



Wetlands
INTERNATIONAL

The Source

2021 Annual Review of Wetlands International



An aerial photograph of a lush swamp filled with green lotus leaves and numerous bright pink lotus flowers. Two people are in a narrow wooden boat, one of whom is reaching into the water to pick a flower. The scene is captured from a high angle, showing the dense vegetation and the path of the boat.

**WETLANDS
INTERNATIONAL
IS THE ONLY GLOBAL
NOT-FOR-PROFIT
ORGANISATION
DEDICATED TO THE
CONSERVATION
AND RESTORATION OF
WETLANDS**

What are wetlands?

Wetlands occur wherever water meets land – mangroves, peatlands, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains, flooded forests, rice-fields, and even coral reefs. Wetlands exist in every country across the world and every type of region – polar, tropical, wet, dry, high and low altitude.

Healthy wetlands are key to restoring nature and healing our climate, yet the world has lost up to 65% of its original wetlands. Urgent action is needed to reverse this decline and revive these natural wonders.

Our Vision

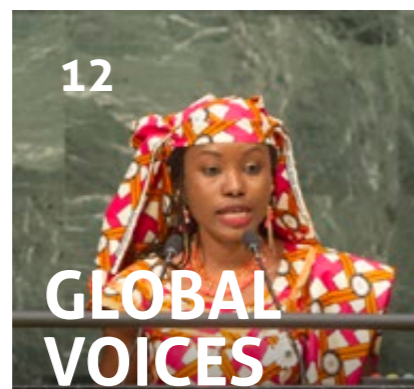
A world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide.

Our Mission

To inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature.

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021 CONTENT

12



**GLOBAL
VOICES
FOR
WETLANDS**

18



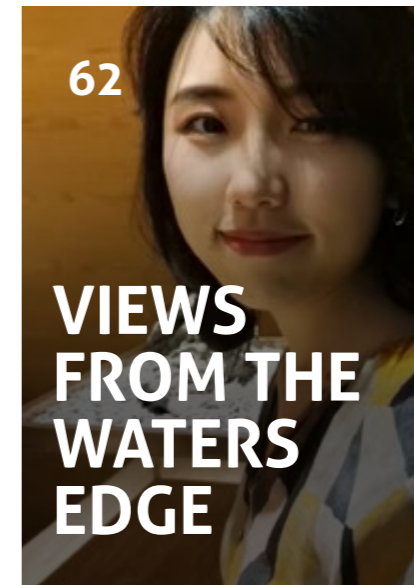
**Richard
Holland**

37



**Ibrahima
Sadio
Fofana**

62



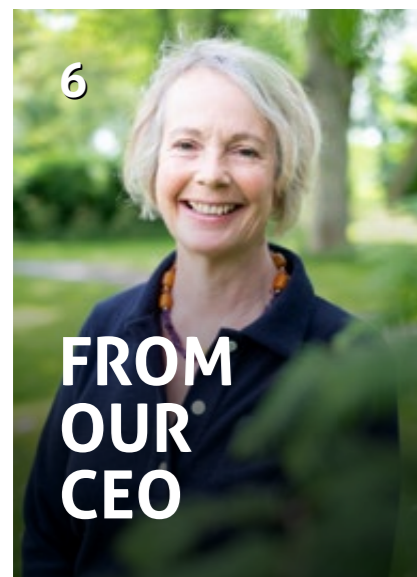
**VIEWS
FROM THE
WATERS
EDGE**

51



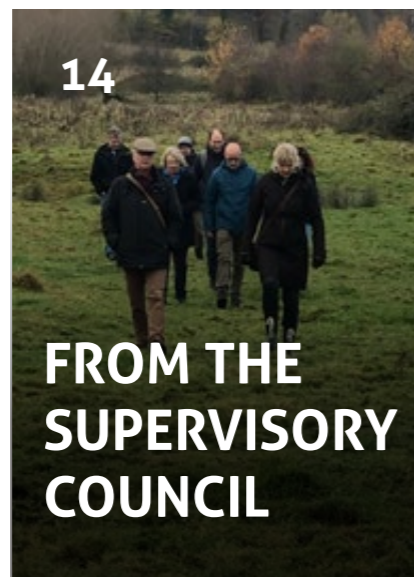
**Ritesh
Kumar**

6



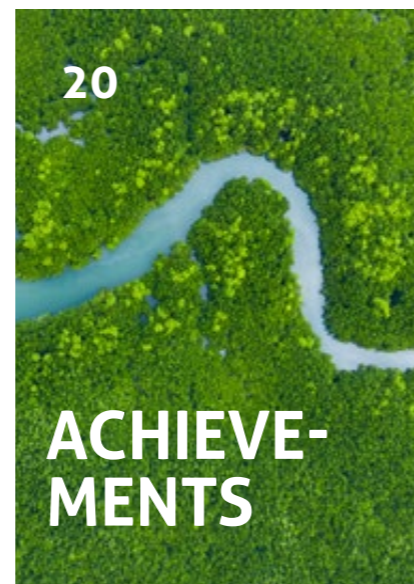
**FROM
OUR
CEO**

14



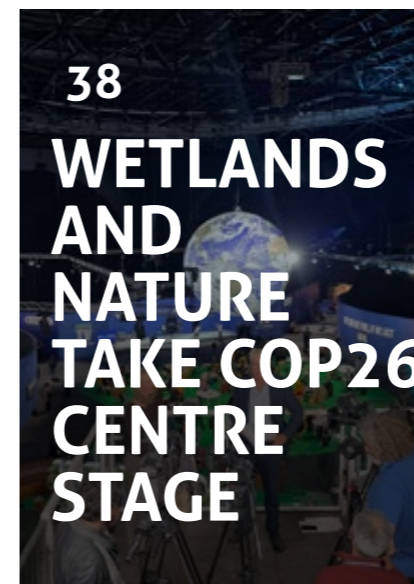
**FROM THE
SUPERVISORY
COUNCIL**

20



**ACHIEVE-
MENTS**

38



**WETLANDS
AND
NATURE
TAKE COP26
CENTRE
STAGE**

50

**FUNCTION-
ING OF THE
ORGANISA-
TION**

60

**SUMMARY
OF
FINANCE
AND RE-
SOURCING**

8



**HIGH-
LIGHTS**

16

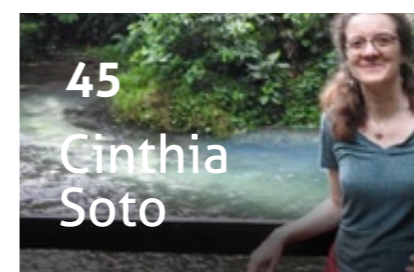
**STRATEGIC
INTENT**

28



**WORKING
THROUGH
PARTNER-
SHIPS TO
ACCELERATE
WETLAND
RECOVERY**

45



**Cinthia
Soto**

50

**FUNCTION-
ING OF THE
ORGANISA-
TION**

62

**THANK
YOU**

36



**Apri
Susanto
Astra**

46



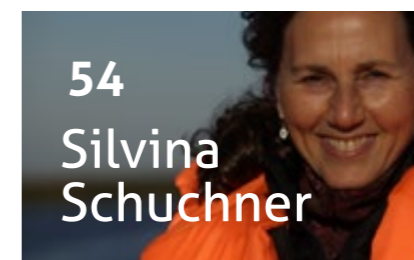
**OUR
OFFICES**

51



**Julien
Anseau**

54



**Silvana
Schuchner**

FROM OUR CEO

Jane Madgwick, Chief Executive Officer, Wetlands International

Two days before the UN climate summit, I had the opportunity to speak with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at an event hosted by the Global Center on Adaptation in Rotterdam. We discussed the urgency of increasing efforts to protect and restore wetlands — and peatlands in particular — to combat the climate emergency. With peatlands storing twice as much carbon as the world’s forests, wetlands must be at the centre of the narrative on how we can meet our global climate goals. PM Trudeau made this subject a key part of his statement at the event and followed up with new commitments in the Glasgow summit.

More than ever, our goals and ways of working are relevant to the global agenda. We see good signs in terms of scaling up our impact. In 2021, we witnessed a stronger focus on water in the climate dialogues as well as heightened understanding that the biodiversity and climate crises are highly interdependent. Throughout the year we profiled “wetland Nature-based Solutions” as bridges connecting the nature, water and climate agendas, using our programme achievements to provide evidence on how to upscale.

Backing up the ambition set out in our Strategic Intent 2020-2030, we promoted dialogue and support for global wetland targets to be included in the Global Biodiversity Framework review process. The scale of wetland recovery we need to see is formidable and must become everyone’s business.

We have achieved some exciting milestones and outcomes in 2021. For example, in Building with Nature Indonesia (2015-2021) we showed that by having good scientific insights, engaging the right blend of partners and using an inclusive, holistic landscape approach, it is possible in as little as five years to create a more resilient mangrove coast, enhance the prosperity and safety of local villages, enable long-term sustainability and create the conditions for upscaling.



Jane Madgwick, CEO, Wetlands International



Restored wetlands from aquaculture ponds in Liaohe Estuary, China

Examples like this encouraged us in 2021 to diversify and strengthen our strategic partnerships to develop and finance a portfolio of large-scale wetland landscape regeneration programmes, as further illustrated in this review. These landscape initiatives will be a source of inspiration and global learning, as well as bringing biodiversity, social and economic benefits locally.

To deliver long-term landscape impacts, we have invested in additional staff capacities, new partnerships, and more intensive collaboration across the entire network of offices despite ongoing Covid-19 constraints. In 2021, with dedicated finance we invested in stepping up our communications and fundraising capacities as well as supporting partnership and programme development. With flexible funding, an enhanced staff team and a growing portfolio of strategic partners, Wetlands International is increasingly well positioned to scale up its influence and impact, largely through inspiring and mobilising many others to take action.

One exciting mechanism for this is working with partners in a set of iconic wetland landscapes to demonstrate and refine the systematic “4 Returns for landscape

regeneration” approach, that we launched with Commonland and the Landscape Finance Lab in 2021. This approach will bring our experience and knowledge to the fore and will help us to better connect our work on shaping integrated solutions for wetlands at the landscape level with our influence on national and global policies and investments.

Looking ahead and mindful that we are running out of time to achieve global climate goals, our most urgent and important task is to engage broader support to safeguard and restore wetlands for people, climate and nature.

Towards the end of 2021, we thanked André van der Zande for his outstanding service as Chair of Wetlands International and welcomed him into the prestigious group of Counsellors of Honour. We welcomed Jan Ernst de Groot back into the Chair and I look forward to work with him and a diverse, talented Council, as well as a growing set of country Chairs, to chart the upward development of our organisation worldwide. Lastly, I want to express my deep gratitude to our growing partners, donors, members and staff around the world for their invaluable contributions and collaboration.

Thank you.

HIGHLIGHTS

Call for focus on wetlands in 2030 Action Targets

Wetlands International welcomed the draft Global Biodiversity Framework to guide actions worldwide through 2030 to conserve and restore nature and its essential services to people, and drew attention to the importance of having specific wetlands conservation and restoration targets in achieving the goals set in the new global biodiversity framework of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

With other international organisations, Wetlands International has drawn up proposed targets that should be included in the new global agreement on biodiversity, promoted as part of Nature-based Solutions to climate change, and backed by the UN's current decade for ecosystem restoration.

The 2030 targets we propose for global adoption include:

1. Peatlands

The remaining undrained peatland carbon stores remain intact and 10 million hectares of drained peatland are restored by 2030.

2. Mangroves

A net gain of 20% in global mangrove cover by 2030.

3. Rivers and floodplains

Remaining free-flowing rivers and floodplains are preserved and river connectivity is enhanced, restoring floodplain ecosystem functionality and area by 2030.

4. Tidal flats

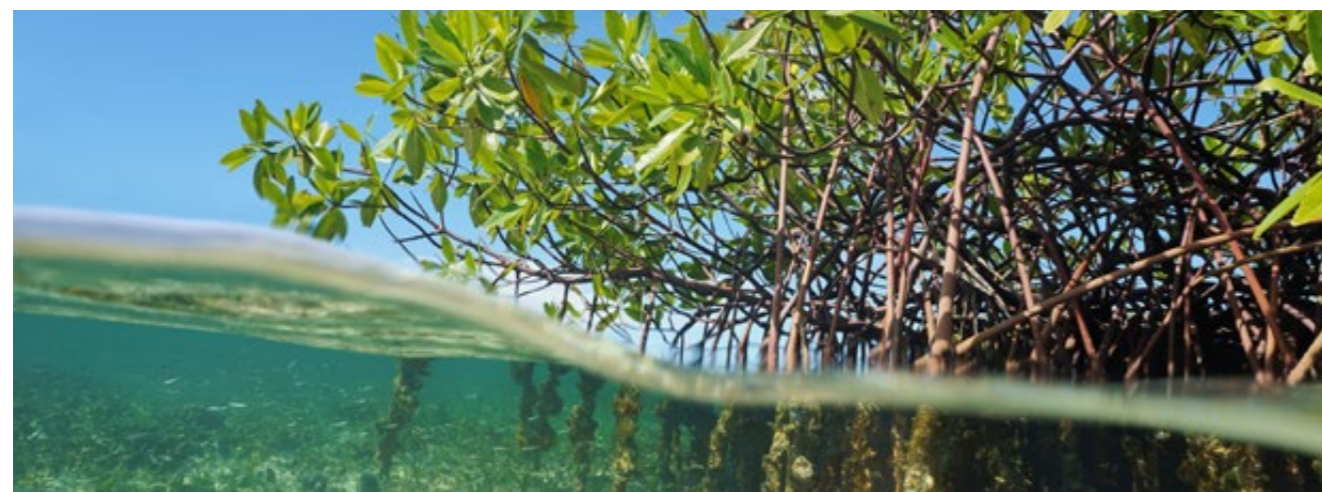
A net gain of 10% in the area of tidal flats by 2030.

5. Migratory birds

50% of the estimated 7,000 critically important sites identified along flyways come under favourable management by 2030.

For more info on wetland targets, visit:

<https://www.wetlands.org/news/wetlands-international-welcomes-the-2030-action-targets-and-calls-for-a-focus-on-wetlands/>



Coastal wetlands such as mangroves sequester carbon up to 55 times faster than tropical rainforests

A common language and route to large scale ecosystem restoration

The urgent need and opportunity to address the joint biodiversity and climate crises by restoring nature and natural processes is recognised and there is growing interest to finance Nature-based Solutions at a whole landscape scale. However, the challenge of preparing high-quality propositions for investment can be a barrier to action.

In 2021, Wetlands International officially became a supporting partner of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and forged new partnerships to mobilise and upscale action to restore wetland landscapes at scale. Our knowledge and experience in all regions are highly valuable to address this challenge. So, we teamed up with Commonland and the Landscape Finance Lab to set out and launch The 4 Returns Framework for Landscape Restoration: a step by step, systematic approach to bring stakeholders together to transform their landscape for four returns: natural, financial and social returns, and the return of inspiration. This framework offers a common language for landscape regeneration that can help bridge the different sectors and interests in any landscape and enable collaboration for transformation over the long-term.

During a launch event on World Environment Day which our CEO moderated, financiers, UN officials, NGOs, government representatives and indigenous leaders gave their backing and heard from those who had tested the approach in different contexts and regions.

