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# Waterbirds around the world

A global overview of the conservation,  
management and research of the  
world's waterbird flyways

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## Successes and challenges of promoting conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region: nine years of a regional strategy

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### ABSTRACT

The Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy is an international cooperative initiative for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands, involving governments, conventions, NGOs and local people. Launched in 1996, the Strategy is coordinated by a free-standing international committee, comprising representatives of governments, the Ramsar Convention, CMS, UNDP/GEF, UNEP, NGOs and technical experts. The Strategy provides a framework for the development and implementation of action plans for migratory waterbird species (Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds) in the East Asian-Australasian region, and through it, networks of internationally important sites have been developed. These networks serve as a focus for site-based conservation efforts, including networking, training, awareness raising, research and sound management of wetlands, through international cooperation and resource mobilization. Based on the successes during the period 1996-2000, the Strategy was renewed for a second five-year period (2001-2005). An Action Plan for the Central Asian Flyway is being developed as a framework for this region. The Strategy is recognized by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals through a number of Resolutions. This paper presents a review of the approaches used in the initiative, its successes and challenges, in a region dominated by developing countries.

### INTRODUCTION

The Asia-Pacific region is home to over 243 migratory waterbird species, including 49 threatened species. The region also contains over half the world's human population and the highest economic growth rates in the world, creating enormous pressures on wetlands and other natural habitats. Efforts to promote international cooperation have been ongoing through a range of different programmes. However, the outcome of an international meeting organized in Kushiro, Japan, in December 1994 and attended by government representatives, convention representatives and technical experts from across the East Asian-Australasian region was a turning point in the development of an international cooperative framework as outlined in the "Kushiro Statement". The Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy (Anonymous 1996) was launched in conjunction with the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention in Brisbane, Australia, in 1996, as a five-year regional initiative to enhance the long-term conservation of migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats involving governments, conventions, NGOs and local people. With a primary focus on the East Asian-

Australasian Flyway and on three groups of migratory species (Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds), a wide range of activities were undertaken to promote conservation. Flyway Action Plans served as the main tool in promoting conservation activities in the region, and networks of internationally important waterbird sites (established for shorebirds in 1996, cranes in 1997 and Anatidae in 1999) have provided a framework for site-based management, education and training activities.

Based on the success of the Strategy in its first five years, an international conference held in Okinawa, Japan, in October 2000 called for the continuation of the Strategy (as embodied in the "Okinawa Statement"), and recommended that countries in the region should enhance mechanisms for collaborative action to conserve waterbird species and their habitats, specifically through: (1) action plans for species groups and globally threatened species; and (2) effectively managed networks of sites that are internationally important for migratory waterbirds.

As a consequence, a second five-year Strategy was launched in 2001 and concluded in 2005 (Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee 2001). Discussions are now focused on developing frameworks for post 2005, through the development of a stronger partnership framework linked to a WSSD Type II initiative to conserve migratory waterbirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, and development of an Action Plan for migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Central Asian Flyway.

The philosophy of the Strategy and the process of its development were first described by Mundkur & Matsui (1997) and Weaver (1997). Reviews of the Strategy and its achievements were presented at the first and second International Conference on Wetlands and Development held in Malaysia in November 1996 and Senegal in November 1998, and reported in Mundkur & Matsui (1998) and Mundkur *et al.* (1999), respectively. This paper is the fifth in the series; it outlines the scope of the current Strategy, and provides a review of the approaches used in the initiative, its successes and challenges, in a region dominated by developing countries.

### SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

#### Geographic area and flyways

The Asia-Pacific region, as defined by the main migratory routes of waterbirds, extends from the Urals across Siberia to Alaska (USA) and southwards across East, Central, South and South-east Asia, Australasia and the Pacific islands, and covers about 57 countries and territories.

Within this region, there are three main migratory waterbird flyways, the Central Asian, East Asian-Australasian and Central Pacific. Some species and species groups have smaller flyway ranges within these broader flyways. In addition, some of the major flyways that extend into Europe, Africa and the Americas also have their origins in the northern latitudes of continental Asia. Here they converge with the flyways of the Asia-Pacific region and overlap in many important breeding, moulting and staging sites.

