRIA. Gerhard Sigmund (gerhard.sigmund@bmu.gv.at) of the Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Jugend und Familie in Vienna sends us the [Ministry's 1 February press release](#) on "Welttag der Feuchtgebiete" and Austria's nine Ramsar sites.

BELGIUM. Véronique Joniaux (v.joniaux@mrw.wallonie.be), on behalf of Jacques Stein, has sent the Bureau an enormous catalogue of activities associated with the Journée mondiale des zones humides in the Walloon Region of Belgium.

BOTSWANA. Stine Tveden of the IUCN Botswana Office in Gaborone (stineiucn@info.bw) writes that Bureau materials were integrated into information on the local situation, such as the preparation of the management for the Okavango Delta Ramsar site, and appeared in the weekly newspapers.

BURKINA FASO. Joseph Youma, Ramsar Correspondent with the Ranch de Gibier de Nazinga (ranch.nazinga@cenatrin.bf) informs that his organization hosted WWD activities in Burkina Faso in cooperation with IUCN, Naturama, and the embassy of the Netherlands in Ouagadougou.

CANADA. Ducks Unlimited Canada reports that the Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre in Manitoba hosts family activities on World Wetlands Day every year, and this year offered a children's coloring contest, slide presentations, walking and snowshoeing tours of the marsh, films, and crafts. Information from c_shaluk@ducks.ca. In addition, Lauralou Cicierski (l_cicierski@ducks.ca) writes that Ducks Unlimited Canada issued a national press release, incorporating some of the Secretary General's comments, on 2 February.

CANADA. Still more from Ducks Unlimited Canada -- Ron Coley (r_coley@ducks.ca) writes that "More than 4000 Grade 4 students in the Province of New Brunswick, Canada, participated in a World Wetlands Day event by preparing posters about the value of wetlands in their area. Submissions were sent to the Ducks Unlimited Interpretive Centre in Fredericton. Prizes, consisting of t-shirts, duck calls, and a limited edition art print of a wetland scene, will be awarded to the winning classrooms. This contest is part of the Ducks

Unlimited Greenwing Program, which teaches youth about the value of wetland habitat to the environment, wildlife, society and the economy."

CANADA. Ashley Moffat (littlemissmoffat@hotmail.com), Marsh Exhibit Coordinator, writes that the Point Pelee National Park Ramsar site offered activities on several dates around 2 February, including public ice-skating on the marsh and a special interpretive booth at the Visitor Centre. Dr Barry Warner wrote in advance of WWD about the now-traditional workshops and ceremonies hosted by the Wetlands Research Centre at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, and [here is his description](#). The Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV) in Newfoundland and Labrador featured a frontpage article on WWD and Ramsar in its February 1999 "Wetland News"; to see one, try inquiring at hchaulk@wild.dnr.gov.nf.ca. Our good friend Maryse Mahy informs us the New Brunswick issued an excellent "Online News Release" on the meaning of WWD: <http://www.gov.nb.ca/cnb/news/nre/9e0084nr.htm>

CHINA. Prof. Meng Xianmin (mengxm@public.cc.jl.cn) reports that a video on wetlands awareness produced by the Wetlands Research Centre of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and China Central TV was shown at prime time on "first Channel Golden Time" of CCTV on 2 February. It is hoped that a series of similar videos on "China's Wetlands" can be produced.

CHINA. Li Lukang of the Wetlands International - China Programme (li.lk@263.net) sends this good news: "A Gift to WWD, A Ban to Reclamation of Wetlands in Heilongjiang Province, China. Heilongjiang province is one of the rich provinces in forest resources and wetlands. The total area of wetlands is 2.7 million ha, which takes 10.8% of the total in China. The Zalong Natural Reserve, one of the 7 Ramsar sites in China is located in this province, but for different reasons a large area of wetlands have been reclaimed for agriculture use. Recently the government of Heilongjiang province adopted an important decision on strengthening protection of wetlands, which will ban all kinds of reclamation of wetlands. This is a substantial contribution to the conservation of wetlands in China." Li Lukang also reports that the "China Green Times" allocated a full page of its newspaper for commemorating the WWD'99 on 28 January 1999. The newspaper published four articles and six photographs on World Wetlands Day.

COLOMBIA. Iván Darío Valencia, a student at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia and member of the Bogotá Ornithological Association, sent us [an excellent report on WWD activities in Bogotá](#) and nearby.

CZECH REPUBLIC. Josef Chytil (jchytil@palava.cz), Secretary of the Czech Ramsar Committee, reported that WWD was the occasion for a widespread distribution of information on wetlands, including lectures and small exhibitions at at least half of the country's Ramsar sites. A leading article was published in the official journal of state nature conservation, Ochrana přírody.

