and practitioners from 203 countries and territories met to commit to the acceleration of species recovery during the first-ever World Species Congress, hosted by Reverse the Red. At the World Conservation Congress in 2008, IUCN members adopted Resolution 4.019 calling for a World Species Congress: a science-based, interdisciplinary, inclusive gathering to highlight the status of species and chart the course of species conservation.

National and regional conversations took place across 96 satellite events, engaging an estimated 100,000 people and facilitating rich connections, deep conversations and a broad reach. The relationship between a global event and local and regional convenings meant that national networks supporting governments in updating and implementing their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans were able to connect and coalesce around the Congress.

With 200 speakers representing 68 countries in 165 sessions, the programme of the Congress shared messages of urgency, success and hope. Notable speakers included Jane Goodall, Russell A. Mittermeier, Jon Paul Rodríguez, Grethel Aguilar, David Cooper, Ivonne Higuero and Amy Fraenkel, as well as representatives from the governments of Angola, Ireland, India, Colombia, Peru, New Zealand, Australia, Spain, Kenya, Germany and Brazil. These speakers shared stories of species recovery across their spheres of influence, to galvanize further support and action to reverse species declines.

Pivotal actions from the Congress are the more than 3,750 pledges made since the Reverse the Red Species Pledge launched. To achieve Global Biodiversity Framework targets, we need coordinated, strategic efforts from all partners. The pledge is a first step in understanding which organizations are committing their skills, experience and knowledge to the recovery of species. Pledges made during the World Species Congress include: Twycross Zoo to reverse declines of 15 threatened species by 2030; Bristol Zoological Society to reverse declines of 97 species; at the satellite event hosted by Te Nukuao Wellington Zoo, 30 conservation organizations to protect 50 species from decline; Botanic Gardens Conservation International to assess 2,000 tree species; and the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Antelope Specialist Group to assess 95 species.

The urgency to achieve global biodiversity targets is increasing. But the World Species Congress was a reminder that saving species is possible. The attendees came away with insights, tools, strategies and frameworks to accelerate their efforts, and connections to more than 10,000 other conservation experts dedicated to the same goal (see Engagement Report available at reversethered.org/world-species-congress-2024). The first-ever World Species Congress was a pivotal moment in conservation: an attestation that, together, we can save species.

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Launching of the Locally led East Asian Flyway Acoustics Program

The East Asian–Australasian Flyway is a globally important bird migration route used by many species threatened by the synergistic pressures of poaching, habitat loss and climate change (Yong et al., 2021, *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, 9, 613172). There are major knowledge gaps regarding the ecology of birds in the Flyway, and the key threats and causes of population declines. Recent advances in acoustic recording technology and machine learning for automated detection of bird sounds have improved the monitoring of migratory birds. However, the bias towards species in temperate regions, particularly North America, means these tools are not as effective or accessible in Southeast Asia. A lack of locally relevant resources and training materials creates an additional barrier for conservationists in the region.

To improve conservation of migratory birds in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway, the Locally led East Asian Flyway Acoustics programme began acoustic data collection in September 2024, during the autumn migration, across 17 locations in Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Taiwan. Embracing a locally led approach, participants from across the region have worked since January 2024 to prepare for the deployment of autonomous recording units, learn analytical approaches for acoustic data and develop research questions. Participants also formed working groups focused on bird identification, machine learning, scientific publication and community outreach. The acoustic data collected will be used to map migration across the Flyway, filling data gaps in the citizen science platform eBird (ebird.org). Participants will also work with developers of the research platform BirdNET (birdnet.cornell.edu), which aims to automate acoustic bird species recognition at a large scale, and SILIC (Sound Identification and Labeling Intelligence for Creatures) that can recognize 257 species of terrestrial vertebrates found in Taiwan, including 213 bird species (Wu et al., 2022, *Ecological Informatics*, 101524; silic.tbn.org.tw). Their input will help to evaluate and improve the performance of automated algorithms for the identification of migratory bird species in the Flyway.

Acoustic monitoring produces extensive datasets that can be analysed to identify species, track migration routes and patterns, and detect threats and changes in bird populations and habitats. These datasets offer fine-scale spatial and

temporal insights into the distribution patterns of migratory birds, which are essential for the design of species-specific conservation plans, habitat restoration and protected area management; this information is challenging to obtain through traditional survey methods. Importantly, the Locally led East Asian Flyway Acoustics network will connect local initiatives across a hemispheric scale, enhancing our understanding of migratory bird ecology and drawing greater attention to the Flyway.

The Locally led East Asian Flyway Acoustics network recently launched a website and blog that can be used to monitor progress (birds.cornell.edu/ccb/locally-led-east-asian-flyway-acoustics-leafa). The project is co-organized by BISA Indonesia, Universiti of Malaysia Terengganu, and the K. Lisa Yang Center for Conservation Bioacoustics. Initial funding for this project comes with generous support from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology through the H. Elliot McClure Fund for the Research and Conservation of Birds in Asia.

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New habitats for birds: rapid population growth and new breeding species in Poland

Recent efforts to create artificial islands in the Szczecin Lagoon in the Oder estuary, Poland, demonstrate that appropriate environmental management can promote the expansion and stabilization of bird populations. These islands, created during a project to deepen the waterway to the port of Szczecin, have seen a dramatic increase in breeding birds, including species that are new to Poland.

The number of breeding birds on the islands increased from 185 pairs in 2021 to nearly 5,000 pairs in 2024. This increase underscores the effectiveness of protecting early successional stages of vegetation on newly established habitats. Among the most notable achievements is the first recorded breeding of the Caspian tern *Hydroprogne caspia* in Poland, with an incubating bird observed on 7 June 2024, marking the southernmost breeding site for this Baltic population.

Other bird species that have benefited from habitat conditions on the islands include the black-winged stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, a species previously uncommon in this region that has begun to expand from the south, and the pied avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, which usually breeds in in the Wadden Sea area but has expanded eastwards to these islands.

These changes are a response to the loss of natural habitats, partly driven by climate change. Creating new habitats that support early successional processes is crucial in combating biodiversity loss (Gómez-Serrano, 2024, *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 8, 1201–1202). Birds respond quickly to environmental changes and therefore reflect the overall health of ecosystems. These increases in bird populations and the presence of new breeding species on these artificial islands is testament to the success of such interventions, and