



ACTIVITIES REPORT 2023

"It is a great pleasure for Spain, as the current President of the MedWet Steering Committee, to share with all MedWet members this excellent Activity Report.

I would like to begin by saying that 2023 has been a fantastic year for Mediterranean wetlands and for the MedWet family, but several events (natural disasters, armed conflicts, loss of human lives) have painfully marked our journey this year.

Despite these difficult circumstances, this Activity Report conveys positive and encouraging information for all of us about MedWet: excellent work was done in 2023, remarkable results have been achieved, and new paths and opportunities have been opened up, ensuring a promising and stimulating future. As members of the MedWet community, we can be proud of our participation in these accomplishments.

A better world is possible with everyone's efforts, and MedWet's mission in favor of wetlands, the refuge of our Mediterranean identity, is an important part of that task. We must therefore continue to develop our deep commitment to MedWet and to the conservation of wetlands for our common Mediterranean home. We are bound by the same ideals and by the conviction that together we are capable of meeting any challenge."

María Magdalena Bernués
Chair of the MedWet Steering Group
Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge
General Directorate of Biodiversity, Forests and Desertification
Government of Spain

"This 2023 activity report from the Ramsar Regional Initiative dedicated to Mediterranean wetlands, MedWet, serves as a source of inspiration for our Secretariat and all Contracting Parties to our Convention. It demonstrates the extraordinary driving force of a structure like MedWet at the scale of a vast region, from North Africa to Europe and the Middle East, through its advocacy, networking, awareness-raising, and educational actions, as well as its contributions to scientifically informed activities illuminated by the participation of local actors.

I would like to highlight, for the year 2023, MedWet's efforts to promote the implementation of Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) in the Mediterranean, as mentioned in Resolution XIV.17, adopted at COP14 in November 2022. MedWet's participation in the RESCOM project, led by the Mediterranean Biodiversity Consortium, and in the RESTORE4C project, funded by the European Union, is evidence of this.

I'm also delighted with the work carried out in 2023 to promote World Wetlands Day in the Mediterranean, and the initiative launched to promote the Wetland City Accreditation. This label is a fantastic opportunity to emphasize the role of wetlands in human well-being. We depend on wetlands not only because they provide water, food and various means of subsistence, and reduce the devastating impact of water-related disasters, but also because they soothe us and fill us with wonder."

Flore Lafaye de Micheaux, Senior Advisor Europe
Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands

Our vision

MedWet : a community at the service of Mediterranean wetlands

The MedWet mission is to ensure and support the effective conservation of the functions and values of Mediterranean wetlands and the sustainable use of their resources and services.

MedWet brings together 27 Mediterranean and peri-Mediterranean countries that are Parties to the Convention on Wetlands. Palestine and a number of international organizations and wetland research centres are also part of the MedWet Initiative.

One of MedWet's successes lies in establishing a community of stakeholders committed to wetland conservation: governments, scientists, managers, and Non-governmental organization (NGOs) from across the Mediterranean. This community supports governments in adopting policies and implementing on-the-ground actions.



Thank you to the funders who have supported us in 2023

In 2023, the MedWet Secretariat received contributions from member countries of the Initiative as well as some additional voluntary contributions (from Spain).

The organisation receives support from the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB) to implement a Communication, Education, Awareness, and Participation (CEAP) program.

The MedWet Secrétariat is also an associate beneficiary of several consortia:

- Horizon Europe - EU funding
- Rest-Coast - EU funding
- Mediterranean Consortium for Biodiversity - MAVA - FFEM funding



The MedWet Secretariat

MedWet is coordinated by the MedWet Secretariat, which carries out the operational management and the administrative functions, with the support of the Ramsar Secretariat, as appropriate.

It works to achieve the following objectives :

- a) to promote the effective implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan, pertinent Ramsar Resolutions, and relevant policies and initiatives in the Mediterranean region by supporting actions on the ground by governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector ;
- b) to reinforce capacities in areas where these are not sufficiently developed, and especially to develop and ensure adaptive and integrated management of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and other wetlands ;
- c) to transfer to and exchange knowledge and expertise among key conservation and sustainable use actors in order to reinforce Mediterranean wetland management; and
- d) to coordinate with other regional and international actions and programmes relevant for wetland conservation and sustainable use, thereby serving to build synergies to support the implementation of the Convention in the region.