Conservation of migratory waterbirds in the adjoining flyways is covered by the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) under the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) and Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) in the Americas. The Strategy thus complements these major frameworks to conserve the migratory waterbirds of the world.

### Waterbird species

The Strategy adopts the Ramsar Convention definition of waterbirds, i.e. “birds ecologically dependent on wetlands” (Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2002), with the exception of the wetland-related raptors (Accipitriformes and Falconiformes), coucals (Cuculiformes) and wetland-related owls (Strigiformes), and covers twenty groups of waterbirds (see Table 1 for a list of families). It covers 243 waterbird species, including 49 globally threatened species (BirdLife International 2001, 2003, Wetlands International 2002). Some of these threatened species, such as Oriental White Stork *Ciconia boyciana*, Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*, Scaly-sided Merganser *Mergus squamatus*, Nordmann’s Greenshank *Tringa nordmanni* and Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*, are restricted to the Asia-Pacific region.

**Table 1. Waterbird families included in the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Strategy.**

Taxonomic group	English name
Gaviidae	Divers (loons)
Podicipedidae	Grebes
Phalacrocoracidae	Cormorants
Pelecanidae	Pelicans
Ardeidae	Herons, egrets and bitterns
Ciconiidae	Storks
Threskiornithidae	Ibises and spoonbills
Phoenicopteridae	Flamingos
Anatidae	Swans, geese and ducks
Gruidae	Cranes
Rallidae	Rails, gallinules and coots
Heliornithidae	Finfoots
Jacanidae	Jacanas
Dromadidae	Crab Plover
Haematopodidae	Oystercatchers
Recurvirostridae	Stilts and avocet
Glareolidae	Pratincoles
Charadriidae	Plovers
Scolopacidae	Sandpipers
Laridae	Gulls, terns and skimmers

Note: Shorebirds (waders) include jacanas, Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*, oystercatchers, stilts and Avocet, pratincoles, plovers and sandpipers.

**Table 2. Priority areas of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 1996-2000.**

#### Conservation of habitats

- Enhancement of site conservation
- Establishment of flyway reserve networks

#### Conservation of species

- Development and implementation of migratory waterbird conservation action plans
- Promotion of the sustainable management of migratory waterbirds

#### Research and monitoring

- Promotion of conservation-oriented monitoring and research activities
- Establishment of advanced migratory waterbird and wetland information storage and retrieval systems

#### Education, information and awareness

- Increased education and public awareness
- Promotion of information flow among waterbird and wetland conservation researchers
- Training of personnel associated with the survey, study and management of waterbirds and their habitats

#### Policy and legislation

- Review and strengthening of waterbird and habitat conservation policies and legislation
- Development of an Asia-Pacific Multilateral Migratory Waterbird Conservation Agreement

The Strategy has taken the approach of promoting the conservation of groups of waterbirds, focussing its efforts primarily on three groups, Anatidae (ducks, geese and swans), shorebirds (or waders) and cranes in the East Asian-Australasian region under three species-group Action Plans. In addition, it has served as a framework to promote conservation of globally threatened species.

### Coordination

The Strategy is coordinated by an international committee, the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee (MWCC), comprising representatives of governments, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), UNDP/GEF, UNEP and three international NGOs, as well as the Chairs of the Anatidae, Crane and Shorebird Working Groups and a representative of Wetlands International’s Specialist Groups (19 members as at April 2004). The MWCC is currently chaired and co-chaired by Australia and Japan, respectively. The MWCC maintains overall responsibility for coordinating, monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Strategy, fund raising, development of projects, and over-seeing activities of the Strategy Coordinator.

