

**WORLD WETLANDS DAY**

**2 February** each year is World Wetlands Day, marking the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea – the Ramsar Convention.

World Wetlands Day, coordinated by the Ramsar Secretariat puts the spotlight on the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through actions at all levels – local, national and global. Hunters are involved in this all year round and we are happy to celebrate the collective efforts of hunters at the local level, right through to their international cooperation with key partners to ensure the future of wetlands and their wildlife.

At the centre of the Ramsar philosophy is **the** **wise use concept**. The wise use of wetlands is defined as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. **Wise use** therefore has at its heart the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources, for the benefit of humankind – a principle that hunters strive for every day.

World Wetlands Day 2012 highlights this concept close to hunters’ hearts by focusing on the theme of **Wetlands & Tourism**. Despite being the most endangered ecosystem in the world, have a key role in preserving a huge diversity of wildlife and offering ecological services for human welfare and sustainable development. Tourism provides means and recourses for the conservation of wetlands through hunting and bird-watching. Hunters work hard, invest time and money in their endeavours to conserve wetlands at the local level and are constantly finding ways to work together with national and international stakeholders to recognise their multi-functional nature.

The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto reflects the rigourous and active commitment made by FACE, its Members and the 7 million European hunters they represent to ensure that hunting is sustainable and contributes positively to biodiversity conservation. The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto explicitly actions that **FACE and its Members will continue efforts at the local level to maintain and restore wetlands**, as well as **collating and communicating best practice examples of wetlands conservation**.

In Finland, for example, some 2000 wetlands have been restored with the help of hunters during the last few decades. Hunters are actively taking care of waterfowl breeding areas in the Nordic countries. Most recently, an EU-funded LIFE + project: Return of Rural Wetlands has been launched in Finland, promoting the interest towards wetland restoration and recreation amongst landowners and hunters in the areas of agriculture and forestry. Healthy habitats are essential to viable water bird populations, which form the basis for the recreational activities on wetlands.

Racoon dogs and mink pose a significant threat to many water bird species by eating their eggs, young and even adult birds. The control of small predators has a substantial effect on the breeding success of many native species’ populations. By voluntarily managing these small predators’ populations in wetland areas, the Finnish hunters are delivering conservation efforts at the grass roots level – whilst at an international level, by participating in international conventions, working with partners and providing insights to policy development, both FACE and CIC reflect these local actions into a global movement of hunters for wetlands conservation.

There is still much to do, and World Wetlands Day 2012 is a reminder of what has been achieved, and a promise of what is yet to come.

**\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\***

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**FACE** is the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation.

Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe’s **7 million hunters** as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organization (NGO).

FACE is made up of its **Members**: **national hunters’ associations** from **38 European countries** including the EU-27. FACE also has 4 Associate Members and has its Secretariat in Brussels.

FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe. [www.face.eu](http://www.face.eu)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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