In August, our coordinator Alessio Satta left to take on new commitments.

Currently, our team consists of individuals who put their multi-disciplinary skills at the service of the Initiative.



Abderahim Smari
Tunisia



Alessio Satta
Italy



Isabelle Perroud
France



Marianne Courouble
France



Flavio Monti
Italy



Sana Mezoughi
Portugal

Joined us in late 2023:



Santiago Suarez
Spain



Flavia Cavaliere
Italy

The key to success 2023 : MedWet reaffirms its leadership role in communication and advocacy for Mediterranean wetlands.

MedWet continues its cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean with the 3rd Online Conference on "the Restoration of Mediterranean Wetlands: the Wetland-Based Solutions."



The 3rd Conference, organised by the Union for the Mediterranean and MedWet, was held on 15 December 2023. It was an excellent opportunity to highlight and inform all stakeholders, including decision-makers and practitioners at all levels, about the latest tools, findings, and strategies available and currently being implemented in these vital ecosystems in different parts of the Mediterranean. The aim was to activate the transformative changes and coordinate the efforts urgently required to scale up wetland ecosystem conservation and restoration.

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/yRgghHHczeY?si=pkPm8pyiblu4k6un>

Active participation in the #RestoreNature campaign

In the midst of mounting environmental challenges, the world has found itself grappling with the dual crises of escalating climate change and biodiversity loss. The scientific consensus leaves no room for doubt—swift and decisive action is imperative to confront these challenges head-on.

A coalition of 200 civil society organizations, including MedWet among the signatories, has issued a compelling call to action in the form of the '#RestoreNature' joint statement. This collective statement served as an urgent appeal to the European Union (EU) to swiftly adopt a robust Nature Restoration Law to pivot from a path of continuous deterioration to one of regeneration.

MedWet not only emphasizes the urgency of adopting a Nature Restoration Law but also contributes to specialized insights on wetland ecosystems. Our organisation plays a pivotal role in shaping policies that specifically address the preservation and restoration of Mediterranean wetlands.



Ensuring advocacy in support of Nature-Based Solutions (NbS)

MedWet est is a **founding member of the Mediterranean Consortium for Biodiversity**, launched at the initiative of the Conservatoire du Littoral, along with other key players such as the IUCN, Tour du Valat, MedPan, PIM and AIFM.

In 2023, the **RESCOM** project was launched: this is the first project carried out by the Consortium coordinated by the Tour du Valat. The project aims to strengthen **the social and environmental resilience of vulnerable marine and coastal areas in the Mediterranean**; it aims to establish an innovative mechanism to address challenges by promoting a more integrated approach to biodiversity conservation, both multi-partner and multi-biome, and by the implementation of Nature-Based Solutions, in order to contribute to better coexistence between ecosystems and populations. The preservation and restoration of natural ecosystems indeed offer effective solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

MedWet is entrusted with an important role in this project, **leading the communication and advocacy strategy** to act at various levels (local, national, regional and international), scopes (political, field), and among different categories of actors to promote the adoption and implementation of Nature-Based Solutions in the Mediterranean.

MedWet and Tour du Valat organised a **side event at the COP23 of the Barcelona Convention in Portoroz, Slovenia, in December 2023** on the restoration of Mediterranean ecosystems as Nature-based Solutions to tackle climate change.

As an observer at COP23, MedWet presented **a position paper** in plenary to emphasize the importance of integrating the restoration of coastal wetlands as NbS in the Mediterranean into the Parties' priority program, in accordance with their international commitments.

<https://www.medconsortium.org/>



The year 2023 marks another significant milestone in the funding landscape for the MedWet Secretariat with the participation in two European programs for ecosystem restoration.