For more info on the 4 returns framework, visit:

<https://www.wetlands.org/publications/the-4-returns-framework-for-landscape-restoration/>

THE 4 RETURNS FRAMEWORK FOR LANDSCAPE RESTORATION



A knowledge-base and call to action for mangroves

In July, the Global Mangrove Alliance released the groundbreaking report, *The State of the World's Mangroves*, which compiles for the first time ever the very latest information available on the value of mangroves and how we can reverse the downward trend impacting the world's best natural carbon sinks.



Coordinated by Wetlands International and The Nature Conservancy — both members of the Alliance — and drawing from the Global Mangrove Watch, we contributed significantly to this remarkable synthesis, alongside 100 authors from around the world who shared cutting-edge science and compelling stories. We now have the knowledge to turn things around for these critical ecosystems. As we begin to realise their full value — as carbon stores, fish factories, coastal defences and more — ever-greater efforts need to be made to protect what remains, and to upscale programmes of restoration.

For more information on the State of the World's Mangroves report, visit: <https://www.wetlands.org/publications/state-of-the-worlds-mangroves/>

Leading the way for how to Build with Nature

By collaborating with Wetlands International and many international partners, Indonesia has become a pioneer country for Building with Nature: an approach to infrastructure and environmental management that works with the forces of nature, rather than opposing them. Our programme, Building with Nature Indonesia, creates stable coastlines with reduced erosion risk through a unique integration of mangrove restoration, small scale hard-engineering and sustainable land use. Our publication, *Restoring an Eroding Coastline and Inspiring Action at Scale (2015-2021)*, summarises the insights and lessons from our landscape scale implementation of the Building with Nature approach between 2015 and 2021 in Demak, a coastal area in Central Java impacted by erosion, flooding and devastating land loss. Local communities helped shape the design and led the implementation, ensuring long-term sustainability, while it was developed and financed through a unique public-private partnership under the leadership of the Indonesian government, Wetlands International and Ecoshape. The success here has already led to replication and upscaling in many other environments in Indonesia and has stimulated other countries in the region to follow suit.

As part of the project, we published technical guidelines for restoring eroding tropical coastlines, to support the scaling up of Nature-based Solutions as an alternative to traditional coastal engineering solutions.

For more information on Building with Nature, visit: <https://www.wetlands.org/publications/building-with-nature-in-indonesia-restoring-an-eroding-coastline-and-inspiring-action-at-scale-2015-2021/>



Wetlands and nature take centre stage at Glasgow climate talks

There was a growing realisation at COP26 that without enabling nature to recover, including wetlands, there is no 1.5° C future.



Wetlands International co-organised the first-ever Peatland Pavilion, which shone a light on peatlands and positioned us as a key player with a proven track record in their protection and rehabilitation. We also contributed to the first-ever Water Pavilion which helped raise the need for better water management in tackling climate change. Continuing our long-standing participation in the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action — enabling collaboration between governments and cities, regions, businesses, and investors to immediately lower emissions and increase resilience against climate impacts — we emphasised the critical role of wetlands in contributing to resilient water management and the increased role for water and water-related activities in NDC enhancement.

COP26 signalled a new beginning in the need to invest in natural climate solutions as a core part of climate action. An Article 6 rulebook agreement was a positive step to activate the necessary finance needed to protect nature and wetlands, and benefit those on the frontlines of the climate emergency while keeping global heating to below 1.5° Celsius

For more information on peatland track record, visit: <https://peatlands.wetlands.org/>

Alliances built for saving Sahelian wetlands

The Blue Lifelines for a Secure Sahel (BLiSS) initiative brings focus on water management and accelerates the safeguarding, restoration, and sustainable use of the Sahel's wetland ecosystems, including rivers, lakes, floodplains, and deltas. In late 2021 we launched our Blue Lifelines strategy, developed together with our core partners CARE, International Alert, and the International Water Management Institute. Together, we are building a wider alliance in the Sahel region of government agencies, private sector, and civil society organisations to catalyse change and achieve our ambitious goals and long-term impact. Specifically, for 2030, we propose a goal to safeguard and restore 20 million hectares of wetlands in six major wetland systems and four basins across the Sahel, enhancing the resilience of 10 million people to climate risk, poverty, conflict, and displacement while benefiting biodiversity.



In 2021, we used the strategy to raise political awareness and endorsement for BLiSS at key events such as the 6th Regional Committee Meeting of the Great Green Wall Initiative and in bilateral dialogues with governments including Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti.

For more information on Blue Lifelines for a Secure Sahel, visit: <https://www.wetlands.org/casestudy/bliss/>

GLOBAL VOICES FOR WETLANDS



"Marshes and other wetlands may seem unproductive and inhospitable to humans, but in fact they provide us with essential services. They store carbon, give us clean water and food, protect us from floods, as well as offer habitats for one in ten of the world's known species."

Dr Bruno Oberle

IUCN Director General
on the launch of IUCN Red List - Dec 2021.

<https://civicrm.iucn.org/civicrm/mailling/view?id=4171&reset=1->



"The shrinking availability of water and impact on resource availability in places like Chad contributes to the fragility of the Sahel region. Inclusion of water and wetlands in the NDCs is important but it's equally important to include the link to conflict. Communities themselves are key to joined-up land and water management. Bringing in the local and indigenous peoples' knowledge is vital to transforming the landscape"

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim

Peul Mbororo, Indigenous Women and Peoples Association of Chad

<https://www.wetlands.org/news/setting-global-targets-would-drive-investment-needed-to-scale-up-wetland-recovery-for-climate-action/>



"Healthy wetland ecosystems provide people with clean water, provide nurseries for aquatic life upon which local communities depend, and act as critical carbon sinks serving both adaptation and mitigation."

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema

Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity on the occasion of World Wildlife Day

<https://www.wildlifeday.org/content/message-elizabeth-maruma-mrema-executive-secretary-general-convention-biological-diversity>



"Less than 1% of the water on Earth is usable freshwater and is mostly stored in wetlands such as rivers, streams, lakes, marshes, estuaries, and aquifers. We are in a water crisis with profound consequences and wetlands are at the heart of its resolution."

Martha Rojas Urrego

Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, on the occasion of World Wetlands Day 2022

<https://www.ramsar.org/news/statement-by-martha-rojas-urrego-secretary-general-of-the-convention-on-wetlands-on-world-0>



"Why should wetlands be top of our agenda? Because improving the way we manage, recreate and share wetlands is so critical that if we get it wrong, history has proven that it can bring about disease, species extinction, mass migration and even war. However, if we get it right, they will continue to bring clean water, abundance of food, jobs, leisure, wildlife experiences and greater well-being."

Sacha Dench

Ambassador for the UN's Convention on Migratory Species & CEO & Founder of Conservation without Borders

FROM THE SUPERVISORY COUNCIL

André van der Zande, Chair (retired December 2021)

Although 2021 was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Wetlands International ended the year in a much stronger position than we could have hoped for in January. I believe this was due to a combination of wetlands being taken seriously as a key part of the fight against climate change and biodiversity collapse, as well as the skill and resilience of the organisation's staff in adapting to new ways of working and continuing to achieve results despite the limitations.

The Council and Board of Association met regularly in 2021, keeping close contact with the CEO and Management Team through online meetings. Fortunately, restrictions had eased sufficiently by November, allowing us to meet in-person in Maastricht, Netherlands. The location of this meeting enabled members to see at first hand the effects of the devastating floods that hit the region in July 2021 and how wetland restoration in the Geul valley could reduce future risks through increasing



Field visit in Limburg, Netherlands to see at first hand the impact of the devastating floods that hit the region in July 2021.

the 'sponginess' of the landscape. This is a prime example of the role that wetlands play in building resilience against climate change. Our thanks go to our partners ARK and Stroming who guided us on this field visit.

In addition to its responsibility to oversee the implementation of the organisation's strategy, annual accounts and the annual review, the Council and Board of Association provided guidance to the CEO and Management Team on a range of key issues. These included a plan to build visibility and influence, strengthen strategic partnerships engaged in our initiatives, create a dedicated fundraising team, and review the organisation's business model.

Members were pleased to see the recognition that the organisation is receiving at the international level, with high profile roles at the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in June, and at the Glasgow Climate COP in November where the role of peatland restoration received a major boost.

We were delighted to receive confirmation that the Dutch Postcode Lottery awarded a three-year grant to the organisation, that will build on the results achieved with their support from 2018-2020.

The past year also saw a highly significant deepening of our relationship with the COMON Foundation, who were already supporting our work on mangrove restoration (To-Plant-Or-Not-To-Plant initiative), organisational development, and in a partnership with Commonland - to test and promote the 4 Returns framework for landscape recovery. In December, the COMON Foundation decided to make Wetlands International a key grantee which will enable us to accelerate our action towards the

2030 goals set in our Strategic Intent. On behalf of the whole organisation, we would like to thank the COMON Foundation for their trust in Wetlands International and the support provided.

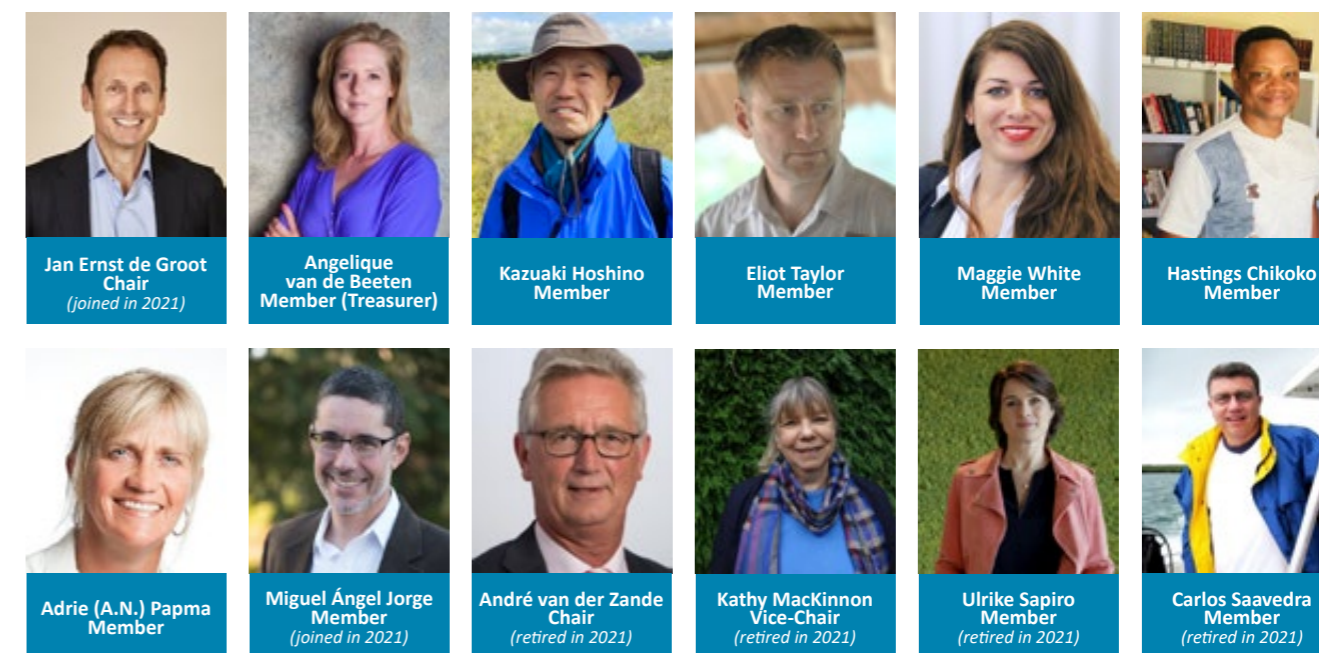
In 2021, we said goodbye to several members: Kathy MacKinnon, our Vice-Chair, who retired after nine years of service; Carlos Saavedra due to ill health; and Ulrike Sapiro due to her appointment in a new position. Our thanks go to them for the support, enthusiasm and inspiration that they provided to Wetlands International. We were also delighted to welcome Miguel Jorge, who was appointed as a new member to the Council and Board at the end of 2021.

Finally, December 2021 marked the end of my own term as Chair of Wetlands International, a function which I have held with enormous pride since 2015. I was delighted to hand over the baton to Jan Ernst de Groot who has taken over as Chair of the organisation. I would like to wish Jan Ernst and other members of the Supervisory Council and Board of Association all the best in helping Wetlands International succeed in its mission to inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature. I will be cheering loudly from the sidelines.



André van der Zande hands over the baton to Jan Ernst de Groot who has taken over as Chair of the Supervisory Council.

Wetlands International Supervisory Council

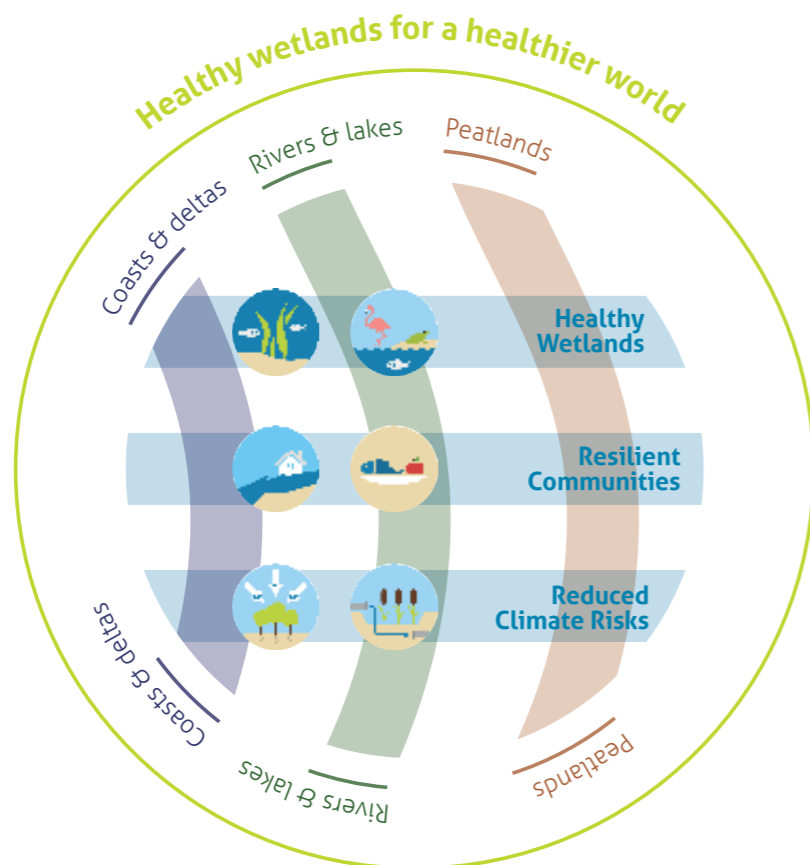


STRATEGIC INTENT 2020-2030

Over 2020-2030 Wetlands International aims to safeguard and restore tens of millions of hectares of wetlands, bringing multiple returns for nature and people. Our theory of change encapsulates the three main phases of our work: to inspire, mobilise and upscale. These are the key ingredients of our organisational strategy for the period 2020-2030.

For this period, we are orientating our work to achieve three, interconnected global impacts: healthy wetlands, resilient wetland communities, and reduced climate risks.

Our vision, targets and strategic interventions are shaped according to landscapes. We focus on three broad categories of wetland landscapes: deltas and coasts, rivers and lakes, and peatlands. "Streams" of work are defined according to the specific contexts of these wetland landscape types.



We measure our progress across these three streams according to the following three interconnected global impacts and six outcomes.

