

Healthy wetland landscapes in a changing climate

Essential for waterbirds and people

Waterbirds in the African-Eurasian Flyway depend on a network of critical wetland sites for their annual migration. These same wetlands are vital for the survival of local communities, providing food and water, and natural defences from floods and droughts. Many of these Critical Sites currently have little or no protection. Some are under threat from declining water availability due to a changing climate, while others are at risk from unsustainable water withdrawals, the degradation of vegetation or overfishing.

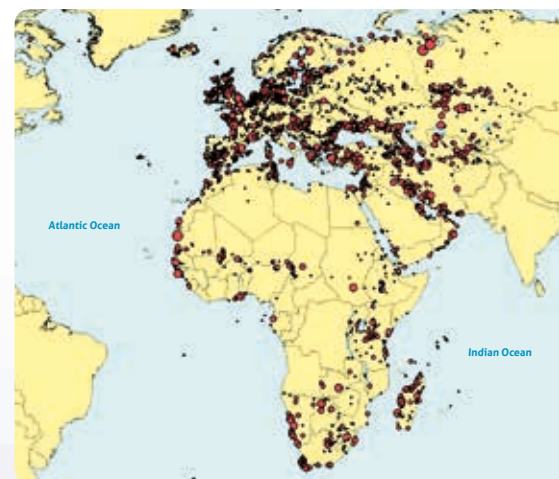
Creating a climate resilient Critical Site network across the African-Eurasian Flyway

Protecting waterbird populations in a changing climate requires a comprehensive network of healthy wetlands in countries across the flyway. But it is not enough to just protect these Critical Sites. Effective conservation necessitates working at a scale sufficiently large to address the impact of upstream activities and maintain the overall functionality of landscapes.

Conservation, restoration and climate-smart management of wetland ecosystems can also help reduce climate and disaster risk for human populations. Such approaches are known as ecosystem-based adaptation and ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, and can turn the threat of climate change into an opportunity to deliver multiple environmental, social and economic benefits.

Our approach

- Assess the vulnerability of Critical Sites in the African-Eurasian Flyway to climate change
- Identify priority sites for adaptation
- Safeguard Critical Sites in countries across the flyway through landscape-level wetland conservation, restoration and sustainable management strategies



Critical Sites in the African-Eurasian Flyway



Safeguarding Critical Sites at a landscape scale

We start by demonstrating our approach in these Critical Sites:

The Inner Niger Delta in Mali is the second largest floodplain wetland in Africa and contains seven Critical Sites. It is under increasing pressure from upstream water withdrawals and local overgrazing, overfishing, and logging of flood forests. We work with the government and Niger Basin Authority to understand the impact of dams and irrigation, and the economic value of the Delta, while at the same time working with local communities to reduce local pressures and restore habitats.

Lake Abijatta is the most important Critical Site in Ethiopia. Its existence is threatened by the overexploitation of water and degradation of the bushland in its upstream catchment. Together with the Rift Valley Lakes Basin Authority we convene communities, the private sector and knowledge institutes to ensure sustainable water allocation. We engage with the agricultural sector and communities to reduce water use and restore catchments.



Lake Abijatta, Ethiopia

Partners



based on a decision of the German Bundestag

The Critical Site Network Tool

Want to know more about Critical Sites in your country? This newly updated online resource contains population level information on 294 species of waterbirds and the important wetland sites they depend upon in the African-Eurasian Flyway.



<http://critical-sites.wetlands.org/>

How governments and donors can contribute

- Identify how Critical Sites for waterbird populations are situated within entire landscapes (e.g. an entire catchment, from upstream to downstream). Understand the ecological and socio-economic dimensions in these areas, and how these may change under different, future climate scenarios.
- Integrate the conservation of waterbirds and wetlands into broader societal, energy, food, water, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and plans.
- Adopt an inclusive and participatory approach to decision making, planning and practice that involves coordinated action between government, the private sector, civil society and local communities: create a coalition of the willing.
- Develop strategies and plans that prioritise the conservation, restoration and management of critical wetland sites and site networks to increase the resilience of both waterbird populations and local communities.
- Recognise and support the role of healthy wetland ecosystems in delivering climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and biodiversity conservation while supporting local livelihoods.
- Align and promote synergies between national strategies for the implementation of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNFCCC Paris Climate Change Agreement and UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

For more information www.wetlands.org