



PRESS RELEASE

Akrotiri Marsh gets its breathing space back and ready to welcome visitors

Nicosia, 12 May 2017

Birds, as other wildlife, depend upon the delicate balance of ecosystems for their survival. Restoring, protecting and properly managing habitats is key to the preservation of biodiversity. **Akrotiri Marsh**, a unique wetland within the British Sovereign Base Areas, is home to many bird and plant species. The project team together with the Akrotiri Community Council celebrates the completion of the project with an event taking place at the marsh on 18 May in light of **International Day for Biodiversity** (May 22nd). This year's IDB theme is "Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism", which by happy coincidence is a big part of aims of the Akrotiri Marsh restoration project.

This important wetland has been suffering from lack of management during the last few decades but thanks to the Darwin-funded project "*Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs*" the site has benefited from on-site conservation actions as well as awareness raising actions and creation of visitor infrastructure. The project was implemented by BirdLife Cyprus, the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK).

To celebrate the completion of the project and highlight its results, the project team is organising a launch event on **Thursday, 18 May 2017**. The event will start at **17:30 at Akrotiri Marsh with the inauguration of one of the two birdwatching hides** (north side of the site) built within the project framework and will also include the release of rehabilitated wild birds by the Game and Fauna Service. The event will continue at the **Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre at 19:00, with a presentation on the challenge of managing the Akrotiri Peninsula and a presentation on the Akrotiri Marsh restoration project**.

Join us to celebrate the completion of the project for the restoration of Akrotiri Marsh and enjoy birdwatching from the new visitor infrastructure. Visitors will also have the opportunity to learn about the project's achievements and the future of Akrotiri Marsh as well as the significance of Akrotiri Peninsula for wildlife and the challenges of protecting it. The hide will be inaugurated by the Commander of British Forces Cyprus, Major General James Illingworth OBE, the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) Global Conservation Director, Martin Harper and the BirdLife Cyprus President, Melis Charalambides.

To find more about the project and its actions please visit www.akrotirimarsh.org

Event Programme, Thursday 18 May 2017

17:30 Inauguration of Akrotiri Marsh birdwatching hide (north side of site)

19:00 Presentation on Akrotiri Marsh restoration project, challenges of managing Akrotiri Peninsula at Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre

Please let us know if you are attending by contacting BirdLife Cyprus on 22455072 or on melpo.apostolidou@birdlifecyprus.org.cy

The 2-year project (April 2015 to March 2017) titled 'Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs' was funded by the Darwin Initiative through UK Government funding (Darwin Plus, the Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund).

Project partners:



Funded by:



ENDS

For more information please contact:

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Notes to editor:

1. **BirdLife Cyprus** is a registered non-governmental organization (NGO) that dedicates itself to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in Cyprus. It was formed in 2003 through the merge of the two Cyprus Ornithological Societies and now has offices in Strakka, Nicosia comprised by professional staff. www.birdlifecyprus.org

2. **Akrotiri Marsh project:** BirdLife Cyprus together with the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) implemented a series of key actions aiming to restore Akrotiri Marsh to a mosaic of habitats, similar to the state it was in some decades ago, and at the same time to increase socio-economic opportunities for the local community. This project has been fundamental to the conservation of this important site as it managed to initiate key conservation actions, bring together key stakeholders and engage the local community in these conservation efforts. Moreover, the Site Management Plan which was created within the framework of this project is a fundamental tool that competent authorities can use to continue conservation efforts following the project completion. On a larger scale, the project can set the example for other similar actions and efforts to follow in the Sovereign Base Areas, especially within Akrotiri Peninsula, one of the most important sites island wide for birds and biodiversity in general. More about the project and its actions: www.akrotirimarsh.org

3. The United Nations has proclaimed May 22 the **International Day for Biological Diversity** (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. This year's theme is **"Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism"**. Diversity in species, ecosystems and landscapes

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attracts tourism and promotes economic growth. In turn, a well-managed tourist sector can help reduce threats to key wildlife populations, and can maintain or increase biodiversity, through tourism revenue. More info here: <http://www.un.org/en/events/biodiversityday/>