

Welcome to

Session 1: Stream Opening

Human health and wellbeing depends on nature



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CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Wetlands: Source of health and well-being

Dr. Christopher Briggs,
Secretary General Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar 1971)
14th November 2014



Wetlands are at the heart of our physical, spiritual and mental well-being



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Physically water makes up 60% of our body
- People seek out water when they relax, for reflection, and for sport
- Wetlands are among the most beautiful places on Earth, and have inspired artists, travellers, poets, and photographers for generations
- The first civilizations took place near wetlands (Nile, Indus, Yangtze)
- Coburg Peninsula was the world's first Ramsar site
 - Traditional Aboriginal owners still conduct an active ceremonial life based on the role of wetlands and water
 - And undertake semi-traditional hunting and gathering



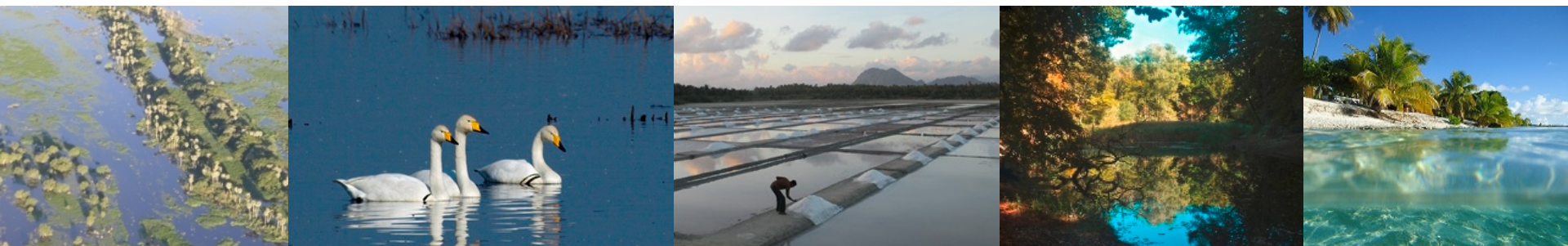
Wetlands are everywhere



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Broad definition: land areas that are flooded with water, either seasonally or permanently
- Inland wetland types:
 - Marshes, ponds, lakes, fens, rivers, flood plains and swamps
- Coastal wetland types:
 - Mangroves, saltwater marshes, estuaries, lagoons – even coral reefs
- Man-made wetlands include fish ponds, saltpans, rice paddies
- Range in size from less than one hectare to the Pantanal in Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay; three times the size of Ireland



Wetlands provide fresh water for us all



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Less than 3% of the world's water is fresh – the rest is saltwater
 - Most of this is frozen
 - Of the available freshwater, the largest share can be found in aquifers
- At a very basic level, humans require 20-50 litres of water per day
 - Minimum for drinking, cooking and cleaning needs
- Almost two billion people in Asia and 380 million EU residents depend on groundwater for their water supply
- Wetlands help purify and replenish the surface water and sub-surface aquifers humanity depends on for all its needs



Wetlands purify our water & filter waste



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Plants from wetlands help lessen water pollution
 - Absorb some harmful fertilizers and pesticides
 - Retain some heavy metals and toxins from industry
- Example: Nakivubo Swamp (Kampala, Uganda)
 - Filters sewage and industrial effluents for free
 - Treatment plant would cost \$2 million per year
- Example: Cypress swamps (Florida, USA)
 - Remove 98% of nitrogen and 97% of phosphorous, preventing contamination of the groundwater



Wetlands purify our air and enhance resilience to climate change



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Peatlands alone cover an estimated 3% of the world's land area, but they hold 30% of all carbon stored on land
 - Twice the amount stored in all the world's forests!
- In the face of rising sea levels, coastal wetlands reduce the impact of typhoons and tsunamis
 - Saltmarshes, mangroves act as buffers; their roots bind shoreline and resist erosion
 - Coastal wetlands increase resilience to the impacts of climate change
- Wet grasslands and peatlands act as natural sponges
 - Absorb rainfall, create wide surface pools, ease flooding in river basins
 - This same storage capacity also safeguards against drought



Wetlands feed humanity



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Rice, grown in wetland paddies, is the staple diet of nearly three billion people
 - 20% of the world's nutritional intake
 - 70% of groundwater extracted is used for irrigation
- Average human consumes 19kg of fish each year
 - Much higher per capita consumption in Asia
- Two-thirds of all commercial fish types depend on coastal wetlands at some point in their lives
 - Breeding and spawning grounds
 - Mangroves and estuaries especially important

