

# Wetlands for Life

Wetlands International  
Strategy (2026-35)



Wetlands International  
is the global not-for-  
profit organisation  
dedicated to the  
conservation and  
restoration of wetlands

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.**

The Convention on Wetlands – including 172 member countries - defines wetlands as areas 'of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres'. Wetlands play a key role in cultures across the globe, forming an integral part of the very fabric of our lives and ways of living. This is why we view people as an intrinsic part of nature, along with other species.



# Our targets for 2035

**4 million ha**  
of wetlands conserved

**1 million ha**  
of wetlands under  
restoration

**2,000 km**  
of rivers maintained  
or under restoration

**8 million**  
people  
more resilient

**40 key wetland  
species**  
conserved

**12**  
flagship landscapes  
managed holistically

**€ 6 billion**  
mobilised

**Global policies**  
include wetlands

**50 countries**  
include wetlands  
in policies and implement  
them

**100 companies**  
impacting wetlands contribute  
to their conservation and  
restoration

**Direct  
impact**

**Systemic  
impact**





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***"While we continue to deliver significant wetland impact with partners at site level, our primary added value is not as an implementing agency but as a driver of systemic change at national, landscape and global levels."***

**Coenraad Krijger, CEO Wetlands International**



# It's time for transformative change for wetlands

Wetlands are our life support systems. They underpin our societies and economies. They provide up to US\$39 trillion in annual benefits, supply almost all our freshwater, directly support over one third of global food production and sustain 1 billion people's livelihoods. They are central to our cultures and livelihoods from Indigenous communities to mega-cities, and underpin peace and security. Wetlands also help regulate the climate, storing 30% of the carbon on land, and buffer us from the worsening impacts of our warming world. And they are amongst the richest ecosystems for biodiversity on Earth.



Coastal community in North Kalimantan, Indonesia

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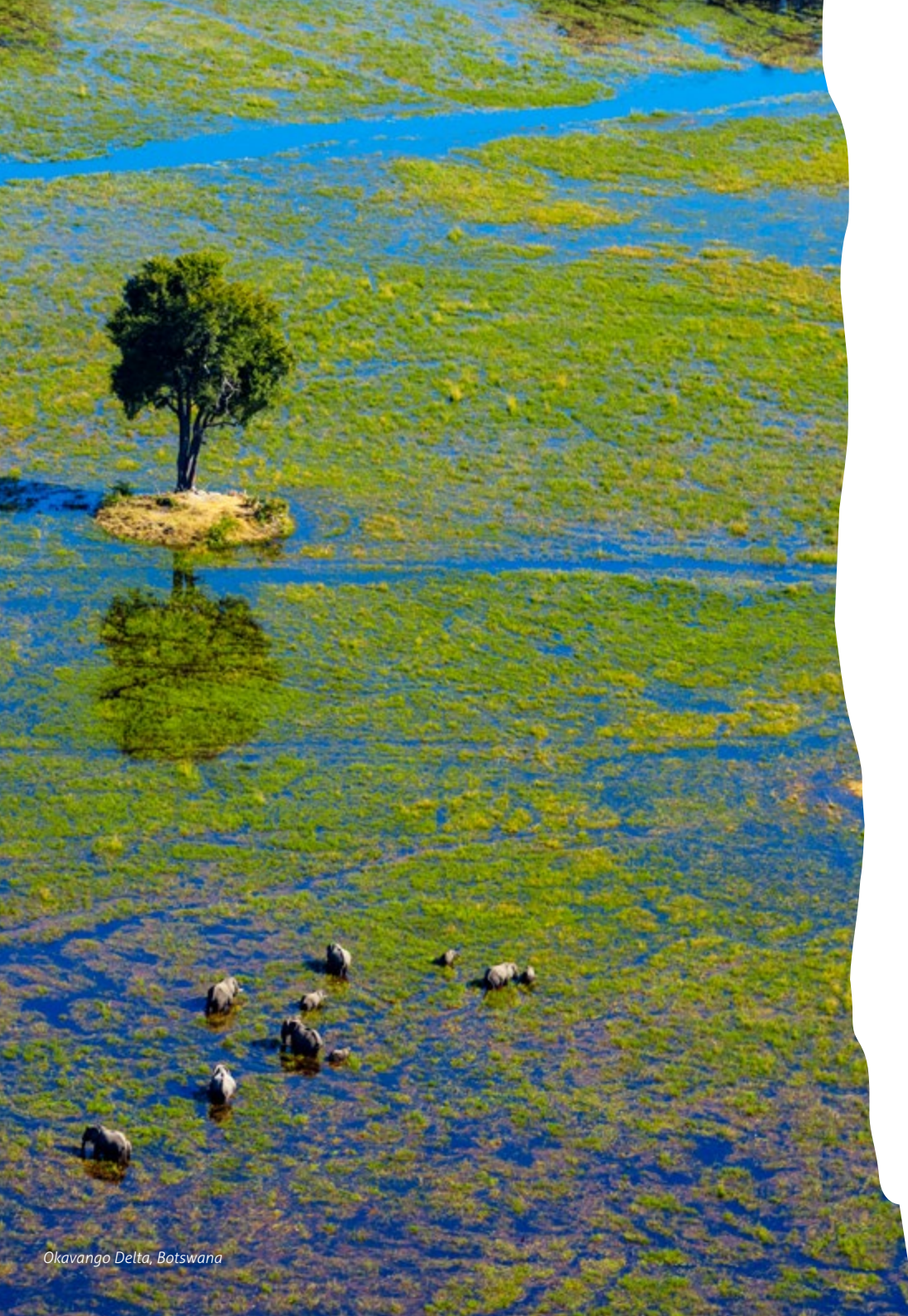
**Wetlands – from rivers to reefs, lakes to lagoons, marshes to mangroves, ponds to peatlands – are key to tackling the greatest challenges of our era.**

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Yet they are continuing to be destroyed, drained, dammed, dredged, depleted and degraded at an alarming rate – a trend that is being exacerbated by climate change, which is rapidly altering their functioning. Already, an estimated 70% of the world's wetlands have been lost since 1900. This has driven us to cross the planetary boundary on freshwater and contributed to the dramatic decline in biodiversity, including an 85% loss in freshwater species populations since 1970. This ongoing loss of wetlands is no longer just an 'environmental issue', it is an existential crisis that is already impacting people, economies, and ecosystems across the world.