Healthy Wetlands



Wetland habitats and functions safeguarded and restored: We aim to help conserve a selection of the most intact wetland ecosystems and restore others within a full range of wetland types across the world. We also aim to restore other freshwater systems, peatlands, deltas and coastal ecosystems for their intrinsic, cultural and ecosystem-service values. We will prioritise ecological networks that connect landscapes, such as flyways and swim-ways.



Wetland species recovered: Building on our long track record for waterbird conservation, we will contribute to the conservation of wetland biodiversity by working on selected flagship species and groups of species linked to specific habitats.

Resilient Communities



Water and food secured for wetland communities: We aim to prevent further wetland loss and degradation that undermines the natural productivity and water storage capacities of peatlands, floodplains, mangrove forests, deltas and lakes. We aim to improve and diversify the livelihoods of people dependent on wetlands, and promote best practices in agriculture and aquaculture, integrating wetland values into the local economy.



Reduced societal conflict and displacement from wetlands: We will in particular strive to resolve situations where deterioration of wetlands – caused by upstream abstraction, climate change or population growth -- contributes to loss of livelihoods, human displacement, conflict and migration. Where necessary, we will use peacebuilding and conflict resolution measures to address imbalanced power relations between stakeholders, building capacity for vulnerable and marginalised people to defend their rights to water and wetland resources.

Reduced Climate Risks



Wetland carbon stores secured and enhanced: We aim to bring wetlands into activities to adapt to and mitigate climate change, which is otherwise a threat to the integrity of all wetlands. Improving the condition of peatlands, river systems and coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, saltmarshes and sea-grass beds will also reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases and return many to their role as carbon sinks.



Wetland Nature-based Solutions integrated into infrastructure developments: We aim to steer urban water infrastructure investment and land-use planning towards using wetlands to meet challenges such as water insecurity and flooding that are conventionally addressed by civil engineering – an approach that often causes further loss and deterioration of wetlands.



RICHARD HOLLAND

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

I am Richard Holland, Director of Operations and Network Development – a position I have held for three years now. Before this, I worked with WWF, Deltares, for a GEF-funded programme and for the European Commission. A constant throughout my career has been a drive to create positive change for water and wetlands. Although hard to pick favourites, I am especially proud of work I did in the Danube River Basin in the 1990s, the results of which are still being carried forward by governments and NGOs in the region.

Growing up in Scotland with mountains, rivers, and moorland on my doorstep, I gained a love of the outdoors which continued throughout my studies and career. I enjoy working for

Wetlands International because of the passion and expertise held by the organisation's staff from various parts of the world. Their ability to liaise with partners to achieve results that make a difference for people, nature and our climate, is admirable.

My current focus is on building cooperation and capacities among our network teams to ensure that we can play a leading role in wetland landscape regeneration that will provide us with positive returns for communities and for biodiversity. I am proud of the way that, despite the constraints of the pandemic, we worked as a team to achieve important results, start new programmes, and attract highly qualified staff around the world.



Barnacle Geese, a migratory species which relies on Scotland's wetlands

ACHIEVEMENTS

This chapter presents our 2021 achievements. Our work towards achieving our goals set out in our Strategic Intent 2020-2030 is organised into three Streams: Coasts and Deltas, Rivers and Lakes, and Peatlands. The section below summarises progress in 2021 towards the 10-year targets.

All of our achievements are the result of our teams working around the world with our many partners in local, national, and international networks. The achievements selected below are part of a long-term results framework and build partly on activities already started in previous years.

We highlight those achievements where Wetlands International's role or contribution has been significant and instrumental towards reaching long-term outcomes. Despite the ongoing disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in most countries, we have seen many positive steps forward over the past year.

At the end of 2021 we are slightly behind the schedule laid out in the Strategic Intent. Nevertheless, we have achieved important results and are confident we have a good basis for future mobilisation and upscaling towards our 2030 targets.

Raising the profile of wetlands

We took advantage of many international events throughout the year to promote the case for global targets that safeguard and restore wetlands. One highlight was the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in June 2021, where as part of the official launch event we released The 4 Returns Framework for Landscape Restoration: a step by step, systematic approach to bring stakeholders together to transform their landscape for four returns: natural, financial and social returns, and the return of inspiration. This framework offers a common language for landscape regeneration that can help bridge the different sectors and interests in any landscape and enable collaboration for transformation over the long-term.

The Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow provided a special focus for our work on peatlands, water resiliency, and responsible carbon finance advocacy. With partners we organised and successfully delivered the first

ever UNFCCC Peatland Pavilion and Water Pavilion. These enabled us to connect with governments, companies and partners and to create a platform that will enable us to scale up results for wetlands in the future.

As well as seeing a shift in the way wetlands are perceived by the international community as a solution to the global climate, biodiversity and social crises, we are proud of the results that were achieved at regional, national and local level.

Impact Area - Healthy Wetlands

Highlights include:

- We brought together and provided technical expertise to government partners to develop sustainable management plans for protected areas in The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania and Indonesia in over 400,000 hectares (ha) of mangroves and other coastal wetlands.
- We completed the management plan for the 380,000 ha Pozuelos UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Argentina, including the 7,000 ha Lagoon, a Ramsar site, in close collaboration with governmental agencies.
- We published the high altitude wetlands manual focusing on sustainable peatland and water management in the Himalayan highlands, which was welcomed by government agencies.
- We published the first State of the World's Mangroves Report in June 2021 with our Global Mangrove Alliance partners, using updated data from the Global Mangrove Watch platform.

Impact Area - Resilient Wetland Communities

Highlights include:

- Government officials in China, Philippines and Indonesia adopted our Community-based Ecological Mangrove Restoration guidelines as part of our upscaling approach to protect coastal communities by accelerating the

sustainable restoration of mangrove belts.

- We launched a three-year initiative in Eastern Africa supported by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Source to Sea, to upscale an approach to combat the drivers of wetland loss and their biodiversity, and enable community resilience in the Rift Valley and mangrove ecoregions.
- We secured two major research projects funded through the EU Horizon 2020 programme to develop solutions to influence EU policies (Common Agricultural Policy and EU Restoration law and Carbon Farming) and promote upscaling of peatland restoration by farmers and communities in Europe.

Impact Area - Reduced Climate Risks

Highlights include:

- Peatlands were included in Russia's Climate Action Plan (NDC) as a result of inventories we compiled for six regions totalling approximately 2.85 million ha of peatlands and monitored the GHG emissions according to international standards on 40,000 ha.
- We witnessed further development of the Building with Nature Asia initiative, a programme that seeks to leverage investment in Nature-based Solutions to increase the resilience of 30 million vulnerable people in cities and settlements along vulnerable coasts and rivers by 2030 across the continent, by engaging government in Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and India in programme design and strengthening actual propositions for investment in selected landscapes in the target countries.
- Working with GIZ and other partners, we secured German government support to develop a major EUR 20 million programme for climate change adaptation and mitigation in the Niger Basin.

Wetland carbon

Wetland carbon is a rapidly developing cross-cutting topic that is relevant to all wetland landscape types. Over the past year, there has been a surge of interest in the role wetland conservation and restoration can play in reducing emissions and capturing carbon, while at the same time providing community and biodiversity benefits. In all three Streams, we made strong progress in developing landscape propositions and best practice guidance for using carbon financing to support action as diverse as mangrove restoration, fire prevention, and peatland rewetting. We also experienced a strong interest in our work on wetland carbon from finance institutions and companies, and we collaborated more strongly with our partners Permian Global, Boskalis, Greenchoice and Rewilding Europe. In 2021, we investigated the role of carbon finance for wetlands – including through a stand-out side event at COP26 – and defined principles to ensure socio-environmental integrity that we will advance in 2022 to unlock carbon finance for wetlands in a responsible way.

Further details of these results are provided below.

Setbacks

Not everything went according to plan in 2021. Despite effectively adapting to working online, several of our programmes have experienced delays and uncertainties due to the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the Sustainable Palm Oil Round Table (RSPO) training course for plantation owners on "Drainage Assessment" was postponed for a second year due to the inability to hold face-to-face interactions. Likewise, we were disappointed that critical global meetings for the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance had to be postponed again.

Achievements in our three Streams

On the following pages, we report on our 2021 achievements in more detail and provide the progress results we have made in each Stream toward our 2030 targets.

OUR SCORING SYSTEM



COASTS & DELTAS 2030 GLOBAL GOAL

Our goal is to safeguard and restore coastal wetland ecosystems as essential features of resilient and productive coastal landscapes. We will achieve our goal by tailoring our work to the different contexts we typically encounter in our target areas, ranging from heavily degraded or modified coastal areas to intact wetland landscapes.

Coasts & Deltas Healthy wetlands

For protected areas in The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania and Indonesia we supported government partners to develop plans for sustainable management of over 400,000 ha of mangroves and other coastal wetlands. In the development of these plans, we facilitated the involvement of community groups and other stakeholders. Currently, we are connecting these 'landscape partners' to collectively scale up conservation, restoration and livelihood interventions.

Through the To-Plant-Or-Not-To-Plant initiative, we restored 758 ha of mangroves using Ecological Mangrove Restoration principles, and attracted significant upscaling investment interest in Guinea-Bissau, Philippines, and Indonesia. We took initial steps to develop landscape-scale restoration and management plans that will ultimately result in the restoration of tens of thousands of ha worldwide. This includes restoring 2,500 ha in Guinea-Bissau with support from our corporate partner Greenchoice to achieve climate, community, and biodiversity impact.

We published the first State of the World's Mangroves report in June 2021 with our Global Mangrove Alliance partners, using updated data from the Global Mangrove

Watch (GMW) platform. This report and GMW are key elements in our upscaling strategy to safeguard mangroves beyond activities in which we are directly involved, and to support policymakers and practitioners in planning, monitoring, and managing mangrove and related policies.

We developed and implemented a blue carbon site selection process, and we prepared pre-feasibility assessments for blue carbon landscapes in Panama, Colombia, Indonesia, and Malaysia with corporate partners, along with dialogues on responsible carbon financing according to the mitigation hierarchy.

We supported the government of South Korea with the listing of the 128,411 ha Getbol, Korean tidal flats under criteria of the World Heritage Convention. The site was officially added to the World Heritage List by UNESCO in July 2021, strengthening its protection status and stepping up conservation efforts and future investment.

We joined forces with the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership to help government partners in the Yellow Sea adopt conservation and restoration guidance of intertidal wetlands.

We worked with stakeholders to highlight the relevance of adopting the Paraná Delta Biodiversity Corridor Strategy which includes over 30 protected private and public areas that enable corridors for wildlife. The National Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development has incorporated the strategy within their priorities for the Paraná Delta.



By 2030, we aim to safeguard 2 million hectares of high value coastal wetlands, including those sites which make up vital wildlife migration corridors.

With 9 years remaining until 2030, we already have opportunities under development and concrete plans to restore and safeguard approximately 1.5 million ha and have initial leads to expand our work in additional countries

Coasts & Deltas Resilient wetland communities

We supported government partners in China, Philippines, and Indonesia to adopt guidelines for Ecological Mangrove Restoration as part of their strategies that will ultimately drive restoration of over 500,000 ha. This will support a shift from often unsuccessful mass-planting approaches to more inclusive community-based restoration strategies than can be scaled up across coastal landscapes.

We provided technical support to the official drafting of a Regulatory Decree for Victoria's Multiple Use Reserve Planning Committee in support of the Paraná Delta wetland conservation (272,000 ha). This builds on earlier activities with local stakeholders to adapt island cattle raising, tourism, and real estate development so that it helps restore habitats for fishing, beekeeping, marsh deer, capybara, and emblematic migratory birds.

With key funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency we launched a three-year initiative called Source to Sea in Eastern Africa. This aims to upscale approaches to combat the drivers of wetland and biodiversity loss, in the Rift valley lakes and Eastern Africa mangrove ecoregions. The areas comprised are the Ziway-Shalla sub-basin in Ethiopia and the Omo-Turkana basins spreading across a large part of southwestern Ethiopian highlands and northern Kenya. The Lamu land and seascape covers an area of 627,310 ha and extends from the Kenya-Somali border to the Tana River with mangrove coverage of 60,000 ha; and the Rufiji Delta comprising the wider Rufiji, Mafia, Kilwa seascape, which represents 70% of Tanzania's mangroves covering a total of 54,000 ha and internationally significant intertidal areas and coral reefs.

In Guinea-Bissau, we developed plans to reinforce wetlands-dependent community livelihoods in the Cacheu National Park (88,064 ha), the Cantanhez National Park (120,987 ha) and their respective buffer zones, and we aim to further expand this work in the proposed Jeta-Pecixe-Cacheu landscape (423,475 ha).



By 2030, we aim to integrate wetlands into 8 million hectares of coastal production systems.

Two years into our strategic intent, we already made significant progress towards the definition of landscape/seascape development plans, which will drive the integration of sustainable production of wetland commodities into the broader supply chain of agriculture and aquaculture products, enhancing community resilience

Coasts & Deltas Reduced climate risks

We continued the development of the Building with Nature Asia initiative, a programme that seeks to leverage investment in Nature-based Solutions to increase the resilience of 30 million vulnerable people in cities and settlements along vulnerable coasts and rivers by 2030 across the continent. We engaged government actors in Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and India in sessions to design the programme and continued with the finetuning of actual propositions for investment in selected landscapes in the target countries.

Together with other Global Mangrove Alliance members, we started the development of a set of guidelines on mangrove restoration. These consolidate existing high-quality guidance and include modules covering different restoration targets, including carbon sequestration, coastal defence, sustainable aquaculture development, and fisheries enhancement. The modules seek to promote large-scale adoption of ecological mangrove restoration principles.



By 2030, we aim to mainstream Building with Nature and promote blue carbon solutions, influencing EUR 10 billion of investments in coastal infrastructure solutions.

Inspired by our work on ecological mangrove restoration and Building with Nature, we received significant attention from the private sector, providing numerous opportunities for (carbon) investment toward wetland restoration

RIVERS & LAKES 2030 GLOBAL GOAL

Our goal is to catalyse investment to safeguard and restore rivers, lakes and their accompanying wetlands, as part of wider freshwater systems; and to provide water security for people and nature, climate resilience, and sustainable and peaceful landscapes.

Rivers & Lakes

Healthy wetlands

In the Ziway-Shalla Basin in Ethiopia, we piloted 1,000 ha of landscape restoration and buffer zone establishment to showcase how these measures contribute to improving the health of Lake Ziway.

We established transboundary wetlands management committees for the implementation of management plans for the Sango Bay-Minziro (endorsed by governments of Uganda and Tanzania) and Semliki (endorsed by governments of Uganda and DRC) transboundary wetlands as part of the Nile Equatorial Lakes Technical Advisory Committee (NEL-TAC).

We completed management plans and started implementation in the Pantanal and the Paraná Delta, improving the productive management and restoration of more than 1.3 million ha of protected wetlands.

We completed the management plan for the 380,000 ha Pozuelos UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, including the 7,000 ha Lagoon - a Ramsar site - in close collaboration with Argentinian governmental agencies in charge of site management.

We secured an investment by Greenchoice for fire prevention and management in 20,000 ha of a key Pantanal landscape to reduce emissions and achieve community and biodiversity impacts. This project allows us to explore upscaling strategies through carbon finance.

We started the preparation of a comprehensive integrated management plan for three sub-basins of the Ganges River under the government-led National Mission for a Clean Ganges initiative. The three sub-basins span an area of nearly 1.9 million ha. We analysed over 280 wetlands in this basin and prepared 275 wetland health cards, which help government and other stakeholders prioritize responses to immediate threats and identify priority areas for future conservation efforts within these wetlands.



