



Message by UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, on the occasion of World Migratory Bird Day

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the United Nations Specialized Agency for Tourism, is very proud to join this year's World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) celebrations dedicated to highlighting the links between migratory bird conservation and wildlife watching tourism.

Every year, millions of tourists are wondered by the world's wild flora and fauna while travelling. The spectacular movements of the world's migratory birds, a true natural heritage, are no exception, and a key tourist attraction in many destinations. Without such enriching experiences, tourism could not be the vehicle for sustainable growth, job creation and poverty alleviation that it is today. Biodiversity is one of tourism's greatest assets – its natural capital – and fundamental to its long-term sustainable development.

UNWTO's Destination Flyways Project, the inspiration for the 2014 WMBD campaign, is a perfect example of how tourism and biodiversity can benefit from each other. Destination Flyways aims to develop sustainable tourism in destinations along the world's major migratory bird routes. By doing so, tourism revenue can be channeled back into conservation of the birds and their habitats, while creating job opportunities for local communities and spread further awareness about the importance of preserving these sites among visitors.

Big numbers entail big responsibilities. With more than one billion tourists travelling the world each year, tourism has a major responsibility in advancing biodiversity protection across the globe.

On this World Migratory Bird Day, we invite all to help us turn one billion tourists into one billion opportunities to protect the world's original long-distance travellers.

Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General