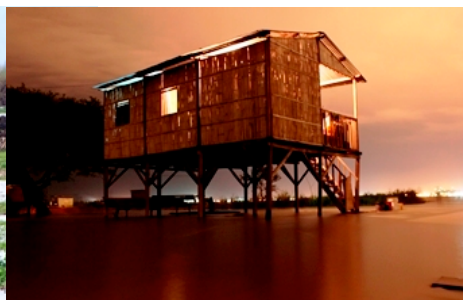


Wetlands provide sustainable livelihoods



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- 62 million people earn their living directly from fishing and aquaculture
 - Including their families, more than 660 million people are dependent on fisheries and fishing for survival
- Sustainably managed wetlands provide:
 - Timber for building
 - Vegetable oil
 - Medicinal plants
 - Stems and leaves for weaving
 - Fodder for animals



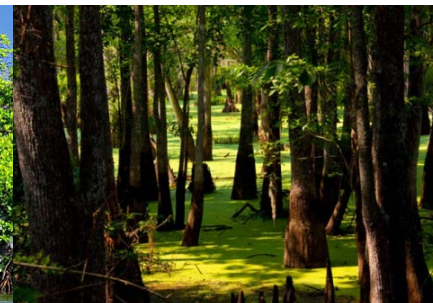
Wetland provide medicinal products



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Wetlands plants and animals have been used medicinally for millennia
 - Today we use 50,000-70,000 species of plants medicinally
 - Leaves, roots, flowers all have use- as well as forms of algae
- Wetland leeches (*Hirundo medicinalis*) are still used to treat many conditions
 - Abscesses, painful joints, glaucoma, venous diseases, thrombosis
- 70-80% of people worldwide still rely chiefly on traditional medicines
- In developed world, many wetland plants are also in demand:
 - White willow: original source of salicylic acid – precursor of aspirin
 - Bogbean: effectively treats digestive ailments
 - Labrador tea: folk remedy for many ailments; also acts as mosquito repellent



Wetlands and water-related diseases: an ecological view is needed



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Wetlands have often been drained to reduce water borne diseases
 - Seen as an effective way to fight malaria, cholera, Japanese encephalitis, etc.
 - This approach can backfire, depriving populations of clean, healthy water, reducing water filtering, and flood protection
- A fuller understanding of the wetlands role in ecology points to a better approach:
 - Prioritize clean water and good sanitation
 - Use wetlands wisely in filtering pollutants and in sustainable food production
 - Better regulate dams, irrigation and water drainage systems



Wetlands are part of our consciousness



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Convention (1971) states: wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreplaceable....'
- People seek out water when they relax: *on holiday, in reflection, for sport*
- Wetlands are among the most beautiful places on Earth, and have inspired artists, travellers, poets and photographers for generations
- **Ramsar Culture Network** established in early 2000s to strengthen the connection between people and wetlands
- 2015 onwards, 'Wetlands, Culture and Livelihoods' a Global Priority recommended and supported by the Secretariat



Wetlands and spirituality: Tonle Sap



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Tonle Sap is one of the most productive freshwater ecosystems in the world, with 350k tons of fish each year. It includes two Ramsar Sites
- 75% of the regional population's protein is derived from the lake's fish
- Fish carvings on the Buddhist temple of Angkor Wat indicate that key role the lake has played for millenia
- The lake is facing enormous pressures, due to dam construction upstream on the Mekong, climate change, and removal of forest that is important for fish hatcheries.
- A festival, called Bon Om Touk,, commemorates the end of the rainy season and the reversal of flow of the Tonle Sap River.





CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

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Questions?





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Thank you!

