

Report:

East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum 2022



Bundesministerium
für Umwelt, Naturschutz, nukleare Sicherheit
und Verbraucherschutz





EAST ATLANTIC FLYWAY YOUTH FORUM

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Rationale

The East Atlantic Flyway stretches from the Arctic, south along the oceanic seaboard of Europe and Africa. It is a critical migration path across 3 continents and 75 countries for millions of birds, nearly 300 different bird species. Wetlands along the flyway provide essential resources that individual birds need to hatch, feed, and live while crossing borders. Wetlands also support human populations, as sources of food, water, and protection from the extremes of weather and climate. With different species coming and going in large numbers as the seasons change, the wetlands are a marvel.

It is no wonder that young people love these wetlands. They wish to celebrate the wetlands in the flyway, and to protect the flyway itself. To enable that, the organisers and supporters created the East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum. Inspired by a similar initiative in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, they wished to convene and connect people aged 18 – 35 to the more established actors in the flyway. This initiative is all the more urgent because wetlands, and so the birds and humans who rely on them for survival, are suffering.

Globally, wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests, with grave implications for the ecosystem services they support, with grave implications for the ecosystem services that they provide (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 2018). Wetland loss and degradation coupled with climate change and other anthropogenic activities raise great concern for migratory birds as many shorebird populations along the flyway are already in decline (van Roomen et al. 2017, EAF report).

For a long time, actors at the international, regional, national and local levels have been working to address this issue. Young people, especially volunteers, have been central to many of these conservation initiatives. The recent report of Youth Engaged in Wetlands showcased the existing diversity of youth-led initiatives and projects dedicated to the conservation and wise use of wetlands (Sharma, Allély-Fermé & Sanchez, 2021). Their efforts extend across different wetland ecosystems and take different forms ranging from research and monitoring to restoration, education and awareness raising, advocacy and ecotourism and span across different disciplines from climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem services, cultural values of wetlands, hydrology and agriculture. The message is clear, young people are taking action for wetlands, but increased collaboration as well as more meaningful participation of young people in decision making processes is needed.





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With the long-term goal in mind to reach greater communication and cooperation across all of the world's Flyways between youth and across generations for the conservation of wetlands and their migratory waterbirds, the overall aim of the East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum was to set the scene for coordinated youth engagement across the East Atlantic Flyway for increased intergenerational communication and cooperation for the conservation of wetlands and migratory waterbirds. The forum targeted flyway youth that are already active in wetland and migratory waterbird conservation as well as those who are simply curious about it. Thus, the Flyway Youth Forum represents a crosscutting contribution to important Multilateral Environmental Agreements, connecting youth with the global agendas to conserve wetlands and waterbird species across the Flyway as well as connecting global agendas to the priorities and ideas of the flyway youth.

Objectives

With the aim to set the scene for coordinated youth engagement across the East Atlantic Flyway, the EAFYF had four key objectives:

Objective 1. Networking



Networking activities were organized throughout the Forum to connect young people across the flyway, giving them the opportunity to get to know each other and share their work, their ideas and aspirations for wetland and migratory waterbird conservation.

Objective 2. Learning



The Forum provided an opportunity for participants to learn about flyway conservation work and its challenges. They discovered the diversity of youth-led initiatives and the work led by partners in wetland and migratory waterbird conservation across the Flyway.





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Objective 3. Collaborating



Through workshops, participants and partners had an open conversation on the challenges and opportunities for wetland conservation along the flyway, building a mutual understanding of each other's challenges.

Objective 4. Activating



10 Youth Ambassadors were selected for the Flyway. The Ambassadors in consultation with the Forum participants developed a Forum Declaration to bring the ideas, networks and resources established during the Forum to the next level.

Each day of the Forum, we provided opportunities for the young participants to explore at least 2 of these objectives. A brief summary of the days can be found in the following outline.





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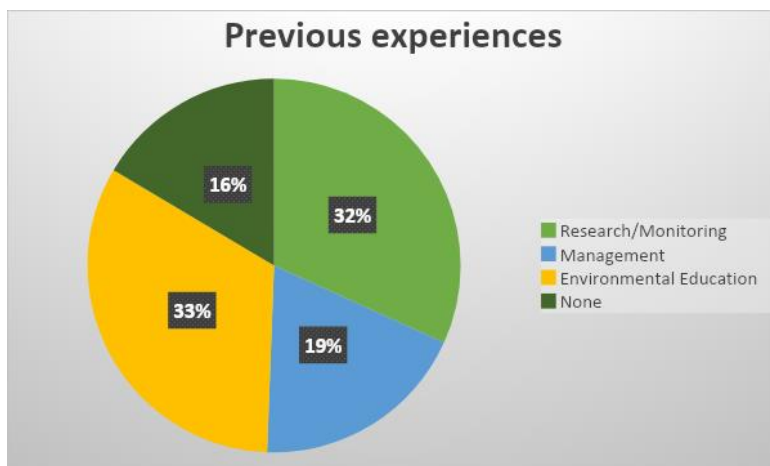
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Registrations

A total of 85 young people applied from 26 countries, inside and beyond the flyway. More than half of the participants (61%) were from countries along the East Atlantic Flyway, with 33 participants from African countries and 18 participants from European countries. Another 16 participants were from other African flyway countries, linked to the East Atlantic Flyway through Inter-African migrants or common breeding sites in the Arctic and another 17 participants were from other flyways. The mean age of the forum was 25 years.



