

RRC-EA  
WEBZINE



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# Ramsar Convention

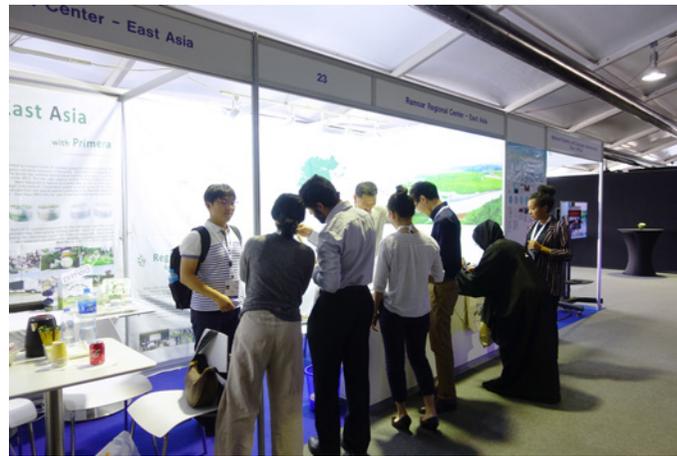


## Ramsar COP13



The Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP13) was held on 22-29 October 2018 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates with the theme "Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future". The Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA) joined the global event and organized two (2) side events: (1) Wetland City

Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention: Strengthening Sub-National Government Support for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use and (2) Promoting the Values of Wetlands through the Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services and Good Practices on Sustainable Urban Wetlands in Asia.



## ► Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention

The first side event provided an opportunity for mayors of the very first set of Wetland Cities to showcase local efforts and their contributions to sustainable urban development and to the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Head of Delegation of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Seung-gwang Yoo, the Secretary General of the Ramsar Secretariat, Ms. Martha Rojas Urrego, and the RRC-EA Executive Director, Mr. Suh Seung Oh, delivered welcome messages to start the side event. Mayors, Vice Mayors and representatives

of the Wetland Cities delivered short statements and presentations that focused on key local wetland initiatives. Video clips about the Wetland Cities were also shown at the side event. The 18 Wetland Cities include Changde, Changshu, Dongying, Haikou, Harbin and Yinchuan in China; Amiens, Pont-Audemer, Saint-Omer and Courteranges in France; Tata in Hungary; Changnyeong, Inje, Jeju, and Suncheon in the Republic of Korea; Mitsinjo in Madagascar; Colombo in Sri Lanka; and Ghar El Melh in Tunisia.



## ▶ Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services

The second side event highlighted the Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services (RAWES) approach and good practices on sustainable urban wetlands. Mr. Hwang Sun Hwan, Ramsar National Focal Point of the Republic of Korea, opened the side event by conveying a short message on behalf of the Minister of Environment. Mr. Robert McInnes, wetland expert and technical adviser of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, explained the process in developing the RAWES approach. The Ramsar National Focal Points of Bhutan (Ms. Sonam Choden)

and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (Ms. Ri Kyong Sim) presented case studies on the application of the RAWES approach in their respective countries. Dr. Ritesh Kumar, Conservation Programme Manager of Wetlands International - South Asia, shared good practices on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments in Asia, specifically in East, Southeast and South Asia, collectively as the "Voice of Asia". The example of Suncheon Bay in the Republic of Korea was presented by Prof. Park Ky Young of Suncheon National University.





## RRC-EA and Wild Bird Society of Taipei sign agreement to promote wetland centers in Asia



The Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA) serves as focal point or Secretariat of Wetland Link International (WLI) for Asia to assist in the development of wetland centers in the region. Aligned with this objective, the RRC-EA formalized ties with the Wild Bird Society of Taipei by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 25 November 2018 at the RRC-EA office in Suncheon City, Republic of Korea.

Through the MOU, the RRC-EA and Wild Bird Society of Taipei commit to improve the capacities of wetland center managers

in Asia on work related to wetland conservation and wise use, exchange information on Asian wetland centers via annual meetings and workshops, and promote ecotourism by disseminating good practices on wetland center management and strengthening regional cooperation.

Mr. Suh Seung Oh, RRC-EA Executive Director, and Mr. Thinby Liu, President of the Wild Bird Society of Taipei, signed the MOU together with Ms. Nien-Chieh Sung, Director of the Taipei City Animal Protection Office.