By 2030, we aim to safeguard 10 million hectares of high value river and lake wetlands, focusing on five basins.

Significant programmes in major wetland landscapes in target basins and beyond have been set in motion with upscaling plans underway

Rivers & Lakes

Resilient wetland communities

We launched a three-year initiative called Source to Sea in East Africa, with key funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. This aims to upscale approaches to combat the drivers of wetland and biodiversity loss in Eastern Africa mangrove and Rift Valley ecoregions. In the Rift Valley this includes a focus on unsustainable agricultural practices, in the Ziway-Shalla (1.5 million ha) and Omo-Gibe-Turkana (14.6 million ha) basins.

We set up five micro-catchment committees, endorsed by government in the Agago River catchment, Uganda (60,000 ha). The committees provide local direction and coordination on basin-wide water management to help build resilience to disaster risk.

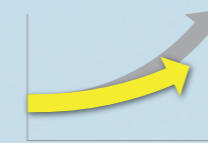
In the Sahel, we piloted and supported the adoption and scaling of innovative agricultural land and water management approaches by communities across 3,500ha

in three major wetland landscapes (Sourou Valley, Mali; Lac Wegnia, Mali; Ziway Shalla, Ethiopia). The approaches will ultimately drive more sustainable water use and facilitate wetland restoration across these major Sahelian wetland systems.

We worked with farmers and landowners to ensure more than 33,000 ha of wetlands are under better cattle ranching practices in the Paraná Delta and Pantanal.

As coordinators of the Wetlands Task Force under the government-led Latin American Initiative 20x20 for Ecosystem Restoration, we initiated a governmental dialogue to promote and enable wetland restoration within the region. One million ha will be restored and protected through forest management and sustainable livestock practices in Argentina (and 50m ha in the Latin America & Caribbean region) by 2030.

We brought attention to the potential of upland wetlands or "natural sponges" to retain peak floodwaters in the aftermath of the floods in Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, and Netherlands. The research, advocacy and communications we undertook with partners has led to the concept now being embedded in the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change and in the EU Guidance on Barrier Removal for River Restoration.



By 2030, we aim to safeguard and restore 60 million hectares of wetland as integral elements of productive river and lake landscapes.

We have made good progress establishing and consolidating programmes in major productive landscapes but need to accelerate this process to be able to realise our goal of 60mha.

Rivers & Lakes

Reduced climate risks

Together with Vitens, a large fruit plantation company, the Cagayan de Oro Basin Council, business and upstream communities, we started a Payment for Ecosystem Services

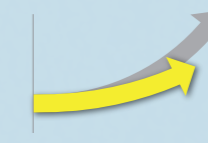
scheme. This new fund was used to pilot a model for basin restoration which combats downstream flooding through innovative community-led reforestation (so-called 'rainforestation') and has so far brought back 60 ha of forest in the Cagayan de Oro river basin of the Philippines.

We raised awareness and secured endorsement for the Blue Lifelines for a Secure Sahel initiative from civil society, African governments and intergovernmental bodies, including the World Bank, UNCCD, the EU, and the African Union's Commission for the Great Green Wall Initiative as a result of the Climate Adaptation Summit and participation in African Union and Sahel G5 meetings.

In collaboration with GIZ, IUCN, IWMI, BBC Media Action, and the Potsdam Institute, we gained approval from the German government to develop a major EUR 20 million climate mitigation and adaptation programme in the Niger Basin. The programme will support the Basin authority and the riparian states to improve implementation of transboundary Integrated Water Resource Management measures in the Niger Basin.

We prepared a guidebook for the management of high-altitude wetlands, as part of the UNDP Secure Himalayas Project, which was endorsed by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change in India. This guidebook will be used in the National Mission on Himalayan Studies project in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Sikkim.

By engaging key EU decision makers including the Presidency led by Slovenia, we promoted the role of wetlands within the water peace and security nexus. As a result, the Council conclusions on Water in the EU's external action (Nov. 2021) emphasise the essential role of conserving and restoring aquatic ecosystems, notably wetlands, to foster human development, to protect biological diversity, to reduce water pollution, and to enhance climate action in line with the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.



By 2030, we aim that EUR 500 million is committed to enable Nature-based Solutions in freshwater wetlands, for climate mitigation and adaptation.

Although good progress is being made, we need to accelerate our progress in our target productive landscapes to be able to make the case to leverage the anticipated target.

PEATLANDS 2030 GLOBAL GOAL

Our goal is to scale up the conservation and restoration of peatlands as a contribution to biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable development. For this, it is vital to ensure that all remaining undrained peatlands stay intact, while 50 million hectares of drained peatland are restored by 2050.

Peatlands

Healthy wetlands

In November 2021, we successfully co-organised the inaugural Peatland Pavilion at UNFCCC COP26 where we launched our Peatland track record. We advocated for the inclusion of peatlands in National Climate Action plans towards governments, international organisations and financial institutions. We progressed discussions on principles to ensure socio-environmental integrity in unlocking carbon finance for wetlands.

Our partners Global Peatland Initiative and Greifswald Mire Centre published the Global Peatland Map 2.0 (unep.org) which includes spatial data from Wetlands International projects in Europe and the Nile Basin, which has helped target countries with significant peatland resource for protection and management (Russia, Ireland, Scotland and Mongolia) and facilitated the inclusion of peatland in governments' Climate Action plans.

In Europe, we influenced the drafting of the EU Nature Restoration law which will set legally binding restoration targets which is anticipated to include wetlands outside of protected sites, when it is published later in 2022.



By 2030, we aim to safeguard over 20 million hectares of high value peatlands, including bringing 5 major peatland landscapes back into good ecological condition.

While we have made progress in engaging with countries and started setting up landscape-scale safeguarding and restoration projects, we have not yet reached the scale to deliver 20m ha by 2030. We expect to accelerate from 2024 onwards.

Peatlands

Resilient wetland communities

We developed successful pre-feasibility assessments for community-based peatland restoration in Peru (153,000 ha around Lake Junin) and Mongolia (30,000 ha across the country) involving improved grazing management to reduce emissions, leading to funding from Greenchoice for developing landscape propositions for restoration. For Peru's Lake Junin, we started to build on the successful restoration of 172 ha of high-altitude peatlands (bofedales) that was completed in 2021.

With Rewilding Europe, local partners, communities and farmers, we developed carbon landscape propositions for peatland restoration in the Oder Delta in Poland (1,300 ha out of 41,000 ha potential) as well as in the Norrbotten district in Sweden (19,000 ha of 200,000 ha potential), resulting in pre-investments enabling us to explore upscaling.

We secured two major research projects funded through the EU Horizon 2020 programme that will create long-term sustainable land management solutions and establish a prioritisation framework for governments and decision-makers. These research projects are designed to influence EU policies (Common Agricultural Policy and EU Restoration law and Carbon Farming) and provide a strong basis for upscaling of peatland restoration by farmers and rural communities in Europe.

As a result of our advocacy efforts, the EU is now shifting its stance and accepting the significant role that improved peatland protection, increased paludiculture (wet peatland farming) and carbon farming can bring to the Green Deal implementation. Including these aspects in the Common Agriculture Policy is key for upscaling since it will drive the largest farm-subsidy stream in Europe and help ensure that peatlands are recognised in the new EU Carbon Farming initiative.



By 2030, we aim to enable community-based conservation and restoration of 10 million hectares of peatlands.

Significant projects with a built-in upscaling mechanism are underway and on track to deliver the outcome by 2030, coupled with a strong EU policy to drive action at scale in Europe.

Peatlands

Reduced climate risks

In Russia (PeatRus project), we completed inventories for six regions totalling approximately 2.85 million ha of peatlands. We also monitored the greenhouse gas emissions to Verified Carbon Standard for 40,000 ha. Both initiatives have resulted in peatlands being included in Russia's Climate Action plan (NDC) and are expected to trigger investments in reducing CO2 emission from peatlands.

Covid-19 restrictions prevented the delivery of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Drainability Assessment training in Asia – the activity should restart in 2022. Once completed, the training has the potential to influence practices on 4.5M ha of plantations under the RSPO scheme.

During COP26 and other events, we used the 2021 Ramsar guidelines for peatland rewetting and restoration to raise awareness of the need to restore 50 million ha of drained peatlands globally by 2050 to meet the 1.5° Celcius target. This 50x50 target provides the basis for action to counter peatland drainage associated with the production of commodities such as palm oil and pulp/fibres, and drainage infrastructure for engineering.



By 2030, we will reduce the impact of peat-based industries in 10 million hectares of peatland, with a focus on palm oil, pulp, and timber.

Although progress is being made, the postponement due to Covid-19 of the RSPO Drainability Assessment training in Asia means we are behind schedule.



WORKING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS TO ACCELERATE WETLAND RECOVERY

By Fred Pearce

The swampy coastal backwaters of Guinea-Bissau – a West African country the size of Belgium or Taiwan, are an ecological treasure – home to one of the largest areas of mangroves on the continent. But much has been lost, so in April 2021, Wetlands International launched a new project, funded by Dutch energy company, Greenchoice, to nurture their restoration.

Mangroves surround the “ecological treasure” that are Guinea Bissau’s coastal backwaters.



Wetlands Nature Reserve, Esteros del Iberá, Colonia Carlos Pel, is a bird watching paradise. On 12 August, 2021, the first birdwatching centre of the Iberá Wetlands was inaugurated in Corrientes, Argentina.

Instead of mangrove planting, we are employing around a thousand villagers to remove dikes and allow 2,500 hectares of mangroves to establish naturally on recently abandoned rice fields. The gains for biodiversity and local livelihoods will be considerable. The restoration could also secure a million tonnes of CO2 in the next 30 years, and Greenchoice has pledged not to claim any carbon credits, so cementing the climate gains.

The project is one item in our growing portfolio of projects for wetlands conservation and restoration built around innovative partnerships with corporate funders and governments, NGOs and philanthropists, international agencies and local communities.

Whether creating sanctuaries for migratory birds in China or preventing fires in the Pantanal wetland of South America, restoring coastal ecosystems across Southeast Asia or improving water management around the oases, lakes and inland deltas of the Sahel, we believe partnerships accelerate and scale up our work, by accessing more funds and growing our influence over wider policymaking and corporate culture.

2021 was a rich year for such collaborations.

In March, we became an official supporting partner of the new UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and unveiled with the NGOs Commonland and the Landscape Finance Lab, the 4 Returns Framework, a methodology for landscape regeneration that connects ecology, community values and economic sustainability for long-term resilience.

The launching publication showcased our work with Indian communities over three decades to restore the catchment of Lake Chilika. Building on this, and supported by the COMON Foundation, a private charitable fund, we also embarked on a programme of collaboration to accelerate large-scale regeneration in a portfolio of landscapes.

In May, we joined with China's National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) and provincial governments, on a new initiative to manage and restore wetlands used as stopovers by birds migrating along the country's east coast. Financed by the Global Environment Facility, the initiative dovetails with our existing work with the NFGA to protect bird-rich wetlands around the Yellow Sea from coastal development.



Villagers assist in building and maintaining brushwood barriers along the coast of Java, with assistance from Wetlands International. Such actions reduce the risk of future flooding in the region.

"Greenchoice is excited to partner with Wetlands International for restoration projects in wetland ecosystems. Wetlands International provides the right mix of in-depth knowledge and action on the ground. During our cooperation we've come to realize, more and more, how important functioning wetlands are in sustaining the water and carbon cycles, on which our planet and species depend."



Ruben Veefkind
Head of Sustainability and Nature-based Solutions, Greenchoice

"The COMON Foundation sees Wetlands International as an influential, while not yet highly visible, organisation with decades of experience and specific expertise in conserving and restoring wetland ecosystems. We like that the team works with partners with a long-term vision and local presence. With our support, we hope they can quickly become even more effective and stronger in capacity to scale up - to accelerate the regeneration of biodiverse, liveable landscapes the world over with their partners."



John Loudon
Executive Director COMON Foundation

Satellite image of Guinea-Bissau's coast.



Landscape approaches work best with long-term commitments, community support and collaborations that break silos.



The Oder Delta, Poland.

In July, with local Argentinian environmental partners FARN and Fundacion Yuchan, we began a campaign to protect salt flats and their flamingos in the high Andes of Argentina, Chile and Bolivia from giant mines intended to extract lithium to make batteries for electric vehicles. One mine site in northwest Argentina will cover 700 square kilometres. The campaign aims to raise environmental standards and ensure effective regulation in the remote mountains. It builds on our long-standing project with the same partners to protect the high Andean wetlands from destructive pastoral and agricultural activities. That work will be in vain if, as we fear, the mines pollute freshwater wetlands and dry out the land by lowering water tables.

And in December, we joined CARE Netherlands, the International Water Management Institute and others in activating the Blue Lifelines for a Secure Sahel (BLISS) initiative. This harnesses our expertise working in Mali's Inner Niger Delta to mobilize government agencies, the private sector and civil society to improving water management across the Sahel. We hope it will ultimately restore 20 million hectares of life-giving wetlands.

To make conservation work across whole landscapes requires long-term commitment, community support and intergovernment and agency collaborations that are rare in conventional compartmentalised environment or development projects. We believe we bring expertise in mobilising such endeavours.

One such is the Corredor Azul project, launched in 2018 to protect freshwater ecosystems along the La Plata river basin. Flowing through Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay, it is the second largest drainage system in Latin America. Threats include numerous hydroelectric-dams in and around the giant Pantanal wetland, farm and forestry expansion in the Iberá Marshes, and Buenos Aires extending into the Paraná delta.

Supported by DOB Ecology, a Dutch family fund, and with local partners, the initial ten-year project is urging governments to promote economic development that will maintain natural river flows and secure a million hectares of wetlands. In August, it launched South America's largest birdwatching centre in the Iberá marshes, raising the profile of one of Argentina's best but least known wildlife sanctuaries.



Fish traps stand in line along the Mayo Dembé, near Mopti, Mali. With partners, our continued work through the BLiSS initiative will ensure water management is sustained for thriving ecosystems and the communities reliant on their services.

We hope our work in the Sahel will ultimately restore 20 million hectares of life-giving wetlands.

On a similar trans-national scale, we have joined other NGOs, including Rewilding Europe and WWF, in the Dam Removal Europe partnership, which in October joined with the London-based Arcadia Fund to launch a EUR 42 million Open Rivers Programme to tear down obsolete dams and weirs that fragment rivers and block wildlife passage. We have a big task – there are half a million such barriers across the continent’s rivers, one every two kilometres.

We team up with other NGOs for global campaigns, too. With IUCN, WWF and others, we coordinate the Global Mangrove Alliance, aimed at increasing mangrove habitat by 20 percent this decade. We also work with Aberystwyth University in Wales on Global Mangrove Watch, a remote sensing tool that gathers real-time data on new threats to existing mangroves. July saw the publication of its first State of the World’s Mangroves report.

Similarly, we are a founder of the Global Peatland Initiative, working with scientists at the Greifswald Mire Centre and the London-based conservation investment firm Permian Global. We helped Permian draw up standards for carbon accounting in peatlands, and in 2021 this enabled Permian to sell carbon credits generated by our work protecting and restoring 150,000 hectares of peat-swamp forests

in Katingan, Central Kalimantan. This work won the 2021 Energy Global Award for our local management partner, Rimba Makmur Utama.