GHANA. The Wildlife Department hosted a News Conference, addressed by Mr Nayon Bilijo, the Deputy Minister for Lands and Forestry, as well as a Photo Exhibition, on 2 February at a venue within the Sakumo Ramsar site, and launched a new magazine called Wetlands Neighbours, with support from the Ramsar Small Grants Fund. [Here is a brief report.](#)

GUATEMALA. Our old friend Raquel Sigüenza de Micheo, Biologist, Mangrove Project (INAB-IUCN-EU) (proy.manglares@starnet.net.gt) sends us [this report](#).

HUNGARY. András Böhm of the Authority for Nature Conservation, Ministry of Environment, sent us a [brief report on WWD activities](#) at national level in his country.

INDIA. Dr Abdhesh Gangwar (ceene@gw1.dot.net.in, ceene@yahoo.com) reports that the Centre for Environment Education, North-Eastern Regional Cell (CEE North-East) held a bird-watching event for schoolchildren at Deeper Beel in Assam, in which students were helped in observing and identifying birds and other species of flora and fauna. A seminar also took place in which experts shared their knowledge and an open house discussion focused on problems and prospects of wetlands conservation. There was also an exhibition of education/communication material on wetlands and related subjects. [Here is Dr Gangwar's report.](#) At Harike Wetland, there were enthusiastic activities for schoolchildren from the districts of Amritsar and Ferozepur, involving films, lectures, bird identification, essay and poster-painting competitions, and Dr Satnam Singh Ladhar, PSCST, Chandigarh (ssladhar@hotmail.com), reports that it was a wonderful experience.

IRAN, ISL. REP. OF. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel (mfazel@chamran.ut.ac.ir), Dept of the Environment, writes that WWD was celebrated in Pardisan ECO-Park in Tehran and many other cities. Dr Ebtekar, Director of the Department of the Environment, [issued a statement](#) explaining WWD and wetland values to the people of Iran, with a translation of the Secretary General's message. Mike Smart, who was in Iran at that time to assist in developing Iran's Biodiversity Strategy, gave a lecture and Q&A on the significance of World Wetlands Day to a meeting of experts. In his report, Mr Fazel apologizes for his English, which he notes is about at the level of Mike Smart's Farsi.

ISRAEL. Dr. Reuven Ortal (ortala@vms.huji.ac.il) notes that World Wetlands Day coincides with the celebrations of Nature Protection Week, which is coordinated with the holiday "Tou BeShvat", the new year for the trees. Events included radio and TV programs, newspaper coverage, free guided walking trips in several parts of the country, free entrance to national parks and nature reserves, workshops and other activities.

ITALY. Dr Aldo Consentino, Director General of the Ministero dell'Ambiente, sends to the Bureau a packet of brilliant 4-ply brochures, in Italian and English, on Wetlands in Italy, and posters on World Wetlands Week in Italy.

JAPAN. Yoshihiko Miyabayashi of the Japan Association for Wild Geese Protection, JAWGP (yym@mub.biglobe.ne.jp) and Fumiko Nakao of the Environment Agency of Japan observe that the Government of Shiga Prefecture, where the Lake Biwa-ko Ramsar site is located, and the Ohmi Environment Conservation Foundation, hosted a number of events on WWD '99 and have put up a Web site describing them: <http://www.biwa.ne.jp/~ohmi9/ramsar/english/index.html> [link now out of date]. On 7 February an "electronic forum" was held for World Wetlands Day, linking Lake Biwa (Shiga Prefecture), Lake Izu-numa (Miyagi), Kushiro Marshes (Hokkaido): see <http://www.biwa.ne.jp/~ohmi9/>

KAZAKHSTAN. A "group of the employees of the 'biodiversity' block", led by Iskandar Mirkhashimov (IMirhashimov@koksh.kz), sent WWD greetings from their National Environmental Center to the Bureau and reported that on WWD they held a meeting and presented an information poster on the "wetlands of Kazakhstan and actions on ratification" of the Convention.

MALTA. Joe Sultana, Principal Environment Officer for the Reserves, Sites and Habitats Section of the Environment Protection Dept. in Floriana (admin@environment.gov.mt), sends the Bureau newspaper articles in the Times and the Malta Independent on 2 February, on WWD and Ramsar and the role of BirdLife Malta in assisting the Department in managing Malta's two Ramsar sites.

NEW ZEALAND. Dr Philippe Gerbeaux of the Department of Conservation, West Coast Conservancy in Hokitika (pgerbeaux@doc.govt.nz), reports that again this year WWD was celebrated with displays in the visitors centre and other activities. Nicola Patrick

(NPatrick@doc.govt.nz) sends Department of Conservation press releases for World Wetlands Day on Project River Recovery in Twizel, a feature article in the Southland Times, World Wetland Day highlights at Lake Wairarapa, and a National Wetlands Centre planned for Waikato. A feature article in the [Wellington] Evening Post by reporter Suzanne Green describes Lake Wairarapa in depth and notes its suitability for designation to the Ramsar List.

