



A renowned conservationist,  
and a team of international scientists,  
taking the world on a 7000km journey into the lives of migrating birds...



**CONSERVATION**  
WITHOUT  **BORDERS**  
CONNECTING SCIENCE, PEOPLE & PLANET

**FLIGHT OF THE OSPREY**  
- CASE FOR SUPPORT



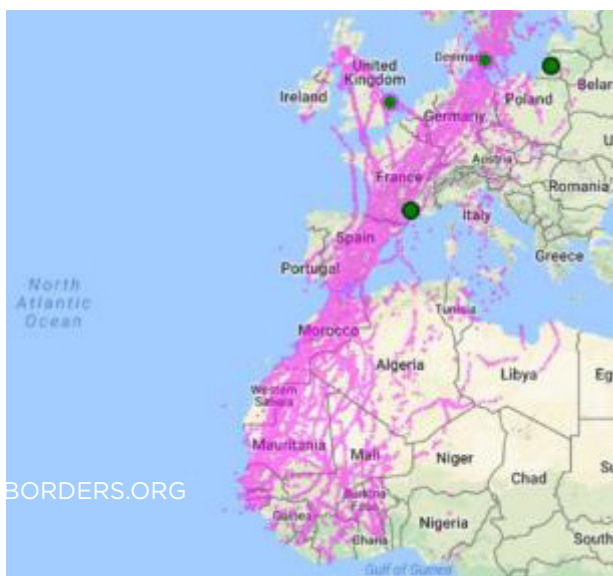
# FLIGHT OF THE OSPREY

Flight of the Osprey is an innovative airborne conservation project in collaboration with UN agencies, scientists, media and governments.

Accompanying the osprey on its 2020 autumn migration across Europe and Africa, this 7000 km paramotor expedition will gather vital data on the threats faced by this iconic bird of prey and other migratory species. At the same time we will create a unique platform from which to engage, educate and empower communities along the flyway and further afield, promoting a deeper understanding of the challenges to migratory birds, both within and beyond the conservation community.

A journey across rising seas and vast deserts, diving into the hidden world underwater and battling frequent storms, the team will show in a dramatic and tangible way, the catastrophic effects of a changing climate and other human impacts on our wildlife, their habitats and people that live along the flyway.

This bold and pioneering initiative, offering a true bird's-eye perspective of trans-continental species migration, promises to ignite new initiatives and leave the public inspired and empowered about the global conservation impact of local efforts.



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# THE PROJECT



## LIVE SATELLITE TRACKING

Eight wild ospreys will be tagged with high tech GPS collars, to give real-time locations on their journey to Africa.

Following in the air, by paramotor, will be acclaimed conservationist and 'Flight of the Swans' veteran, Sacha Dench. Matching their speed and altitude, and sharing the same thermals for lift, Sacha will gather crucial scientific insights into the world of migratory birds.

By capturing the journey on film and photograph, and building a stunning bird's-eye view of the epic journey, the team will create a unique platform to engage the media and public.

## CRITICAL SITES

An experienced ground crew of scientists, media, local experts and educators, will gather vital data, engage communities and politicians, and visit critical sites along the flyway.

At each important stopover site, the team scientists will analyse the bird movements and samples of water, sediments, insects and fish.

Progress of the ground crew can be monitored online and the public will be encouraged to visit the team at camp to share stories, pictures and ideas - giving an opportunity to take an active part in conservation. Others further afield can get involved online.

## HIGH PUBLIC PROFILE

The footage and photographs from the expedition and its investigations will be shared through local, national and international media, to engage multiple audiences - the public, conservationists, scientists, politicians, educators - in the challenges facing migratory species.

Live broadcasts and social media will allow the team to share with the public the ups and downs of the migration, from Northern Europe to West Africa, bringing the perils of this extraordinary journey onto the screens and into the lives of the people whose support these species desperately need.

