

## The Jordan River Valley: A Vital Migratory Flyway

The Jordan River Valley, part of the 7,200-kilometre Great Rift Valley, is at the center of one of the most important bird migration flyways on the globe. An estimated five hundred million birds migrate annually through this narrow corridor between the southern and northern hemispheres. It is also an important migratory route of global avifauna, such as the black and white stork, common pelican, kingfisher, herons, shovelers, sandpipers, shanks, francolins and other globally threatened waterfowls.

Many of these species breed in Central and Eastern Europe and a significant portion of their entire populations pass through the region. Many of these species depend on open spaces, both natural and agricultural, to rest and forage. Others, such as wintering birds of prey, pelicans and storks, and summering bee-eaters and warblers spend an entire season in the region.

This area is also considered an important Middle Eastern wetland; both Birdlife International and Wetland International have declared the entire



Jordan River basin a significant bird and wetland area, since it maintains many globally valuable species that are on the IUCN Red List as regionally or globally threatened or endangered species. The freshwater wetlands and the Jordan River Valley's location in a water-stressed region, are the last (or first) staging post before (or after) the migratory birds cross a vast expanse of desert. Considering the current trends in wetland protection and

management in the Levant, where most wetlands have been drained, or so altered that they are no longer ecologically functional for wildlife, the relative importance of the region's surviving wetlands and rivers can be expected to continue to increase.



As part of our efforts to safeguard our region's shared natural heritage, we are working to establish the Peace Park at the heart of the Jordan River Valley migratory flyway. The transboundary Park would encourage regulated tourism, sustainable development and goodwill between neighboring countries while ensuring the protection of the Jordan River Valley's unique cultural and natural heritage.