NORWAY. Bill Hovey (crenhov@mail.robin.no) informs us that at the International School of Stavanger students spent a large part of 2 February poring over wetland awareness materials provided by the Bureau.

PAKISTAN. Jamshed Kazi, formerly an intern in the Ramsar Bureau and presently with IUCN-Pakistan, contributed a report on World Wetlands Day in that country, including the announcement by WWF-Pakistan of the construction of a new Wetland Centre just outside Karachi and IUCN-Pakistan Coastal Ecosystems Unit's excursion for journalists on the meaning of WWD and the role of the Convention.

PHILIPPINES. The Department of Environment and Natural Sources has sent the Bureau a resource book showing an enormous calendar of events held throughout the country and pictures of such activities as mangrove plantings, interviews, banner displays, etc.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC. Jana Zacharaova (zachar@flora.lifeenv.gov.sk) of the Department of Nature and Landscape Protection, Ministry of Environment, in Bratislava, reports that at national level the press conference held on 2 February in conjunction with the first meeting of the Slovak Ramsar Committee was very well attended the media, NGO personnel, and government officials at all levels. Ján Zuskin, Director General of the Section of Nature and Landscape Protection, sent a bundle of press clippings about the event.

SOUTH AFRICA. Anton Linström (mllinst@lantic.co.za) has provided a brief report on the WWD activities in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, and John Dini, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, has given us a summary of activities throughout the country.

SPAIN. Fernando Lahuerta (terela40@retemail.es) writes that a group of students from the High School Val Miñor in Nigrán in southwest Galicia made a report on a nearby estuary and its role as a resting area for migratory birds, and posted it on their intranet and on the Web, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Styx/9936> though the page seems not to be quite working yet.

SWEDEN. Torsten Larsson of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (torsten.larsson@environ.se) despairs of arousing public interest for WWD in Sweden, given the season, and notes that more interactive functions are planned for later in the year. Nonetheless, for WWD the Agency has placed notices in newspapers and journals explaining the background of WWD, with up-to-date news of Ramsar-related activities in Sweden and proposed extensions of the Ramsar List in that country. At Lake Hornborga, visitors were informed about WWD as well.

THAILAND. Asae Sayaka of Wetlands International - South Thailand Programme reports that the office in Pattani held a forum for environmental NGOs in Southern Thailand, with a field trip in mangrove areas around Pattani Bay; a group of media came to produce a documentary film. The Office of Environmental Policy and Planning organized a conference on "The Role of NGOs in Wetland Conservation" in Bangkok on 2-3 February. Also on 2 February, the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand hosted a trip for schoolchildren to wetland sites around Bangkok.

THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA. Vasil Anastasovski of the National Ramsar Committee in Skopje reports that the NRC hosted an official meeting on 2 February, during which H.E. the Minister of Environment, Mr Toni Popovski, and the Deputy Minister, Mr. Marjan Dodovski, declared their support for intensified activities for the protection of wetlands and biodiversity in their country.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO. Nadra Nathai-Gyan (n.gyanwl@trinidad.net) writes that lectures were presented and wetlands packages, including the WWD posters, were prepared by the Wildlife Section for several schools.

UNITED KINGDOM. Cindy Peters of the European Wildlife Division, Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (research.wacd.doe@gtnet.gov.uk) sends from Bristol [the press notice on new Ramsar sites](#) designated by the UK in celebration of World Wetlands Day. Details on these sites will follow shortly.

UNITED STATES. Robin Weinman of Eastern Oregon University (rweinman@eou.edu) writes that the Wetlands and Waterfowl club in the state of Oregon held a clean-up day at Ladd Marsh on 30 January, as well as box/cone construction on 6 February at the local Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife shop. It was planned that t-shirts bearing the new Ramsar logo would be presented to the first 50 people who volunteered for the clean-up. More information from the club president, Richard Scheele (scheelr@eou.edu).

URUGUAY. Eduardo Gudynas of CLAES, the Latin American Center for Social Ecology (claes@adinet.com.uy), reports that, as part of WWD, his institution distributed a press release on the present status of wetlands in Uruguay, with a focus on the situation of water resources in the country. The Ramsar logo and a link to Delmar Blasco's statement were included. This can be seen on the CLAES Web site, www.sicoar.com.uy/claes/econoticias, in the Eco-News section.

VENEZUELA. Alejandro Luy of the Fundación Tierra Viva (tierraviva@cantv.net) in Caracas sends us a brief article on the meaning of World Wetlands Day and description of the country's Ramsar sites published in the NGO's journal *Ambiente en Letras* 3:45 (1 Feb. 1999), and [we reprint it here](#).