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RESSOURCE
PROJECT
SWM Sahelian Wetlands Site

newsletter

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WELCOME

After a long autumn migration, the time has come for a great many northern waterbirds to rest over the winter in the wetlands of North Africa and the Sahel.

Between November and February every year, as part of the International Waterbird Census (IWC) coordinated by Wetlands International, we are working with our five partner countries to carry out important bird counts. These census campaigns have many objectives, which include obtaining long-term datasets to assess trends; identifying new sites that have attracted large concentrations of waterbirds; and developing more efficient, standardized techniques and local expertise.

At the field sites, our technical partners are working to conserve wetlands by strengthening national legal frameworks, supporting the designation of Ramsar sites of high conservation value, improving management practices, and experimenting with new types of sustainable wetland development, for example, harvesting and commercialising water lily seeds in the Senegal River Delta.

These are some of the exciting topics and challenges that I would like to share with you in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading about them!

Bruno Portier
RESSOURCE* Project Coordinator

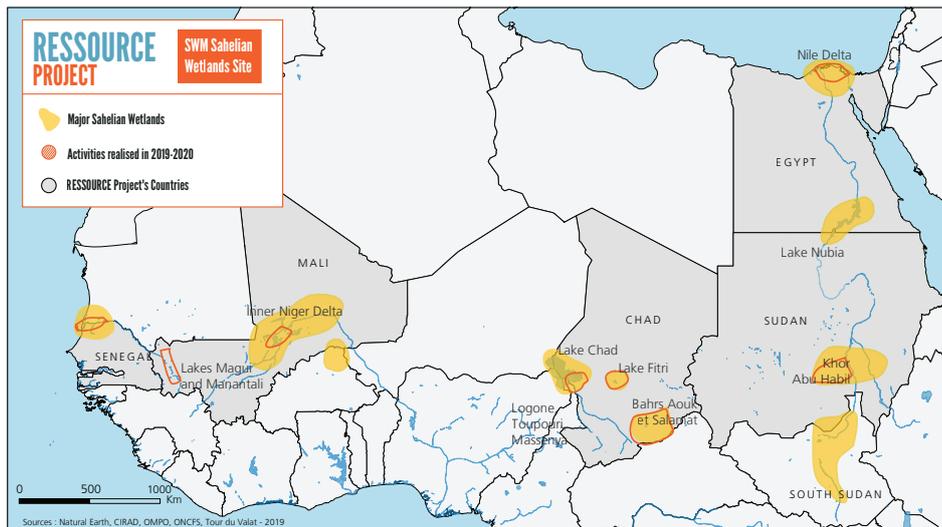
"Strengthening expertise in Sub-Saharan Africa on birds and their rational use for communities and their environment"

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HIGHLIGHTS



Egypt - Lake Nasser, Nile Valley and Delta

Our partners in the Nature Conservation Sector are working on preparing land and aerial counts over the Delta and in the Middle Nile Valley. In the Nile Delta, surveys of waterbird harvesting suggest that Rallidae, especially the Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) and the Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*), are the two main species collected.

Mali - Inner Niger Delta

Monitoring of the marketplaces where waterbirds are sold reveals that sales (retail and wholesale depending on the species) mainly take place near Bamako. The Spur-winged Goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*) is the most common species at market stalls and the most consumed in restaurants, followed by the White-faced Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*).

Senegal - Senegal River Delta

In order to prevent the Sacred Water Lily *Nelumbo nucifera*, accidentally introduced in 2004, from invading the whole Trois Marigots wetland, neighbouring communities carried out removal operations by hand in June 2020. Almost 5 ha were cleared, and the mowing of the *typhas* was carried out along 1 km of banks at the third 'marigots'.

Sudan - Red Sea coast and upper Nile Valley

To support the Ramsar designation process for the Khor Abu Habil, two meetings of the National Ramsar Committee were organized, and a further local consultation meeting is planned.

Chad - Bahr Aouk et Salamat Ramsar Site and Lake Chad Basin

Aerial counts in sections of the Bahrs Aouk et Salamat, which had never previously been covered, combined with statistical estimates made it possible to significantly revise upwards the world population estimate (WPE) of several waterbird species. The numbers of the Knob-billed Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) extrapolated for this Ramsar area alone are, for example, higher than the maximum estimate published for the entire West African population.

SPECIAL FOCUS - WATERBIRD CENSUS DATA

Since the start of the RESSOURCE Project in 2017, over 16 000 waterbird census records have been formatted, validated and stored in a database specifically developed for the project. More specifically, 1 853 659 birds were observed at 1 433 observation sites or points in the four participating countries.

"The larger sites are sampled by aerial transects. Using distance sampling methods we can obtain abundance estimates, which can be extrapolated for vast areas that could not otherwise be covered. These data will allow us to revise waterbird population numbers," explains Clémence Deschamps, Project Manager at the Tour du Valat Research Institute.

