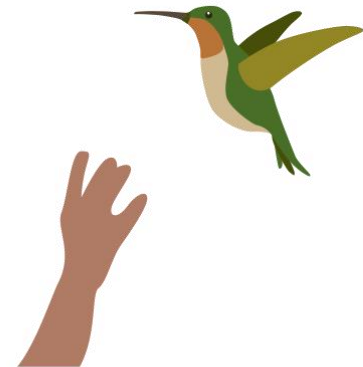


# World Wetlands Day

2 February 2024

Wetlands and Human Wellbeing



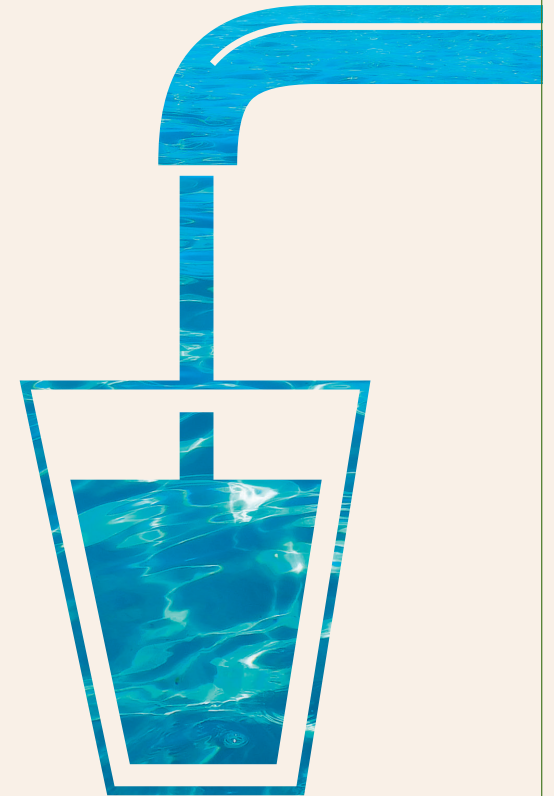
# Life interlaced Wetlands and people

CARE – NURTURE – SUPPORT

# Wetlands and Water

## OUR EXISTENCE RELIES ON WATER

- Wetlands hold and provide most of our freshwater.
  - They naturally filter pollutants, leaving water we can safely drink.
- We use more water than nature can replenish.
  - Less than **1%** of freshwater is usable.
  - Our water use increased sixfold in **100 years** and rises **1%** annually.
  - Almost all global freshwater sources are compromised: **82%** of the world's population is exposed to high levels of pollution in their water supply.
- Urban and water resource planning that incorporates wetlands and their benefits delivers improved health and wellbeing for city residents.
  - We could have enough water if we better value and manage wetlands and water – through protection, restoration and wise use.



# Wetlands and Food

## WETLANDS AID FOOD SECURITY

- Wetlands have underpinned the development of civilizations for thousands of years, providing people with access to fish, other food and freshwater for crops and livestock.
  - Fish harvested from wetlands provide the primary source of protein for more than **1 billion** people.
  - Rice paddies feed **3.5 billion** people annually.
- Unsustainable agricultural practices are damaging and destroying wetlands.
  - More than half of Wetlands of International Importance are damaged by agriculture.
  - Agriculture accounts for **70%** of water withdrawals from the Earth's wetlands.
  - Aquaculture is growing faster than any other food production sector.
- Major changes to global agricultural systems can help stop wetland conversion and reduce water use and pollutants – while providing a future of sustainable food production for the world's growing population.



World  
Wetlands Day

2 February 2024

Wetlands and Human Wellbeing



#ActForWetlands – [www.worldwetlandsday.org](http://www.worldwetlandsday.org)

Ramsar  
Convention  
on Wetlands

# Wetlands and Biodiversity

## THE RICH BIODIVERSITY OF EARTH'S WETLANDS NURTURES HUMAN WELLBEING

- Wetland biodiversity is critical to sustainable human development.
- About **40%** of the world's plant and animal species depend on wetlands.
- Wetland biodiversity supplies food, clean water and jobs, protects against storms and floods, and mitigates the impacts of climate change.

