

# CONNECTING FISH, RIVERS AND PEOPLE



WORLD FISH  
MIGRATION DAY

24<sup>th</sup> MAY  
2014

© Michel Roggo /WWF Canon

## WORLD FISH MIGRATION DAY 2014

### CONNECTING FISH, RIVERS AND PEOPLE

---

#### WHAT IS WORLD FISH MIGRATION DAY 2014 (WFMD)?

WFMD, on May 24<sup>th</sup>, has been developed to increase worldwide awareness of the importance of freshwater migratory fish, and rivers that flow freely to oceans, as well as the people that depend on them. This celebration seeks global attention to ensure that important, natural river networks remain connected to the oceans, and to restore connections within rivers so that populations remain healthy, species are not lost, and the river ecosystems remain productive.

Organizations around the world will host events to engage the general public, resource managers, and commercial and recreational anglers, as well as individuals who influence public, fisheries and energy policy. An exciting array of events have been planned, varying from a fishway tour in the Kruger National Park (South Africa), to a celebration of the removal of the Arase Dam (Japan), to talks, seminars and children's activities planned in many countries. The theme running throughout all events is [Connecting fish, rivers and people](#).



#### WHY DO WE CARE?

Humans have been benefiting from rivers and migratory fish for millennia. Rivers and the life they support provide many services: water supply, irrigation, navigation, hydropower, an important source of protein, recreation and more. However, these activities are often carried out at a high environmental cost: river degradation, river fragmentation, water quality deterioration, flow regime modification, and habitat modification and destruction, collectively lead to a decline in fish populations.

Barriers, such as weirs, dams and sluices for water management, hydropower and land drainage have been built, which prevent fish migrations that are needed for reproduction and feeding, and can disrupt the life cycles of species, causing depletion in population sizes and species numbers. Migratory fish requiring freshwater ecosystems are threatened around the world and fish populations are declining rapidly.

Many species of fishes, such as salmon, shad, catfish, sturgeon and eel migrate between the sea, estuaries and rivers to complete their life cycles. Other species must make extensive migrations within their home rivers. Free migration routes for fish are crucial to their survival. If they cannot reach their breeding grounds, or their larvae cannot drift and enter into floodplains, the species will decline and eventually become extinct. Barriers fundamentally change river ecosystems and can have profound effects on temperature and flow patterns that diminish the habitat quality for native fishes, and create conditions that encourage establishment of alien species.

Around the world, millions of people rely on freshwater fish as a primary food source and for their livelihoods. In the Amazon river basin (the largest in the world) the fisheries are sustained almost solely by migratory species. The collapse of fish stocks in many places has had a devastating effect on the food security of people, which often includes millions of the world's poorest people.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Conservationists, water and natural resource managers, as well as dam developers, are working together to restore and improve migration routes for fishes in rivers systems. It is our shared responsibility to find solutions, and to conserve and restore free fish migration. We need to recover healthy rivers and protect others to prevent further river degradation and loss of the abundance of fishes and even species extinction. We owe it to future generations to improve environmental conditions and to ensure the sustenance of the millions of human lives that depend on rivers, their natural flow patterns, and the species that inhabit them. To accomplish this brighter future, we need to start by educating people and raising awareness of the current situation as well as practical solutions to address these issues.

WFMD events highlight the ecological and social importance of migratory species and how they are threatened by human activities. This international commemorative day is designed to bring a greater understanding to the general public and those individuals who influence water, energy and fishery policies. Raising awareness and creating commitment, at all levels, to improve the health of our rivers is essential to take action to protect these vital natural resources and the full range of biodiversity that lives within them.