Dr. Christopher Briggs

Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

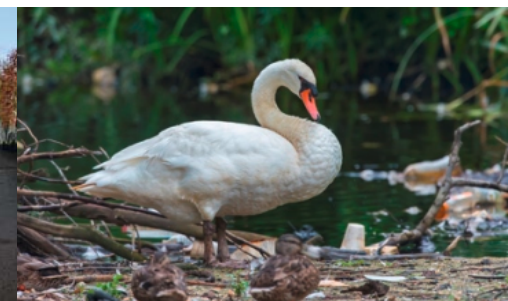
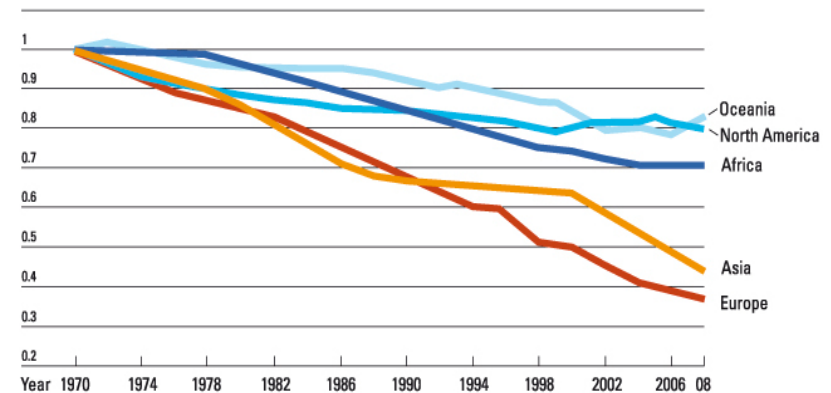


A future without wetlands?



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(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- 64 % of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900
 - Higher in some regions, esp. Asia
- WWF Living Planet Index:
 - freshwater species populations declined by 76% between 1970 and 2010
- Wetland Extent Index
 - Sampling of 1000+ wetland sites globally between 1970 and 2008
 - Average loss in site area: 40%



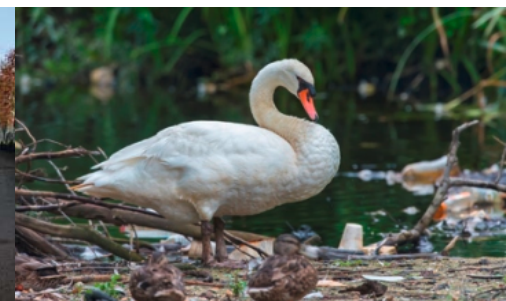
Not just wetland loss: degradation



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(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Major changes in land use, specifically increases in:
 - Agriculture
 - Grazing animals
 - Other harvesting such as logging
- Water diversion through dams, dikes and canalization
- Infrastructure development, particularly in river valleys and coastal areas
- Air and water pollution and excess nutrients
- Ramsar Sites also affected
 - An estimated 700 Wetlands of International Importance show serious degradation



How can the trend be reversed?



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(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

- Make policies that consider wetlands carefully
 - Understanding of ecosystem services that wetlands provide
 - Integrate into land use planning
- Use all remaining wetland sites wisely
 - Meet human needs while sustaining biodiversity and other wetland services
- Restore wetlands that have been degraded
- Develop financing sources for wetlands conservation
- Educate others about the benefits of wetlands



The Ramsar Convention



- Intergovernmental treaty on wetlands
 - Provides the framework for the conservation and wise use
 - 168 Parties (member countries)
 - First modern global environmental agreement
 - Named after Ramsar in Iran, where the Convention was adopted
- Members commit to:
 - Wise use of all their wetlands
 - Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”)
 - Cooperate on transboundary wetland systems and shared species



Ramsar proposed Strategic Plan 2016-2021: Aligning goals to reverse loss and degradation



Goal 1

Address the drivers of wetland loss and degradation

- Halve the rate of wetland loss by 2021
- Integrate wetlands into sectoral policies/plans
- Increased water efficiency in agriculture
- Orient investment to wetland restoration

Goal 2

Effective conservation and management of the Ramsar Sites Network

- Ramsar Site information updated
- Reach total of 2500 sites and 250 million hectares

Goal 3

Wise use of all wetlands through partnerships

- Contracting Parties adopt wise use in wetlands and water management
- Balance extraction and in-flow in major river basins
- Additional funding flow to support wetlands conservation

Goal 4

Raise awareness & involvement in wetlands

- Make best practice guidance available to policy-makers and practitioners
- Enhanced public participation in wetlands



Stay connected

For more information on the *Healthy Parks Healthy People* approach visit www.hphpcentral.com

Contribute to the Promise of Sydney at
www.worldparkscongress.org/about/promise_of_sydney



Coming up in Stream 3

Hall 3B1 Home Room, 1.30pm-3pm

Session 2: Perspectives on health, Current practices & future opportunities for park managers

Charley Room, 1.30-3pm

Session 4: Valuing diverse knowledge paradigms

Hordern Room, 1.30-3pm

Session 6: Contribution of protected areas to the achievement of related Sustainable Development Goals