International environment agreements give us further avenues for collaboration. We are official partners of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and an associate member of the NDC Partnership, providing parties to the Paris Climate Agreement with expertise to make wetlands conservation and restoration part of their Nationally Determined Contributions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

We also work with engineers – collaborating for instance with Dutch dredging company Boskalis within Ecoshape, a consortium developing natural methods of coastal management. Our flagship Building with Nature Project has been fighting coastal flooding on the Indonesian island of Java. It has worked with local communities and government to install shoreline brushwood barriers to trap silt in which mangrove seeds can take hold. This is improving coastal protection, restoring coastal ecosystems and reviving marine fisheries and aquaculture along 20 kilometres of shore, and has aided more than 10,000 people.

The project, which concluded in 2021, has now handed ownership of the barriers to our villager partners. Meanwhile, the government is replicating the approach across Indonesia, and we are working with them, the Asian Development Bank, Ecoshape, and others to help other Asian countries to adopt the Building with Nature approach to tackling water risks along vulnerable coasts.

But whatever the scale of our projects, we believe that none will work without full buy-in from the local communities most connected with – and dependent on – wetlands.

In Java, our staff spent over a year in local communities, designing the brushwood barriers project, before work began. Villagers did most of the work, and received training and other benefits under our Bio-rights payments system, which offers loans for community development projects that are written off on successful completion of agreed work.

Bio-rights has underpinned our work with community organisations across the world for several years now. Our experience shows that it creates mutual respect that helps secure success by combining ecological, communal and livelihood benefits. For us, the resilience of communities is ultimately inseparable from ecosystem resilience.

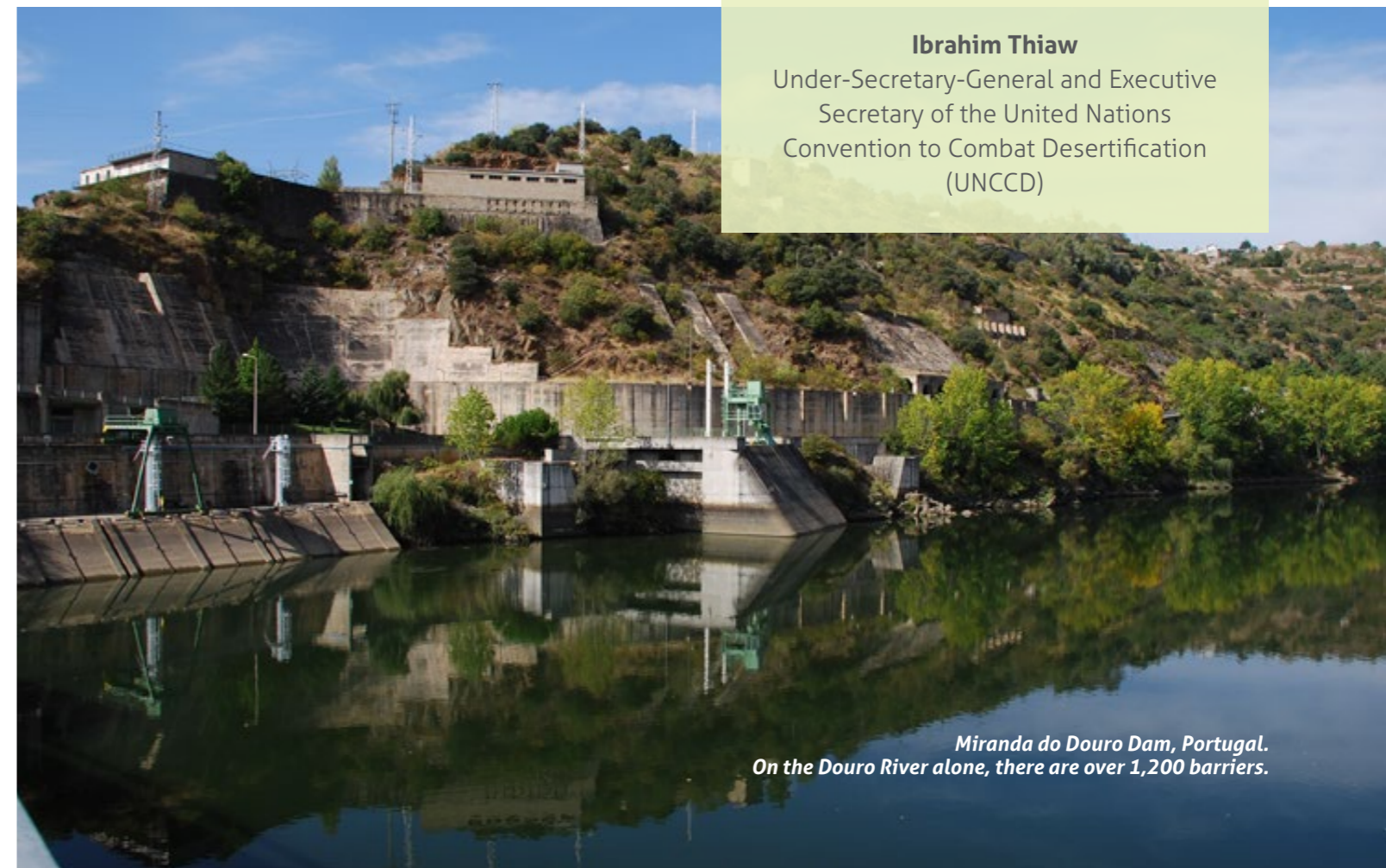
“At the onset of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in 2021, the plans and commitments are there. Restoration is an idea whose time has come; investing in land restoration is generally economically profitable, socially acceptable and environmentally desirable.”

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/countries-commit-restore-global-land-area-size-china>



Ibrahim Thiaw

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)



Miranda do Douro Dam, Portugal. On the Douro River alone, there are over 1,200 barriers.



APRI SUSANTO ASTRA

COORDINATOR NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS PROGRAMME

My name is Apri Susanto Astra. I am currently working at Wetlands International Indonesia as the Coordinator of the Nature-based Solutions Programme. This is part of Building with Nature Indonesia, which has been ongoing since 2015, bringing about various proud achievements as well as invaluable challenges and lessons for future improvement.

I think going forward, to make our voices heard at big conferences, such as COPs, we need more cutting-edge communication products to explain our work and tell our story. It would be even better if community representatives could speak directly at the conferences. To reach our 2030 targets, my team and I will continue to work with communities, while carrying out our respective roles. Collectively, we should attempt to invite more parties to be involved in wetland conservation activities, especially in Indonesia, and at global level.

On a personal level, I like outdoor activities, such as going to the sea, or camping in the mountains; this is complemented by my desire to be involved in preserving nature. Working with Wetlands International has given me that opportunity, and I discovered my passion for working with communities on nature conservation.



IBRAHIMA SADIO FOFANA

ADVOCACY OFFICER FOR THE BLUE LIFELINES FOR A SECURE SAHEL (BLISS) INITIATIVE

I'm Ibrahima Sadio Fofana – a trained socio-anthropologist. Since March 2021, I have been an advocacy officer for the Blue Lifelines for a Secure Sahel (BLISS) initiative. I have 15 years of experience working with local and international NGOs and have worked in many regions in Mali: Mopti, Gao, Koulikoro, Kayes, and Bamako. I joined Wetlands International in 2011 as a Field Coordinator, in charge of dialogue and strengthening projects for CSOs in Mali and West Africa. My ambition is to aid in the challenges of rural development, conservation, and restoration of natural resources to benefit wetland communities and their ecosystems. The field of work within Wetlands International is precise – it is all about “wetlands”. This is unique because it gives a clear orientation and has motivated me to stay within the network and share my experience and skills. The work of Wetlands International is different because it promotes all aspects of biodiversity. We mobilise resources to enable people to become resilient in the face of climate challenges. Wetlands International also advocates for better conservation of nature and continues to provide services for the benefit of all.

My greatest success in 2021 was the opening of the agencies with the Great Green Wall of Mali, Chad, Niger and the coordination of the Commission of the Great Green Wall to accompany the BLISS initiative; with the African climate week as a highlight to this commitment: I co-organised a virtual side event for promoting BLISS and generated supportive pledges. The advocacy work I do influences policy, practice, and investments in wetlands and will help to keep healthy wetlands for future generations. I will continue to contribute to the mobilisation of financial resources and work with key players for the implementation of the BLISS objectives by making visible what we are doing during forums, conferences, bilateral meetings, and advocacy events.



WETLANDS AND NATURE TAKE COP26 CENTRE STAGE

By Fred Pearce

Nature finally took centre stage in UN climate negotiations at November's COP26 event in Glasgow, Scotland. The carbon-storage capacity of wetlands came to the fore, as delegates from around the world considered afresh how they could limit climate change at or near 1.5° Celsius of warming – a target set in Paris, seven years prior.



With peatlands storing twice as much carbon as the world's forests, wetlands must be at the centre of the narrative on how we can meet our global climate goals.

Few in Glasgow any longer doubted that boosting the ability of ecosystems to capture and hold on to carbon was an essential adjunct to halting greenhouse-gas emissions from industrial activities. But many countries were still struggling to draw up plans for advancing their own "Nature-based Solutions".

Wetlands International played a significant role at the event by plugging the gaps in national expertise, while placing ourselves prominently in growing global efforts in wetlands conservation and restoration. With support from the Dutch National Postcode Lottery, we were in Glasgow nurturing relationships with governments, NGOs, and finance institutions to advance the learning process and assist in mainstream policy initiatives to protect and restore wetlands.

Forests have long been seen as part of a solution for greenhouse-gas emissions. However, the conference's location in Scotland helped raise the profile of wetlands alongside forests as Nature-based Solutions. In particular, it highlighted the role of peatlands, which we have pioneered in putting on the international climate change agenda.

COP26 took place near some of Europe's most important and carbon-rich peat bogs, including the Flow Country, which is often called the most intact and extensive blanket bog system in the world. The Scottish hosts embraced that proximity with a commitment to restore a quarter-million hectares of its degraded peatlands by 2030.

A popular venue on the conference fringe was the Peatland Pavilion, which we organised along with the Global Peatlands Initiative, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Succow Stiftung, Greifswald Mire Centre, IUCN Peatlands Programme, National Trust for Scotland and University of East London. The Pavilion contained a water droplet structure built out of reeds gathered from peatlands, and a 3D virtual pavilion with more than 200 exhibits, streamed online in 22 languages. It was attended in person by more than 20 ministers and high-level participants. Additionally, 45 sessions were held on everything from conservation finance to the science of peatlands as carbon megastores, sharing field work and best practice for restoration with governments, donors, and companies. The virtual Pavilion lives on as a permanent online resource.



Wetlands International's CEO Jane Madgwick speaking with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Global Center on Adaptation



Jane Madgwick, CEO, speaks live on Al Jazeera about wetlands as a solution to climate change.

“Water is not just a victim of the climate crisis, it is central to solving climate change” - CEO Jane Madgwick



Cinthia Soto, Senior Advocacy Officer at Wetlands International, and peatlands experts visit Flanders Moss National Nature Reserve north of Glasgow, one of the largest remaining intact raised bogs in Britain.

One event launched a global peatlands mapping initiative, intended to be used in a forthcoming Global Peatlands Assessment. This assists countries with large peatland resources and significant greenhouse gas emissions. Consecutively, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Scotland and Chile to collaborate on protecting their respective peatlands, discussions took place on the development of a new European Peatlands Initiative and Germany unveiled its national peatlands strategy.

Several nations in the Nile Basin firmed up commitments in their climate pledges, known formally as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to include protection of peatlands such as South Sudan’s giant Sudd swamp. Meanwhile, Canada committed to increasing protection of its own rich peatland resources.

However, some attendees warned that many nations have a long way to go to fulfil their pledges. Canada, for instance, has a quarter of the world’s peatlands, including the Hudson Bay Lowlands, which alone contains the equivalent to 175 years of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions. Yet currently only a tenth of those peatlands

are in protected areas, and many are threatened by mining developments.

Wetlands International also brought expertise to water issues. At the Water Pavilion, in collaboration with the Stockholm International Water Institute and partners, we underlined how wetlands are critical to the better water management in landscapes that we need as part of adapting to climate change. “Water is not just a victim of the climate crisis, it is central to solving climate change” said CEO Jane Madgwick.

During the conference, delegates made two important breakthroughs for wetlands. First, several countries, particularly in the tropics, included wetlands protection and restoration in their NDCs for the first time. Most notable were Peru, which during 2021 banned commercial exploitation of peatlands; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where vast swamp peatlands were discovered less than a decade ago within the Lac Télé Community Reserve; and Indonesia, which sees keeping its peat swamp forests wet as the key to preventing forest fires.



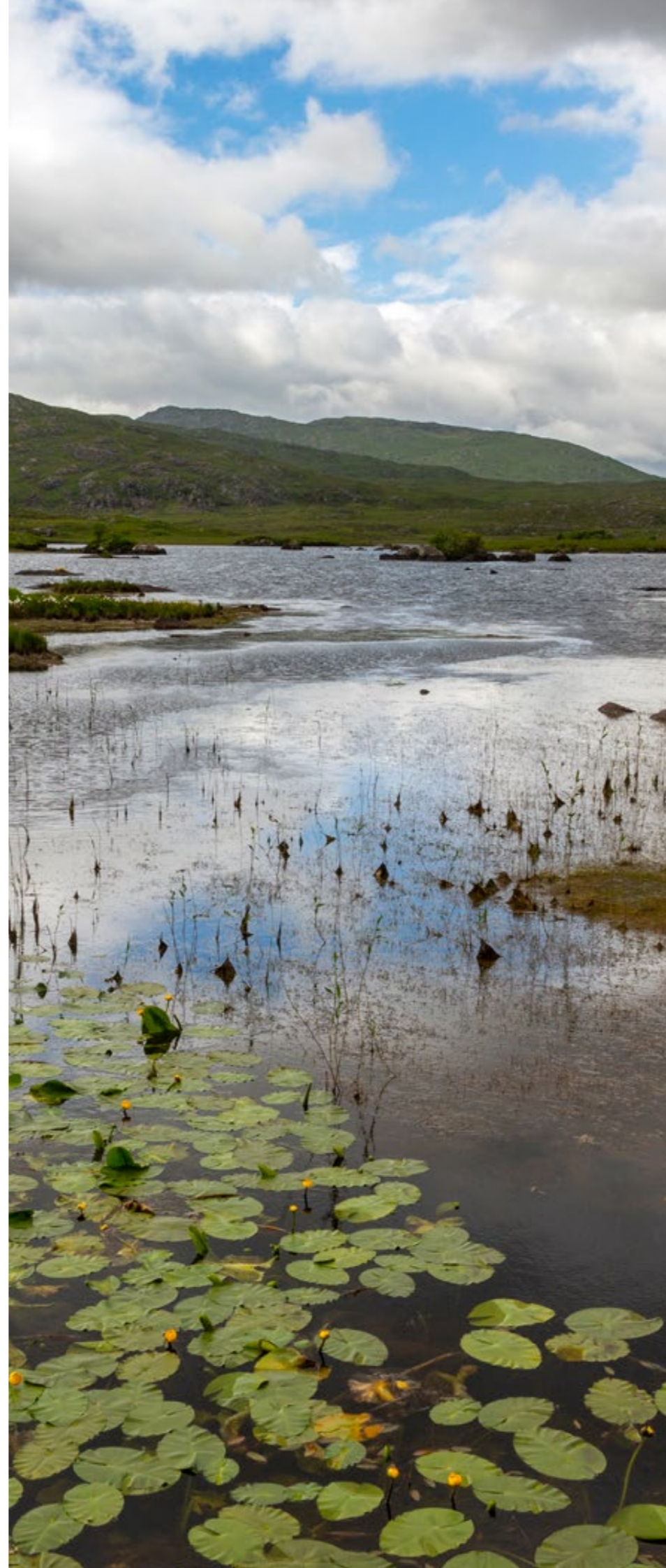
Wetlands International delegation at the Peatland Pavilion.