- Biodiversity losses are rising and are tied to changes in land use.
- Plastic pollution is severely impacting wetlands and the species that depend on them. Ingestion, entanglement and other dangers posed by plastic pollution are affecting more than **800** marine and coastal species.
- Climate change and biodiversity loss are linked.

- Meeting global biodiversity, climate and Sustainable Development Goals requires halting the loss of wetlands and rapidly scaling up restoration.
- Maintaining well-managed, intact ecosystems and native biodiversity – by applying wise use and One Health principles – can help control emergent zoonotic diseases and bring health benefits to all.



# Wetlands and Livelihoods

## WETLANDS PROVIDE JOBS AND HELP ERADICATE POVERTY

- Wetlands provide more than **1 billion** livelihoods across the world – delivering food, water supplies, transport and leisure.
  - More than **660 million** people depend on fishing and aquaculture for a living.
  - Almost **1 billion** households in Asia, Africa and the Americas rely on rice growing and processing for their main livelihoods.
  - Half of international tourists seek relaxation in wetland areas, supporting **266 million** jobs in the travel and tourism sectors – which is **8.9%** of the world's total employment.
  - Wetlands offer economic opportunities for indigenous populations, including traditional livelihoods that entail harvesting and processing medicinal plants, dyes, fruits, reeds and grasses.
  - Farmers and herders look to wetlands for a consistent water supply for livestock grazing.
- Ongoing wetland loss is driving a vicious cycle of declining biodiversity and deepening poverty.
- The Sustainable Development Goals underline that we must protect and restore ecosystems such as wetlands to reduce poverty.



# Wetlands and Climate

## WETLANDS ARE NATURAL GUARDIANS AGAINST POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Wetlands capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and store more carbon than any other ecosystem on Earth.
  - Peatlands store about **30%** of land-based carbon — twice the amount of all the world's forests.
  - Coastal blue carbon ecosystems (mangroves, seagrass beds, salt marshes) capture and store carbon in their sediment up to **55 times** faster than tropical rainforests.
  - Wetlands safeguard the **60%** of humanity along coastlines against storm surges, hurricanes and tsunamis.
  - An acre of wetland can store up to **1.5 million** gallons of floodwater.
- Wetlands are at high risk from climate change, severely impacting many economically marginalized people.
  - Wetlands are integral components of resilient urban planning, restoration and vital contributors to One Health.
  - Meeting the climate challenge requires ambitious wetland conservation and restoration across society.



# Wetlands and Culture

## WETLANDS ARE A CHERISHED PART OF CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

- The wetland landscape reflects the close relationship between humans and wetlands over millennia.
  - Down the ages, water has been venerated as the sustainer of life and plays an important role in the world's major faiths.
  - Wetlands have inspired humankind's creative and spiritual minds from the earliest times and have contributed to the artistic heritage of perhaps all cultures around the world.
  - People living near wetlands have developed socio-cultural values around wetlands that are integral to their culture, spiritual life, sense of place and current existence.
  - Wetlands provide a connection to nature that contributes to improved mental health and wellbeing.
  - Song, dance and stories as collective expressions of reverence towards wetlands are rich traditions that remain part of everyday life for many of the estimated **3 million** indigenous people living within at least **5,000** distinct cultures worldwide.
- The degradation of wetlands has consequences for the mental health of populations who live in those settings, including solastalgia – grieving over the loss of place.
- Their distinct roles and experiences within societies across the globe supply women with unique knowledge and valuable perspectives on wetlands. Women can play a crucial role in conserving the culture, folklore, music, mythology, oral traditions, customs and traditional knowledge around these precious ecosystems.