H2020 REST-COAST project: Promoting Sustainable Governance of Coastal Restoration

The H2020 REST-COAST project is positioned as an innovative initiative to demonstrate that effective upscaled coastal restoration can provide a low-carbon adaptation solution. By focusing on improving biodiversity in vulnerable coastal ecosystems, such as wetlands and seagrass meadows, the project addresses challenges resulting from decades of the environmental degradation of rivers and coasts.

The central objective of the project is to develop large-scale river-coast connectivity and increase the nearshore accommodation space for the resilient delivery of coastal ecosystem services (ESS). The project is committed to enhancing citizen participation, as well as to engaging local and regional authorities and civil society organizations. The strategic plan of the REST-COAST project is designed to support transformative change in governance and policies, which will demonstrate the crucial importance of the coastal dimension in the EU Green Deal for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

In this context, MedWet plays an essential role by making a significant contribution to policy issues and governance frameworks at the EU and international levels. MedWet will be in charge of preparing guidance notes and specific recommendations for the management of restoration and conservation. As a key partner, MedWet is committed to facilitating the dissemination and adoption of best practices in environmental governance, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness of the REST-COAST project.

Horizon Europe RESTORE4Cs project: cooperation for a community of practice

One of the needs identified by the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP14) is the establishment of a network of practices to combat climate change. In the RESTORE4Cs project, MedWet is responsible for building a Community of Practice that will bring together wetland managers from six pilot sites in Europe, as well as members of the MedWet Managers Network, Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs), and other European project restoration champions.

Through the activities of this community and the development of policy briefs, MedWet will raise awareness of the role of coastal wetlands in implementing European strategies for climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection (such as the Nature Restoration Law and LULUCF, among others).

The objective of RESTORE4Cs is to assess the effectiveness of different restoration activities in wetlands and their contribution to greenhouse gas reduction and the provision of ecosystem services. To improve information accessible to stakeholders and decision-makers, the project will develop an integrated platform and a geographic information system to identify new wetlands for restoration.



MedWet at the service of Mediterranean site managers



Considering the need to implement actions on the ground in favour of the conservation and sustainable use of Mediterranean wetlands, MedWet has put itself at the service of managers by launching the **Mediterranean MedWet Managers Network** in 2020.

The network aims to promote best management practices, the exchange of knowledge, and the conservation of wetlands at a more effective level, to guarantee a promising future for Mediterranean wetlands.

The network offers managers the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience through online platforms and meetings, to build their capacity, and to advocate for the conservation and effective management of their wetlands. The network produces guidelines to highlight best practices in the field.

Today, MedWet plays an important role in promoting the network's members (44) by inviting them to international meetings (Union for the Mediterranean, UNEP, Ramsar Secretariat, etc.) and also in putting them in touch with partners and donors.

The website dedicated to the Mediterranean MedWet Managers Network :

www.medwetmanagers.net

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Mediterranean MedWet Managers Network website. At the top left is the MedWet logo. To its right are two prominent buttons: 'Tell Us Your Story' and 'Become a Member'. Below these is a horizontal navigation menu with links for 'OUR NETWORK', 'DISCOVER OUR WETLANDS', 'NEWS', 'STORIES', 'ACADEMY', and 'CONTACT'. The main heading reads 'Discover the Ramsar Sites in your country'. Below this is a map titled 'Ramsar Sites members of the MeRSIM network' showing the Mediterranean basin with numerous blue location pins marking Ramsar sites in countries like Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and others. The map is powered by Google My Maps.

MedWet strengthens the promotion of Communication, Education, Awareness and Participation (CEPA) activities in the Mediterranean with the support of the French Biodiversity Agency

To raise awareness of the importance of wetlands for humanity and the planet, **World Wetlands Day (WWD)** is celebrated every year on 2 February, the anniversary of the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971.

Based on the French experience and with the support of the French Biodiversity Agency MedWet has developed the World Wetlands Day dynamic at the Mediterranean level.

