



World Wetlands Day
2 February 2018

Wetlands for a sustainable urban future



Walking the talk: Urban wetlands, making cities liveable

The world's urban population is increasing by 2.4% each year, and the number of mega-cities with more than ten million inhabitants will jump from 31 to 41 by 2030. This growth spurt is an opportunity to integrate wetlands into urban planning.

Restored Xin'an River waterfront Huangshan City, China

The Xin'an River flows through the middle of Huangshan City, an urban center of 1.4 million people, named after the distinctive Yellow Mountains that dominate the area. A 7.5 km stretch of the southern edge of the river has been restored to natural wetland, bringing natural flood control together with a new green belt that includes a wetland park, botanical gardens and defined housing developments.



Nakivubo Swamp, Kampala, Uganda

Rapidly growing Kampala is the capital of Uganda. The Nakivubo Swamp covers some 550 hectares (1,360 acres), stretching from the city's industrial heart through residential areas with around 100,000 households. A 2003 estimate put the value of its natural water treatment services at \$US2 million per year. Wetlands naturally filter and reduce the contaminants that drain into natural and man-made water systems.

Văcărești Nature Park, Bucharest, Romania

Declared a protected zone in 2014, Văcărești Nature Park is a 183-hectare (450-acre) urban wetland just 4km from the center of Romania's largest and most densely populated city. The site is a unique case of nature totally reclaiming a man-made reservoir that has been abandoned since 1989. It's now a rich ecosystem with hundreds of species of flowers and plants around three ponds. Home to a vast range of bird and animal life including otters and turtles, the park provides a green lung to the built-up city surrounding the site.

That Luang Marsh, Vientiane Lao PDR

Located on the edge of Vientiane, this 2000-hectare (4,940-acre) marsh has long been a buffer against flooding and a provider of livelihoods for local fisherman, as well as a source of rice and vegetables. A recent WWF and WWT project constructed six water treatment wetlands here for a primary school, a paper mill and a brewery, proving that these can be a low-cost, low-energy way to treat urban waste water. These systems are part of a larger management plan for the marsh, which also foresees specific urban development zones.



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World Wetlands Day is made possible by the Danone Fund for Water.

