



World Migratory Bird Day 2014 Destination Flyways: Migratory Birds and Tourism



Statement by Fernando Spina Chair of the CMS Scientific Council

In a progressively crowded world, man feels ever more the fascination of nature and the need to have contact with preserved landscapes and wild animals. Biodiversity, though, is heavily affected by anthropogenic activities. The remaining habitats and sites which are important for biodiversity and for migratory species deserve therefore particular protection from the impacts of human activities.

Protection implies restrictions to activities that have the most serious impacts, which often causes local communities living in protected areas to have a negative perspective towards the conservation of biodiversity. For many years and in numerous parts of the world this dilemma has caused dramatic limitations to the crucial need to create and maintain protected areas. However, this dilemma can be tackled through a different perspective towards biodiversity and migratory species in particular: the important presence of wildlife should no longer be seen as a limitation but rather an opportunity. The amazing growth of “ecotourism” across the world offers sound evidence that wild animals are, in fact, an important source of income for local communities living in areas of particular conservation value.

Migratory birds are the most classical example of this economic value of biodiversity world-wide. Millions of people invest their holiday time and money to enjoy the fascinating spectacle of migratory birds. Flying migrants following their long and challenging routes often visit many countries during a single journey, so representing a “flying treasure” shared across political boundaries and continents. Not only for the conservation of ecosystem services and functionality, but also for their huge potential economic value for each of the countries along their flyways, migratory bird conservation requires cooperation and shared and joint conservation strategies across vast geographical areas.

It is a great pleasure celebrating World Migratory Bird Day 2014, an event devoted to the UNWTO campaign “Destination Flyways: Migratory Birds and Tourism”. This project will help develop initiatives for sustainable tourism in some of the key areas for bird migration around the globe. In celebrating migratory birds we have to join forces in order to find the right balance between the primary goal of respecting the ecological and behavioural needs of migratory birds, at the same time allowing people to enjoy these beautiful creatures and contribute to local economies. This balance will help us maintain and improve the networks of sites and protected habitats along the invisible pathways followed by this “flying treasure”. Let’s all work together for this challenging task!

Fernando Spina

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