This project aims to mobilise governmental and non-governmental actors in wetland conservation issues by weaving a territorial network around the celebration of World Wetlands Day. This action has made it possible to significantly strengthen links with civil society, particularly local NGOs working with future generations. **In 2023 :**


684
Structures
organisatrices

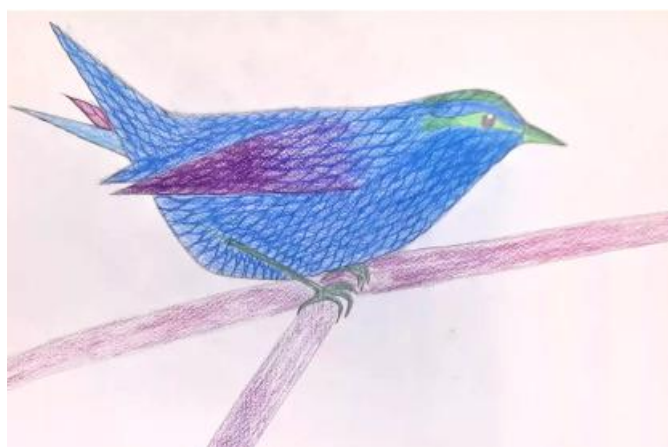

1366
Animations


57.200
Personnes
sensibilisées



Key elements for success :

- A regional network of actors: The census of Mediterranean Ramsar Site managers and local NGOs enabled the project to be carried out and a regional network to be set up. The resulting network enabled WWD to be amplified at the Mediterranean level.
- Tools in the languages of the countries around the Mediterranean: registration forms and event maps, designed with MedWet partners and used to relay information to local players.
- A call for projects open to all local organisations provides concrete and effective support for their actions. This call for projects will make it possible to support 34 events per year, to create a Mediterranean identity for the WWD, and to strengthen cooperation among all the players involved in the region.



Partners

The Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention, the Ramsar France association, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), and the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory with the support of the French Biodiversity Agency.

Other events in 2023

Webinaire "Good practice in integrating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into your wetland management plans"

This webinar was organised by MedWet, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Ramsar Secretariat on 12 July 2023.

Its main objective was to provide an in-depth overview of Disaster Risk Reduction to wetland managers and policy-makers. This included not only clarifying key issues related to DRR, but also presenting the guidance notes available to facilitate the integration of DRR into wetland management plans.

To replay the webinar :
<https://bit.ly/43BI68K>



Migration routes in the Mediterranean

Last year, on Friday 24 March 2023, we organized an online workshop with Tunisian and French young people from the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean which was an exceptional day for them. The online workshop organised by MedWet with the support of the OFB raised awareness among young people of the importance of conserving wetlands and Ramsar Sites for migratory birds in the Mediterranean. The event brought together young people and NGOs from Tunisia and France: The high school of Ghar el Melh, the high school of Ferdinand Buisson de Thiaucourt, the Association "Friends of Birds/Birdlife Tunisia", the Tunisian Association of Wildlife, the House of Culture of Ghar El Melh, and the Regional Parc Naturel of la Lorraine.

High school students from both sides of the Mediterranean presented their research on the great cormorant and the grey crane.

They shared their knowledge about wetlands for migratory birds and their thoughts on the measures to be taken to restore ecosystems. Investing time and resources on the young generation is important to ensure a sustainable future, and we hope that this event will inspire young people to get involved in concrete actions in the future.



Promoting the Mediterranean Wetlands City Accreditation

Following MedWet's participation in the second Circle of Mayors held in Amiens in June 2023, our team is mobilizing efforts to promote Wetland City Accreditation on a Mediterranean level.

We aim to promote this accreditation within our civil society networks and encourage Mediterranean participation in the next Mayors' Circle in China. A working group was set up in autumn 2023 composed of the MedWet team, the Ramsar France association and two members of the independent standing committee.

Leading a network of wetland cities is a relevant approach for contributing to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention. Education and awareness-raising projects are a priority. Museums, visitor and education centres, schools - everyone is invited to take an interest in these fragile ecosystems and biodiversity reserves for our future.





The Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory

The Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO) was established in 2008 within the framework of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), and is managed by Tour du Valat.

