

MEDITERRANEAN WATERBIRD NETWORK

The aim of the Mediterranean Waterbird Network (MWN) is to improve the monitoring of waterbirds and the conservation of wetlands in the Mediterranean Region.



This network includes the National coordinators of the International Waterbird Census (IWC) programme from five countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt), the **Tour du Valat (TDV)**, and the National Office for Hunting and Wildlife (ONCFS).

After five years of cooperation in North Africa, projects with other Mediterranean countries are starting to emerge that will coordinate our improved knowledge

of migratory species and better contribute to their conservation. By supporting these countries, the MWN contributes to their achievement of the objectives set in the AEWA Action Plan for Africa (Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds) through its support at the international level, both in the field and in the management and analysis of data.

This intergovernmental treaty, which is managed by the United Nations, promotes international cooperation between the contracting parties to better conserve and manage 255 migratory waterbird species and their habitats in Africa and Eurasia.

Its Action Plan for Africa has **three priority objectives** for North Africa:

- 1 strengthen the network of birdwatchers in the 5 countries;
- 2 improve the spatial coverage and the coordination of the monitoring of wintering waterbirds;
- 3 establish regional coordination for managing, analyzing, and publishing data.



OUR TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS



Our network is particularly thankful to the many volunteers for their involvement and motivation.

The MWN Team

IWC National coordinators from the five North African countries

Mohamed Dakki (GREPOM - Institut Scientifique de Rabat / Maroc) • Samir Sayoud (Centre Cynégétique de Reghaia) & Hamida Salhi (Direction Générale des Forêts) (Algérie) • Hichem Azafzaf (Association des Amis des Oiseaux/BirdLife Tunisie) • Essam Bouras (Environment General Authority) et Khaled Salem Ettayeb (Tripoli University) (Libye) • Wed Abdou (Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency) (Egypt)

L'Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (France)

La Tour du Valat (France)



OUR PARTNERS

Albania: Noe Conservation, PPNEA • **Algeria:** Association Environnementale Aquacirta, Association Nationale Algérienne D'Ornithologie, Conservation Des Forêts D'El Oued, P.e.a. Echourouk, Université 20 Août 1955 Skikda, Université du 08 Mai 45
Belgium: Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ornitološko Društvo Naše Ptice
Canada: Diver/Loon Specialist Group • **Spain:** Parc Natural Del Delta de L'Ebre • **United States:** Crane Specialist Group, Heron Specialist Group, Compagnie Des Salins du Midi et Des Salines de L'Est, Woodcock and Snipe Specialist Group, Lpo Hérault, Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue, Réserve Naturelle Nationale de Camargue • **Greece:** Hellenic Ornithological Society, Pelican Specialist Group, Lake Kerkini Management Authority

Italy: Anthus, Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale (ex-INFS) • **Jordan:** Birdlife Middle East, Royal Society For The Conservation of Nature • **Libya:** Environment General Authority
Morocco: Institut Scientifique de Rabat • **Montenegro:** Center For Protection And Research of Birds of Montenegro, Natural History Museum of Montenegro • **Norway:** Swan Specialist Group
Netherlands: Cormorant Specialist Group, Goose Specialist Group
Portugal: Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos, Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e Das Florestas (Icnf)
United Kingdom: Duck Specialist Group, Flamingo Specialist Group, Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group, Wader Specialist Group
Syria: Syrian Society For The Conservation of Wildlife • **Tunisia:** Association Des Jeunes Chercheurs, Faculté de Science de Gabès

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REPORT

2012-2017



MEDITERRANEAN WATERBIRD NETWORK



THE MEDITERRANEAN WATERBIRD NETWORK (MWN) HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE TO:

- STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF BIRDWATCHERS WHO COUNT WATERBIRDS
- VALORISE THE DATA ACQUIRED AND SHARE THEM WITHIN THE NETWORK
- STRENGTHEN THE COOPERATION AND EXCHANGES BETWEEN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

TRAINING

Training of volunteers is organised once a year in the five North African countries. Volunteers of all levels can acquire the theoretical and practical skills needed to identify the different waterbird species.

Participants are also trained in counting techniques, so they can learn the skills needed to participate in the IWCs the following year and thereby help to improve the monitoring.

SUPPORT FOR TRAINERS

Tools for improving the skills needed for the identification and counting of waterbirds were created and distributed for free by the MWN.

- A multilingual CD for trainers.** This CD provides concrete educational media that can be used immediately in training courses. It was made in 4 languages (French, English, Arabic, and Portuguese).



- An ornithological field guide in Arabic.**

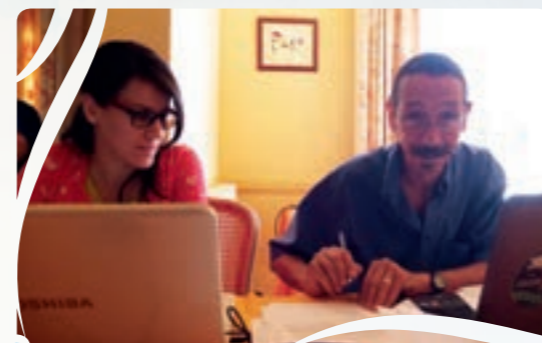
This first-ever ornithological field guide in Arabic describes and illustrates all of the waterbirds regularly observed in North Africa with their distribution range and characteristics.



Testimonial by Khaled Etayeb, IWC National coordinator in Libya

“The MWN has enabled us to consolidate our efforts and share our common experiences, put in place standard counting methods to improve them, create a common database that guarantees the copyright of national data, and we also contributed to a scientific article. One of the most important aspects is to be able to mutualise our counting experiences and to centralise the data with other colleagues in the Mediterranean Region. We hope this project can continue supporting our census activities so as to better contribute to the conservation of waterbirds and wetlands.”

