World Migratory Bird Day

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- P R E S S R E L E A S E –

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY
8-9 MAY 2010

World Migratory Bird Day focuses on globally threatened migratory birds

On 8-9 May 2010 thousands of people around the world will be attending World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) events which will celebrate bird migration and highlight migratory birds in crisis.

Events to mark World Migratory Bird Day will include bird festivals, educational programmes, presentations and birdwatching trips organised by hundreds of dedicated groups and organisations around the world. An international photo competition – The World's Rarest Bird Photo Competition is also linked to WMBD this year and is focusing on the world's most threatened birds.

"**Save migratory birds in crisis – every species counts!**" - is this year's central WMBD theme and aims to raise awareness about globally threatened migratory birds, with a particular focus on those birds on the very edge of extinction - the Critically Endangered.

"The threat of extinction faced by individual bird species is a reflection of the larger extinction crisis threatening other species and the natural diversity that underpins all life on Earth", says Bert Lenten - Executive Secretary of the UN Environment Programme's African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and initiator of the World Migratory Bird Day campaign. "By focusing on migratory birds in crisis during the International Year of Biodiversity, World Migratory Bird Day 2010 is highlighting the role played by birds as indicators, enabling us to see the negative effects our current way of life is having on the planet and its biodiversity", added Mr Lenten.

As one of the best researched taxa, birds serve as vital indicators for the state of biodiversity and the biological health of the ecosystems they inhabit. If a bird species becomes threatened with extinction it is often a clear sign that the conditions of the required habitats have changed and that other species dependent on them may also be affected.

A staggering 1,227 or 12.4% of the total 9,865 extant bird species in the world are currently classified as globally threatened and 192 of these are considered Critically Endangered.

An estimated 19% of all known birds are considered to be migratory, of which 11% are Globally Threatened or Near Threatened and 31 are classified as Critically Endangered according to BirdLife International on behalf of the IUCN Red List.

"World Migratory Bird Day is an opportunity to draw international attention to migratory birds around a central theme each year. The focus on the most threatened migratory birds in 2010 acts as yet another reminder to governments that more needs to be done internationally to conserve these species across their migratory ranges", says Elizabeth Maruma Mrema - Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), a UNEP administered wildlife treaty.

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Critically Endangered bird species are found throughout the world in all countries and territories, with most countries supporting at least one species with this highest risk category assigned by the IUCN.

“International collaboration is the only way to conserve migratory birds as they pass along their flyways”, said Dr Marco Lambertini – BirdLife’s Chief Executive. “That's why the BirdLife Partnership, with over 100 national organisations across the continents, can make a great difference in providing safer routes for migratory birds, as well as promoting the crucial inter-governmental co-ordinated efforts needed to address the growing threats along the flyways”.

Some prominent examples of “migratory birds in crisis” being highlighted in the context of this year’s WMBD campaign include the Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*), the Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*), the Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*), the Waved Albatross (*Phoebastria irrorata*) and the Orange-bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) – all of which are migratory and listed as Critically Endangered.

These birds face a range of mainly human-driven threats, of which agriculture and invasive alien species are the most important. Hunting and trapping, logging, urbanization, pollution and fisheries are also significant threats, with climate change increasingly becoming a factor.

“It is time we listen properly to what the birds are telling us about the current state of our environment. Without immediate conservation action, there is a risk that the state of the world’s biodiversity will continue to get worse and that as a result some migratory bird species, including some that fall under international wildlife treaties such as AEWA might become extinct” says Mr Lenten.

Notes to Editors

World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD)

World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) is a global initiative devoted to celebrating migratory birds and for promoting their conservation worldwide. It is being organized by the Secretariats of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) – two international wildlife treaties administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The WMBD 2010 campaign has also received support from the following partners: UNEP, The International Year of Biodiversity (IYB), BirdLife International, Wetlands International, The Partnership for the East Asian - Australasian Flyway (EAAFP) and The World’s Rarest Project.

The WMBD campaign is made possible through part of the voluntary contribution given to the AEWA Secretariat by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

For more information please see the WMBD Partners page on www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

Events in over 40 countries

As of 6 May 2010 over 70 separate events in more than 40 countries have been registered on the campaign website. WMBD events will be celebrated in: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Egypt, France, Germany, Hong Kong SAR (China), India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kenya, ,Madagascar, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, the United States of America and Zimbabwe.

For more information please see the WMBD Around the World page on www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

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World's Rarest Birds Photo Competition

World Migratory Bird Day 2010 has teamed up with this year's World's Rarest Bird Photo Competition covering the world's most threatened birds and has included an additional prize for the best photo of one of the 31 Critically Endangered birds that are migratory. Photos submitted to the international photo competition will be featured in a landmark publication – The World's Rarest Birds – which will support international conservation efforts and help fundraise for BirdLife International's Preventing Extinctions Programme. Contributors to the photo competition, whose images are published will receive a free copy of the book and also have a chance of winning a number of attractive prizes.

For more information please see the Photo Competition page on www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

A dedicated press page is available, please see: **www.worldmigratorybirdday.org**

2010 International Year of Biodiversity

2010 International Year of Biodiversity The United Nations declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) to raise awareness about the crucial importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of biodiversity loss, and to engage people, particularly youth, throughout the world in the fight to protect all life on Earth. Initiatives will be organized throughout the year to disseminate information, promote the protection of biodiversity and encourage countries, organizations, and individuals to take direct action to reduce biodiversity loss. The focal point for the year is the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. For more information see: www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/

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