
Statement by Dr. Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on World Migratory Bird Day 2018

Biodiversity Decline and Land Degradation Puts Migratory Birds at Risk

Migratory birds are among the most powerful symbols of the need to protect biodiversity and ecosystems across and beyond national borders. Their annual odysseys – already epic in scope – are made more difficult every year as biodiversity declines, ecosystems are destroyed and land is degraded in every region of the world.

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) published five expert assessment reports in March this year (<https://www.ipbes.net/outcomes>), written by more than 550 leading experts from over 100 countries. The reports describe, in detail, the degradation of biodiversity and ecosystems due to a range of common pressures, among them: habitat degradation, the unsustainable use of natural resources, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change.

Many of the most fragile and vulnerable ecosystems are essential elements of the flyways for migratory species. Wetlands, for instance, which are key habitats and sources of food, have seen global losses of 87% since the start of the modern era – with 54% lost since 1900.

Conversion of forests and rangelands for food production, timber and urban development has also led to habitat loss and fragmentation, with almost 13% reduction in South-East Asian forest cover between 1990 and 2015, and with the region predicted to lose habitats and species at a similar pace to the global rate of extinction by 2050 (approximately 45 per cent), if current trends continue. Global climate change is also intensifying these challenges, with more than half of African bird and mammal species potentially being lost by 2100.

Our best options to respond to these cross-boundary challenges are found in better governance, integrating biodiversity concerns into policies and practices across sectors (e.g. agriculture and energy), better application of scientific knowledge and technology, increased awareness and behavioral changes.

In light of these risks and opportunities, IPBES welcomes the new collaboration between the Convention on Migratory Species, the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds and Environment for the Americas to speak with one unified global voice on the importance of migratory bird conservation.

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