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WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY TO EDUCATE PARTICIPANTS ON HOW TO PROTECT BIRDS FROM PLASTIC POLLUTION

“Protect birds: Be the solution to plastic pollution” is the theme for the 2019 [World Migratory Bird Day](#) (WMBD), the only international education program that celebrates the migration of nearly 350 bird species between their nesting habitats in North America and wintering grounds in Latin America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

This year WMBD will tackle the challenges of plastic pollution in the environment by teaching participants at more than 700 locations from Argentina to Canada about the many ways that plastics can harm birds and by offering some ideas for ways that people can reduce their use of plastic items. Many of the events will include cleanups and other habitat restorations as well as educational presentations, bird walks, and creative art activities.

Now in its 26th year, WMBD has grown from a one-day event into a framework underpinning hundreds of projects and programs year-round. WMBD in the Americas is coordinated by [Environment for the Americas](#), which provides bilingual educational materials and information about birds and bird conservation throughout the Americas. Their programs inspire children and adults to get outdoors, learn about birds, and take part in their conservation.

Since plastic was introduced in the 1950s, an estimated 8.3 billion metric tons have been created. Only about 9% of plastic materials are recycled, leaving more than 6.3 billion metric tons of plastics in landfills or polluting the environment. “One of the main types of marine debris in the marine environment today is plastic. We know fishing gear, plastic bags, bottle caps, utensils, and other plastic pieces are entangling and being ingested by birds. NOAA’s Marine Debris Program is pleased to be partnering with World Migratory Bird Day this year to help raise awareness about plastic marine debris and encourage people across the globe to be part of the solution,” Nancy Wallace, director of the NOAA Marine Debris Program says.

Plastics harm birds in marine environments, as well as other habitats. As human use of plastics grows, so too does the amount of plastic pollution that invades most ecosystems around the globe. “Plastic debris such as fishing line poses a serious risk of entangling birds, which can entrap them and cause serious injury,” says Dr. Susan Bonfield, Director of Environment for the Americas.

Migratory birds also have a high risk of directly ingesting plastics. It’s been estimated that 80% of sea and shorebirds have consumed foam, pellets, thread, and other items. In addition, small bits of plastic, known as microplastics, pose a hazard to birds and smaller organisms throughout the food chain due to the toxins they concentrate in the environment.

In addition to raising awareness about issues important to bird conservation, World Migratory Bird Day is also a celebration of the spectacular journeys that migratory birds take as they travel between nesting and non-breeding sites around the world. Global partners at the Convention on Migratory Species in Bonn, Germany recognize that “World Migratory Bird Day joins our voices as one for the protection of the birds we share. With raised awareness of threats such as plastic pollution to birds, it is our opportunity to take action by making changes that help birds, whether personal or more broadly.”

Although WMBD is traditionally celebrated in Canada and the U.S. on the second Saturday in May, in reality every day is bird day, and programs, festivals, and other events occur throughout the year, whenever it works best for organizers—and the birds. “Ultimately, the goal of WMBD is to connect people to nature through birds,” says Miguel Matta, WMBD Coordinator in Latin America.

Add Information about your event here!

To learn more about migratory bird habitats, download IMBD educational and promotional materials in Spanish and English, and search for activities planned in your area, visit <http://www.migratorybirdday.org/>.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. **Dr. Susan Bonfield** is the Executive Director for Environment for the Americas. After studying Black-legged Kittiwakes in Alaska, she returned to the Lower 48 where she has since gained over 17 years of experience in bird research and education. She has created education programs in the U.S. and Mexico, assisted with workshops on bird monitoring and conservation in both countries, taught basic identification courses, and led a course for the USFWS National Conservation Training Center. Susan has a B.S. in Biology from Randolph-Macon Woman's College, an M.S. in Ecology, Fisheries, and Wildlife from

University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources from Colorado State University.

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