Most of the applicants (84%) already had some experience in wetlands or migratory bird conservation. Research/Monitoring and Environmental education were the most frequently named, with 16 participants somewhat being involved in the management of wetland areas.

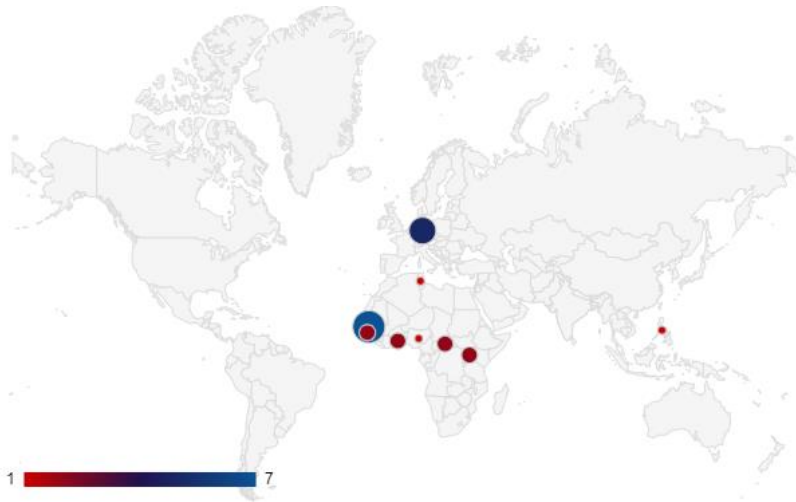




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Through the course of the Forum, participation was especially strong among people from the East Atlantic Flyway. The final survey revealed a strong focus on the flyway, with fewer European countries represented.



We did not collect data on gender but the final feedback was divided approximately 57 / 43 % male / female.



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Day 1 – Setting the scene

Opening of the East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum

The aim of the first day was to set the scene for the upcoming discussions on how we can strengthen youth engagement in wetland and flyway conservation. The East Atlantic flyway covers more than 30 countries with a multitude of different habitats and initially one may think it is difficult to find a common denominator to encourage more engagement of young people. However, the East Atlantic Flyway falls within the mandate of several international agreements. Particularly relevant for the protection of wetlands and migratory birds are the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA). It was therefore a great honour to have Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, and Jacques Trouvilliez, Executive Secretary of AEWA, providing the keynote speeches for the first East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum, embracing the message to provide more opportunities for young people. As Ms Rojas Urrego stated, “this is a critical time to redouble efforts to protect migratory birds and the wetlands they inhabit”. Wetland ecosystems and the important ecosystem services they are providing are disappearing at an alarming rate, putting millions of animals at risk. Both keynote speakers pointed towards the urgency of creating opportunities for youth engagement as these are, as Mr Trouvilliez described it, “the future generation who will be charged with carrying forward the current work”. Ms Rojas Urrego added: “The voices of youth need to be heard to change the hearts and minds and to drive political change”. With these encouraging words in mind the organisers and young participants entered the Flyway Youth Forum.

The key organisers of the Forum briefly introduced the work carried out by their respective organisation in relation to wetland and flyway conservation. The Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) is tasked with all organisational and administrative aspects related to the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation and the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. One of the main programmes in relation to the flyway is the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, which supports monitoring and capacity building activities along the East Atlantic Flyway. The Migratory Birds for People Programme is a network of wetland visitor centres in the flyway. They collaborate to share best practice, create resources, and distribute optics to the West Africa member centres. Youth engaged in Wetlands is a youth-led group, that developed out of the Youth Engagement Group of the Ramsar Convention. It co-led a similar Forum in the East Asian Australasian Flyway in 2020.