Protecting, restoring and sustainably managing wetlands – from rivers to reefs, lakes to lagoons, marshes to mangroves, ponds to peatlands – is key to tackling the greatest challenges of our era. Investing in healthy wetlands is central to enhancing water and food security, mitigating and adapting to climate change, reducing disaster risk, reversing biodiversity loss and desertification, and driving sustainable development. It is crystal clear: the world cannot achieve the global goals for climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development unless we halt the loss of wetlands and rapidly scale up their restoration and integrated management.





**We need to conserve 428 million hectares of our remaining wetlands by 2030 and ensure that 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands and 300,000 km of degraded rivers are under restoration by 2030. This will require an investment of US\$275-550 billion per year.**

The world is waking up to the importance of healthy wetlands. They have been explicitly incorporated into key global agreements. Countries have designated more than 2500 wetlands of international importance. Finance is beginning to flow, with investment in Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for water security doubling to US\$49 billion in the decade up to 2023.

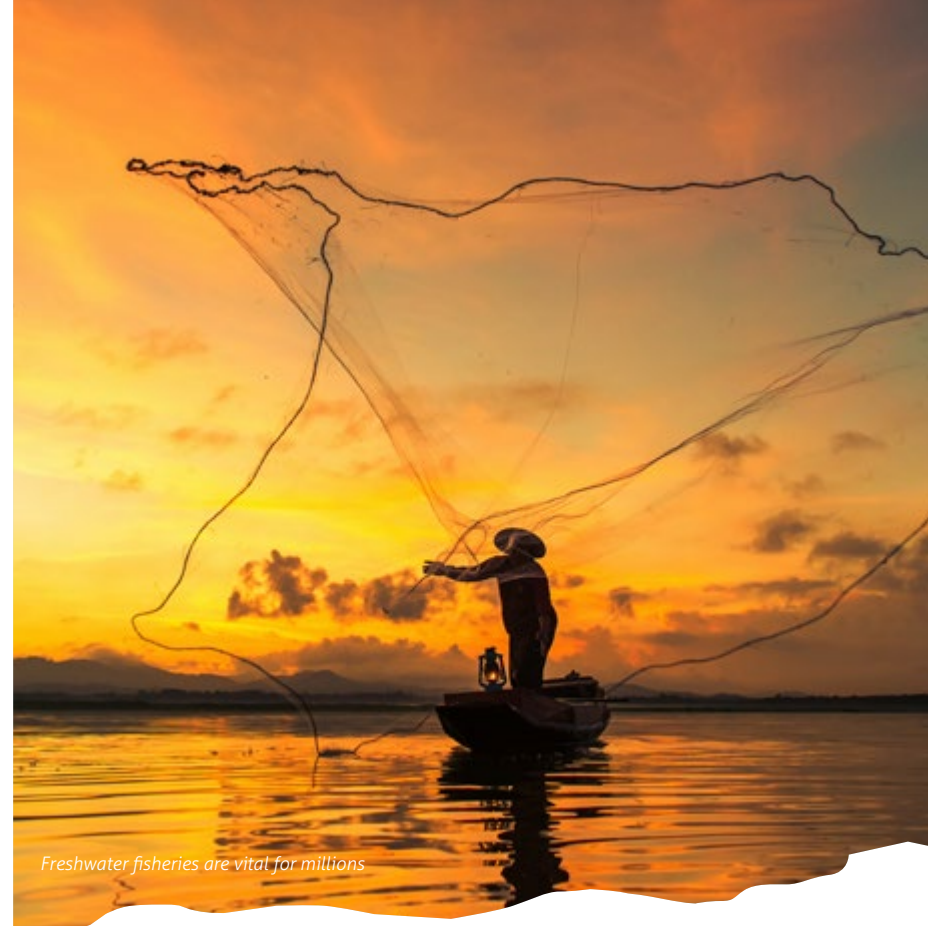
However, the pace of progress is not fast enough. Safeguarding the world's wetlands for people, nature and climate cannot be done at the speed and scale required by relying on the models and approaches of the past. We need a truly transformative approach which changes the systems that fuel the ongoing loss of the world's wetlands and helps us stay within safe and just Earth system boundaries.

# What is needed for transformative change

**Why is something so precious and fundamental to our very existence disappearing so fast and what can we do about it?**

People have become increasingly disconnected from wetlands and their species. We consistently undervalue them. We forget that water does not come from a tap and that fish do not come from a shop, they come from wetlands. We forget that our cultures and civilisations are shaped by wetlands. So, we do not factor them into development decisions. We need to heal this broken relationship. We need to reconnect people and wetlands. And we need to amplify the voices and influence of those communities – from Indigenous Peoples to local farmers and fishers – who do still value the wetlands that sustain them.

