



## The Pakistan Wetlands Programme and YOU: The *Tourism Pakistan*

**At** the Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP), we are highly committed to wetlands conservation and work tirelessly to find creative, innovative and imaginative ways of letting people know how important it is to take care of this precious Pakistani resource.

**The** Pakistan Wetlands Programme is a pioneering partnership among the Government of Pakistan, Embassy of Kingdom of Netherlands, Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Programme, WWF International and local communities. Inaugurated in December 2006, the PWP aims to create an enabling environment at national level and develop replicable model management plans for selected wetlands representative of four wetland eco-regions of the country. **These** four regions extend from the highest mountains of Pakistan in the North, to beyond the mouth of the Indus River flowing into the Arabian Sea in the South and many areas of the country in between. Wetland tourism has benefits both locally and nationally for people and wildlife – benefits such as stronger economies, sustainable livelihoods, healthy people and thriving ecosystems. **The** world community responded to the challenge of degradation of wetlands by signing a Ramsar Convention at Ramsar (Iran) on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1971 for international cooperation in their conservation and management. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetlands

**Wetlands** are various types of water bodies such as marshes and mangroves, etc. located inland, along rivers, lakes or coastlines where the water is at most six meters deep. Along with oceans, forests, pastures and other ecosystems, wetlands contribute to our well-being in many ways: they help control floods, act as a buffer against storms, recharge groundwater and maintain water quality, to name a few. But as with most ecosystems wetlands face severe challenges from human activity and are threatened in most parts of the world. **Despite** the generally arid nature of Pakistan's climate, the region supports an estimated 780,000 ha of wetlands that cover about 10% of the total surface area of the country. More than 225 significant wetlands sites have been identified in Pakistan and 19 of these have been internationally recognised by the *Ramsar Convention* as being of global importance. Pakistan has been an active and responsible partner in this global effort. The diverse assortment of natural freshwater and marine wetlands that occur within Pakistan support many unique combinations of biodiversity. **From** 2006 to 2011, the PWP organised activities of all sizes and shapes, from lectures and seminars, nature walks, children's art contests and community clean-up days, to radio and television interviews and letters to newspapers, to the launch of new wetland policies, new Ramsar sites, and new national programmes.

**The** theme for the World Wetlands Day 2012 is *Wetland Tourism: A Great Experience*, designed around a theme -- the role our wetlands play in their surrounding environments. Indeed, conservation and sustainable management of wetlands presents us with an unprecedented **win-win** opportunity to not only enhance the quality of this ecosystem but at the same time to provide



sustainable livelihoods, reduce poverty, promote tourism and contribute to the well-being of millions of our citizens.

**We** will be undertaking a number of activities on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012. For further details please visit our web site [www.pakistanwetlands.org](http://www.pakistanwetlands.org) , or contact: Nasir Iqbal Malik, Coordinator, Awareness-raising and Communication. I, on behalf of the wetlands community and PWP in particular, invite you to join us in this journey to conserve our wetlands.

**Please** do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like additional information. We look forward to your questions, comments and enthusiastic participation.

Kind Regards,

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