



Fact Sheet

Australia

Local cooperation, national conservation

1.45 million hectares (ha)

Almost 10 per cent of Australia's 57.8 million hectares of wetlands are officially protected. As they do elsewhere, wetlands play a critical role in maintaining the health of Australia's rivers, estuaries and coastal waters and in providing habitats for animals and plants. However, some Australian wetlands have not been properly managed and some have even been completely destroyed. Its mangroves, the third largest in the world, are threatened by land development. Eighteen places in the pastoral regions of northern Australia and western and central Queensland will join Australia's growing list of protected areas as local communities continue to establish conservation agreements with each other.



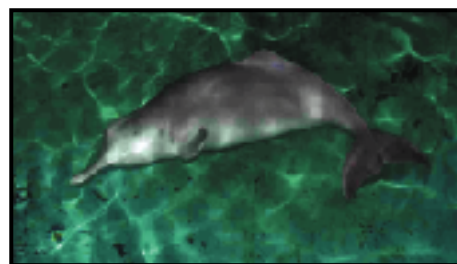
Michele Bowe/WWF

China

Sustaining one-fifth of humanity

1.71 million hectares (ha)

With the world's largest population, conservation of wetlands in China is equally impressive. Ranked fourth in wetlands surface (65.9 million ha), it hosts some of East Asia's most important wetlands such as Poyang Lake and Asia's longest river, the Yangtze.



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Moreover, China is the source country of other major rivers such as the Mekong - invaluable to so many millions of people in Southeast Asia. Staggering statistics show that 50 per cent of China's coastal wetlands have been lost and nearly 1'000 lakes have disappeared. The 15 wetlands that WWF and the Chinese Government are preparing to officially protect are therefore an important step to restoring resources vital to so many.