

Landmark Project Launched to Protect South Dongting Lake

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A groundbreaking project has been launched to protect and restore South Dongting Lake in Hunan Province, China. This initiative, the first under the Regional Flyway Initiative (RFI), marks a significant step towards safeguarding critical wetland habitats for migratory birds across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

The RFI, a collaborative effort between BirdLife International, the Asian Development Bank, and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), aims to finance and implement projects that balance conservation and economic development. By investing in wetland restoration and sustainable practices, the RFI seeks to improve the livelihoods of local communities while protecting biodiversity.

South Dongting Lake, a vital habitat for thousands of migratory birds, has faced increasing pressure from human activities and climate change. The project will address these challenges through a range of measures, including wetland restoration, sustainable agriculture practices, and community-based conservation initiatives.

The Asian Development Bank, in partnership with the Yuanjiang Municipal Government, the Hunan Provincial Government, and the Agence Française de Développement, has committed \$308 million to support this ambitious project. The funds will be used to restore nearly 12,000 hectares of degraded wetland, improve water quality, and strengthen the lake's ecological resilience.

By protecting South Dongting Lake, the project will not only benefit local communities but also contribute to the global conservation of migratory birds. This landmark initiative sets a precedent for future conservation efforts and demonstrates the power of collaboration between governments, NGOs, and local communities.

“I am thrilled to salute the launch of the first flagship restoration project of Dongting Lake in Hunan Province, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as part of BirdLife’s joint East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) regional initiative with the Asian Development Bank and the EAAFP, first announced at the Convention on Biological Diversity COP in Kunming in 2022. This is the most advanced of BirdLife’s Global Flyways initiatives which include the Americas, Africa-Eurasia and Central Asia. They are all designed to protect the critical feeding and breeding grounds of migratory birds, enhancing local peoples’ lives and providing climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience. Through the proven success of nature restoration, we can provide justified hope to people and the planet that we are stepping up solutions globally to the twin climate and biodiversity crises.” – Martin Harper, CEO, BirdLife International