

Welcome to the Birds

A series of events across the East Asian-Australasian and Central Asian Flyways to raise awareness of the wonder of our migrating birds



What is it?

Every year, over 50 million waterbirds make an epic journey along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, which connects the north-east Asian breeding grounds with wintering grounds in south-east Asia and Australia. For example, the Far Eastern Curlew travels the length of East Asia from its breeding grounds in Siberia to the wetlands of southern Australia, while the Bar-tailed Godwit holds the record for longest non-stop flight of over 11,000 km, travelling from Alaska to New Zealand.

We believe that the wonder of these annual migrations will be a way of gaining support for bird and habitat conservation amongst the broader public.

Welcome to the Birds provides BirdLife Partners with the opportunity to demonstrate that some of their country's key species are shared by other countries, placing even more importance on the need to protect key sites. *Welcome to the Birds* provides the opportunity for a BirdLife Partner to do advocacy work and awareness-raising at a key site or for a threatened species by reaching out to specific groups such as schools, or to the general public.

In 2013...

Eleven organisations from across the flyways held events.

Sri Lanka

The Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka's *Migrant Watch* began on 28th September with an expert lecture, followed by a field visit to Talangama Tank in Colombo the next day with 120 people. This event has since been repeated monthly, during the entire migratory season. In addition the monthly visits to Thalangama tank, field trips were arranged to Bundala Wetlands in November, Mannar in December and Jaffna in January, Anawilundawa Ramsar site in February with a special focus on observation of migratory birds. A kids program for junior birders was also held.



Malaysia

The Malaysian Nature Society held their ninth annual *Festival of Wings* (or *Pesta Sayap*) as part of *Welcome to the Birds* on 19th October at Kuala Selangor Nature Park with about 400 students and 200 members of the public attending. Activities included a drawing competition, face painting, talks on nature, birdwatching, exhibitions, games booths and a music concert.



Australia

In consultation with BirdLife Western Australia, Rio Tinto held events at Dampier Salt's Dampier and Port Hedland sites, as well as in Cape Lambert's Wickham region. The events were run over a week in October, and included bird counts and identification, expert talks, and community open days at the sites. They gave away show bags and information flyers on the migratory species found at the site, on the flyway, and on projects to protect the birds and minimise impacts.

Taiwan

Two local bird conservation societies, the Wild Bird Society of Taipei (WBST) and Kaohsiung Wild Bird Society (KWBS), members of the Chinese Wild Bird Federation, conducted more than 16 events in Taiwan between October and December, reaching at least 452 people. These events included wildlife-watching trips to rural areas or in urban parks, maintaining educational centres and organising birding trips.



Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society held a Yellow-Breasted Bunting count competition on 2-3 November, as well as educational booths on 13 October.



Dongying

The Dongying Birdwatching Society organized for school children to visit the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in November. They also held a pledge event where 40 local restaurants promised not to sell wild birds and in turn received plaques.



Vietnam

Viet Nature Conservation Centre, with Vietnam Wild Tour, held two, two-day events at Xuan Thuy National Park (Nov 16-17) and Tram Chim National Park (Nov 30 and Dec 1). There were 28 participants at Xuan Thuy, and 30 at Tram Chim, including bird specialists, nature lovers, bird watchers, bird photographers, journalists, Viet Nature volunteers, and national park volunteers. Both events included t-shirts, discussions and basic training on bird watching, followed by birdwatching in the field and a birdathon. The event at Tram Chim was also used to identify members for the new Viet Nature volunteer club. The events received coverage in the *Saigon Times*.



Philippines

Haribon Foundation conducted seminars over November, December and January for 231 students from six schools on the different migratory species found in the Philippines, their journey along the flyway, and the threats they frequently face. Three introductory birdwatching days were then held at the Las Pinas-Paranaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area for a total of 59 students. An online information campaign via the Haribon Facebook page launched, a video of the celebrations produced, and the series of *Welcome to the Birds* activities covered in the *Manila Times*.



Cambodia

On 22 December, the BirdLife International Cambodia Programme held a site visit at Anlung Pring Sarus Crane Reserve in partnership with the Cambodian Forestry Administration, Mlub Baitong (a local NGO) and the Royal University of Phnom Penh Department of Social Work. Over 240 people attended including primary and university students and teachers and local decision-makers. The day included discussions on conservation, quizzes and games, a nature walk with a wetland ecologist, Welcome to the Birds t-shirts and birdwatching. It received national television coverage.



Nepal

On 11 January 2014, Bird Conservation Nepal in coordination with the local New Taudaha Club and Shree Karkotak Nagraja Nagrani Vyasthapan Samaj held an event at Taudaha Lake near Kathmandu to raise awareness and start the mid-winter waterfowl census. Around 80 participants including students, local people, bird lovers and BCN members attended, with talks, screening of a documentary film, posters and displays as well as a bird count.



Funding and support

BirdLife International and the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB; BirdLife in the UK) provided partial funding to those Partners which requested financial assistance for *Welcome to the Birds*. Payments were made to four organisations across the flyway to support their events.

In addition, BirdLife International and RSPB ran advocacy and communications training for the Asian Partnership in July 2013, to help build the capacity and skills for Partners to organise and run *Welcome to the Birds* most effectively.

We produced some educational and promotional materials, available in English and also without text to allow for local language translation.



In 2014...

We aim to be even bigger!

A website is in the process of being developed, and will be live soon. This website will be a place to show what the BirdLife Partnership has achieved via *Welcome to the Birds*, and also to develop out future plans for this important event.