Our extractive, growth-at-all-cost economies focus on short term, individual and material gain. This approach promotes the overuse and excessive consumption of resources as well as ever-increasing pollution at the expense of planetary boundaries. Meanwhile, power and wealth are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a tiny fraction of the global population and profit-maximising multinational corporations. Their interests and investments are driving greater inequality and environmental degradation, shifting the burden of impacts onto a growing, socially and economically underprivileged majority of the population. We need a long-term vision and cross-sectoral collaboration. Together with companies and financiers we need to build new, regenerative production systems that foster the wetlands they depend on. We need solutions that prioritise long-term sustainability, justice, equality, and accountability, and systems that provide benefits for society as a whole as well as nature and climate.



*Freshwater fisheries are vital for millions*

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**Together with companies and financiers we need to build new, regenerative production systems that foster the wetlands they depend on.**

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The world has signed up to a series of landmark global agreements on development, climate, and nature, even specifically on wetlands. However, investment and implementation are lagging far behind. Recently, global conflicts have risen, triggering a switch in investment towards security and defence – and away from climate, the environment, and sustainability. Moreover, political polarisation and increasing opposition to environmental and climate commitments are undermining national and global efforts to accelerate action. The result is ambitious targets but not the enabling environments necessary to achieve them, particularly related to wetlands. There is an urgent need to align public and private policies and plans at national and local levels with the goals of these global frameworks to deliver much greater impact on the ground. It is essential to leverage much more finance for wetlands as well as much more wetland-sensitive investment across social and economic sectors.

The disconnect between people and nature, our growth-at-all cost economies, and the slow pace of policy implementation and investment are the underlying drivers of wetland loss and degradation. These have fuelled a range of direct threats to wetland health, including unsustainable land conversion and overharvesting, destructive mining for metals, minerals, oil and gas, poorly planned infrastructure and dams, water diversion and over abstraction, pollution and the spread of invasive species.

We need transformative – rather than incremental – change to achieve sustainability and justice: a deep shift across economic, social, and technological systems, involving new ways of thinking, governing, and behaving. The scale of the global challenges requires us to act now, together. Each of us has a distinct role to play, and we need to complement, learn from, and strengthen each other.





**The scale of the  
global challenges  
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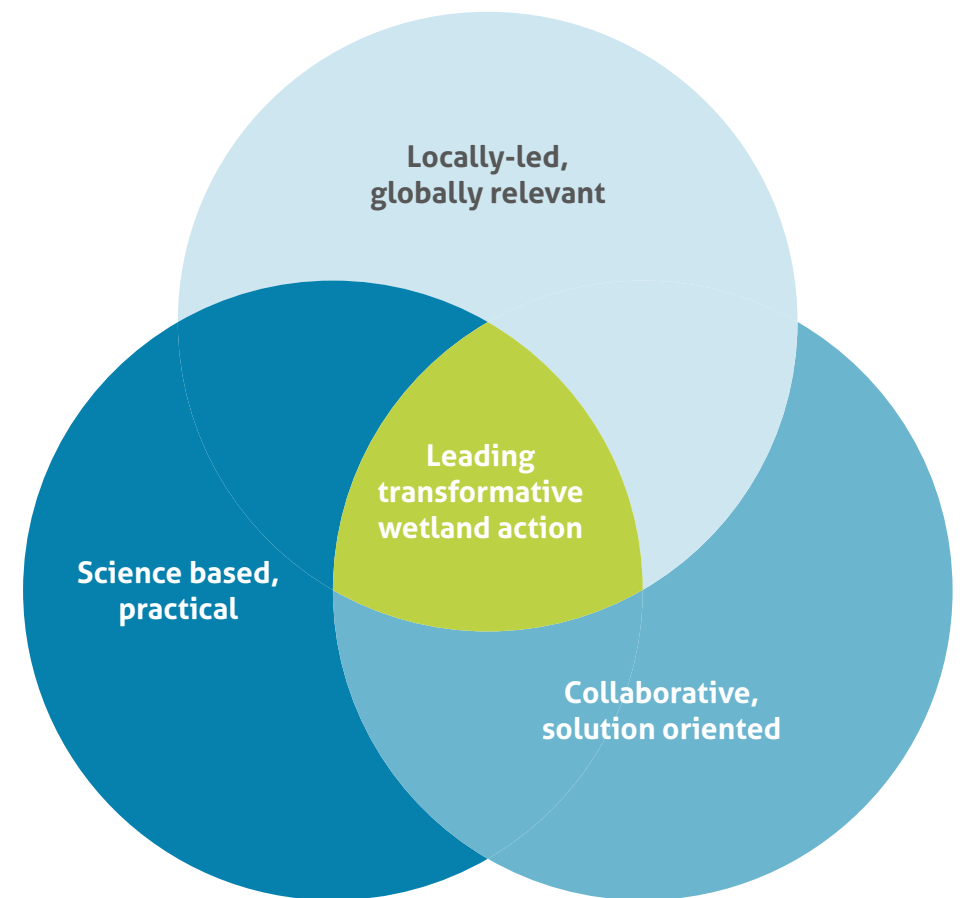
# Our unique role in this transformation

Wetlands International is a locally-led global organisation, whose mission is to inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature. We are a unique network of country, regional and global offices that originated locally and joined forces in 1996 to ensure worldwide reach and impact. With currently 18 offices across the globe and around 300 staff we have delivered impact for wetlands in over 100 countries. We are an official International Organization Partner of the Convention on Wetlands with over 170 UN member states and a member of its Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

Our decades of implementation, thought leadership, and policy advocacy are based on science and enriched by traditional and local knowledge. We have co-created innovative solutions and best practices that we have road-tested in many different settings, geographies, and cultures. These range from award-winning solutions to integrate nature into coastal engineering to fire and grazing management, wet agriculture (paludiculture), and successful savings and loans mechanisms.

We act as a bridge between local and global actors, bringing diverse knowledge and worldviews together to drive collective action. We prioritize collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, working to secure benefits for vulnerable groups on the frontlines of the nature and climate crises, including women and youth.

