



**Statement by
Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of World Migratory Bird Day
8 October, 2022
#WMBD2022**

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Today, 8 October 2022, we recognize World Migratory Bird Day.

Birds are often symbolic of freedom as we watch them gliding on the breeze, seemingly without a care in the world. But unfortunately, this vision is not rooted in reality.

Their freedom and their very lives are at risk as a result of our actions. Bird populations are rapidly decreasing, and their habitats are in jeopardy, in turn putting life on Earth in jeopardy. Birds play an essential role in the functioning of the world's ecosystems – ecosystems that humanity relies on. Not only do birds contribute to nutrient cycling and soil formation, but they also help pollinate plants, spread seeds, control pests, and transform landscapes.

Light pollution, or artificial light, is the theme of Migratory Bird Day this year and is a significant threat to migratory birds and their migration patterns. It causes disorientation when they fly at night, leading to collisions with buildings, it disrupts their internal clocks, and interferes with their ability to undertake long-distance migrations. Many species of birds migrate at night to increase their chance of survival as night flight brings cooler temperatures and fewer predators. However, artificial light distorts the natural patterns within ecosystems and contributes to the deaths of millions of birds each year. This simply cannot be allowed to continue.

We need to act urgently to protect birds across their entire migratory cycle. We can do this through the appropriate connectivity of protected and conserved areas, using the best practice guidelines developed under the Convention on Migratory Species, conserving important bird and biodiversity areas (IBAs) and corridors. Another important piece of the puzzle is the need to introduce policies that incentivize sustainably reducing light emissions during migratory periods.

We also need more 'dark sky' designations, which have many benefits beyond just helping migratory birds. Dark sky designations **protect areas that make a special commitment to protect and preserve the night, reducing or eliminating light pollution in all forms.** Plants and animals depend on Earth's daily cycle of light and dark to conduct life-sustaining behaviours. Protecting darkness is critical to ecological integrity,



providing a healthy environment, sustaining a healthy population, and contributing to a healthy economy. But action must be taken at all levels – from local to global.

With the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting this December (COP 15), there is no better time to start acting. World leaders will come together to adopt a robust and transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework to set us on a path of living in harmony with nature by 2050. This indeed, includes bird protection and their flyways.

Today, World Migratory Bird Day, is not just another day; it is a call to action. Not just to better the lives of birds today, but to leave a legacy of a healthy planet and, in turn, healthy people, for future generations. It is a chance to *dim the lights for birds at night* and allow migratory birds to fly freely with the moon and stars guiding them once again.