Second, negotiators reached agreement on Article 6, the essential rulebook for voluntary international cooperation, including carbon trading under the Paris Agreement. By providing a UN-approved pathway to help governments reach their NDCs, including through the involvement of non-states actors, there is now an enabling environment for wetlands conservation and restoration that should help unlock public and private finance.

Besides the vital importance of wetlands in mitigating climate change, there was also a growing recognition in Glasgow that wetlands can help countries and communities adapt to climate change through buffering the impact of droughts, floods, storms and rising sea levels. This role has yet to be reflected in international climate funding. UNEP estimates that only about one percent of total climate finance has gone into nature-based adaptation, and wetlands received only a fraction of that.

The bad news is that wetlands are still being lost faster than any other ecosystems worldwide. The good news is that the commitments made by governments in Glasgow could quickly change that.

For more information on our work at COP26, visit: <https://www.wetlands.org/cop26/>



CINTHIA SOTO

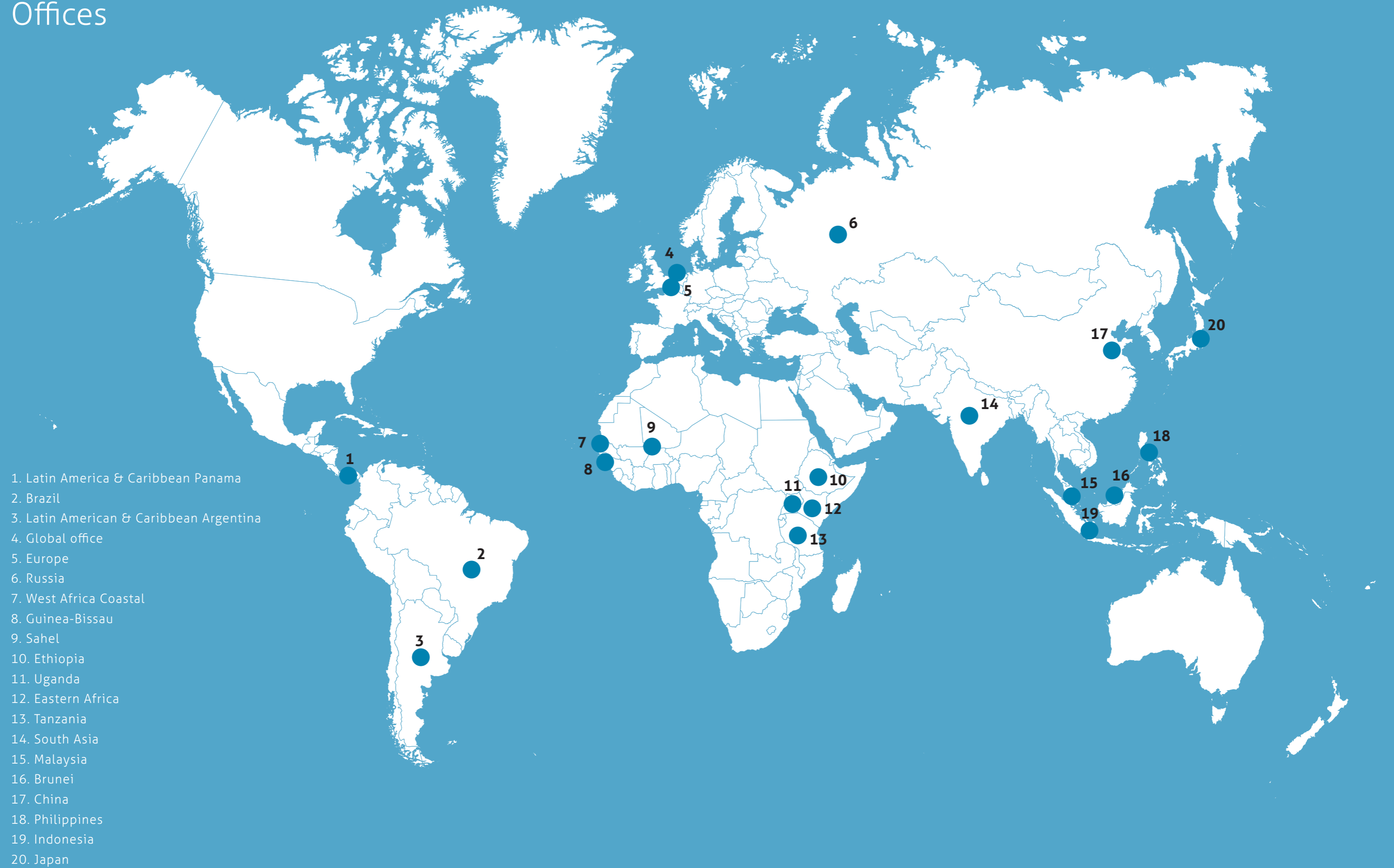
SENIOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY OFFICER

I am Cinthia Soto – I am Costa Rican, but have lived in the Netherlands for nine years. As Senior Climate Change Advocacy Officer with Wetlands International, I have the privilege to work within an exciting international environment. I've had many opportunities to connect with people from different cultures, backgrounds and walks of life. Also, I support the goals of Wetlands International as an organisation, and I value the balance between what needs to be done, and what we can actually do about it. We do provide solutions to the challenges we identify - we do not just stay at the finger-pointing stage, we go far beyond that as solution builders, conveners, and partners.

In my current position, I work to increase the role of wetlands in climate change action. I promote Nature-based Solutions, support capacity development internally and externally, and promote policies that can increase funding for wetlands, all of which have an impact on our 2030 targets. I am pleased to say that I led our involvement in the UNFCCC/COP26 in Glasgow, where we organised our Peatland Pavilion, and increased visibility by actively engaging with our partners and other environmental organisations.

While we recognise that transformational change is necessary, we understand that there is no perfect solution to the environmental challenges that we are currently facing, as problems are often interlinked. At Wetlands International, we contribute from different angles, we test solutions on the ground and we propose evidence-based policies. We are not going to reach targets for the conservation and restoration of wetlands in isolation - we need to work with governments, the private sector, financial institutions, NGOs, and other relevant bodies.

Wetlands International Offices



Views from the Waters Edge

We asked three prominent independent experts to assess where the world stands at the end of 2021 on wetlands and climate change. Here are their responses.



Ting Wang is a youth advocate for wetlands and a landscape researcher at The University of Hong Kong

Why is getting nature right central to fixing climate?

Nature is the buffer between human development and climate. Ecosystems can absorb manmade emissions, and their biodiversity helps us to adapt better to climate change. But climate change threatens that, because it damages habitats, causing ecological losses that untimely impact humanity's chances of survival.

How important are wetlands to this?

Wetlands are a versatile way to harness nature for fighting climate change. Around 40 percent of all species live or

breed in wetlands, including rivers, mangroves, peatlands, and tidal mudflats. Wetlands stabilize coastlines, protect human settlements against extreme weather events, reduce the risk of soil erosion, and capture and store carbon to reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases. However, their potential has too often been neglected. Mangroves forests of Southeast Asia have been drained and dammed, as have the marshlands of South America and the swamps of Central Africa.

Did the world make progress in 2021, and what are your hopes for 2022?

2021 started with a series of catastrophic extreme weather events, such as fires in California, but more hopefully, ended with a compromise deal at the United Nations Climate Change Conference. We are running out of time, but we should be motivated by hope, based on ambition and collaboration across the generations. The world's youth are key allies for wetlands. Their innovative participation is necessary to place nature conservation into a broader political, economic, and ecological framework.



Hans Joosten is a world authority on peatlands and co-founder of the Greifswald Mire Centre, Germany

Why is getting nature right central to fixing climate?

The destruction of natural ecosystems, such as the draining of peatlands, deforestation, and the ploughing of steppe

soils, is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere. The consequent climate change is a threat to the survival of natural ecosystems worldwide. Therefore, we must protect pristine ecosystems and restore damaged ones. However, we should not overestimate the capacity of nature in mitigating climate change. Even when optimally treated, ecosystems can only contribute; they cannot solve the climate problem. Most of the job we must do ourselves, by reducing anthropogenic emissions almost to zero.

How important are wetlands to this?

Wetlands are disproportionately important, because peatlands, mangroves, saltmarshes and seagrass meadows are the ecosystems that worldwide have the highest carbon density and have the highest rates of carbon capture. Conversely, their destruction also releases enormous amounts of carbon dioxide. Peatlands are the global champions in this respect. We have to stop them from acting as a substantial source of emissions – by protecting and where necessary rewetting and restoring them.

Did the world make progress in 2021, and what are your hopes for 2022?

Over 2021, the awareness of the importance of wetlands, and especially peatlands, has substantially increased, among scientists, politicians, and policymakers. The bad news is that the urgency for action is rapidly increasing because we have less and less time to keep climate change within tolerable limits. The good news is that we know better and better what to do scientifically, technically, and politically. During 2022, we should launch global actions for peatlands and other high-carbon wetlands.

Why is getting nature right central to fixing climate?

Nature and climate are part of a virtuously reinforcing dynamic and cannot be addressed separately. Functioning forests, oceans, and wetlands store large amounts of carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere and contribute to global warming. Likewise, limiting carbon dioxide emissions would help control the acidification of the oceans and protect marine biodiversity. Fixing one requires fixing the other.

How important are wetlands to this?

This mutually beneficial relationship is reflected in wetlands. Adequate climate conditions underpin healthy wetlands, while wetlands provide ecological services that limit climate change and help adapt to its effects. For instance, wetlands act as sponges during floods, absorbing excess water for slow release later.

Did the world make progress in 2021, and what are your hopes for 2022?

Definitely! We progressed towards defining clear common goals uniting climate, nature, and ethical considerations. We also set specific and time-bound targets for nature: zero net loss of nature from 2020, nature positive by 2030, and full recovery by 2050. These are beacons for society. However, until we act on them, we will keep losing natural treasures. I wish for a world where the values of wetlands for nature, climate, and humanity are recognised, and where wetlands have been restored to a thriving state.



Andre Hoffmann is a Swiss businessman, environmentalist and philanthropist, the son of pioneer wetlands activist Luc Hoffmann

FUNCTIONING OF THE ORGANISATION

Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to affect people in all countries in 2021 and, although there were a few periods of respite, most of the year was disrupted everywhere: in-person meetings, travel and working with partners was very limited, if at all possible. The rise of new virus mutations led to unexpected waves of infections and local or national lockdowns.

Impacts were felt directly by our staff, from illness, quarantine and worry about family, friends and future employment, to personal isolation caused by our offices being closed for much of the year. Project implementation was challenging but progressed better than in the previous year due to improvements made in remote working and extensive re-planning of projects.

It was a struggle for everyone, but our staff showed enormous resilience, equally matched by the understanding and flexibility shown by our programme donors.

Strategic Intent

This was the first year of implementing the Wetlands International's Strategic Intent (2020-2030) since its approval by the organisation's governance in December 2020. Our teams prepared regional strategies and stream plans to implement our strategic ambitions.

Achievements

Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and uncertainty in several countries where we work, positive progress was made across all three workstreams. Results contributing to the goals set out in the Strategic Intent have been delivered collaboratively by our office teams through programmes and projects, in line with the local context in which they operate. A summary of achievements is provided on pages 20-27. A list of the main projects carried out in 2021 is provided in pages 54-57 of the Annex.

Wetlands International network

Wetlands International is an independent, global network of offices with shared values, brand and purpose that implement a joint strategy to safeguard and restore wetlands in more than 100 countries worldwide. Our offices and locations are shown on pages 46-47.

Global Office

The Global Office, based in the Netherlands, facilitates work across the network and provides leadership and support in representation, programme leadership, communication, and fundraising. The office is responsible for facilitating the daily work of the network and ensuring it is aligned with decisions taken by the network management team and global board. A social report for the Global Office in 2021 is presented on pages 58-59.

Communications and advocacy

Strengthening our advocacy and communication is a key part of upscaling our impact at landscape, national and global levels. With support from the COMON Foundation and the Dutch National Postcode Lottery, the focus this year was on increasing our visibility, profile and influence while putting in place the foundations and building capacity across the network. In 2021, we appointed a new Global Head of Communications and Advocacy - Julien Anseau - and strengthened our capabilities by recruiting new staff with strong climate advocacy, media and external outreach track records.

We made good progress in the areas of traditional media, social media and thought leadership in 2021. We increasingly secured coverage in top-tier international media, including our opinion editorial published by Al Jazeera ahead of COP26 and our CEO appearing on the One Planet podcast. We also grew our audiences online across all digital channels; followers on LinkedIn grew from 10k to 15k in the last 12 months alone. We saw similar growth on Twitter which we use for breaking news, newsjacking and policy influencing. Our fastest growing channel is Instagram.



JULIEN ANSEAU

HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY

I lead the communications and advocacy team across the Wetlands International network. Before joining in August 2021, I worked in communications at WWF International producing news and content for international media. I also spent many years in global and regional communication roles with a large international development NGO, providing strategic and technical leadership to communications and advocacy teams in Africa, Americas and Asia. I was fortunate to travel to places like Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Ethiopia, Ecuador and the Balkans.

Wetlands International's mission strongly resonates with me. Wetlands are crucial to people, climate and nature; and yet they continue to be overlooked. This needs to change and it is now a communication challenge to get people to care and act for wetlands.

My team is passionate, engaged and great to work with. We aim to inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands, and we are responsible for building awareness, influencing change and supporting resource mobilisation to achieve impact at scale.

A major highlight for my team in 2021 was raising wetlands up the global agenda at COP26 in Glasgow. We co-organized both the Peatlands and Water Pavilions, and positioned wetlands as a key solution to climate change. There is now a growing realisation that healthy wetlands are vital to meeting global climate, sustainable development and biodiversity goals.

Our challenge now is to engage wider audiences. Wetlands International alone will not be able to safeguard and restore the world's wetlands, which is why it's essential we work with governments, companies, NGOs, finance institutions, academia, youth, and the media.

Network Organisation Chart

Governance

Wetlands International is a non-profit organisation with charitable status in the Netherlands and in countries where it operates. The organisation has two complementary forms of international governance: an Association of Members (governments and NGOs), and a foundation overseen by a Supervisory Council (SC) whose members also constitute the Board of the Association (BoA). The SC and BoA met four times in 2021. A report of governance activities is presented on pages 14-15. In cases where Wetlands International offices have an independent legal status, they are governed by their own boards and the network CEO (F.J. Madgwick) is an ex-officio member.

Network management

The Global Board, consisting of the Wetlands International CEO and Heads of each office, is responsible for strategic decisions on positioning, programme priorities and institutional issues. The global board delegates operational decision-making to the Network Management Team, chaired by the CEO, with members drawn from among heads of office and global functions. In 2021, the Network Management Team met every two months and helped steer the organisation through the continuing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Global Board met in October in its annual meeting and decided on policy positions, finalised the 2022 Annual Plan, endorsed recommendations of the business model review, decided on 'big ideas' to be developed, and agreed priorities for Network Management Team and changes in its membership.

Accountability

Transparency and accountability towards our stakeholders are part of our core values, including actively seeking feedback on our performance. A dedicated webpage provides our annual reports and accounts, and information about key global policies including the Conservation and Human Rights Framework, INGO Accountability Framework, Code of Conduct, Corporate Engagement, Anti-corruption, Ethical, Gender, and Partnership policies. In 2021 Wetlands International made no changes to these policies.