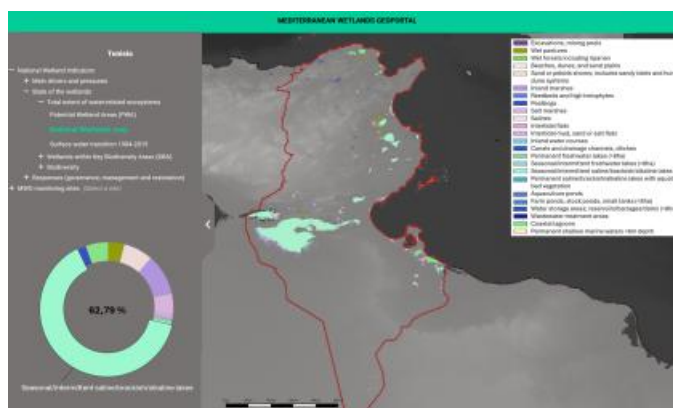
This is a long-term and wide scale monitoring tool, with two main objectives:

- to convey synthetic and comprehensive scientific knowledge to decision-makers in Mediterranean countries on the conservation status of wetlands and the progress made to preserve them;
- to promote more ambitious policies in favour of wetlands.

Among the tools used to implement this monitoring, the MWO relies on a set of indicators that are regularly computed and updated in collaboration with its different scientific and technical partners. These monitoring indicators are used to feed the MWO's products, including the reports "The Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook" (1st and 2nd editions in 2012 and 2018). They provide an overview of the scientific information resulting from the calculation of the monitoring indicators, usually presented as figures and key messages for decision-makers and society in general (media, NGOs and the general public). In order to optimize their media impact, these reports are generally released at the occasion of major international events dealing with wetland conservation, such as the Ramsar COPs.

In 2023, as well as strengthening the team with the arrival of new recruits, the main focus was on redefining the MWO's monitoring indicators and action strategies, with the 3rd Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook report in prospect. As a result, new tools and approaches are currently being integrated into the MWO's knowledge production process and will, eventually, increase its impact on its main targeted audience in MedWet countries.

One of these products that will also become a flagship tool of the MWO is the Geoportal on Mediterranean Wetlands, whose development began in 2023, with deployment scheduled for the end of 2024. This new tool will allow to gather and centralize all main georeferenced data on the status and trends of Mediterranean wetlands, harmonize them at the regional scale and facilitate their dissemination through an online, scalable and user-friendly platform.



Additionally, to maximise its impact on its target audiences, the MWO is currently working on tailoring its main findings to the national levels of each of the 27 MedWet countries. This process requires a good understanding of the political, socio-economic, and environmental contexts in these countries, to ensure that the recommendations and key messages derived from the monitoring indicators are adapted to the real issues and needs in terms of managing, preserving and restoring wetland ecosystems.

Therefore, the MWO is working on developing Country Profiles that will be used, for instance, to better map key stakeholders within each MedWet country, as well as defining the main levers for action required to ensure that the role and needs of wetland ecosystems are taken into account when it comes to defining governance and management policies for land, water and other natural resources.

Increased presence on the Internet and social networks

In 2023, MedWet's websites, whose content is available in three languages, recorded **94,800 page views**.

The main MedWet website page attracted 92,649 visits last year, with an additional 2,164 visits to the MedWet managers' network website. These figures underline the enduring relevance of MedWet's online resources, highlighting their impact on a diverse audience.

www.medwet.org

www.medwetmanagers.net

MedWet is also very active on social media with two Facebook pages, three Twitter accounts, one on LinkedIn, one on Instagram, and a YouTube channel.

MedWet's strong online presence, with a total of **15,932 followers** on various platforms, is remarkable because it is entirely organic, with **no advertising**.

Facebook : English/French 6700 followers / Arabic 4350 followers

Twitter : English/French 2722 followers / Arabic 448 followers

LinkedIn : 3600 followers

Instagram : 810 followers

MedWet is the unique organisation that provides comprehensive news and information on wetlands in the Arabic-speaking world.

For the MedWet Managers Network, recently introduced on social media (June 2023), the total number of followers on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter is 900.