Throughout our history we have worked in alliances across sectors, connecting communities, civil society organisations, companies,



investors, and countries in the understanding that different perspectives are needed to co-create solutions that can reach scale and persist over time. We are strengthened by our government and NGO membership and associate experts.

Our inspiring track record means we are in a unique position to lead global wetland action in the required transformation. Together with

partners large and small, from communities to companies and local to global levels, we believe that this new strategy will enable us to achieve our vision of a '*world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide*'.



Woman in de Saloum Delta, Senegal hanging girlandes to grow oysters



# Our goals to trigger impact at scale

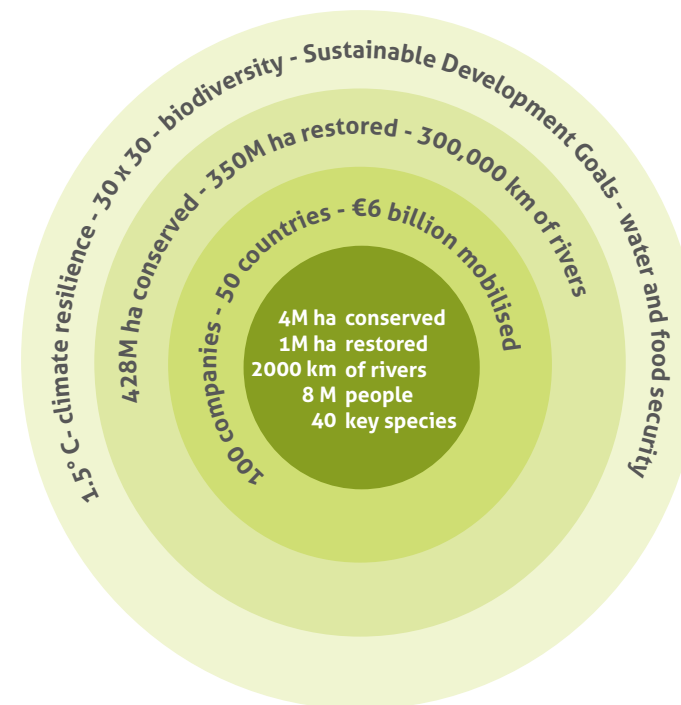
We orient our work on wetlands towards the global goals for 2030 that seek to address the greatest challenges of our era, on water and food security, climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, and sustainable development, including but not limited to:

- **Keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°, strengthening climate adaptation and building resilience (UNFCCC Paris Climate Agreement);**
- **Protecting 30% of wetlands, restoring 30% of degraded inland and coastal wetlands, and halting human-induced species extinctions and recovering threatened species (Targets 2, 3 and 4 of CBD Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework);**
- **Combatting desertification and mitigating the impacts of drought (UNCCD); and**
- **Zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, clean water for all, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, and life on land as well as contributing to the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2, 3, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 of the UN Agenda 2030)**

Given that protecting, restoring and sustainably using wetlands are absolutely key to achieving these interdependent global goals, we will contribute to implementation of the Convention on Wetlands and the needs identified by its Scientific and Technical Review Panel:

- **Conserving 428 million hectares of wetlands;**
- **Ensuring 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands are under restoration;**
- **Ensuring 300,000 kilometres of degraded rivers are under restoration;**
- **Securing US\$275-550 billion per year in funding for wetland action; and**
- **Improving the population trajectories of key waterbird, fish, and other wetland-dependent species.**

It is essential to drive progress towards these global goals, but wetland action will need to be sustained and further scaled up beyond 2030 to ensure we stay within safe and just Earth system boundaries. We will work with partners to shape the post-2030 policy agenda and build even greater momentum to further accelerate wetland protection, restoration and wise use worldwide.



By 2035, our direct contribution to these global goals for wetlands, together with partners, will be:

- **Conserving 4 million hectares of wetlands;**
- **Ensuring 1 million hectares of degraded wetlands are under restoration;**
- **Ensuring 2000 kilometres of rivers are maintained or under restoration;**
- **8 million people benefit from conserved and restored wetlands through reduction in risks and hazards and/or improved standard of living; and**
- **Conserving 40 key wetland species.**

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**Our direct impacts showcase solutions that help trigger the systemic change in policies, business and finance necessary to accelerate and scale up wetland action worldwide.**

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While substantial, our direct impacts only represent a fraction of the global goals. Yet, they are critical to achieving them because they will showcase solutions that help trigger the systemic change in policies, business, and finance necessary to accelerate and scale up wetland action worldwide.



*Critically Endangered European eel*



Our focus will not be on maximising the number of hectares or kilometres we can directly conserve, restore and effectively manage with our partners, because we can never achieve the global scale we seek this way. Our added value will be to inspire and enable those with day-to-day stewardship of the world's wetlands to fulfil their responsibility to safeguard and restore their wetlands.

By 2035, our systemic contribution to these global goals for wetlands, together with partners, will be that:

- **Wetland considerations are embedded in key policy decisions relating to major global policy agreements;**
- **50 countries make tangible progress in integrating wetlands into key national and sectoral policies;**
- **50 countries have enhanced the implementation of key national and international policies in support of wetlands;**
- **100 companies with material impact on wetlands deliver measurable contributions to wetland conservation/restoration; and**
- **€6 billion is mobilised in investments and funding supporting wetland conservation and restoration.**

To demonstrate that it is possible to create sustainable and prosperous wetland-based societies and economies, we will focus on 12 flagship landscapes from Argentina to the Philippines combining site level action in wetlands with collective efforts to transform government, business and investment policies and practices to drive systemic change. We will ensure by 2035 that:

- **12 flagship landscapes are under holistic management, including innovative finance and regenerative land-use practices.**

We will track trends towards the global goals and will monitor, evaluate, and learn from progress towards our own direct and systemic targets and will apply evidence-based, adaptive management accordingly.