Anti-corruption and whistle blowing

All staff are introduced to the anti-corruption policy in their induction and are encouraged to be vigilant and discuss any suspicious activities with their line manager or head of office. Stakeholders can approach Wetlands International with any grievances or complaints related to possible cases of fraud, discrimination or mismanagement. The complaints procedure is available for use of anyone on the Wetlands International website. No complaints were received in 2021.

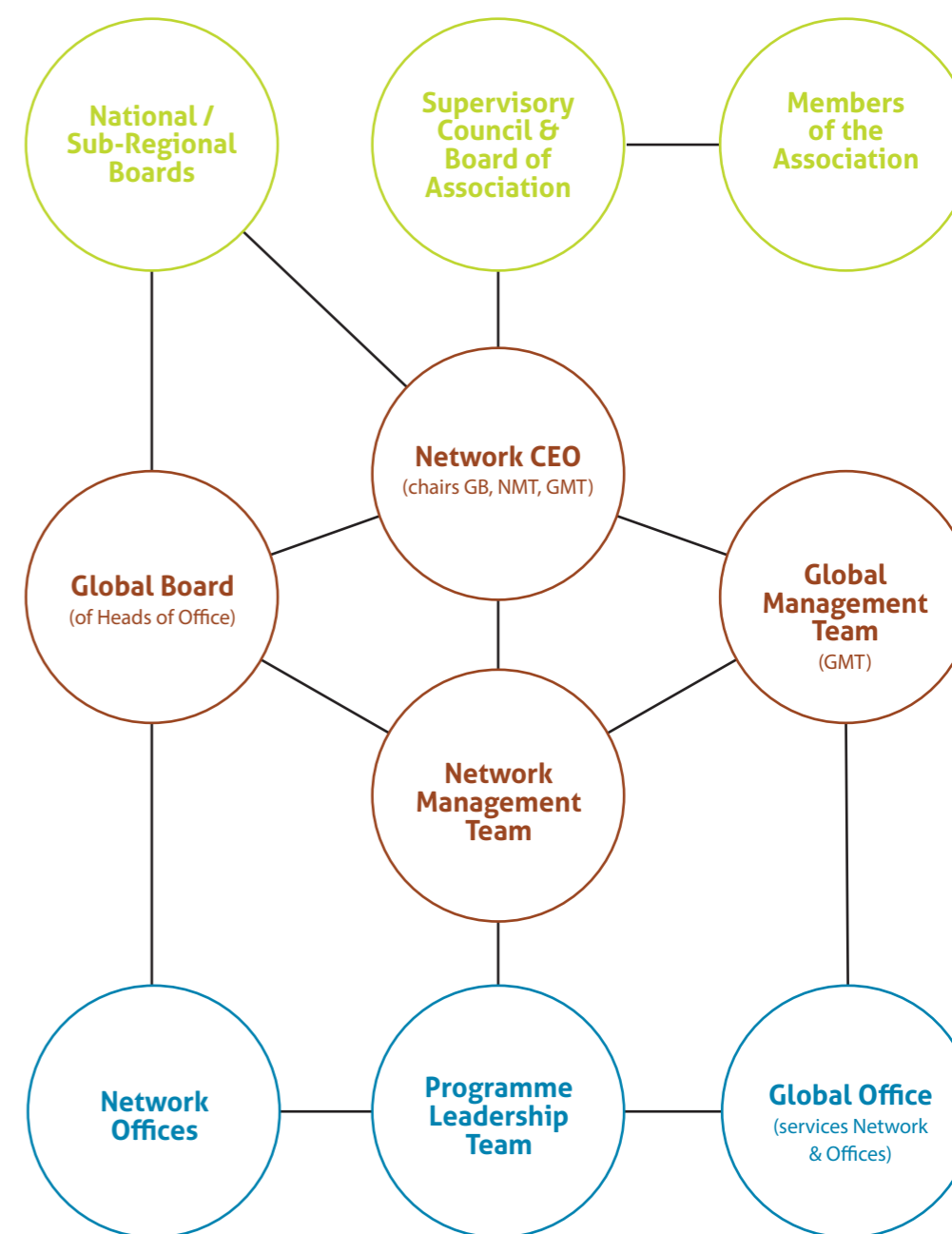
Corporate Social Responsibility

Wetlands International strives in its daily operations to reduce negative impact on the environment and act in a sustainable and socially responsible way. In the Netherlands, we encourage Global Office employees to use public transport. All company flights booked are compensated for their CO2 emissions. For 2021 we have calculated 19.31 tons of CO2, which corresponds to a reduction of 8 percent compared to 2020. Commuting to work and domestic travel also remained low as many staff worked from home for most of the year and online meetings were the standard way of working.

GOVERNANCE

NETWORK EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION





SILVINA SCHUCHNER

REGIONAL COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR - ARGENTINA

I am Silvina Schuchner - I was born and raised in Buenos Aires, a beautiful and multicultural city that has grown its urban agglomerations along the La Plata River. Only recently, we started recovering the river banks and coastline. I have a degree in Communication and previously worked as a media professional for 25 years. That is how I was able to meet different native communities and learn about their relationship with land. I love trees in all their forms - many years ago, a wise man taught me to hug them to feel the energy of the earth, since then I got into the habit of doing it. I also love the ceibo, our national tree, and the liquidambar with its red leaves in autumn and its seed spheres that, sway in the wind like little bells.

A year and a half ago, I joined the Wetlands International LAC team in the Argentina Office with one goal: to make everyone aware of the beauty and services that wetlands provide and how important it is to conserve them. I feel that we have a lot to contribute through communication. I was particularly interested in the Wetlands International LAC office because we work with a regional perspective that transcends political borders. The Corredor Azul, one of our main programmes, seeks to preserve the health and connectivity of the Paraná-Paraguay wetland system, one of the last examples of a great river system that flows without barriers.

For me, one of the highlights in 2021 was to develop a campaign for World Wetlands Day, the 50th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention, which was covered by national media. Our main achievement was to reach both the general public and key decision-makers using different platforms. This year, through a podcast, we have been able to hear the voices of the high Andean communities who defend their territory against non-responsible lithium extraction: Artisanal fisherfolk, sustainable livestock farmers, and ecotourism entrepreneurs are our best ambassadors for the work we do every day.



RITESH KUMAR

DIRECTOR OF WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL - SOUTH ASIA

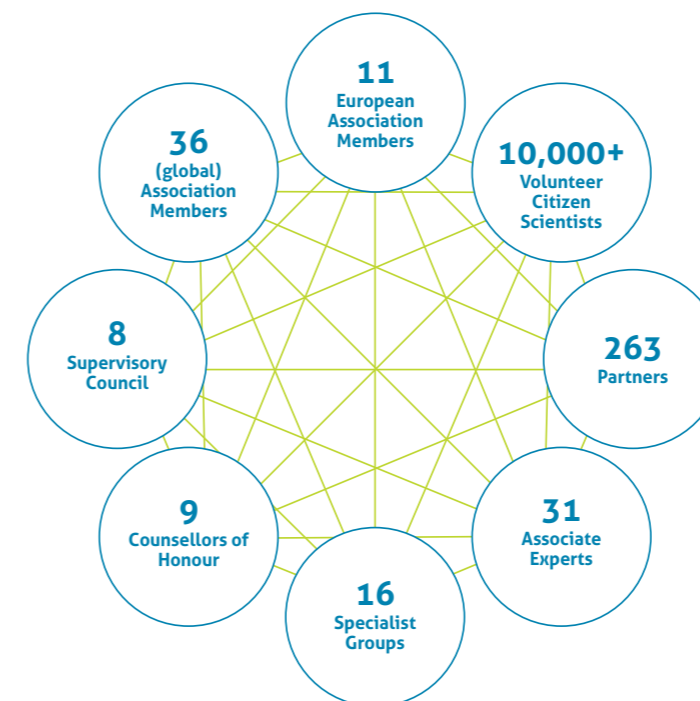
I am Ritesh Kumar – Director of Wetlands International in South Asia. Working with Wetlands International has given me the opportunity to contribute to building healthy, functioning ecosystems for resilient communities. My team and I believe in an “all of society” approach to conserving wetlands, an inclusive approach which exists as part of the nature conservation agenda set up in the 2030 targets.

One of our challenges is to communicate that wetland ecosystems are not just interfaces of land and water, but support-systems for all people living on our planet. We, as Wetlands International, can act as connectors of science and knowledge and work at multiple scales, within multiple sectors, and with a wide range of diverse people. These interconnections drive us towards action for conserving wetlands for future generations. In 2021, we started to tell the stories of ordinary people. We joined hands with non-profit conservation and environmental science news platform, Mongabay India, and published 25 stories of people initiating and leading change in our Wetlands Champions series. These stories have been immensely popular and used throughout various platforms to showcase the power of motivated people taking action. Wetlands International can act as a strong facilitator by promoting a more inclusive agenda for wetlands conservation, building on diverse ways of seeing, understanding and interpreting nature, showcasing community perspectives and making important voices heard.

Risk Management

A risk register for the network, including mitigation measures, is updated at least once a year and discussed with the Wetlands International Supervisory Council. Tackling the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic remained the highest risk at the end of 2021, followed by economic recession triggered by a post-pandemic budgetary squeeze. The top five risks in December 2021 are listed in the table below:

Risk	Area of risk	Potential Impact on organisation	Mitigation measures
1. Impact of Covid-19 reduces fundraising and delays project implementation	Operational	Slower implementation leads to missed opportunities, fewer results, increase in costs, and challenges in fundraising.	Keep close contact with project teams, partners and donors. Move activities online and other adaptations.
2. Economic recession in multiple regions leads to fewer funds available and more competition	Financial	Fewer opportunities to develop and implement new programmes with impact on income and staff budget.	Regular review of situation with Network Management Team; sharpen propositions; give more attention to relationship management and fundraising.
3. Insufficient resources to cover organisational costs	Financial	A strong pipeline of new prospects, including flexible funding for organisational development, is needed to create positive impact for wetlands and the communities who depend on them.	MT, Heads of Offices and Programme Heads have time reserved to identify and develop project concepts. Building a global fundraising team.
4. Political instability and conflict	Governance	Need to stop or substantially change implementation due to rising insecurity or changes in government support.	Maintain close contacts with Heads of Office, diplomatic networks and donors; strengthen cooperation with local communities; incorporate flexibility in project design.
5. Insufficient monitoring of project implementation	Financial	Cost over-runs, disallowed expenditures (non-compliant with donor conditions) and insufficient delivery of results, with consequent impact on reputation.	Increasing the frequency of analysing results and standardising reporting. Periodically reviewing management information.



Associated experts, members and volunteers

Increasing our reach

The strength of Wetlands International is much more than its staff and offices. Through working with influential partners, specialist groups, experts and members, we accelerate our momentum and strategic results.

Members and the Supervisory Council provide active governance and, together with Counsellors of Honour, bring high-level expertise, guidance and connections. In 2021 Kathy MacKinnon and André van der Zande became Counsellors of Honour in recognition of their distinguished service to the organisation. Specialist groups, associate experts and partners provide expertise, evidence and advice that underpins our approach on science, policy and practice. Partner organisations with whom we work regularly to implement programmes and projects are listed on pages 68-73 of the Annex. We are especially proud of our long-standing engagement with volunteer and citizen science groups, such as those who participate in the International Waterbird Census each year.

Members of the Association

Government and NGO members of the global association provide long-term support and strategic guidance to the organisation. In December 2021, members took note of the 2020 annual review and accounts, passed resolutions to approve a new Chair (Jan Ernst de Groot) and a new member (Miguel Jorge) of the Board of Association, and discussed advocacy for global wetland targets in 2022 at the Convention for Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention meetings. Our European Association was joined by one new member in 2021 (Birdlife Belarus).

Strategic partnerships

Wetlands International works in many partnerships in nearly all the activities we undertake. Our partnership policy lays down principles that guide why and how long-term strategic relationships are developed and managed. In 2021 we made important steps forward in strategic partnerships across our programme, including with:

- Coasts and Deltas: Global Mangrove Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, WWF, Permian Global, and Boskalis
- Peatlands: Global Peatlands Initiative, Greifswald Mire Centre, Rewilding Europe, Greenchoice
- Rivers and Lakes: CARE, International Alert, IWMI, GIZ
- Conventions and Waterbird Agreements: Ramsar Convention, IUCN, AEWA, EAAFP and CMS

COmON Foundation

The COmON Foundation supports Wetlands International in its mission to achieve impact for wetlands and people worldwide. This includes safeguarding and restoring mangroves and coastal landscapes in Africa and Asia, bringing knowledge on wetlands and water issues into the 4 Returns methodology for landscape restoration in partnership with Commonland, and support for a step change in the organisation's effectiveness. At the end of 2021, the COmON Foundation made Wetlands International a key grantee which elevates our relationship to a strategic level.

Spotlight: Global Office Social Report 2021

This section provides insight into our global office staffing and human resource (HR) practices in 2021.

Covid-19

2021 was again a tough year for our Global Office staff in the Netherlands regarding the continuing risks of the pandemic. Our Covid-19 team oversaw our policies and practices to ensure the safety and well-being of our staff while endeavouring to deliver our mission. Working from home remained the norm for our team with no travel outside the Netherlands until late in 2021.

Throughout the year our aim was to protect our staff, their families and friends to the maximum possible while going through various waves of infection, lockdown and easing of measures. It was especially challenging for new 'wetlanders' who started working for the organisation in 2020-2021. We are proud of our great team and are thankful for their resilience, flexibility and professionalism - hats off to all!

Diversity

In December 2021, we had a total global office staff of 34 people which is 5 fewer than the previous year. Our staff has a diverse cultural and professional background which matches our role as an international NGO. During the year key staff ratios remained generally stable with 14 different nationalities, an average age of 46 years, and a balanced male/female ratio of 47/53. In 2021, almost 80% of our staff were educated to university level and include 9 members with PhDs.

Employment contracts

The average number of working hours per person per week was 34 during the year (fulltime is 36 hours). During 2021 we employed 10 new staff members while 15 staff members left. We reshaped the team to meet the needs of the Strategy and the emerging project portfolio. Of the fifteen who left: three moved to other Wetlands International functions in other Offices; six moved to new jobs, of whom two senior technical staff after 10 years

in the organisation and the other four moving to jobs which represented a career step-up for them; five staff did not match the needs of the new Strategy and became redundant; one person resigned for personal reasons.

Induction at a distance

The past year taught us to be flexible and creative in all we do. New colleagues picked up their responsibilities quickly and started to bring on others in turn. In this we benefited from the remote working practices developed in the first year of the pandemic, and we also used the limited possibilities to meet in person to strengthen teamwork. For example, in September, during one of the periods when the Covid-19 rules have been relaxed, we held a games day for all Wetlands employees.