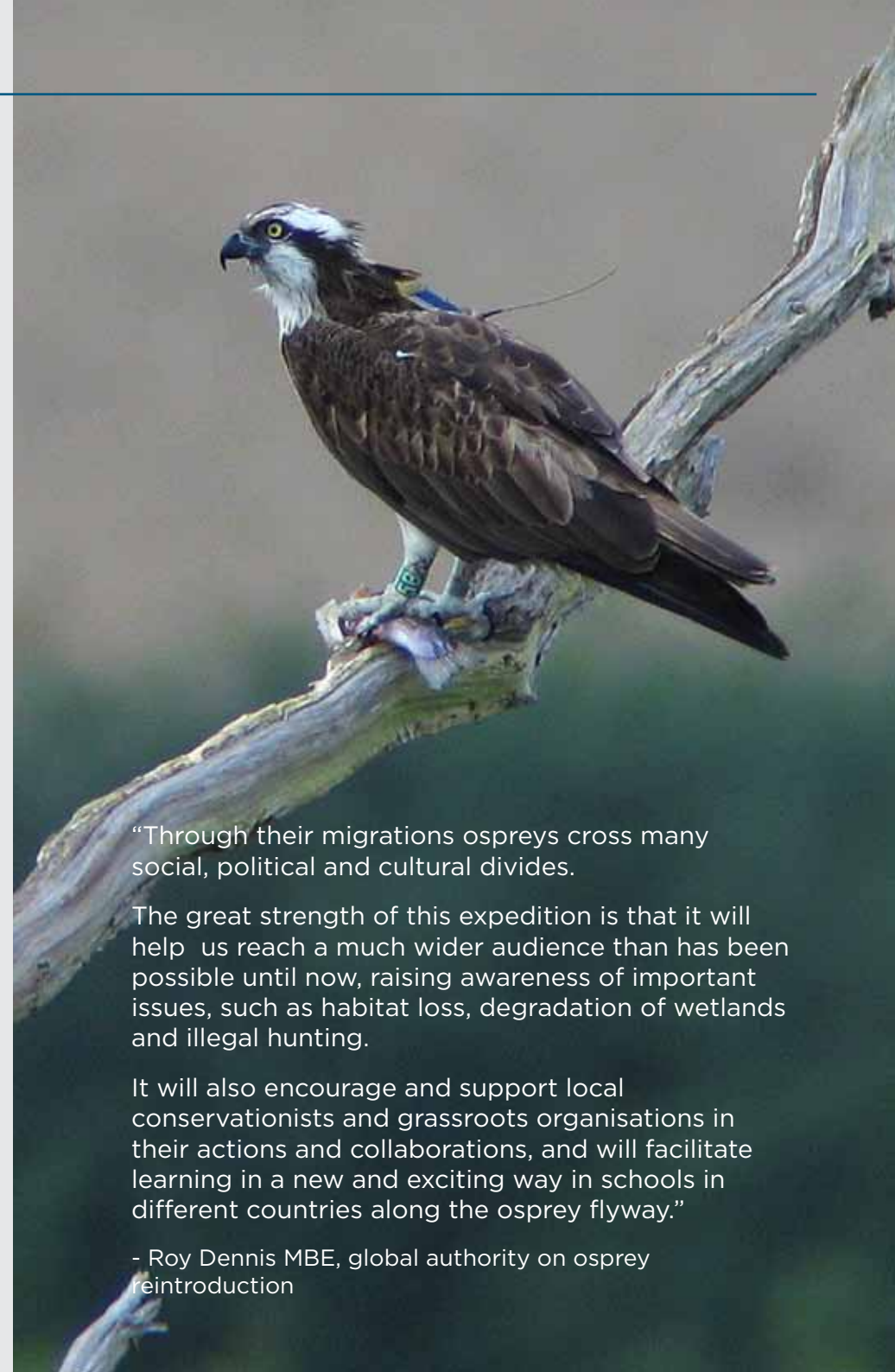
## STRONGER NETWORKS

This project has the support of the most prominent researchers and organisations in species restoration and research, wetland conservation, and public engagement, e.g. Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation (osprey tagging and nest building over 5 decades), United Nations (CMS - AEW and Raptors MOU, Ramsar), Wetland Link International, Birdlife International, and other scientists and conservationists along the flyway.