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Youth voices

Engagement in conservation is growing around the world and many young people have already taken the initiative and participate or even lead projects dedicated to the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The second half of the first day was therefore dedicated to young conservationists to talk about their work. The start was made by Bethany Copsey & Jamie Walker from REPEAT, who talked about peatlands and the fact that, due to their high potential to store CO₂, drained peatlands contribute to about 6% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions which is more than shipping and aviation combined. At the same time peatlands are important habitats for migratory birds. With a new webinar series REPEAT is trying to increase awareness for the ecosystem services that peatlands provide, and thus the need to protect them. Joao Belo presented the results of a case study regarding the flyway role of the Bijagós Archipelago, Guinea Bissau, the second most important wintering areas for migratory shorebirds in West Africa. The extensive mudflats of the Archipelago provide sufficient food for the shorebirds and the mangroves forests provide protection against predators. However, anthropogenic effects such as climate change, tourism, or oil exploration are threatening the pristine status of this ecosystem. More capacity and training is needed on the ground to counteract the impact of these threats. Finally, Matthew Tabilog, the founder of 'Mangrove Matters PH', gave an overview of the work his youth organisation is doing in the Philippines to promote mangrove conservation. Mangroves provide key ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, flood prevention or providing safe nurseries for marine organisms. Working closely with local stakeholders in developing sustainable strategies to utilise mangroves, the young activists at Mangroves Matters PH try to conserve mangroves, to protect the Philippines from the expected impact of climate change, but also for the benefit of migratory birds. Overall, the message of the session was impressive and clear, young people are successfully taking action for wetlands.

During the subsequent networking session, the Flyway Youth Forum participants had the chance to ask questions, talk about their own experiences and projects, thereby getting a better understanding of the scale of youth-led initiatives that already take place along the flyway.





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Day 2 – Setting the scene

Day 2 features presentations suggested by organisations Forum as Partners. We also had time for networking with a clever game for breakout groups; and a brainstorming session.

Presentations

Dr. Mia Rönkä, Chair of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF), of the Arctic Council spoke first. She introduced the millennia of ecosystem services birds have provided – provisioning, regulating, and cultural. She described a traditional Finnish Epic, a creation myth where the universe was created from a goldeneye egg. There are thousands of years-old paintings of waterbirds on cliffs in the Arctic and North. Science and art are both analytical processes that lead to an outcome and we can use both. Youth offer unique perspectives and innovative ideas. Dr Rönkä also introduced the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative.

Nicola Hiscock, Lead Aviculturist and Project Manager at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust introduced Project Godwit, a collaboration to head-start *Limosa Limosa Limosa*. Very few of these breed in the UK, so they head-start, by collecting eggs from nests (early enough for the parents to lay a second clutch) and carefully hatching and rearing them to release. The population is 40% higher than it was predicted to be without their intervention. She walked us through the biological and ecosystem needs. They use colour rings and geolocators to learn where the birds go on the flyway. More than half go to the Tagus estuary in Portugal. The result is a stronger population overall. They also use engagement techniques with local people.

Marc Van Roomen and Albert de Jong of the Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology, Sovon told us about waterbird monitoring on the East Atlantic Flyway. The count arctic birds that make their way to West Africa, and look into the human uses of the sites and surroundings. The average trend over functional groups; those breeding in the High Arctic are decreasing. Pelicans and herons in West Africa are stable or increasing. Environmental monitoring is increasingly mentioning the effects of climate change as threats. They are working on a new report, similar to 2017's Flyway assessment. Albert introduced the practicalities of bird counting in Banc d'Arguin. He recounted seeing the same individual four years apart in the Netherlands and Mauritania. He found bird connect people when he got stuck in the mud and a local counter helped him out.

Geoffroy Citegetse, the East Atlantic Flyway Manager at Birdlife International in Dakar, Senegal values youth engagement on the flyway. Senegal is an important location for the flyway, so





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BirdLife increased its presence with a project and supported BirdLife Partners with training in counting and policy and advocacy. Wildlife clubs and Site Support Groups are important for national Partners. They also network between NGOs and government institutions.

Activities include World Migratory Bird Day, research with university students, and BirdLife's Spring Alive campaign. In Guinea Bissau a football competition was held with teams wearing different waterbirds on their football shirts. He advises wide stakeholder engagement, beyond just science.

Vivian Fu, the Communications Officer at the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat spoke about the flyway where she works. International collaboration is essential. They have NGO, government, and commercial partners. They also see young people as important stakeholders. So they co-organised the Flyway Forum there with YEW. They had 87 participants and a Declaration. They have launched a Youth Think Tank Competition.

Eaaflyway.net/thinktankcompetition. They welcome you to join young people from other flyways to take part.

Brainstorming

The brainstorming again used the format of breakout rooms and then summaries in plenary. The groups used our three exploratory questions but mostly answered number 1. Looking for common perspectives on cultural importance of wetlands and migratory birds uncovered different traditions and approaches. Everyone wants to influence public opinion.

In West Africa there are stronger traditions valuing wetlands as sacred, and excluding women and children from them. These practices are diminishing and the cultural setting is changing. As such there is the possibility to create new rituals, by engaging elders; by influencing school curriculums; through social media and traditional media; through in-person and online events; and ultimately reaching political leaders. Dialogue at any of these levels can help win future generations, and ease tensions caused by less inclusive approaches. Along with the establishment of databases of opportunities, these are in part the role of youth in the flyway.