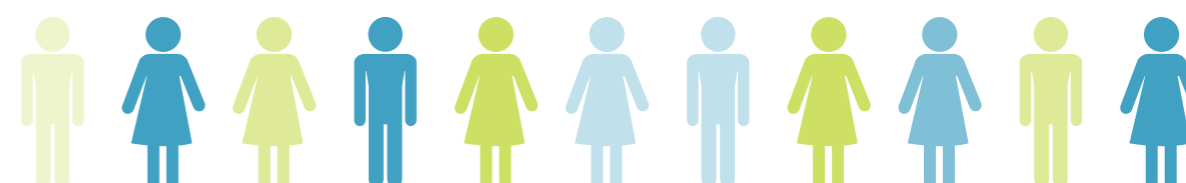
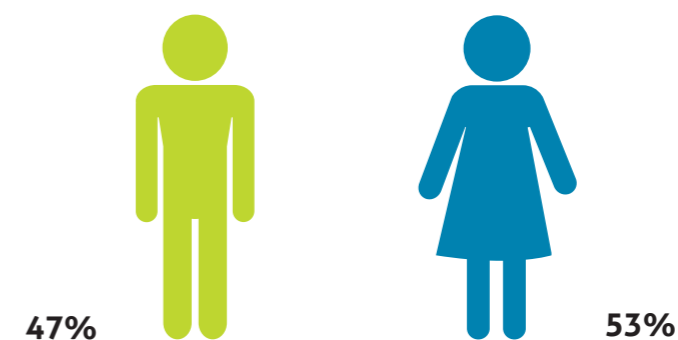
Health

In 2021 Covid-19 affected our staff more than the year before – mentally and physically. Our total percentage of sick leave went up to 2.1% which is relatively high for the organisation, including reasons other than Covid-19. With most staff working from home, we continued to make additional equipment available (screens, chairs, keyboards, etc.) to colleagues to work safely.

Integrity

Personal safety and integrity are a priority for Wetlands International. We have policies and practices about the behaviour staff can expect from each other and we endeavour to create a safe space to share concerns or complaints as they occur. No official complaints were received in 2021 from staff; the external person of trust was consulted after receiving a letter from a staff member who had left by mutual agreement. After discussion it was agreed by all that, apart from informing the Supervisory Council, no further action was needed. We continue to give attention to awareness and training on behaviour, transparency and integrity.

Global Office Staff



14 NATIONALITIES

AVERAGE AGE: 46

STAFF NUMBERS

total: 34
fte: 31,8
part-time: 12
full-time: 22



CONTRACT TYPE

permanent: 18
fixed time: 16
project: 0

HEALTH

short-term
sick leave 2.1%

HIGHEST LEVEL EDUCATION

PhD: 9
master: 16
bachelor: 7
other: 2



INTEGRITY PROCEDURES

internal: 0
external: 0

SUMMARY OF FINANCE AND RESOURCING

This section provides a summary of Wetlands International's finance and resourcing in 2021. A detailed version can be found in sections 1 and 2 (annual accounts) and section 3 of the Annex.

Wetlands International focuses its work where wetlands matter most to both people and nature. Our programmes and initiatives are developed to meet our goals which are set out in our Strategic Intent 2020-2030 and are organised into three streams: Coasts and Deltas, Rivers and Lakes, and Peatlands (see section 3.1 of the Annex for a complete list of our projects).

Our programmes are increasingly large-scale and long-term, involving transboundary and international work that involves several offices. The network's offices (global and sub-regional, national) work together on resource development and an increasing amount of funding is raised by offices other than the global office.

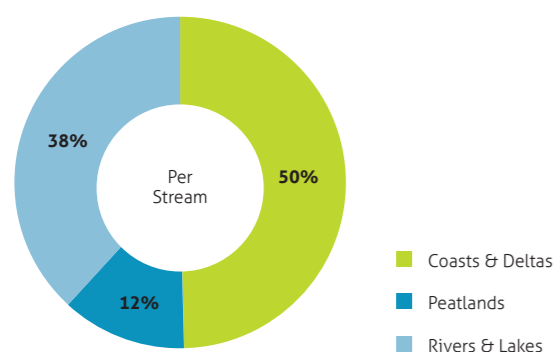
Resourcing the global organisation

The main sources of income of Wetlands International for 2021 came from projects as well as important annual contributions from our members. The total network project income is based on data obtained from all offices according to their national finance practices. The total network project income of 2021 amounted to EUR 14.8 million (see Annex section 3.1).

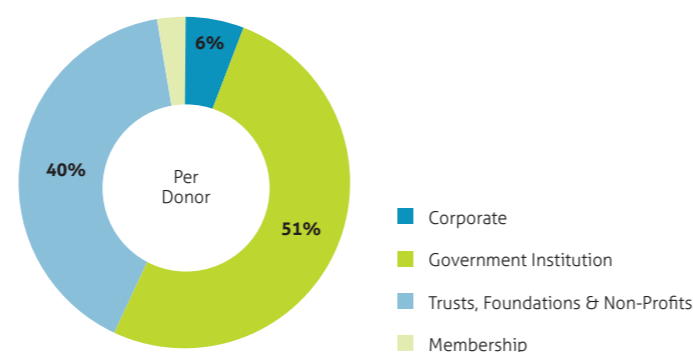
Our sources of income and expenditures across the sectors

The main source of income in 2021 was from government grants, representing 51% of our income. In addition 40% came from foundations, trusts and other non-profits, 6% from corporate funding (through our Collaboration Agreements). Membership contributions are 3% of the total income but are important strategically, as they enable action on waterbird monitoring and support strategic investments. A full list of network projects can be found in section 3.1 of the Annex. This list provides an overview of projects implemented in 2021 per office and includes the stream, the amount funded, the donor and the donor type.

Global Network Income by Stream



Global Network Income by Donor



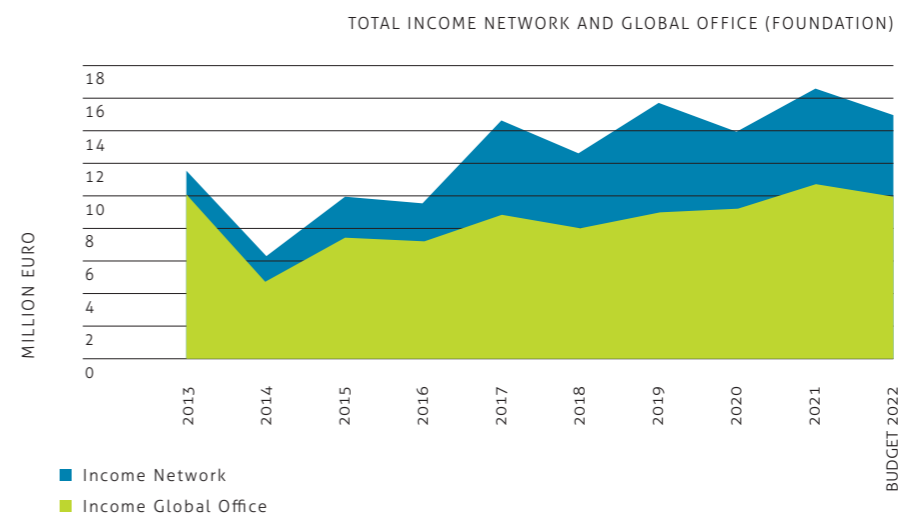
Our sources of income and expenditures across the three streams

Across our three streams, Coasts and Deltas accounted for the largest portion of our income at 50%, Rivers and Lakes at 38% and Peatlands contributing 12% of total network income.

Resource development and implementation by network offices

In 2021, network offices received and managed 35% of total income directly from our donors. This is slightly lower than in 2020 (44%). This decrease was mainly due to delays in implementing project activities, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Projects managed through the global office are mostly implemented by our network offices or by affiliated scientific institutions, partners and experts using sub-contracts.



Considerations looking ahead

We can further invest in improvement of our network's institutional capacity and financial resilience, thanks to a growing portfolio of core and flexible finance. In addition to our annual member dues and a grant from the Dutch Postcode Lottery, from 2022 we anticipate an annual grant from the COMON Foundation to enable our entire organisation to step up efforts to reach our global ambition in terms of impact for people and nature. This key grant will be evaluated every three years. We also received significant one-off grants in 2021 from individuals via philanthropic fundraising platforms.

Project and programme funding continues to be our mainstay but with these (more) flexible funds, we are better able to invest in strengthening organisational capacities, nurturing partnerships and programmes, donor stewardship, communications and advocacy – all of which enables us to attract additional finance for upscaling. These positive developments make the organisation less vulnerable to shifts in donor priorities and increasingly competitive calls for proposals. In addition, we will be able to give more priority to secure long-term and multi-region programme development.

We aim to make positive shifts in the coming years in our operational standards and processes across the network organisation. In 2022-2023 for example, we will roll out project cycle management training to harmonize operations across offices and build staff expertise. This will further increase our efficiency, project management standards and capacity to share and manage project knowledge and lessons from the field.

Alongside this, we are taking steps to develop fundraising capacity across the regions, to enhance our communications impact and to improve knowledge management and learning.

We continue our efforts to enlarge and diversify our base of members and supporters, and plan to explore mechanisms which will improve the financial resilience of the Wetlands International network as a whole, including strengthening our financial reserves to enable us to address unforeseen external events and to invest in the organisation. The above priorities reflect the advice received from consultants who undertook a review of Wetlands International's internal operations during 2021.

THANK YOU

The progress made towards our 2030 targets, as set out in the Strategic Intent 2020-2030 and documented in this Annual Review, is made possible thanks to the support of our donors, members, partners and the global network of volunteer International Waterbird Census observers. Many thanks to them all.

Wetlands International has the ambitious goal to safeguard and restore tens of millions of hectares of wetlands over 2020-2030, bringing multiple returns for people, climate, and nature. Our theory of change encapsulates the three main phases of our work: to inspire, mobilise, and upscale. These are the key ingredients of our organisational strategy for the period 2020-2030.

At Wetlands International, we understand that only by working with others can we safeguard and restore the world's wetlands. That is why we join forces with a growing portfolio of partners to increase our reach and accelerate our impact.

In 2021, we worked intensively with existing and new partners to drive wetland solutions across sectors and scales, from knowledge institutions to the private sector. We would like to thank you all.

Our members played an important part in shaping our Strategic Intent 2020-2030 and their annual membership contributions helps us to drive implementation. Our members, both governments and NGOs, also provide additional financial support and collaborate in programmes and on policy advocacy. A big thank you to them for their continuing support and collaboration.

The International Waterbird Census, one of the longest running and largest citizen science programme in the world, brings together counts of millions of waterbirds thanks to the many hours of fieldwork by tens of thousands of volunteers. Many thanks to them.

We would especially like to thank our major donors in 2021:

- The COmON Foundation for supporting Wetlands International in its mission to achieve impact for wetlands and people worldwide, including safeguarding and restoring mangroves and coastal landscapes in Africa and Asia, bringing knowledge on wetlands and water issues into the 4 Returns methodology for landscape restoration in partnership with Commonland (see page 30), supporting for a step change in the organisation's effectiveness, and making Wetlands International a key grantee (see page 61).
- The Dutch National Postcode Lottery for their grant and extending its support for another three years (2021-2023). This contribution enables us to step up our work with partners to stimulate and enable whole landscape recovery including the regeneration of vital wetlands (see page 61).
- DOB Ecology for supporting major, long-term programmes to conserve and restore mangroves in Africa, and to conserve the river and wetland system of the Paraná-Paraguay and the High Andean wetlands in South America (see page 33).
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for enabling the restoration of high value wetlands in the Rift valley and along the East African Mangrove Coast.
- The International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) for its support to the Building with Nature Indonesia programme and the Accelerating Adaptation through Building with



Measuring carbon in palm swamp forests on peat, Peru.

- Nature in Asia upscaling initiative (see page 34).
- The German Agency for Development & International Cooperation (GIZ) for enabling our work on deltas and coasts.
- The MAVA Foundation for supporting our long-term engagement and partnership programmes in West Africa and the Mediterranean region.
- Arcadia for enabling our work to help conserve and restore intertidal wetlands along the Yellow Sea coast in China, a critically important part of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway for migratory waterbirds (see page 34).
- Grantham Foundation for supporting our work with Rewilding Europe on the development of carbon landscape propositions for peatland restoration, and attracting further funding for upscaling (see page 26).
- Greenchoice for supporting us to restore 2,500 ha of mangroves in Guinea-Bissau (see page 29) and contributing to the first-ever Peatland Pavilion at UNFCCC COP26 (see page 44).
- All the donors who fund the Global Mangrove Alliance, and particularly the Oak Foundation, DoB Ecology, COmON Foundation and the Dutch National Postcode Lottery for their support toward the development of the Global Mangrove Watch platform and its

- integration into (inter)national processes to support the broader mangrove community (see page 34).
- The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and others for funding our work in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and elsewhere on the African continent (see page 11).
- The many ministries of environment and development agencies, state and local governments, and all government and NGO members who enable our work.

A big thank you also to all the other donors listed on page 75 onwards of the Annex.

Colophon



Copyright

© 2022 Wetlands International

Published by Wetlands International

P.O. Box 471
6700 AL Wageningen
The Netherlands

Design and Layout

Gertie Vos
Joeri Borst

Editor

Andrea Gros
Megan McFarlane
Nikita Tiwari

Writer

Fred Pearce

Photo credits

- | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|--------|--|-----|--|--------|---|
| cover | Wetlands International East Africa, Elizabeth Wamba | 13. | <i>middle</i> Martha Rojas-Urrego, Wikipedia, Creative Commons | 34. | Mopti, Yveline Poncet | 51. | CIFOR, Deanna Ramsay, Flickr |
| back | Adobe Stock | 13. | <i>bottom</i> Sacha Dench, Conservation without Borders | 35. | Juanje Orío, Flickr | 54. | Wetlands International Argentina, Silvina Schuchner |
| 2. | Shutterstock | 14. | Wetlands International | 35. | Ibrahim Thiaw, Desertif Actions | 55. | Wetlands International South Asia, Ritesh Kumar |
| 6. | Wetlands International, Joeri Borst | 15. | Wetlands International | 36. | Wetlands International Indonesia, Apri Susanto Astra | 54-55. | Anna Krezo |
| 7. | IUCN, XIA Jianguo | 15. | <i>bottom right</i> Wetlands International, Nicolette Petri | 37. | Wetlands International, Ibrahima Sadio Fofana | 63. | CIFOR |
| 8. | iStock | 18. | Wetlands International, Richard Holland | 38. | Peter Blakely, Natural England | 64. | Shutterstock |
| 9. | 4 Returns Landscape Cover, Wetlands International | 18-19. | <i>background</i> Adobe Stock | 40. | Wetlands International | | |
| 10. | The State of the World's Mangroves Cover, Wetlands International | 22-23. | <i>background</i> NASA Johnson, Flickr | 41. | Wetlands International, Cinthia Soto | | |
| 10. | CIFOR | 24-25. | Adobe Stock | 42. | Wetlands International, Arin de Hoog | | |
| 11. | Wetlands International | 26-27. | Adobe Stock | 43. | Wetlands International | | |
| 11. | Olivier Barriere | 28. | Adobe Stock | 44. | Wetlands International, Arin de Hoog | | |
| 12. | Dr Bruno Oberle, Wikipedia, Creative Commons | 30. | Adobe Stock | 45. | <i>background</i> Shutterstock | | |
| 12. | <i>bottom</i> Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, United Nations, Rick Bajornas | 31. | Ruben Veefkind, Greenchoice | 45. | Wetlands International global office, Cinthia Soto | | |
| 13. | <i>top</i> Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Convention on Biological Diversity | 31. | Wetlands International | 48. | Hans Joosten, Jongebloed DBU | | |
| | | 32. | John Loudon, COmON Foundation | 48. | Research Gate, Ting Wang | | |
| | | 32. | Steve Black | 49. | World Economic Forum, Andre Hoffmann | | |
| | | 33. | Rewilding Europe | 51. | Wetlands International global office | | |



Wetlands
INTERNATIONAL

www.wetlands.org