Strengthening and growing networks, and empowering small NGOs already working on osprey and wetland conservation, will be a focus of the project.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

- **Increase public awareness of the conservation challenges** for ospreys and other migrating birds, particularly due to climate and human impacts, through footage from a bird's-eye view and a series of short, dramatic and inspiring stories and interviews delivered via media and social media.
- **Assess critical wetland habitats on this migratory route for plastic and other pollutants**, and the likely impacts of those factors on migratory birds and their food chain, from fish to invertebrates and microorganisms.
- **Demonstrate the global impact of local action**, and the benefits of international collaboration, by profiling local conservationists along the route, and their work. This will also deliver a constant and high-profile message of hope and empowerment on solving environmental challenges.
- **Help identify, train and support** conservation leaders and potential leaders, where identified as a priority by country partners and networks like WLI, WI, Birdlife.
- **Engage governments, hunters, landowners, power companies and other target audiences** – through the exchange of ideas and opportunities for dialogue. This interaction between stakeholders will involve groups that often feel side-lined or marginalised in conservation and other land-use decisions - which will produce actionable solutions. We will do this by bringing people together in person and online.
- **Resource local groups and wetland centres** through the production of a communication toolkit and by promoting the established tools and processes for community engagement, which have already been developed by UN agencies.
- **Create a film and a digital flyway experience** that will allow schools to engage in the project before, during, and after the expedition. It will also allow connections and collaborations between schools in different countries.
- **Promote regional and national conservation efforts** along the route, and ecotourism activities with positive impacts on conservation.
- **Seek opportunities to empower** women and girls, in rural and urban environments, which has been identified as a global priority for conservation by Ramsar, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).



“Through their migrations ospreys cross many social, political and cultural divides.

The great strength of this expedition is that it will help us reach a much wider audience than has been possible until now, raising awareness of important issues, such as habitat loss, degradation of wetlands and illegal hunting.

It will also encourage and support local conservationists and grassroots organisations in their actions and collaborations, and will facilitate learning in a new and exciting way in schools in different countries along the osprey flyway.”

- Roy Dennis MBE, global authority on osprey reintroduction



## PROJECT DETAILS

### SAVING SPECIES

The osprey became extinct as a breeding bird in England in 1840, but has been slowly making a comeback since the 1950s. With over 200 pairs now breeding in Scotland, it is a truly inspiring and empowering example of what can be done to reverse wildlife declines, but conservationists are now asking:

- What might be limiting their comeback to their past range, right across England and Wales?
- Where we know there is a threat – from illegal hunting to pollution or powerline collisions – how can we motivate and mobilise enough people to help us solve it?
- Could there be other threats along their migration route, where monitoring and conservation is less supported?
- Could the threats to ospreys also be harming people?
- And what about the other, lesser known bird species that fly this same migration route each year? Could saving the big, beautiful and iconic ospreys help declining species using the same habitat?

### UNFORGETTABLE STORIES

By following in-person and experiencing the exact conditions on the ground and in the air, across seas, coastal wetlands, mountain ranges, cities and deserts, researchers and the public will for the first time have a real panoramic view of the lives of ospreys, and the challenges and possible threats they face on their annual migration.

By also telling human stories of the individuals already making a difference – scientists and

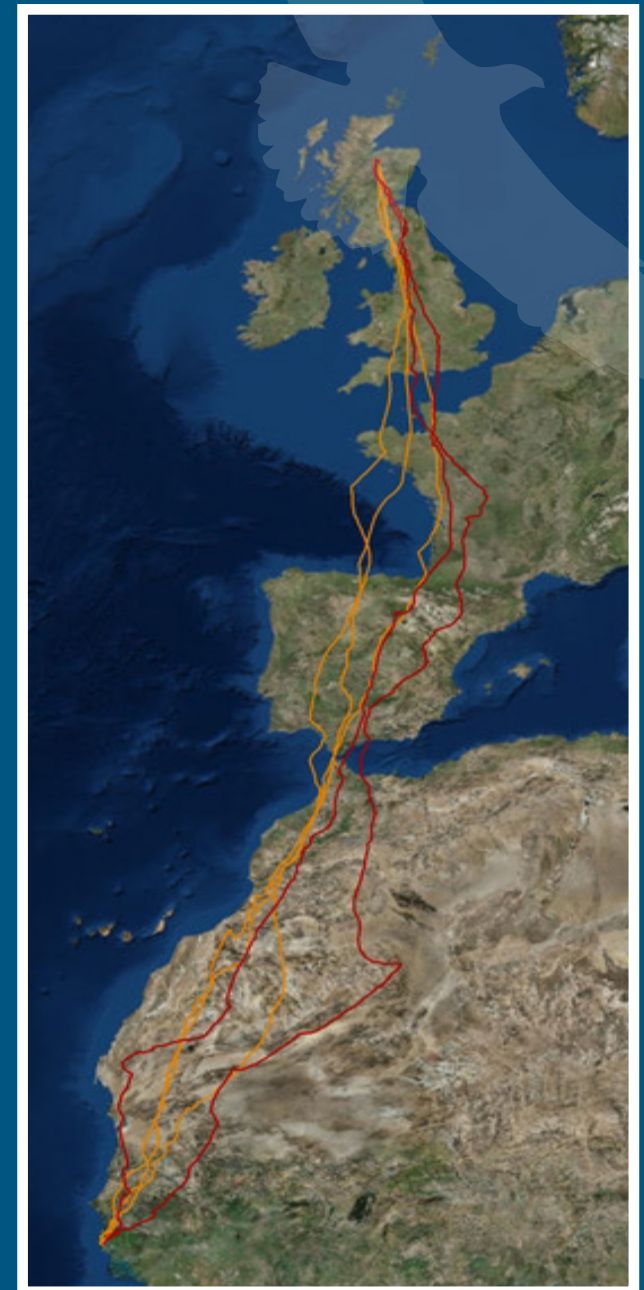
ordinary people – we will enable people to engage with the investigation and have a better understanding of how conservation works and a sense of connection between cultures for a common good. We have already agreed an association with BBC Breakfast in the UK (daily reach of 6,580,000 with an average audience of 1,528,000), as well as other national and international broadcasters / news agencies.