## RRC-EA forges partnership with Hanns Seidel Foundation – Korea



On 18 December 2018, the Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA), Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) - Korea Office, and the Suncheon City Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on common projects aimed at promoting wetland conservation and wise use in the Korean Peninsula and in other countries in East, Southeast and South Asia. Mr. Suh Seung Oh, RRC-EA Executive Director, Dr. Bernhard Seliger, HSF-Korea Resident Representative, and Mr. Heo Seok, Suncheon City Mayor, represented the three (3) organizations

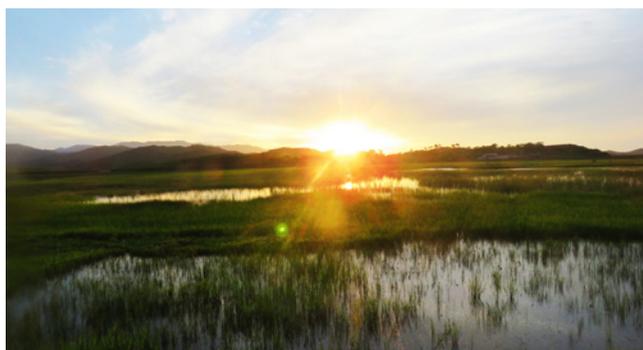
under the MOU.

The MOU signing ceremony allowed the organization leaders to deliver short statements of gratitude and commitments, as well as to exchange tokens of appreciation. Areas of collaboration specified in the MOU include organizing capacity building activities, sharing and disseminating relevant information and publications, and carrying out learning events (e.g. exchange program) for students, researchers and policy makers to strengthen links among participating countries.



## Republic of Korea

### Conservation of Wetlands in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - Introducing the Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services



**Duration** 2 months (May - June 2018)

**Status** completed

**Total cost** USD 5,000

**Implementing organization**  
Hanns Seidel Foundation

**Project leader** Dr. Bernhard Seliger  
Resident Representative

#### Project objectives

1. introduce the Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services to key officials in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)
2. increase the awareness on the national level (e.g. in related ministries, research institutes and political institutions) on wetland ecosystem services
3. increase the awareness on the local level (the local population living in adjacent areas to wetlands and benefiting from the services) on wetland ecosystem services
4. improve the National Wetland Inventory in the DPRK

## Accomplishments

The delegation representing the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), Birds Korea and the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Korea joined the “National Workshop on Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)” held on 16 May 2018 in Pyongyang, and introduced several urgent topics to participants such as Yellow Sea Wetland Conservation, current efforts in DPRK with international partners to conserve wetlands in the DPRK, the status of the ongoing National Wetland Inventory in the DPRK and most of all, the Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services (RAWES) approach. At the same time, the workshop was conducted on occasion of the World Migratory Bird Day as well as the accession of the DPRK to the EAAFP and the Ramsar Convention.

The National Workshop was broadcasted in the national news on KCTV and attracted much attention. Therefore, one of the project objectives to raise awareness on environment protection and wetland conservation was achieved. The event was accompanied by a two-day field visit to Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve (one of the two first Ramsar Sites in the country). During the field visit, two (2) teams were formed to focus on different issues.

One team focused on the introduction of the RAWES approach to researchers and scientists, as well as representatives of the Mundok Management Board and local farmers and fishermen. This was the first time the tool was introduced in DPRK— first to a wide audience of decision-makers, ministry officials and researchers at the workshop, and then to a specialized

audience during the field visit.

The second team focused on the biodiversity of Mundok Ramsar Site. The same team stayed longer in the country to continue with the survey along the East Coast. A total of 175 bird species were counted, with three species previously unrecorded / inadequately documented in the DPRK (Little Stint, Black Tern and Eastern House Martin); and one or two species in territory (Eurasian Bittern, Russet Sparrow) which were not considered in the past by international researchers to be present in the area. Both groups contributed significantly to the National Wetland Inventory in DPRK that is currently in progress and planned to be published and presented at Ramsar COP13 in Dubai in October 2018. At the same time, the activity contributed to increasing the capacity of local researchers and site managers by having international environment experts showing and introducing modern tools.

Additionally, intensive discussions during the National Workshop, the field visits and during side-meetings between present international organizations and local partners led to strengthening cooperation. A first draft for the National Wetland Strategy for DPRK was discussed and shall be further elaborated. This framework can be used both as a guideline for domestic strategy and as a strategy for cooperation with local partners and international organizations. Also, more than 10 remaining activities for 2018 were discussed between representatives to increase environmental conservation and cooperation in DPRK and East Asia.

In spite of communication difficulties experienced by the project team, the

workshop in DPRK served as a good platform for fruitful discussions. During the visit, HSF and the Ministry of Land and Environment Protection (MoLEP) of DPRK finalized the publication of leaflets about Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve, Rason Migratory Bird Reserve, Scaly-Sided Merganser and Baers Pochard. An agreement on the publication of the

updated National Wetland Inventory, that is planned to be introduced to the public during a Ramsar COP13 side event, was also signed by HSF and MoLEP. The project team is regularly communicating with MoLEP on future plans as part of continuing efforts to strengthen and expand environmental cooperation.