The goals of these approaches are for youth to communicate with each other, to help with wetland management, and to make political pressure to save wetlands. There are challenges of funding, of youth disempowerment, and of community resistance in the wake of previous exploitative policy.





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Day 3 – Collaboration for the Flyway

The Flyway World Café is a virtual space to allow for an intergenerational dialogue around the challenges and opportunities of the flyway. For this Forum, the main objectives of the World Café were to strengthen communication across the flyway and across generations and to build a mutual understanding of the challenges and opportunities along the flyway. Evelyn Moloko from AEWA was our host for this forum and guided us through the three main topics:

1. Migratory birds connecting generations, cultures and communities: Is there a common perspective around the importance of migratory birds and wetlands in our cultural history?
2. Acting against wetland loss and degradation for future generations of both birds and people: What is the role of youth in the conservation, protection and restoration of wetlands?
3. The Flyway framework to strengthen local capacities: How can we increase opportunities to learn from and help each other along the flyway?

Guest speakers were invited to provide an overview about possibilities for youth engagement and encourage discussions around the different topics.

Victoria Buschman, an Inupiaq Inuit wildlife and conservation biologist working for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), gave us an overview on the importance of including indigenous communities in wildlife conservation. Partly due to the lack of infrastructure in the Arctic, many local communities still follow their traditional way of life and rely on the landscape as their source of nutrient, including migratory birds. Thus, they have a specific interest to protect these species, meaning that considering the sustainability of traditional practices is always at the forefront. Historically, there has been tension between traditional conservationist and communities on how to achieve conservation objectives, but the desired outcomes are the same and it is time to work together. The indigenous knowledge can overcome a lot of the data deficiency and research gaps that inevitably occur in a large wilderness area like the Arctic.

Tim Dodman is one of the experts in flyway conservation work along the East Atlantic Flyway. He has been involved in the implementation of capacity building projects, especially along the African Atlantic coastline for many years. One of his key messages for the young forum participants was to “Go out and get your feet wet”. Most countries along the flyway have very active conservation organisations with a focus on wetland and flyway conservation who organise campaigns, beach clean-ups, or environmental surveys. Many people who work in nature





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conservation will have done formal training at a university or college. But there are also opportunities for learning online, such as the Flyway Training Kit, and more practical training courses organized by local NGOs, which include workshops in waterbird counts, wetland management or other areas. The best way to learn is always to get involved and exchange ideas with other like-minded people.

The final presentation was given by Hacen El-Hacen from the University of Groningen, who gave insights into the development of the World Heritage Site Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania. Four key conservationists significantly contributed to the management of the protected area, by not only caring deeply for the birds, but by connecting to people at all levels of society, from Imraguen skippers to decision makers, in a mutual and respectful manner, thereby achieving broad conservation goals. Unfortunately, the type of conservationists who put their fortune and business at the service of protecting nature, is becoming rare. Hacen El-Hacen therefore stressed the importance “to involve the next generation, not leaving anyone behind. Nothing will benefit the flyway like a well-trained multinational youth”.

During the subsequent discussion in break groups, the forum participants explored the possibilities for youth engagement with regard to the three key topics. Here are a few key statements from these discussions, which found further consideration during the development of the declaration:

- Education and training should include cultural perspectives and knowledge for sustainable flyway conservation
- Strengthen involvement of youth in conservation management and policies through consultation.
- Connect youth organisation to strengthen the youth voice.
- Connect youth organisations with traditional organisations to develop ideas and methods that are engaging for young people
- Participate in awareness campaigns.





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Day 4 - Action for the Flyway

The fourth day was highly discursive and worked towards our fourth objective, activating the participants for the future. Rather than being presentation led, the group networked and brainstormed. Looking to the future after the Forum, the Slack channel also became more important. The networking groups included a mix of the participants, organisers, and supporting partners.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming started creating a calendar of days and potential activities that the participants could pursue.

For event days, there are many possible activities, some requiring money, some just time – litter picking, video competitions, visiting wetlands. Wetland visitor centres can help with CEPA resources and access, in some places.

The identified event days were:

- International Waterbird Census (January)
- World Wetlands Day (2 February)
- World Wildlife Day (3 March)
- International Women's Day (8 March)
- Earth Day (22 April)
- World Migratory Bird Day (7 May and 8 October)
- International Day for Biodiversity (22 May)
- Arctic Sea Ice day (15 July)
- International Youth Day (12 August)

Activities included:

- Instagram photo contests using hashtags
- Joining the Global Birding bird race
- Community training on biodiversity surveying
- Celebrating the achievements and challenges for women working in wetlands
- Emphasising wetlands' climate roles
- Litter picking





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- Open-days at wetlands

Training can involve the participants in two directions – they can receive training from experienced practitioners, and deliver training to children on naming birds and wetlands information. Well-trained participants can use their network to connect research along the flyway.