A Strategy Coordinator provides secretariat support to the Committee and liaison with the Working Groups. Three Flyway Officers coordinate implementation of the three action plans in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. A Central Asian Flyway Officer coordinates development of activities in the Central Asian Flyway. Four staff operate from offices of Wetlands International (in Australia, India, Japan and Russia), while the coordinator for cranes is employed by the Wild Bird Society of Japan. Core support has been provided by the Australian Department of the Environment and Heritage, Ministry of the Environment, Japan,

**Table 3. Overview of actions implemented that contribute to achieving outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005.**

Elements	Selected actions undertaken and outcomes achieved
1. Action plans for species groups and globally threatened species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Plans for Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway updated for 2001-2005.</li> <li>• North East Asian Crane Action Plan and Site Network extended to cover conservation action for the globally threatened Oriental White Stork <i>Ciconia boyciana</i>.</li> <li>• International task forces established to develop conservation plans for selected globally threatened species:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Swan Goose <i>Anser cygnoides</i></li> <li>– Baikal Teal <i>Anas formosa</i></li> <li>– Spoon-billed Sandpiper <i>Eurynorhynchus pygmeus</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Synergies developed with the UNEP/GEF/ICF Siberian Crane <i>Grus leucogeranus</i> project in two flyways across Asia.</li> <li>• Coordination improved with monitoring and conservation groups for the threatened Black-faced Spoonbill <i>Platalea minor</i> in East Asia.</li> <li>• Current status of the threatened White-headed Duck <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i> in Central Asia assessed.</li> <li>• Increased marking and study of movements of the threatened Saunders's Gull <i>Larus saundersi</i> in East Asia.</li> </ul>
2. Effectively managed networks of sites that are internationally important for migratory waterbirds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site Networks for Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, established during 1996-1999, have been strengthened by the addition of internationally important sites (as at April 2004, the networks covered 80 sites in 13 countries – see table 4).</li> <li>• Increased visibility and recognition of sites at national and international level.</li> <li>• Range of activities undertaken at network sites (and other important sites) including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Public awareness and information dissemination</li> <li>– Management planning of sites</li> <li>– Training courses for site managers</li> <li>– Field surveys at network sites and other important sites</li> <li>– Monitoring and migration studies of waterbirds</li> <li>– Art exhibitions on nature</li> <li>– Crane Research Handbook of Field Study and Shorebird Study Manual produced and widely used.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3. Raised awareness of waterbirds and their link to wetland values and functions throughout the region and at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of educational and awareness resources produced in many languages.</li> <li>• Annual awareness-related activities promoted and implemented across the region, at network sites and other important areas, involving a wide range of stakeholders including politicians, government officials, school and college students, and local people at network sites.</li> <li>• Awareness-related activities linked and integrated with national and international events such as World Wetlands Day (2 February).</li> <li>• Wetland centres promoted and facilitated to implement awareness raising activities.</li> </ul>
4. Increased capacity of government agencies and non-governmental organizations to implement conservation actions for migratory waterbirds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing of government and other funding support for conservation, public awareness, education and research activities at the site, national and international level.</li> <li>• Identification of new sites of national and international importance through survey activities.</li> <li>• Strengthening of local capacity to manage wetland and waterbird conservation through organization of training courses.</li> <li>• Study tours and visits organized for network site stakeholders nationally and internationally to build linkages and improve understanding of management and conservation practices.</li> <li>• Increased involvement of community and children in the study and conservation of waterbirds and wetlands.</li> </ul>
5. Developed knowledge base and facilitated information exchange for the sound management of migratory waterbirds and their habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional waterbird and habitat monitoring programmes such as the Asian Waterbird Census strengthened through building of national networks (coordinated by Wetlands International).</li> <li>• Improved cooperation on the study of migratory routes of waterbirds through adoption of flyway-wide colour marking schemes, such as through development of the Asia-Pacific Shorebird Colour Flagging Protocol.</li> <li>• Development of a Science Action Plan for the Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>.</li> <li>• Up-to-date information on waterbirds, threats and conservation priorities collected and disseminated as technical and non-technical information through a range of media in English and several Asian languages.</li> <li>• Publication of important regional information sources on waterbirds and wetlands including: Threatened Birds of Asia: the BirdLife International Red Data Book (2001) and Saving Asia's threatened Birds: a guide for government and civil society (2003) by BirdLife International, and Waterbird Population Estimates – Third edition (2002) and Numbers and distribution of waterbirds and wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region. Results of the Asian Waterbird Census: 1997-2001 (2004) by Wetlands International<sup>1</sup>.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> This publication was formally launched at the Waterbirds around the world Conference.