More than 120 participants from Ministries, Research Institutes, the State Academy of Sciences, the National Conservation Union of Korea, and local representatives from different provinces attended the workshop.



Aside from the workshop, posters for the World Migratory Bird Day were disseminated. Printing was supported by HSF. Dr. Bernhard Seliger, Resident Representative of HSF Korea shows the printed poster.



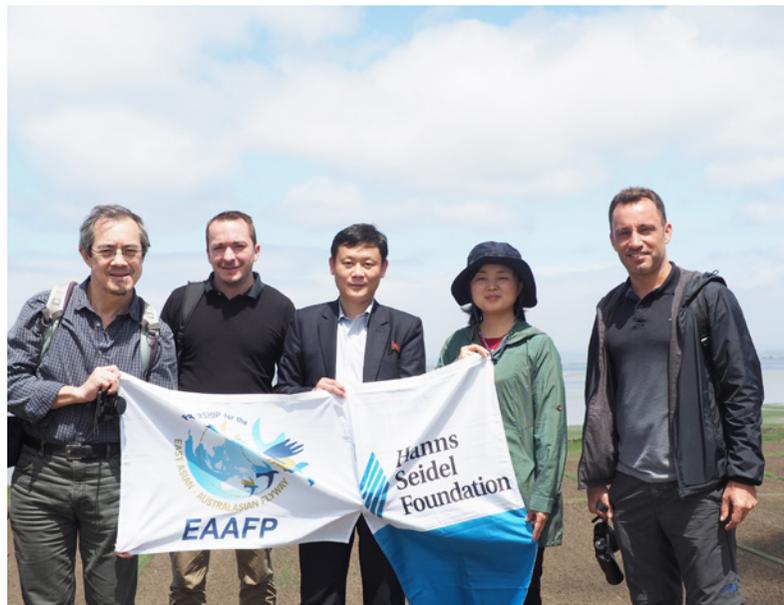
Ms. Ri Kyong Sim, General Director of the Department of External Economic Cooperation, MoLEP presents a poster about the World Migratory Bird Day, including other publications supported by HSF, to Mr. O Kyong Chol, Head of the Management Board of Mundok Ramsar Site.



Mr. O Kyong Chol introduces the education materials that he uses to teach locals, students and school children.



■ Mundok-gun consists of several small villages and is located in the East Coast at the Chongchonggang Estuary in Pyongan-nam-do at the border to Pyongan-buk-do.



■ Researchers from MoLEP together with representatives of HSF, EAAFP and IUCN while introducing the RAWES approach.



■ The wetlands in Mundok provide important ecosystem services to the local population.



■ Participants and stakeholders of Mundok Ramsar Site discuss about the RAWES approach during the training at Mundok Ramsar Site. The RAWES Field Assessment Sheet was translated into (North) Korean language and also used during the training.



■ One field team surveys the biodiversity of Mundok Ramsar Site, which will contribute to the National Wetland Inventory in the country.



## Alys Laver

WWT Steart Marshes

### ▶ Please briefly introduce your area of specialization.

A committed, knowledgeable and passionate wetland management specialist with over 10 years of experience. With the ability to deliver the complex demands

associated with highly designated sites, the conservation environment and visitor expectations through good staff and volunteer management.

### ▶ What are the major wetland projects and activities that you have undertaken?

I have managed land in the Somerset Levels and Moors, one of the largest and richest areas of traditionally managed wet grassland and fen habitats in lowland UK. The SPA within the river Brue was my catchment and I was involved with the Living Landscapes initiative, promoting a more connected approach to land management. Parts of the Brue Valley include areas of raised peatbog, most have been destroyed through peat extraction or the intensity of agriculture. However, many areas remaining have been restored to create areas of open water, fen and reed bed. I was involved with several restoration projects, maintaining existing mire and the creation of new wetlands after peat extraction.

Remaining within the area but now situated in the river Parrett catchment, I am managing one of the largest habitat creation projects in the UK, WWT Steart Marshes. Created by the process of managed coastal realignment, the site provides current and future compensation habitat to the Severn Estuary, which holds SAC, SPA, SSSI and Ramsar designations on account of its importance to biodiversity. Overseeing the delivery of landscape and monitoring agreements to ensure that the reserve is developing as expected. I am also writing the management plan which will determine how the site is managed for years to come.

### » What are the most important issues that you have encountered and how were you able to address these?

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- Issues with local land owners whose interests differ from those of a wetland conservation organisation, communication and agreed target water levels results in everyone feeling informed.
- Concerns from the local community due to large scale changes, communication is key and to maintain regular meetings once a project is completed maintains good relations.
- Science communication and visitor engagement is crucial if you want people to understand the importance of wetlands and that they need to be conserved. Knowing your audience and the best way to communicate with them can be understood through visitor surveys.