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**Our added value is to inspire and enable those with day-to-day stewardship of the world's wetlands to fulfil their responsibility.**

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*Trainees during field excursion in Lamu, Kenya*

An aerial photograph showing a muddy, brown landscape with sparse green vegetation. A winding, light-colored trench has been dug into the mud. Five people are visible along the trench, working on the mangrove restoration project. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**From now on,  
everything that  
we do needs  
to trigger  
transformative  
change.**

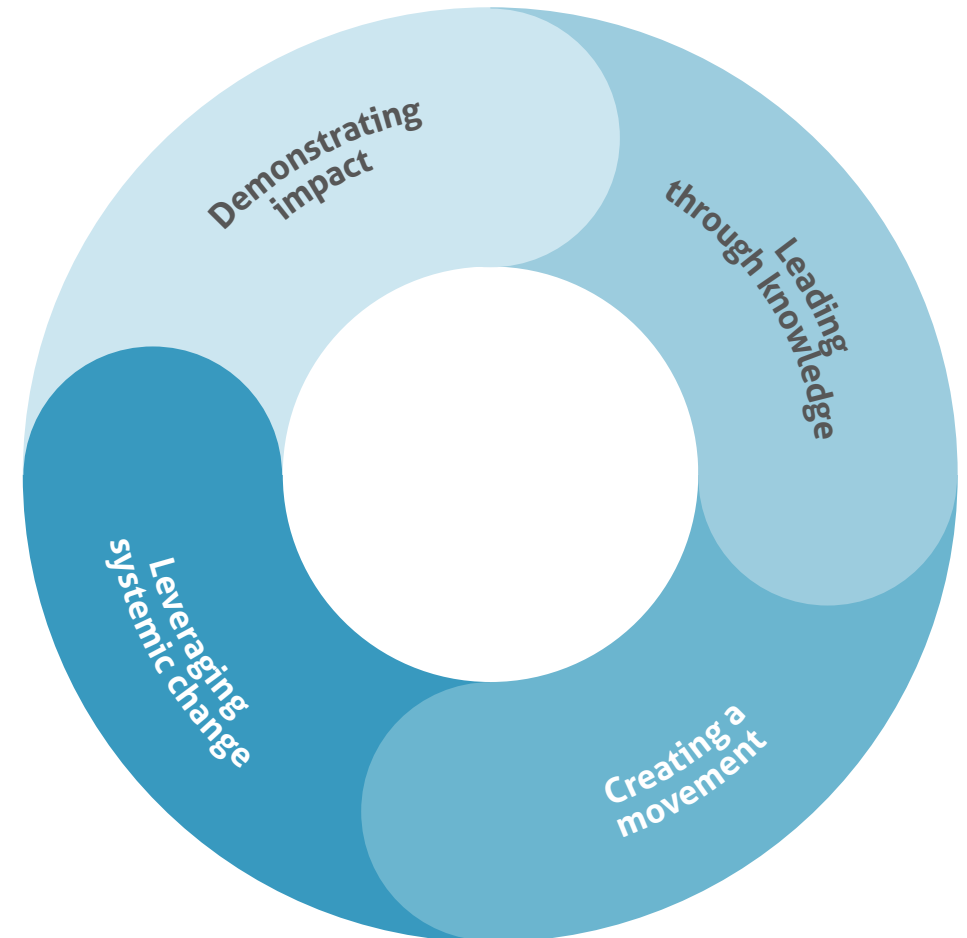


# How we will achieve our goals

From now on, everything that we do, from science to policy and on-the-ground practice, needs to trigger transformative change for wetlands, in support of people, biodiversity and climate. While we continue to deliver significant wetland impact with partners at site level, our primary added value is not as an implementing agency but as a driver of systemic change at national, landscape and global levels. Our approach will inspire and enable the actual stewards of the world's wetlands – from communities and cities to companies and countries – to scale up action to protect, restore and sustainably use the wetlands they are responsible for and so deliver transformative, global change.

To do this, we have identified four interconnected impact pathways that we are strongly positioned to deliver. Our approach remains rooted in practical, on-the-ground action and the knowledge we derive from it. But to accelerate and scale up wetland action with and by others, we go from site to landscape level and beyond. We envision transformative outcomes for wetlands through systemic interventions that bring others along, influence policies, unlock finance and guide business action to deliver impact at scale.

Building on our 30-year track record, we will **demonstrate impact** through our site and landscape level interventions. Working with





multiple partners in diverse geographies, we will have a significant direct impact, resulting moreover in scalable best practices, innovative co-created solutions, and holistic landscape approaches. We will **lead through knowledge**, showcasing these successes to inspire others, while providing cutting edge mapping tools and technical guidance to guide action to where it is most needed and effective. We will **create a movement**, representing the voice of wetlands, building broader coalitions and alliances, and spreading the need and solutions for transformative wetland action across the globe. We will **leverage systemic change** by ensuring governments adopt and implement new policies, businesses pursue sustainable practices, and financial institutions redirect their funding from harmful investments to wetland-positive ones.

These impact pathways are interconnected and will reinforce each other, creating a virtuous circle driving ever greater wetland action. Together they will help to tackle the underlying drivers of wetland loss, including the broken relationship between people and nature, unsustainable production and consumption patterns and systems, policy and governance challenges, and runaway climate change as well as underinvestment.