The important work of verifying and validating data from the bird counts is essential to guarantee the quality of the analysis and the information that will be given to managers and decision-makers. "Once processed, the data are shared with government partners who transmit them to Wetlands International, thus contributing to the assessment of long-term population trends and the identification of wetlands of international importance using the Ramsar Convention criteria. With these results, the RESSOURCE Project is actively contributing to the implementation of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and Ramsar action plans," adds Jean-Yves Mondain-Monval, from the Migratory Avifauna Unit of the French Office for Biodiversity.



COUNTRY STORY – MALI

“Despite the ongoing security challenges of flying over the Inner Niger Delta, in late February 2020, preparatory flight tests were carried out over the Manantali and Magui Lakes in the Kayes Region of western Mali,” explains Pierre Defos Du Rau from the Migratory Avifauna Unit of the French Office for Biodiversity. This made it possible to assess the number of waterbirds at both sites, as part of Mali’s contribution to the International Waterbird Census, and to assess the technical performance of the aircraft company identified for the aerial surveys.

The two sites are not as favourable for waterbirds as other wetlands in Mali. For example, the Inner Niger Delta hosted around one million waterbirds each winter between 2006 and 2008. However, the sites aerial images show numerous habitats suitable for migratory stops and wintering areas for waterbirds.



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FACTS AND FIGURES

In January 2020, it is estimated that nearly **2.7 million waterbirds** visited the Bahrs Aouk et Salamat Ramsar site in southern Chad.

The estimated abundance of **White-faced Whistling Duck** in the Bahr Aouk et Salamat floodplains could exceed **400 000 individuals**.

During the winter of 2019–2020, nearly **140 000 waterbirds** were counted using ground census in the Khor Abou Habil region in Sudan.

In the Senegal River Delta. Migratory waterbirds account for an average of **65 percent** of the offtake, the Garganey (*Spatula querquedula*) being the most hunted species, with **25 to 40 percent** of the offtake.

EVENTS CORNER

World Migratory Bird Day

10 October 2020

The theme of World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) was “[Birds connect our world](#)”. The RESSOURCE Project was promoted on Twitter by the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), FAO, [WMBD](#) and [Wetlands International – Africa](#), and on [Facebook](#) by the latter.



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Migratory birds are indispensable to healthy ecosystems and to the well-being of people in every region of the world.

Webinar series on COVID-19 and the forestry sector

12 October 2020

FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy

The SWM Programme participated in the event *One Health: Concrete steps towards harnessing forestry and wildlife sectors* (see the [event](#) recording on the FAO Youtube channel). The session was also promoted on Twitter ([here](#) and [here](#)).



One Health: concrete steps for harnessing

Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) Biodiversity Digital Conference: One World – One Health

28-29 October 2020

During this conference, the SWM Programme organized a session, Tackling the risks of wildlife-borne disease pandemics – policy and investment priorities, which attracted over 550 participants. The SWM Programme [White paper](#) and [Policy brief](#) “Build back better in a post-COVID-19 world – Reducing future wildlife-borne spillover of disease to humans” were launched.

FROM THE FIELD



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Flood-recession agriculture on the banks of Lake Magui, a Ramsar site in western Mali. Fishers, farmers, herders, hunters and wildlife compete to use these Sahelian wetland resources.

NEWSROOM

Further information about the RESSOURCE Project can be found through the following links:

- The involvement of young people in the RESSOURCE Project was praised on social media ([here](#)), including on International Youth Day on 12 August ([here](#)).
- The RESSOURCE Project brochure was published in [English](#) and [Arabic](#).
- The sixth SWM Programme Newsletter (July – October 2020) was published in [French](#) and [English](#).

WHAT'S COMING UP?

- 2 February 2021
World Wetlands Day ([read more here](#))
- 8 May 2021
Migratory Birds Day ([read more here](#))
- 15–16 June 2021
European Development Days ([read more here](#))

RESSOURCE TALKS

François Lamarque,
Head of Mission, international and European
conventions and programmes relating to wildlife
species – Ministry for Ecological Transition

A lot of ground has been covered by the RESSOURCE Project since 2013, when, with our colleagues from *Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage* (ONCFS, French National Agency for Wildlife), we began to think about a project that would combine improving the livelihoods of local communities with the conservation of migratory waterbirds and African wetlands.



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Why has the French Ministry of the Environment invested in this project?

The reason is simple. Migratory waterbirds are an important source of protein and income for local communities in the Sahelian wetlands while, at the same time, a number of these species are hunted in France. It is therefore a shared resource that requires coordinated management to ensure sustainable use in Africa as well as in Europe. We therefore need to have comprehensive estimates of global populations and the offtake of hunted species.

Knowing these two parameters (i.e. estimates of the population and species offtake) makes it possible to adjust the harvest levels to avoid affecting the conservation status of the target species. This underpins the adaptive management approach that the Ministry for Ecological Transition is implementing in France for several hunted species.

The important and innovative data collected by the RESSOURCE Project are therefore of great value for the management of the waterbird resources – not only in Africa, but also in France.

On the eve of setting out on a new non-professional adventure, I must conclude by telling you how much pleasure I have had in working with all of you on this project, which is complex, but above all exciting and implemented by truly dedicated staff. The planet is small and the world of conservation even smaller, so hopefully we will see each other again soon.



FIND OUT MORE

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