



## WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY 2013 NETWORKING FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

STATEMENT TO MARK WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY BY MR. ANGUS MIDDLETON

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FOR HUNTING AND CONSERVATION OF THE EU



The increasing human population and the developments that go with it mean that we have to be smarter about how we interact with each other and with nature upon which we rely. In particular this has resulted in an increased use of land in both quantity and intensity. Unfortunately this has impacted on the resilience of natural systems. Our ability to offset temporal fluctuations in our environment through spatial displacement has become especially constrained. This spatial squeezing - habitat loss & degradation - is by far the biggest pressure on migratory birds, a pressure which must be addressed to ensure their future and most certainly our own.

Fortunately humans are nothing if not adaptive and we are seeing increasing use of technology and innovative policies to offset this. As a representative of European hunting my comments are mostly confined to the Africa Eurasian Flyway but are valid in most flyways to a greater or lesser degree.

We are seeing a much greater coherence in protected areas as demonstrated by a number of initiatives, including the Critical Site Network and BirdLife's Important Bird Area Programme. Classical protected areas alone are insufficient - there is a need to build into our landscapes a greater porosity which specifically includes accommodating multi-use within our landscapes: this empowers people to be a part of nature and to conserve it. We are after all a part of nature and nature is a part of us. We therefore need to integrate humans into the conservation of protected areas and the landscapes in which they are situated. As part of this we simply can't afford to view nature in isolation from human existence and ideas such as "*nature needs half*" - whilst well intended - promote a disconnection from nature that is extremely dangerous for conservation. Hunters are protecting and creating areas that are important for migratory birds and FACE will be sharing some inspiring stories of the work done by hunters for migratory birds as part of World Migratory Bird Day 2013.



We are also using technology and innovation to link up policies to better address environmental concerns and whilst there will always be more to be done, we must reflect on witnessing a much better integration of policies that takes at least some account of the environment. Not least of these are the Convention on Migratory Species, the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement and the Raptors MoU which are working to address this issue of coherence and in some cases delivering success. Hunters are integrally involved in working for integrated conservation policies.

Finally we need human networking because conservation is after all a human concept and as humans we all have different ideas. This is certainly the case when we consider hunting, not just between hunters and non-hunters but also between hunters. Hunters and environmentalists have a lot of common ground in conservation, and despite our differences, can collaborate for effective conservation. Many people play with words, saying that there is too much conversation and not enough conservation, but actually good conversations are a necessary precursor to long lasting conservation. We as hunters are certainly working on this with our partners best exemplified by the BirdLife-FACE Agreement.

But we hunters and environmentalists can do more. To do so we all need to be more honest about our relationship with nature and the fact that neither hunting nor protection are a panacea for conservation in general. In particular the conservation of migratory birds is exceptionally complex and requires networking: a network of space, a network of policies and a network of people.

So let's network!

Mr. Angus Middleton

Networker for Migratory Birds & FACE Secretary General on **World Migratory Bird Day 2013**