## Demonstrating impact

Our practical, site-level conservation, restoration and wise use activities do not only deliver significant direct impact in wetlands with and for local people but also provide solutions and best practices that can be taken up at scale. But to unleash the benefits of healthy wetlands for societies and economies, we need to go beyond the site level. As the source of life, wetlands are key in any given landscape. They depend on – and sustain – natural flows of freshwater, carbon, and valuable soil beyond the wetland itself, underpinning the health of landscapes and entire transboundary regions.

Due to the diverse values of wetlands, the main challenges are multiple and competing claims, and the perceived disconnect between economy and nature. This is why site-level interventions need to be holistically combined with systemic interventions at landscape scale that create enabling policies, unlock finance, and transform business practices. Collaborating with governments, communities, civil society organisations, companies, and investors, we drive transformative change across landscapes – underpinning sustainable and prosperous wetland-based economies.



Community workshop in Indonesia

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**Collaborating with governments,  
communities, civil society  
organisations, companies, and  
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change across landscapes.**

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Our work with and through others in landscapes, focused on 12 flagship landscapes from Argentina to the Philippines, will provide the public and private stewards of the world's wetlands with inspiration, tools, and approaches to transform their landscapes. As the voice of wetlands, we will make sure that they know. That is how we will multiply our direct impact many times over, benefiting many other invaluable wetland landscapes – and the societies and species that rely on them – with or without our direct involvement.

## Leading through knowledge

We will lead global wetland action to where it is most needed by influencing research agendas, generating and sharing easily accessible and user-friendly knowledge on wetlands and biodiversity in terms of presence, status, values, policies, and plans. Our world class global

## We expand our work with companies and investors, using our work in sites and landscapes as 'learning labs'.

tools include the Global Mangrove Watch and Waterbirds Populations Portal. We also coordinate the International Waterbird Census, one of the world's longest-running and largest citizen science initiatives. We will enhance the scope and functionality of our existing tools, while expanding their range to cover all wetland systems in a Wetland Atlas. To counter the growing, direct impact of climate change on wetlands, we will specifically generate knowledge to enhance wetland resilience.

To ensure that new knowledge, tools, and techniques move more quickly into the mainstream, we will expand our work with companies and investors, using our work in sites and landscapes as 'learning labs'. In doing so, we will take care to work with scientific as well as local and indigenous knowledge. We will also seize the opportunities provided by Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance the precision, speed, and scale of data collection and analysis – critical for monitoring under-

studied and often inaccessible wetlands. Through satellite imagery and machine learning, AI will help us flag changes in land use, hydrology, and vegetation cover in near real time, support decision-making, and enable proactive responses to the worsening impacts of climate change and degradation.

Developing knowledge and practical solutions needs to go hand in hand with mutual, adaptive, and reflective learning, from wetland-dependent communities and local grassroots organisations through to decision makers and the next generation of engineers. To achieve scale, we use trainer-of-trainers approaches and collaborate with knowledge institutes, universities, and schools to develop materials that can be embedded in standard curricula. By making courses available online, we reach a far wider audience. In addition, we will promote wetland restoration and wise use as livelihood opportunities, highlighting how investing in healthy wetlands can create jobs, support local economies, and build stronger, longer term local capacity.



Ecological Mangrove Restoration training in Mombasa, Kenya



## Creating a movement

Whether at global, country or landscape level, our work always starts by convening all actors who depend on or impact wetlands to get a joint understanding of the problem and co-create solutions. We also help to connect and mobilise tens of thousands of people across vast regions through our work on the world's great flyways for migratory birds and swimways for migratory fish. But the real game-changer is the creation of a movement to accelerate action, boosted by the three global initiatives that Wetlands International has helped to shape – the Freshwater Challenge, Mangrove Breakthrough and Peatland Breakthrough. Designed to assist countries to deliver progress and achieve national goals under multiple global conventions, these initiatives seek to mobilise non-state actors to help unlock finance and deliver impact on the ground. By mobilising these broad, transformative coalitions that connect communities, civil society organisations, companies, and countries, we will ensure that our best site and landscape solutions are scaled up and replicated worldwide – far beyond our direct spheres of impact. They will also provide platforms to communicate widely about wetlands.

Speaking of communications: we will be the global voice of wetlands, their people, and wetland-dependent species. We will work with more partners in more sectors and across more platforms to enhance our local, national, and global reach and impact. We will go beyond our traditional technical audiences and reach out to a wider public, to see wetlands for what they are: our life support systems. This will contribute significantly to reconnecting people and wetlands, sharing local and landscape level solutions, spreading knowledge and tools, and creating this movement.



*Community workshop on Ecological Mangrove Restoration,  
Jeta Pexie Cacheu, Guinea-Bissau*

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**We boost three global initiatives  
that we helped to shape:  
the Freshwater Challenge,  
Mangrove Breakthrough and  
Peatland Breakthrough.**

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## Leveraging systemic change

Over recent years, our advocacy has helped secure many global policy wins for wetlands. But we are all too aware that the geo-political world is changing dramatically. While some countries are withdrawing from multilateral collaboration and reversing environmental policies, other countries are stepping up on the global stage and acting as champions. Strong national and specifically also sub-national policies will become more critical. We will adapt our global advocacy to also target relevant non-environmental fora and enhance our work on national and sub-national policies to drive implementation and collectively unlock business action and finance. We will advocate to ensure that government decision making on wetlands is brought within the realms of real political power – such as finance, agriculture, security, and public works. Going one step further, we will advocate for the rights of wetlands from local to global levels.

Businesses are often a major driver of wetland degradation, but they can also be positive and powerful change agents. Within our 12 flagship landscapes, we will focus on companies and sectors that have a high impact or dependency on wetlands. Together we will develop innovative, investable, regenerative wetland-based solutions, which will have a direct impact and serve as incubators. In coastal wetlands, we will focus on sectors such as coastal engineering and dredging, aquaculture, and fisheries. In peatlands, we will prioritise critical industries like palm oil and peat extraction for fuel and growing media. In freshwater ecosystems, promoting water stewardship in agriculture, mining and water sectors will be crucial. We will then advance these solutions through the three global initiatives and sector platforms to activate companies and their sectors worldwide.