**Table 3 (cont).** Overview of actions implemented that contribute to achieving outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005.

Elements	Selected actions undertaken and outcomes achieved
5. Developed knowledge base and facilitated information exchange for the sound management of migratory waterbirds and their habitats. (Continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of four web-sites dedicated to informing the public about activities and issues relating to waterbird conservation.</li> <li>• Establishment of list servers and e-groups to promote information exchange on waterbird and wetland issues amongst people within the Asia-Pacific region (and globally).</li> <li>• Organization of international and national training courses and meetings to share expertise and information on waterbird and habitat management issues.</li> </ul>
6. Harmonized national and state policies and legislation as a foundation for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of increased implementation of policies and legislation in response to resolutions and programmes of global conventions dealing with migratory waterbirds and their habitats:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Ramsar Convention                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rec. VI.4. The “Brisbane Initiative” on the establishment of a network of listed sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.</li> <li>– Rec. VII.3. Multilateral cooperation on the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Asia-Pacific region.</li> <li>– Res. VII.21. Enhancing the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands.</li> <li>– Res. VIII.37. International cooperation on conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific region.</li> </ul> </li> <li>B. Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Res. 5.4. To take an active role in the development of a conservation initiative for migratory waterbirds of the Central Asian-Indian Flyway.</li> <li>– Res. 6.4. CMS Strategic Action Plan and companion document UNEP/CMS/Conf. 6.12 called on Parties to support and provide input to the Strategy: 1996-2000 and “<i>future related initiatives that may lead, at an appropriate time, to a formal multilateral Agreement among States of the region, under the auspices of CMS</i>”.</li> </ul> </li> <li>C. Convention on Biological Diversity                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Programme of Work on Protected Areas</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increased interaction with regional bodies (e.g. ASEAN and SACEP) to promote regional conservation programmes and action.</li> <li>• Support provided to review and update national policies and legislation on waterbirds and habitats through local and national activities.</li> </ul>
7. Enhanced organizational relationships at all levels to increase cooperation and deliver greater conservation benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting awareness and support for the Strategy at a national and local level.</li> <li>• Seeking greater cooperation of all stakeholders (governments, research institutes, development agencies, business sector, local communities and others).</li> <li>• Implementation of actions outlined in the Strategy and species-group Action Plans through involvement of all stakeholders.</li> <li>• Strengthening the roles of NGOs in implementation of the Strategy.</li> <li>• Reporting on progress on implementation to meetings of the Ramsar Convention, CMS, BirdLife International and Wetlands International.</li> </ul>
8. Adequate planning and resources to implement the Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening of international coordination and communication through regular meetings of the MWCC involving a range of stakeholders.</li> <li>• Team of strategy and flyway coordination officers engaged to coordinate implementation of activities.</li> <li>• Resources implemented for activities from an increasing range of government, corporate, non-governmental and private partners and supporters.</li> </ul>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Government of The Netherlands.

Originally established under the aegis of the Wetlands International – Asia Pacific Council, in 2003 the MWCC became a free-standing committee that reports directly to the Ramsar Convention, CMS, BirdLife International and Wetlands International.

### Focus of the Strategy

The two Strategies have aimed to respond broadly to the issues of habitat destruction and loss, species declines, low public

awareness and support, and limited institutional capacity to manage and monitor waterbirds and their habitats. The Strategy 1996-2000 was structured along six broad and overlapping themes with a total of 11 objectives and a number of priority actions defined for each objective (Table 2). Based on the experience of assessing the progress that had been made during these first five years, the MWCC restructured the Strategy 2001-2005 such that it was presented as eight key elements with a number of expected outcomes for each element (Table 3). In recognition of the challenges and time needed for the development of a formal international agreement without strong interest and

commitment from the many governments concerned, no specific action to develop such an agreement was proposed within the timeframe of the second Strategy.