### » What is your outlook on wetlands in the region?

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Wetlands in Somerset are doing well but peat extraction continues to be an issue. There are a huge number of NGOs in the country all working hard for wetlands and there's a lot of exciting projects underway providing plenty of hope. There are concerns over Brexit and how it could have an extremely adverse effect on the management of these areas.

### » What advice can you give to young advocates of wetland conservation in the region?

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When trying to communicate your messages, always start simple and with an area you know to be of interest. I have discovered that many people don't even know what a wetland is. Remain enthusiastic and positive for the future as there are a lot of people fighting for the future of wetlands. More joined up thinking, nationally and internationally is the way forward.



## Devaka K. Weerakoon

University of Colombo

### ▶ Please briefly introduce your area of specialization.

My specialization is conservation biology with a specific focus on conservation of threatened species.

### ▶ What are the major wetland projects and activities that you have undertaken?

I have undertaken a range of wetland projects over the years. These include:

- member (Ecologist) of the team that prepared Management Plans for two (2) urban wetlands – Wetlands in the Colombo Metropolitan Region and another Urban Wetland North of Colombo comprising two (2) small basins, Mudun Ela and Kalu Oya
- monitoring of two (2) urban wetland parks
- monitoring the post-development changes in wetlands for several development projects in Sri Lanka
- preparation and implementation of a recovery plan for the critically endangered fish species, *Pethia bandula*, that has resulted in recovery of the species from a mere 100 fish to around 1,600 individuals
- preparation of national guidelines for e-flow determination of river diversion projects
- conducting biodiversity surveys of many wetland ecosystems in Sri Lanka
- team leader of the strategic environment assessment carried out for the water sector projects in Sri Lanka

### ▶ What are the most important issues that you have encountered and how were you able to address these?

With respect to wetlands, the most pressing issue in Sri Lanka is that they are not legally protected and therefore are subjected to a range of threats varying from pollution, spread of invasive species, encroachment,

in-filling, changes in water regimes, etc. Secondly, wetlands are managed by various agencies that have overlapping and sometimes contradictory mandates. During recent years, I have worked closely

with many of the line agencies responsible for wetland management in Sri Lanka to find solutions to these inter-agency issues as well as collected data necessary for management on many wetlands so that

decisions regarding wetlands can be based on better data sets. I have also planned and conducted many awareness programmes for people living around wetlands to get their support to manage wetlands wisely.

### » What is your outlook on wetlands in the region?

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Most of the major cities in the region are located next to wetlands resulting in great deal of pressure on the wetlands. However, these wetlands are essential to ensure sustainability of cities by functioning to reduce flood, reduce temperature, clean air, recreational opportunities and many other services. Therefore, protecting these wetlands are an essential element in

ensuring sustainable cities in the region. It is therefore very important to engage city planners and decision makers to create awareness about the importance of developing cities while protecting the remaining wetland habitats so that the cities will be more resilient especially in the face of pending climate change-driven changes in weather patterns.

### » What advice can you give to young advocates of wetland conservation in the region?

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Work as much as possible with local agencies that are managing wetlands to help them to carry out their work without harming the wetland integrity or its components and create as much as awareness about the importance of wetlands among the

communities that live around wetlands and thereby establish wetland support groups to look after the wetlands. Also, it is important to collect information about wetlands that will enable well informed management of wetlands.



# Announcements

## **Video lecture on Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services now available**

The video lecture on the Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services (RAWES) approach is now available for viewing via Youtube or the website of the Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA). This video lecture is part of a series of online learning modules being developed and promoted by the RRC-EA in support of the Ramsar Convention and was recorded during the 10th Regional Training Workshop for Wetland Managers in East, Southeast and South Asia held on 7-11 May 2018 in Suncheon City, Republic of Korea.

The RAWES approach is a simple, systemic and cost-effective approach designed to carry out rapid qualitative assessments of a comprehensive range of wetland ecosystem services. It was developed specifically within the context of the Ramsar Convention to support a variety of Ramsar-related purposes including: describing the ecological character of a wetland for Ramsar Site designation; updating the Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS); Ramsar Site management planning; formulating and implementing Ramsar National

Policies; providing information for national wetland inventories; conducting wetland impact assessments; and developing CEPA (communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness) materials.

The RAWES approach can be used by Ramsar Site and wetland managers across a range of scales from whole wetlands to localized zones of large and complex wetlands. At the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar COP13) held in Dubai in October 2018, the Contracting Parties officially recognized the RAWES approach by adopting Resolution XIII.17 on Rapidly Assessing Wetland Ecosystem Services.

The resource person and facilitator featured in the video lecture is Mr. Robert McInnes, wetland scientist and Director of RM Wetlands and Environment, Ltd. The videos include English subtitles which may serve as reference for translation into other languages.



# RRC-EA

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