Unlocking public and private finance is key to transformative change. We are already piloting innovative financing tools, such as biodiversity and carbon credits, nature-related bonds, and payment for ecosystem services. We will work with partners to bring these mechanisms to scale and create pipelines of investable landscape propositions to leverage new sources of blended public and private funding for wetlands. To open the financial floodgates and unleash the hundreds of billions needed to achieve the global goals for wetlands, we will team up with new partners to highlight the economic and financial dependencies of countries and companies on wetlands, advocating for reform of policies, subsidies, and regulations. With our knowledge, we will influence targeted business and financial frameworks and policies. Together, these systemic changes will disincentivize investments and activities that are harmful to wetlands and incentivize wetland-positive action.



Large petrochemical plant near mudflats



We prioritize working with  
and securing benefits for  
Indigenous Peoples and  
local communities.



*Kichwa children on the Napo River in the Ecuadorian Amazon*



# Our focus

We continue to work in a range of freshwater and other inland wetlands, including rivers, floodplains, lakes (including saline lakes), marshes and inland deltas, since they underpin societies and economies by providing water, food, fisheries and transport. They also connect ecosystems from land to sea and are hotspots of biodiversity. Yet, they are the most threatened wetlands, hosting freshwater species whose populations have collapsed by 85% since 1970. We will boost transformative action through the Freshwater Challenge.

We will prioritise **peatlands**, since they nourish other ecosystems, store 30% of terrestrial carbon and are phenomenal sponges – and because they continue to be drained and converted, fuelling 5% of global GHG emissions, huge wildfires, and the loss of water, biodiversity and resilience. The Peatland Breakthrough will provide peatlands with the global spotlight they deserve.

We will focus on **coastal wetlands**, especially mangroves, saltmarshes, and seagrass beds, since they sustain and buffer communities and cities, support farming and fisheries, and host rich biodiversity – and are being 'squeezed' by urbanisation, unsustainable infrastructure, and rising seas. A major component of our game-changing coastal wetland work is the Mangrove Breakthrough.

We are deepening our commitment as a network to 12 flagship landscapes across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, where wetland action can trigger transformative change in the near term. These landscapes provide diverse and irreplaceable values for people, are important for climate mitigation and/or adaptation, and play a crucial role in sustaining biodiversity. They are also part of transboundary ecological corridors, flyways used by migratory waterbirds and swimways for migratory fish.

Within these landscapes, distinct types of wetlands occur, and different actors and sectors interact.

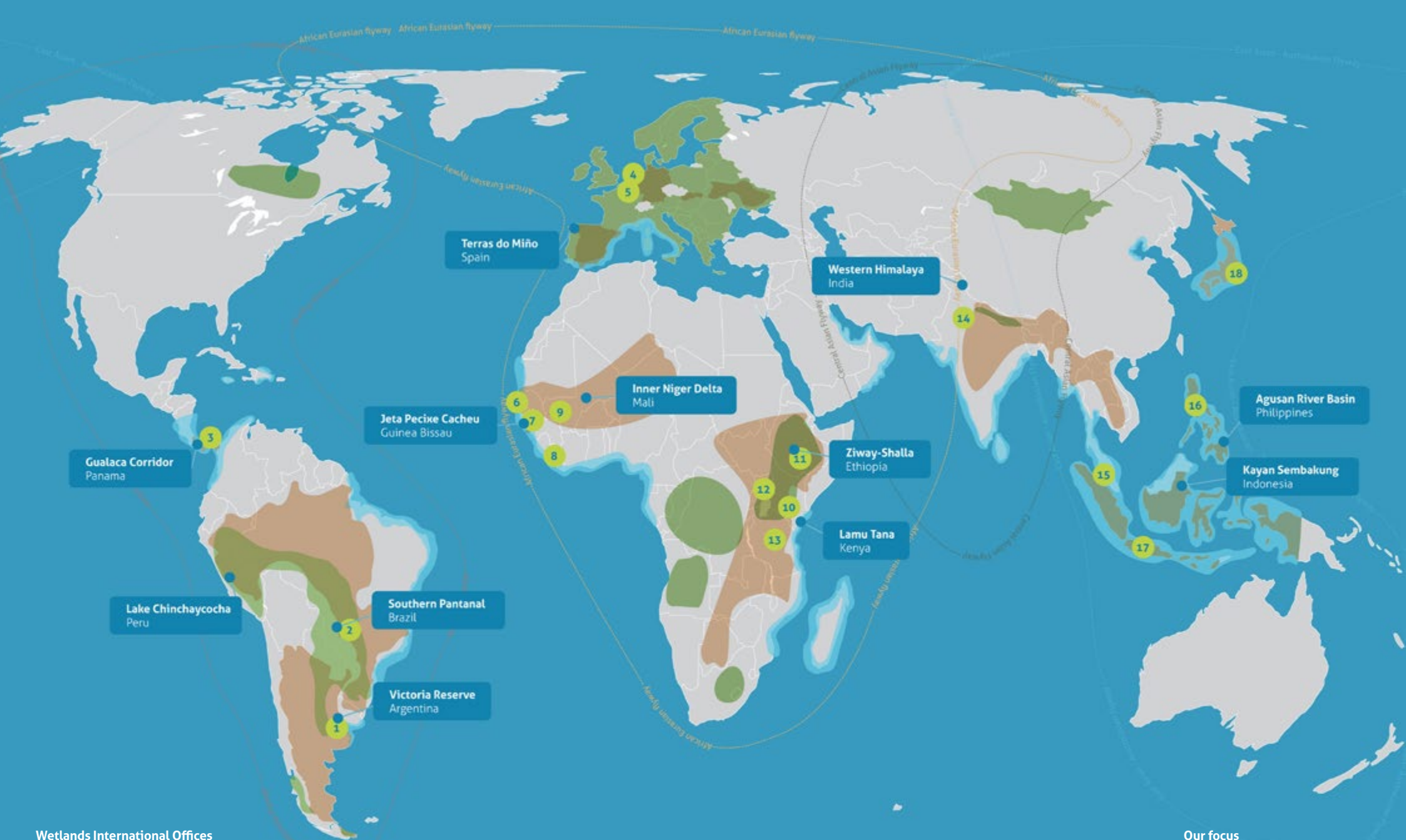
We select our sites and landscapes to optimally benefit biodiversity in terms of species, with specific attention on **migratory waterbirds** and their flyways and **migratory fishes** and their swimways as they are connectors, indicators of wetland health, and under increasing pressure.