### Achievements to date

The Strategy has called for activities to be undertaken at the international, regional and national level. These activities have primarily been developed separately along the different flyways, although some activities have been more region-wide (such as the monitoring of waterbirds; see Li & Mundkur 2004). A range of activities, including promoting awareness, improving understanding of the migration strategies and conservation needs of waterbirds, and building local capacity to monitor and manage waterbirds and wetlands, have been implemented (Table 3). This work has been achieved largely through encouraging participation of an increasing number and range of stakeholders: governments, NGOs, academe, technical institutions, development agencies, etc. The East Asian-Australasian Flyway has remained the primary region of flyway-wide activities over the last nine years, although during the last few years coordinated work across the Central Asian Flyway has increased.

The three species-group Action Plans prepared during the first Strategy in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway have been reviewed and updated, and have continued to serve as the main tool for implementation of activities (Table 3). The three existing site networks have continued to serve as a focus for site-based conservation efforts for Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds. As at April 2004, thirteen countries, Australia, People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation and Singapore, had nominated eighty sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds to the site networks (Table 4, Fig. 1). Of these, eight sites have been nominated to more than one network in recognition of their importance for multiple waterbird groups. Although the network sites cover both coastal and inland wetland habitats, a slightly larger number are currently coastal wetlands. Fifty-eight percent of the sites are also listed as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, enabling a close linkage of many conservation activities under these two frameworks.

To date, many activities in the Central Asian Flyway have focussed on collation of information on waterbird distribution and abundance under the umbrellas of the International Waterbird Census (Gilissen *et al.* 2002) and Asian Waterbird Census (Li & Mundkur 2004), and revitalization of interest and linkages amongst agencies and institutions through rebuilding the capacity of expert networks, especially within the Central Asian countries (see Solokha *et al.*, this volume). The development of a Flyway Action Plan to promote action for all migratory waterbirds was recognized as a priority, and the first major meeting of flyway range states, organized in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in 2001, has provided an impetus for its development (CMS Secretariat 2001). A follow-up meeting to finalize the Action Plan took place under the aegis of the CMS in New Delhi, India, in 2005.

Over the last few years, new information collected through activities implemented under the Strategy has benefited the production of a number of important global, regional and national reference publications on the status of species and their

**Table 4.** Status of the site networks for Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (as at April 2004).

Total number of sites designated on three networks	80
• East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network	35
• North East Asian Crane Site Network	26
• East Asian Anatidae Site Network	27
Total number of sites also listed as Ramsar sites	46 (58%)
Number of countries involved in the site networks	13



**Fig. 1.** Sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds designated on the Anatidae, Crane and Shorebird Networks in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (as at April 2004). The inset indicates the network of sites in the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

habitats, such as those by BirdLife International and Wetlands International (Table 3). These references have in turn provided valuable guidance and support for activities and local publications and information resources.

Based on the wide range of activities undertaken during the last nine years, as summarized in Table 3, it is evident that the Strategy has proven to be an important regional initiative with involvement and support from a large number of national and local stakeholders and international partners, including multilateral environmental agreements and non-governmental organizations.

At the international level, the implementation of the Strategy has been widely recognized and supported by two important multilateral environmental agreements, the Ramsar Convention and the CMS. The Conferences of the Parties to these Conventions have passed six resolutions and recommendations at their triennial meetings that support or highlight the main

activities of the Strategy (Table 3). In addition, the activities of the Strategy have provided a mechanism for implementing a number of other resolutions of these two Conventions concerning promotion of wetland and species conservation, building local capacity, dissemination of information, monitoring of wetlands and their waterbirds, increasing awareness and public education, etc. The Strategy has also directly contributed to the priorities of the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly with respect to protected areas, inland wetlands, public awareness and capacity building.

Implementation of the Strategy for migratory waterbirds has benefited resident birds and other wetland species through raised awareness of conservation issues and improved management of important waterbird sites. Thus migratory waterbirds have proved to be an important flagship group that can serve to unite people across the region to promote the conservation of a common heritage and resource.

### CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

The Asia-Pacific region is the most populated part of the globe, with a majority of developing countries or countries in transition where the primary focus remains national development, industrialization and improvement of the living standards of the people. Here, the development of conservation initiatives for migratory waterbirds and their habitats is normally given a much lower priority than human development and progress. While implementation of the Strategy has been quite successful in developing local awareness, capacity and interest in waterbird and habitat conservation, a lot more effort, activities and resources are needed to continue and strengthen the work. The main priorities include:

- **Enhancing awareness raising:** Actions to raise awareness need to be enhanced for decision makers, policy makers and the corporate sector.
- **Broadening government involvement:** Government agencies involved to date have been largely limited to the ministries responsible for the environment and forests. Engagement of government agencies responsible for the use and management of wetlands is also needed to enable sustainable development of the wetlands; such agencies include those responsible for water resources, irrigation, agriculture, fisheries, power supply, military, ports, industry, transport, rural development, etc. at the national and sub-national levels.
- **Enhancing species coverage:** The Strategy has focussed on three species groups; additional actions are needed to promote conservation of the ten other species groups covered by the Strategy and the large number of sites of importance for these species. Although good information has been collected on the status and distribution of some species, information across all countries is still lacking and serves as an impediment to quantifying their status and trends.
- **Enhancing site coverage of the networks:** The focus of the Strategy has been to obtain recognition for internationally important sites for migratory waterbirds, especially through the establishment of networks of international important sites in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Work undertaken during the Strategy indicates that there are at least 600 sites for migratory shorebirds, cranes and Anatidae (with additional sites for other species). The network of sites

currently includes only 80 sites (13%). Even though new sites are being added to the Site Networks each year, it is unlikely that the targets identified in the Strategy will be achieved unless strategies for site designation are enhanced.

- **Enhancing country coverage:** While the number of national and local partners is increasing, the initiative has not been able to involve all the countries in the region. Particularly in South-east Asia, where the Shorebird Network covers the entire region and the Anatidae Network covers some countries, very few sites have been designated compared to the large number of sites known to be of international importance. Mechanisms need to be developed to involve all countries in the region.
- **Strengthening national networks:** More people capable of collecting information on waterbirds and interested in developing and supporting conservation initiatives are needed.
- **Reporting and publicising the achievements of the initiative:** More effort is needed to publicise the achievements of the initiative to a wide range of audiences both within countries and across the region.
- **Securing a sound financial basis for the initiative:** To date the initiative has been successful in securing resources to develop and support activities on an annual basis. A variety of government, corporate and development agency funds have supported activities at the local and national level. Support for core coordination has been received from only a few government agencies. The lack of funding on a long-term basis has prevented the development of a more extensive regional conservation programme. Broadening of the funding base for coordination and project activities is a priority.

### WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Despite all these successes over the past nine years of the initiative, the challenges for conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region are increasing as the destruction and loss of important wetlands continue across the region through human-induced and natural causes. The capacity of local and national agencies and groups to monitor and manage species and their habitats needs to be strengthened in a majority of the countries.

In recognition of the need to ensure sustainable development and the conservation of species and habitats, and to gain support for future activities at flyway and national level in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, the Governments of Australia and Japan and Wetlands International put forward a proposal to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg in September 2002, under the Type II Partnership Initiative. The main values of the new initiative are: (a) to provide governments and non-governmental organizations with a formal mechanism for signing up and becoming partners to the broader framework of the initiative; (b) to broaden the work of the Strategy and to place the recognition and effective management of important sites in the international context of sustainable development; and (c) as security for Strategy activities and networks. This framework will be developed to support conservation in the flyway post-2005.

Likewise in the Central Asian Flyway, the Action Plan being developed under the framework of the CMS is being broadened to ensure that the needs of people living at sites used by waterbirds are addressed.

In summary, the prognosis for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats is brighter through the achievements of the Strategy, but efforts need to be sustained and expanded through improving and broadening the support and participation of all stakeholders to tackle the challenges of the future.

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