

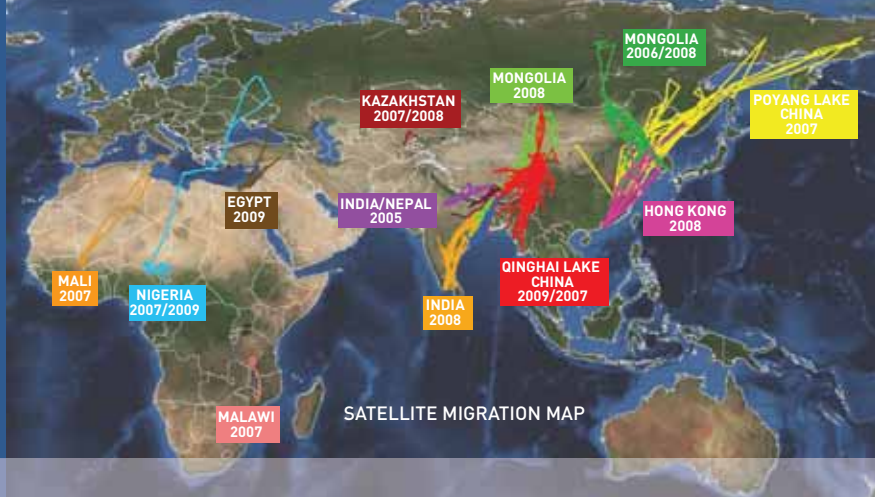


The EMPRES Wildlife Unit



The One World One Health approach

The Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES) Wildlife Unit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was established to investigate the role that wildlife species play in diseases that impact livestock and agriculture based livelihoods. Land-use changes and the competition for natural resources are bringing human populations, agricultural lands and livestock into closer contact with wildlife. This increased contact creates opportunities for the transmission of endemic and newly emerging infectious diseases between livestock, wildlife and humans. It is clear that there is a need to establish long-term, sustainable wildlife disease monitoring programs globally, with a focus on understanding the ecology and epidemiology of diseases between domestic and wild animals. With the emergence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 it became apparent that multidisciplinary in-country and regional capacity building was necessary amongst, biologists, veterinarians, ornithologist and others.



Wild birds and avian influenza

LEADERSHIP, CAPACITY BUILDING, SURVEILLANCE AND DISEASE ECOLOGY

It has long been known that wild birds are a reservoir for low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) viruses worldwide but to date, wild birds have not been identified as the reservoir for the HPAI strain that has spread across Asia into Europe and Africa. Since 2006 the EMPRES Wildlife Unit that has coordinated, facilitated, or implemented training of more than 500 in-country nationals from over 90 countries worldwide on wildlife disease surveillance. Trainings aim to increase the capacity to objectively investigate and evaluate the role wildlife may play in disease outbreaks in these countries. The EMPRES Wildlife Unit is leading and facilitating a range of collaborative activities to study the epidemiology and ecology of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds, migratory routes, habitat use and the role wild birds may play in virus introduction and movement. FAO has deployed almost 400 transmitters in 9 countries and is monitoring global migratory bird movements across more than 40 countries to determine whether wild bird movements are temporally or spatially associated with HPAI H5N1 outbreaks.



FAO co-convenes with UNEP-CMS the The Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds which aims to bring together the best scientific advice on the role of migratory birds as vectors of HPAI H5N1 and emphasizes the need for additional science in understanding epidemiological issues related to this disease and wild birds. Information on the task force and its recommendations are available at their website: <http://www.aiweb.info/document.aspx?DocID=8>

Current maps of migratory bird movement and further information on wildlife activities is available at the EMPRES Wildlife Unit's website at: <http://www.fao.org/avianflu/en/wildlife/index.html>