In all that we do, we prioritize working with and securing benefits for Indigenous Peoples and local communities and vulnerable groups, including women and youth.



*Peatland area in Mongolia*





**Wetlands International Offices**

- |  |                           |                      |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Latin America & Carribbean - Argentina | 8 Sierra Leone            | 15 Malaysia - Brunei |
| 2 Latin America & Carribbean - Brazil    | 9 Sahel - Mali            | 16 Philippines       |
| 3 Latin America & Carribbean - Panama    | 10 Eastern Africa - Kenya | 17 Indonesia         |
| 4 Global Office                          | 11 Ethiopia               | 18 Japan             |
| 5 Europe                                 | 12 Uganda                 |                      |
| 6 West Africa Coastal - Senegal          | 13 Tanzania               |                      |
| 7 Guinea-Bissau                          | 14 South Asia - India     |                      |

**Our focus**

- Coastal Wetlands
- Freshwater Wetlands
- Peatlands
- Flagship Landscapes

This map uses Equal Earth Projection, designed to show the relative sizes of landmasses correctly.

# Leveraging the growing power of our network, partners and members

Our mission to 'inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature' is more urgent than ever. It is clear that to respond to the worsening threats to wetlands and seize new opportunities, we need to evolve. We need to grow with purpose: to create a stronger, more connected, and resilient network. This will necessitate significant changes in the way we work and may involve expansion in our geographical scope. It will challenge us to leave our comfort zone and take steps to ensure we are fit for that purpose – to lead and accelerate transformative wetland action worldwide. We need to build on our strengths, while embracing innovation and transformation, and will create a network development strategy accordingly.

We are so grateful to the partners, donors and members who have helped us protect and restore wetlands for people, nature, and climate. Starting as an organization dependent primarily on public funding for specific projects, we proved that wetland solutions could work in different geographies and circumstances. Diversifying our funding base and developing strong relationships with invaluable core funders, we were able to scale up our operations and impact. Our annual turnover has doubled to around €20 million. However, we will need to significantly increase this to accelerate action sufficiently to achieve the goals of this ambitious strategy – just as environmental funding from many traditional donors is falling away. Bridging this gap will be a challenge, but we are confident this new



*Starlings famously flock together to create astonishing 'murmurations'*

strategy outlines an ambitious path to transformational impact that will leverage additional private and public finance.

While much of our work will still be funded through projects and programmes, we will diversify our funding sources. We will expand our collaboration with countries, companies, and investors, combining public and private funds, leveraged by catalytical philanthropic finance. These funds will increasingly be raised locally, tapping into emerging markets. And we are thinking big – creating a Wetland Impact Facility to raise €100 million over 10 years. We will invest this in landscape interventions and then scale up the lessons and solutions from those 'learning labs' worldwide.

We will also seek to increase our core funding, as this is key to building a more connected and influential network. A strong network will power our efforts to accelerate wetland action and deliver on the promises of this ambitious and transformative strategy.





**The stakes are high:  
if we succeed,  
the world succeeds.**



## Acknowledgements

This strategy was developed by an appointed core writing team consisting of Femke Tonneijck, Ritesh Kumar, Chris Baker, Peter Konijn, Maria Stolk, and Richard Lee through a consultative and iterative process. Critical inputs and feedback were provided by colleagues across the Wetlands International network as well as by our member governments and organisations, and a wide diversity of partners. Foundations of Success supported our journey. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to strengthening this strategy both internally and externally, particularly the members of our Strategic Advisory Group – Constantino Auca Chutas, Jane Madgwick, Musonda Mumba, David Obura, Henk Ovink and Derk Segaar.



Lake Nakuru, Kenya

## Key references

As a science-based organisation, our new strategy is based on a wide variety of scientific research and critical publications, including:

- Global Wetland Outlook 2025**  
 Convention on Wetlands (2025). Global Wetland Outlook 2025: Valuing, conserving, restoring, and financing wetlands. Gland, Switzerland: Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands. DOI: 10.69556/GWO-2025-eng.
- Fifth Strategic Plan of the Convention on Wetlands (2025-34)**  
 Adopted by Contracting Parties at COP15 in Victoria Falls in July 2025
- Thematic Assessment Report on the Underlying Causes of Biodiversity Loss and the Determinants of Transformative Change**  
 IPBES (2024). IPBES secretariat, Bonn. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11382230>
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Production Richard Lee

Design and layout Joeri Borst

Contact

Wetlands International

[info@wetlands.org](mailto:info@wetlands.org)

[www.wetlands.org](http://www.wetlands.org)

+31 (0) 318 660 910

P.O. Box 471

6700 AL Wageningen

The Netherlands