Following this we moved onto relaxed activities without breakout groups, to help connect people who may have had limited time in the groups on previous days. The participants shared photos of wetland species and themselves at work in wetlands, with others guessing at the species. We also invited feedback via online forms.





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Summary

Quotes

Martha Rojas Urrego – Secretary General, Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention

“I would like to congratulate Youth Engaged in Wetlands and partners for hosting the east Atlantic flyway Forum at a critical time to redouble efforts to protect migratory birds and the wetlands they inhabit. I am deeply encouraged by the tenacity and commitment of young people globally leading the charge to conserve ecosystems on which we all depend.

We need unprecedented action from all corners of society, governments, business, civil society, and youth. I am truly inspired by the engagement from youth conservation networks. So such as the youth engaged in wetlands and others here today, setting the bar for stronger coherent and inclusive action on wetlands and broader biodiversity loss.

Your voices and actions are critical to raising awareness of the urgency and opportunities to scale nature based solutions, such as wetlands to the myriad global challenges we face. I am thrilled by the increasing diverse participation of young people in the designation of wetlands of international importance in wetland management or restoration in education and public awareness campaigns and working to promote the wise use of wetlands for communities, income, earning activities.

I wish you a very successful forum and look forward to enhancing collaboration and engagement of youth and together turning the tide on wetlands and broader biodiversity loss for a sustainable future.”

Jacques Trouvilliez – Executive Secretary, UNEP/AEWA Secretariat

“Some 50 years ago, as a young boy, I was looking for birds in woodland and wetlands, and I was lucky enough to work on biodiversity conservation later on.

As Executive Secretary of AEWA I am therefore delighted to see that Ramsar, alongside AEWA and others, has stepped forward as one of the initial supporting organisers of this East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum. A truly unique event, which is connecting the youth with the global agendas to conserve both wetlands and waterbirds across the flyway.





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The ultimate goal of the forum is to connect, empower, provide the unique platform for dialogue, for future use leaders, which are focusing on wetlands and waterbird conservation, in many of the countries found along the specific flyway. It is my sincere hope that the use flyway forum concept will continue to be successful and continue to grow beyond the east Atlantic flyway and evolve to bring together youth from across the entire African duration flyway in the coming years."

Participant feedback

- Il y a lieu d'améliorer le suivi des activités des jeunes engagés dans la promotion et la protection des zones humides ainsi que de l'intérêt accordé aux oiseaux migrateurs
- Il faut améliorer les activités du programme. Proposer d'autres activités...
- I remain engaged and animated by this experience and ready to serve.
- The time for ambassadors to network and get to know each other in details.
- Sessions should always be carried out in weekends when everyone is free and prior information should be passed on early enough.
- As a visual learner, I find it very helpful to understand the presentation better whenever there are slides shown on screen. I hope in the future all presenters get to have ppts ready. Thank you!
- Pérenniser ce forum, mettre en place de actions concrètes, coordonnées et inclusive.
- Thanks for organizing this forum, it has been a great and fulfilling experience interacting and sharing ideas with passionate and like minded youth from across the globe.
- Everything was enjoyable and educative
- I think the balance between presentations and discussions was good. The networking activities were very well planned and fun.
- I'm really grateful for the opportunity to learn so much and to get to know so many other nice people who are working for essentially the same goals as I am. Really inspiring and motivating. Thank you! :)
- Juste un grand merci pour opportunité
- C'était super, même virtuellement et malgré les potentiels soucis informatiques
- I am really enjoying the forum because it is very interesting, interactive, educative, friendly, motivating and most of all it's a whole learning and networking forum I really love it
- I really enjoyed the forum and it would be great to stay in contact - for me its quite important to think - especially as youth - global and international, because most of our problems (biodiversity and cklimate, etc) have to be solved in international cooperation.
- Merci pour cette initiative. Ça été un excellent forum et j'ai beaucoup apprécié et beaucoup appris auprès des autres participants.
- Mieux, je compte en faire part à ma communauté





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Some numbers

Sixty-seven people registered to take part in the forum.