MANAGING AND SHARING



The MWN proposes solutions for entering and sharing data.

- A shared and protected data entry and storage **web platform**, which can be used to manage and share national data with technical and institutional partners.
- A data sharing charter**, drafted and signed in October 2016 by MWN partners, defines the user rights and limitations vis-à-vis the data shared, while ensuring the rights protected by copyright law.

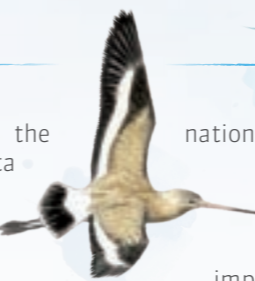
VALORISING

As of the start of their joint project, the MWN partners wished to work together on the management and analysis of the data pooled at the regional scale. These results were valorised through the publication of an initial article¹, published in 2016 in **Biological Conservation** and co-authored by the National coordinators and their staff.

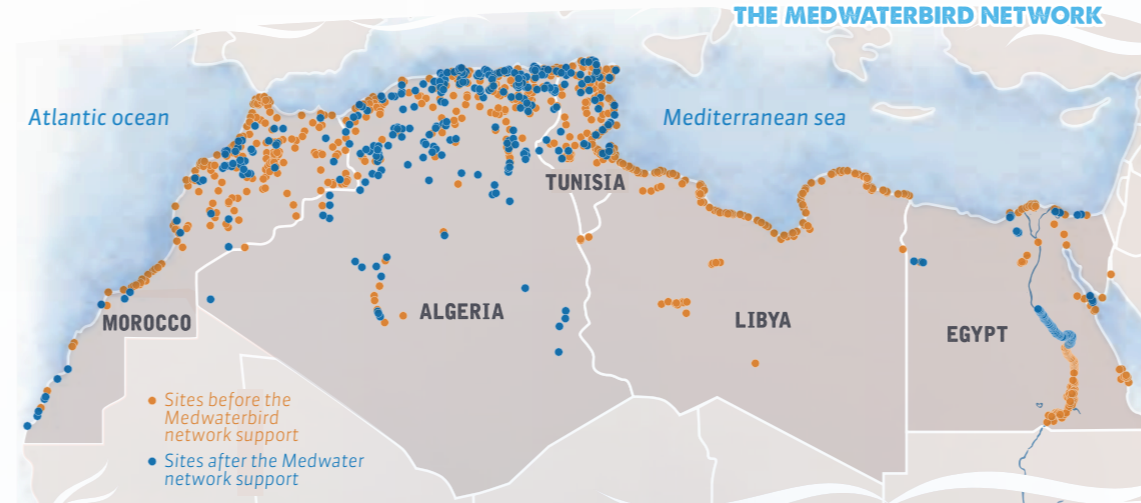
¹ (Sayoud et al. 2016. *Biological Conservation* 206:11–20. doi: 10.1016/j.biocon.2016.12.005)

This publication confirms the interest of pooling the data of the censuses coordinated in the 5 countries, because it can help us to improve our knowledge of the population sizes and confirm the importance of Ramsar sites for the bird communities in these countries. It also highlights the need for better regional coordi-

nation of these censuses, in order to better optimise the efforts required in the field. Finally, it underlines the importance of mutualising more complete data sets, in order to make decisions based on the evaluation of the conservation status of species and wetlands.



UPDATE OF IWC SITES MADE BY THE MEDWATERBIRD NETWORK



RAISING AWARENESS



The MWN developed a **capacity building** project from 2013 to 2016, which was funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). It aimed to raise the awareness of communities and local stakeholders about the issues linked to fragile wetlands, and to involve them in the longer term in the sustainable management of these sites, particularly for the monitoring of wintering birds.

FOCUS ON WWW.MEDWATERBIRDS.ORG

Our site provides information and tools devoted to waterbirds in the Mediterranean Region, for birdwatchers in the field, National coordinators, and any other people interested in waterbirds. It provides:

- identification sheets** for all waterbird species found in the region;
- a presentation of the Mediterranean Basin and its conservation issues for waterbirds;
- technical descriptions of waterbird monitoring and census protocols;**
- a list of our **partners** working to study and protect waterbirds;
- a **bibliography database** (being finalised);
- training tools** created and made available within the framework of the MWN.

COOPERATING AND EXCHANGING

One of the MWN's objectives is also to promote dynamic sharing with Wetlands International (WI), the NGO that is the international coordinator of IWCs. The exchange of North African IWC data started decreasing somewhat in the early 2000s; therefore the MWN's priority task

consists in facilitating data entry and sharing as well as the censuses themselves. After considerable work in terms of managing and updating the data, then drafting a charter for sharing these data, they **were all transmitted to WI at the end of 2016.**

More than **38,000 data items** for **491 sites** or **9,000,000 waterbirds** were thus added to the international database. These supplementary data are now available for new estimates of population trends as well as for assessing their conservation status.

Testimonial by Hichem Azafzaf, IWC National coordinator in Tunisia

“In spite of the conventions and international agreements for the monitoring and conservation of waterbirds, there was almost no coordination in the past between North African countries in terms of field work, or information and data sharing. At the same time, the lack of equipment, trained birdwatchers, and financial means has made waterbird monitoring more and more difficult in certain countries. The Mediterranean Waterbird Network (MWN), which was created in 2012, has made it possible to find solutions for most of these problems. We must remain dynamic and mobilised, while extending and replicating this experience in other Mediterranean countries.”

