

## RAMSAR CONVENTION BUREAU

The Convention on Wetlands provides a framework for international cooperation as well as national action in the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention is known as the Ramsar Convention after the city in Iran where it was signed in 1971. The treaty secretariat is housed in IUCN's headquarters in Gland. The Secretary General of the treaty secretariat is Dr. Peter Bridgewater of Australia.

The Ramsar Convention, which was opened for signature in 1971 and entered into force in 1975, is the oldest global environmental treaty. The convention seeks to protect a diverse category of natural habitats which includes marshes, swamps, coral reefs, lakes, mangroves, peat bogs, and man-made wetlands such as rice fields and reservoirs. It promotes the "wise use," or sustainable use, of wetland regions so as to preserve their biodiversity and their essential role in water management. Wetlands are the habitat for thousands of plant and animal species including fish (salmon, eel, plaice), mammals (moose, hippopotamuses, beavers), birds (ducks, geese, pelicans, flamingos), amphibians (frogs, toads) reptiles (crocodiles) and flora (water lilies, mangroves). In addition, wetlands play a crucial role in water purification by filtering pollutants and chemicals, and they are the breeding grounds for more than two-thirds of the world's fish harvest.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention took place in Valencia, Spain in November 2002. It produced 46 new resolutions dealing with issues ranging from water management to the impact of invasive species on wetlands.

By Mid-2003, 1,305 Ramsar sites covering a total of 110,028,570 hectares had been designated around the world, including the Florida Everglades, the Venice Lagoon, salt Lake Nakuru in Kenya, and Les Grangettes, Switzerland where the Rhone River flows into Lake Lemman. As of August 2003, 137 countries had ratified the treaty (including the United States which joined the Ramsar Convention in 1985).

# RAMSAR

### INTERNET

*[www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)*

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