Based on self-reporting (those who completed a questionnaire after the Forum):

- Youth joined from twelve countries in the flyway
- Eight joined for the entire forum
- Seventeen joined for just one day
- Five joined for three day

The most represented countries were:

- Senegal, 6
- Germany, 5
- The Gambia, 3
- CAR, France, Uganda 2

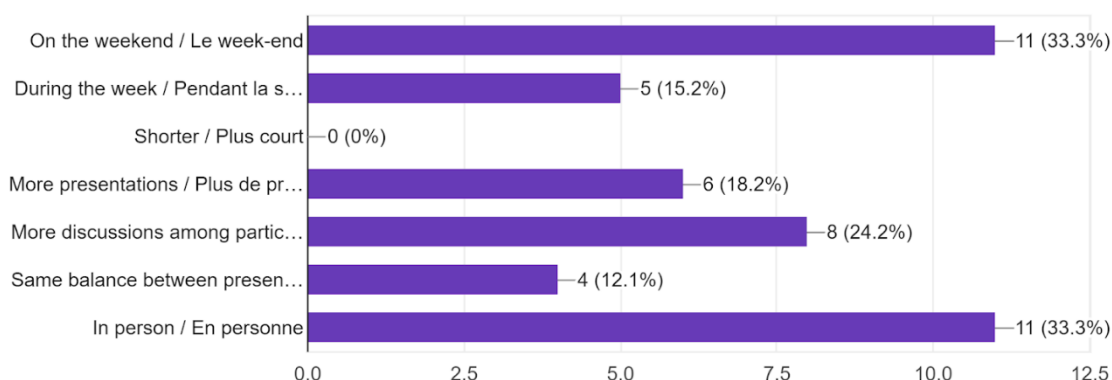
Of the 33 respondents to the final survey, 31 said they would participate again.

Future activities

Some of the participants provided feedback looking forward to subsequent Flyway Youth Forums.

Preferrably, the next forum should be.... / De préférence, le prochain forum devrait être.....

33 responses



The organisers will consider this and input from the supporters, partners, and advisors, to plan a Forum in 2022.





Acknowledgements

The organisation of the East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum was an incredible collaborative effort between numerous supporters and supporting organisations. First of all, we need to thank all our colleagues at YEW, WWT, CWSS and IWSS who helped developing ideas and concepts, organising speakers and materials, or assisting with communication before, during and after the forum. A very dedicated group of advisors volunteered their time and knowledge to provide guidance on all aspects of the forum and helped to improve the general concepts, the speaker list while also promoting the Forum at their respective organisations. Speakers from all along the flyway, very young and slightly older, have agreed to introduce the young group of forum participants to the multi-faceted approach that is called flyway conservation, thus providing them insights into the many opportunities that exist to contribute to conservation of migratory birds and wetlands. The challenge of working across such a wide geographical scale is the multitude of languages which are spoken in the different countries. We were therefore incredibly grateful to our many interpreters from the ISIT Paris. who have volunteered their time to make sure that language barriers do not stop us from working together. Besides the organisations actively involved in the organisation of the forum, we also had partners that supported us by providing advice, and promoting the forum. The forum was only made possible through the financial support by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and its Migratory Birds for People Programme and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, thus they deserve special recognition. And finally, we want to thank all the participants for their active engagement and their honest interest in making in improving the living conditions for birds and people along the East Atlantic Flyway.

Keynote speakers

Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Dr Jacques Trouvilliez, Executive Secretary of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA).

Advisors

Tobias Salathé and Zebedee Njisuh, Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention

Flavio Monti, MedWet

Evelyn Moloko and Florian Keil, CMS/AEWA Secretariat





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Courtney Price, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna

Peter Prokosch, Linking Tourism & Conservation

Khady Gueye, Wetlands International West Africa

Speakers

Albert de Jong, Project Leader – Communication and Monitoring, Sovon Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology.

Geoffroy Citegetse, East Atlantic Flyway Manager, BirdLife International.

Jamie Walker and Bethany Copsey, Members of RE-PEAT.

Hacen el-Hacen, Researcher in Banc d'Arguin, University of Groningen.

João Belo, PhD candidate.

Marc van Roomen, Sovon Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology.

Matthew Vincent Tabilog, Founder of Mangrove Matters PH.

Mia Rönkä, Bird expert, Artist, Poet, CAFF/University of Turku.

Nicky Hiscock, Project Manager & Lead Aviculturist, WWT.

Tim Dodman, Consultant - WSFI capacity building programme,

Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI).

Victoria Buschman, Author: Arctic wetlands and Indigenous species; CAFF.

Vivian Fu, Communications Officer,

Secretariat of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership

Interpreters

Arnaud Pretre

Catherine (Demelza) Batchelor

Euan Borthwick

Geoffrey Stucklin

Irène Féron

Julie Martin

Lucille Chevalier





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Annexe 1: The Ambassadors

Name: Awa Joof

Nationality: Gambian

Location: Banjul

Bio: Junior research officer of research unit of West Africa Bird Study Association in the Gambia.



Name: Dembo Jatta

Nationality: Gambian

Location: Kigali

Bio: Second year student at the African Leadership University studying Global Challenges with a focus on Wildlife Conservation. He formerly worked as a research assistant at the Kartong Bird Observatory and he is a BTO C-licensed ringing/banding permit holder.