## WHAT ARE WFMD GOALS?

- Highlight the importance of protecting natural, free-flowing river networks, and avoiding construction of new barriers to migration in productive systems
- Raise awareness of the ecological and socio-economic importance of migratory fish
- Enhance our global understanding of threats to migratory fish and the many solutions to open free migration routes and restoring once great migrations
- Spark focused, innovative, and species-specific strategic actions to re-open fish migration routes
- Foster partnerships, dialogue and cooperation with people living around fish migration routes and free flowing rivers to improve sharing of innovations, learn from failures, and increase the rate of restoration
- Provide an international platform to highlight local, national and international programs working to protect and restore migratory fishes and to share this information



## WFMD KEY MESSAGES

- Natural free flowing river networks need to be maintained all around the world!
- Many fishes require a connected river system to complete their life cycles. When fish migration is blocked, populations become depleted, rivers and nearby marine habitats become degraded; and non-native species often become established in these changed conditions; these factors can have a detrimental effect on the livelihoods, culture, and quality of life of millions of people globally.
- Natural freshwater systems are productive and also yield the highest benefit to many connected ecosystems across landscapes, as well as the people who rely on them; the sustainable use of these systems is usually economically more beneficial than the high costs of engineered water management and alternative uses.
- Migratory fishes and the other fishes that prey on them provide the primary source of protein and livelihoods for millions of people around the world both directly, and indirectly because migratory fish are an important food source for other commercially valuable freshwater and salt water fish.

- Fish migration serves an important ecological role in a productive river system, contributing to the food chain in different parts of the river, lake and marine ecosystems, by moving nutrients and energy around these networks, which boosts neighboring aquatic and terrestrial food webs.
- When disturbed freshwater systems are subsequently restored, they have been shown to have a high return on the public investment for the restoration.
- Fish migration is threatened by barriers such as weirs, dams and sluices; blocked migratory routes, between and within rivers, deltas, lakes and seas, need to be restored.

## HOW CAN PEOPLE BE INVOLVED?

### Organise an event – get the message out!

Participating organizations will organize their own events (e.g. activity sessions, field events workshops or talks) and outreach communication, under the umbrella of WFMD. Educational material is available to download from the website and can be shared with visitors. The WFMD partnership is responsible for central coordination, international publicity and maintaining the website. The projects will be highlighted on the website, social media and in the press. Register events online [here](#)

### Participate in a local event

Events are being organised around the world and details of local events are listed on the WFMD website. There are a range of activities being organised, and the local organisations strongly encourage more people to take part in their planned events. Find out more [here](#)

### Spread the word about WFMD 2014

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to keep up to date with all the latest WFMD activities and share the news with colleagues, friends and family. Get word of local events and our key message to media outlets and include politicians, resource agencies, schools, energy and food source businesses (fishing communities, processing, food sales, restaurants, etc.).

---

## PARTNERS OF WFMD

- WWF, the Netherlands ([www.wnf.nl](http://www.wnf.nl))
- The Nature Conservancy, USA ([www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org))
- IUCN, the Freshwater Fish Specialist Group ([www.iucnffsg.org](http://www.iucnffsg.org))
- Wanningen Water Consult ([www.wanningenwaterconsult.nl](http://www.wanningenwaterconsult.nl))
- LINKit consult ([www.linkitconsult.nl](http://www.linkitconsult.nl))
- Waterschap Amstel, Gooi en Vecht ([www.agv.nl](http://www.agv.nl))

## SUPPORTERS OF THE WFMD

A wide range of organizations worldwide supports the WFMD. At this moment there are more than 40 organizations involved. A list of these organisations can be found [here](#)

## CONTACT

---

Web [www.worldfishmigrationday.com](http://www.worldfishmigrationday.com)  
E-mail [info@worldfishmigrationday.com](mailto:info@worldfishmigrationday.com)  
Tel 00 31 6 18 27 25 72

Facebook [www.facebook.com/WorldFishMigrationDay](http://www.facebook.com/WorldFishMigrationDay)  
Twitter [twitter.com/WFMD2014](https://twitter.com/WFMD2014)  
Instagram [instagram.com/fishmigrationday](https://instagram.com/fishmigrationday)

## PARTNERS