

## **Summary of WLI Russia conference, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011**

Around 30 people from across this list of host organisations took part:

Tomsk State University  
Baltic Fund for Nature, St Petersburg  
Khakassky National Park  
Birds for People offices, Moscow  
WLI, Slimbridge, UK  
Ramsar, Gland, Switzerland

Summary of the questionnaires that were prepared beforehand:

- Development of new wetland centres
- Advice and support from experts, training and capacity building
- Common position and statement for all those involved in WLI
- Financial support
- Stronger community of people delivering wetland education
- Internationally relevant materials

### **Notes from the meeting**

Ensure that government colleagues kept on board, even if not directly involved in wetland education, as many deliver wetland education / engagement work, indirectly support wetland centres themselves, or are likely to influence future wetland centre development in their regions.

Collaboration is very important between wetland centres, but sometimes difficult to achieve. Need to have good ways of establishing and maintaining contact between centres and their partners.

Wetland conservation terms can be difficult to discuss with non-specialists (Khakassky) which makes it hard to find protection or funding for wetlands. Tomsk have done some work to raise awareness, getting people (particularly decision-makers) directly involved in experiencing wetlands.

Latest scientific information is important to have, to gain credibility with the public and visitors. But, also difficult to put it in a format that visitors can understand. Often scientists need help from education professionals to turn their information into something that is publicly understandable.

Contact with the media is essential to get messages distributed beyond the wetland centres. The ability to create newspaper items, give good interviews to journalists, produce short films and video clips allows us to reach those that may never visit a wetland or wetland centre.

The activities and materials offered in wetland centres should also be aligned with the National Curriculum. This makes it much more useful to teachers and schools, at both primary and secondary levels. These materials can also be shared between centres.

Most of the centres engaged are in Western (European) Russia, so more work should be done to encourage those from Eastern (Asian) Russia.

Producing materials such as leaflets, guides, lesson plans could be done in a similar format, to show that they belong to a wider network of education professionals. Would also allow standard formats to be produced that could then be replicated across the wetland centres, without each one having to produce it from the start.

Would be good to encourage the public to carry out their own monitoring of species and/or habitat, that could feed into their local centres. This would give valuable and up to date information from people that regularly visit their local wetlands. Some training could be offered to help them produce useful and more accurate data.

### **Summary of meeting:**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2011, the WLI Russia network met for the first time via video conference. 25 wetland professionals met across 4 locations at Moscow, St Petersburg, Tomsk and at the Khakassky National Park, along with the Head of WLI and officers from the Ramsar secretariat.

The meeting gave an opportunity for Russian wetland officers to update each other on their work, to better explain WLI and its project, to announce the new Wetlands International MATRA-funded project and to plan for the best way to develop wetland education and engagement across Russia.

Discussions brought up suggestions for better training and capacity building of staff, increased numbers of wetlands submitted as Ramsar sites, using WLI to raise the importance of wetlands in Russia, producing materials to help partners communicate wetland messages better, delivering scientific messages to the public and engaging the public in monitoring of wetlands and their wildlife.

WLI Russia will continue to grow, and we plan to develop the contact between wetland centres over the next 2 years, working closely with Wetlands International as part of their new project. For more information, please contact the Head of WLI at [wli@wwt.org.uk](mailto:wli@wwt.org.uk), or Irina Kamennova, Wetlands International, at [ikamennova@wwf.ru](mailto:ikamennova@wwf.ru). Powerpoint presentations will be available shortly on the WLI Russia web page at <http://whooper.wwt.org.uk/wli/regional-partners/asia/wli-russia>

Chris Rostron, Head of WLI, December 2011