Name: Emmanuel Nii Attram Taye

Nationality: Ghanaian

Location: Accra

Bio: PhD candidate at the zoology department of the University of Ghana, Accra and a research officer at the Centre for African Wetlands. His research focuses on assessing the health and integrity of wetlands using species assemblages such as waterbird communities as indicators. He aims to champion the cause of nature conservation particularly conservation of avian communities and their habitats.

Name: Esther Nosazeogie

Nationality: Nigerian

Location: Nigeria

Bio: Researcher with the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research. She uses research and science journalism to promote conservation in Nigeria.





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Name: Fagimba camara

Nationality: Gambian

Location: Banjul

Bio: Head of research unit of West African Bird study Association in the Gambia.



Name: Gervais Muderhwa

Nationality: Congolese

Location: Bukavu/South Kivu Province

Bio: Young person engaged in the defense of environmental rights, active in conservation, protection of biodiversity, fauna and ecosystems in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Name: Ines Mejri

Nationality: Tunisian

Location: Manouba

Bio: Applied License in Analytical and Experimental Biology, course Analysis & Quality of the Higher Institute of Biotechnology of Sidi Thabet, Tunisia (2019). Research Master in Biology of Organisms, Populations and Environment speciality Evolutionary and Functional Ecology at the Faculty of Sciences of Tunis El Manar.



In September 2021, started a new Research Master in Bioinformatics applied to health at the University of Manouba.

Name: Joao Belo

Nationality: Portuguese

Location: Setúbal

Bio: PhD student (University of Aveiro, Portugal) working on wader spatial ecology and migration in Tagus Estuary and also at the EAF scale.





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Name: Joop Bonnet

Nationality: Dutch

Location: Wageningen

Bio: Studying Aquaculture and Marine Resource Management at Wageningen University, and is specializing in coastal wetland restoration and building with nature.

Name: Sira Doumbia

Nationality: Senegalese

Location: Dakar

Bio: Second-year PhD student at Cheikh Anta Diop University specializing in ecology and ecosystem management. I work on the conservation of the crowned crane and its habitat.





Annexe 2: East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum Declaration - a call for action

The context

Wetlands are among the most important ecosystems on Earth owing to the myriad of functions they perform, both tangible and intangible. They provide unique natural resources which only exist within the nexus of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, while retaining features of both. Among the numerous distinctive characteristics of wetlands, the most obvious one is the presence of standing water for some time of the year, resulting in unique soil conditions, and organisms, especially vegetation, adapted to or tolerant of saturated soils. As a result, they have the ability to support distinctive flora and fauna.

Wetlands can range from ponds of a few hectares in size to large expanses covering hundreds of square kilometres. The Ramsar Convention, the intergovernmental treaty for the conservation of wetlands, defines wetlands as 'areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt including areas of marine water, the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres'.

Wetlands have been described as the kidneys of the landscape because they collate the water and waste from both natural and human sources upstream. They mitigate both floods and drought by stabilizing water supplies much as sponges soak water. Wetlands play numerous roles in the ecosystem; including but not limited to groundwater purification, run-off water retention, flood prevention, shoreline stabilization and habitat for waterfowl and other fauna.

Along the world's eight major flyways wetlands play a critical role in providing habitat, food and shelter for migratory waterbirds. According to AEWA, the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, the East Atlantic Flyway is used by about 90 million birds annually, passing from their breeding areas in the Arctic and northern Europe to wintering areas in western Europe and along the Atlantic coastline of Western and Southern Africa.

The problem exposed

Despite their evident importance, wetlands are one of the world's most underappreciated resources and are quickly vanishing along the Flyway, both in terms of extent and quality. As a result, the availability of wetlands' ecosystem services to society declines, posing enormous ecological, economic, and biological concerns, particularly in developing countries.





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Wetlands are prone to over-exploitation due to their high productivity. Many wetlands are degraded, lost, or altered due to a variety of land-use activities. It is estimated that Europe has lost 56.3% and Africa around 45% of its wetlands (no data available specifically for the Arctic, Davidson 2014). While the decline in Europe has slowed since 1990, sufficient data from African sites are missing. Some of the factors that have contributed to the recent loss of wetlands include agricultural drainage and irrigation, overexploitation, infrastructure, oil and gas drilling, pollution, and the introduction of invasive species. Many reservoirs have been constructed to deliver water to irrigation schemes, frequently at the expense of wetlands downstream. Excessive exploitation of wetland resources includes, e.g. overfishing, oil extraction, mining and deforestation, and is driven by the demand for food security and rapid population growth. The resulting loss of functioning wetlands can have detrimental effects on the multitude of species that depend on these wetlands. Already 23% of the migratory waterbird populations along the East Atlantic Flyway are declining (van Roomen et al. 2017).

