

*Migratory birds represent one of the most important elements of biodiversity on Earth. They are found in all terrestrial and marine environments around the world and are adapted to using natural and manmade habitats. Their migratory behaviour affords them a special role as ecological keystone species and indicators of the linkages between ecosystems and of ecological change.*

*Avian migration is an absolutely incredible phenomenon. Annually, migratory birds make long, arduous and risky journeys from their breeding grounds to wintering areas and back again. It is broadly recognized that the successful completion of the annual cycle of these birds strongly depends on national actions that can be supported and strengthened by international cooperation. Ensuring their conservation worldwide is a chief focus of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).*

*Concluded under the auspices of CMS, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU) aims to promote internationally coordinated actions to reverse raptor population declines and improve the conservation status of migratory birds of prey throughout the African-Eurasian region.*

*This year's World Migratory Bird Day theme highlights the interrelationship of people and nature. Birds of prey provide many ecosystem services that directly benefit people: for example, falcons eat millions of insects which threaten agricultural crops, and vultures and other raptors consume animal carcasses which helps prevent the spread of diseases. No one country can conserve this spectacular group of species that connects continents, countries, cultures and communities. Working together is necessary to tackle the many threats that they face, which also delivers wider conservation benefits to other species of wildlife and biodiversity more generally.*

*Nick P Williams*

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