Traditional tenure rules, poor resource management, and weak or non-enforced national legislation are only a few reasons why wetlands are vulnerable to anthropogenic activities. In the absence of solid governance mechanisms that enforce policies, wetlands will continue to be exploited along the East Atlantic Flyway and across the world.

The rationale

Wetland habitats are increasingly disappearing, along with the services that they provide. However, many communities depend directly or indirectly on wetlands for food, shelter, livelihoods, cultural values etc; and people will become even more dependent on wetlands as the climate continues to change.

If wetland systems are not functioning properly ecologically, they will be unable to provide the services that we enjoy on a local and global scale. Locally, wetlands purify water and protect from natural hazards like storms. Globally, wetlands regulate climate and the water cycle. Many migratory organisms like birds and fish, use habitats that span across continents for different aspects of their life-histories. They may spawn/breed in one continent and have feeding grounds on another. If one part of the habitat is compromised, it would very likely affect the survival of the species. Also, human impacts on the environment such as pollution in one area may be carried by the water to a farther location, which can put the health of people and animals at risk.





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As wetlands are international systems which cut across national boundaries, the management and conservation of such systems requires international cooperation. The members of the Flyway Youth Forum recognize the value of wetlands and understand that a continued use of wetlands in an unsustainable/unwise manner will quickly bring more problems, which cut across national boundaries. Thus, we consider the need to work together, across boundaries and generations, for urgent action to facilitate policy and decision-making that promote the wise use of wetlands, and the conservation of their resources, rather than underestimate or completely overlook them.

We also realize that the widespread degradation of wetlands will disproportionately affect poorer and more vulnerable communities through the adverse effects of the ongoing climate change. Thus, we value the prevention of and mitigation against further environmental injustice.

The role of youth in wetland and migratory waterbird conservation

The effects we feel today will be much more felt in the future and the people most affected will be the youth of today. Wetland degradation/loss and the decline of several populations of migratory waterbirds are huge problems and young people want to be part of the solution. However, youth voices are often neglected despite the many young people who actively work in wetland and waterbird conservation.

This situation needs to change in order to have a more equal participation and to increase the diversity of perspectives on solutions regarding the conservation of the flyway. Thus, it is imperative to provide a platform for young voices and to increase the intergenerational dialog, so that young people's opinions may be incorporated in the decision-making processes. They will be the ones who have to deal with the long-term effects of the decisions made today.

Youth have a lot to add to the discussion. Youth are dynamic, adaptable and creative. They have the power to influence their local and global community through a wide set of skills, their potential and their motivation. Youth can be the bridge between conservation and policy, acting as collaborative partners and presenting new and fresh ideas to common shared problems. By having different mindsets working on the same issues, the global understanding of the flyway problems and possible solutions will be advanced, and this will benefit all populations dependent on wetland habitats in their day-to-day life.





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If young people's voices can be heard along the flyway, it will be possible to develop and implement a collective plan of action aiming at preserving the flyway and its network of extremely important wetland habitats. Besides bringing novelty and innovation, these collaborative efforts will empower young people, giving them the confidence needed to act as stakeholders for wetlands and birds and to have a louder voice in flyway conservation issues.

Call for action

Call to take action to youth

We call upon the youth to tap into their talent, energy and enthusiasm to commence a transboundary conversation on the importance of wetlands and the services they provide. So, if you are a young person who values wetlands and migratory birds and who feels you could contribute to their protection, then join us. We can help you to sharpen your message and goals, and make your voice heard. Together we can host campaigns and events that generate the solutions and mitigation actions to preserve these valuable parts of the natural world. Next to that we will empower ourselves by active participation in our communities and direct interactions with decision makers.

We young people hold the key to a prosperous and sustainable future for wetlands and migratory birds. By active participation in discussions and wetland related events, we can be a crucial agent for positive change along the entire flyway.

Call for support to stakeholders

There is an urgent need to integrate inter-generational efforts in the decision-making processes, and youth are here to actively participate. For that to happen we need support and resources from flyway partners. The Flyway Youth Forum shall not be an isolated event but shall create opportunities for young people to work on flyway issues.

Thus, we call upon all relevant stakeholders operating along the East Atlantic Flyway to work with youth from local communities connected through the flyway, and emphasize the importance of their role to advocate for healthy wetlands. We ask governments, philanthropies, foundations, companies, and funding agencies to encourage and support youth-led projects and





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initiatives along the East Atlantic Flyway, providing tangible informational as well as financial support.

We stress the importance of making our voices heard and holding governments accountable for sustainable environmental governance. We, the young people, are the key to sustainable long-term developments. It is time to act together for the protection and conservation of wetlands and migratory birds.