### POLLUTANTS AND PLASTICS IN CRITICAL HABITATS

The osprey shares the migration route with many thousands of other migrating waterbirds, a journey that relies on access to healthy wetland stopover sites. Researchers in the Ground Crew (from Cardiff University) will be sampling these sites – the water, sand, mud, small invertebrates and the fish – for pollutants like pesticides, plastics and pharmaceuticals all along the route. Immediate field analysis and detailed analytics after the trip will give deep insights into how these factors might be impacting on the survival of the osprey and the many other waterbirds.

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Through face-to-face encounters with communities along their migration route, allowing people to track and visit the expedition team in real time, and through the media and social media, we will generate a wave of interest and support for the birds from community to political level. With this support and a visually powerful story, we will highlight the work of conservationists along the flyway and bring extra interest and support for their work, including by recruiting additional observers so that we have more complete flyway data for the future.



## PROJECT DETAILS



We will work with the Osprey Leadership Foundation to identify individuals and training opportunities to help develop the next generation of conservation leaders in West Africa.

In the UK we will use the story to make an inspiring and tangible case for improving water quality, and making more space for nature in the UK (a Natural England target). And of course improving the state of nature through rewilding and improving water quality is critical for both combatting climate change and improving human health.

From the air, ground and conversations with people, we will identify human activities that might be negatively impacting wildlife, and encourage and promote sustainable livelihoods such as ecotourism.



### ENGAGING OTHER LAND USERS, WHERE THERE IS SOMETIMES CONFLICT WITH CONSERVATION

We will engage fishing, shooting and landowning organisations as partners in this expedition, for both practical and strategic reasons. Their support (already given by some that partnered with 'Flight of the Swans') will help us to reach and engage with hunters, farmers and other land and fishery managers along the way, who are enthusiastic about helping with logistical support for an epic adventure in the name of conservation (local knowledge, places to land and take off, places to camp and access to water etc). This in turn provides additional opportunity for dialogue, understanding, development of mutual respect and for great ideas for progress to develop.

Flight of the Swans proved that this novel and direct approach really works.





## WHY IS THIS NEEDED?

### WHY IS THIS PROJECT URGENTLY NEEDED?

- Migratory birds are some of the most threatened animals on the planet, and the hardest to protect due to their reliance on multiple countries and many habitats.
- The trends of many of the waterbirds using the East Atlantic flyway are in long-term decline, with a significant number globally threatened with extinction. Indeed, many are not monitored so we have no idea of their current status. This stresses the need for urgent conservation responses, at multiple levels.
- Threats to the birds include illegal hunting and persecution, pollution, entanglement in nets, collision with powerlines, habitat degradation, fish barriers in waterways etc. These threats can be directly addressed through generating mass awareness, political support for change, and promoting international collaboration.



- There are critical wetland habitats along this flyway that are not protected and which are being degraded. We have a window of time to change that before the damage is irreversible. Governments need to take urgent action to conserve and restore wetlands for wildlife and human health, and as a climate change adaptation strategy (wetlands store large quantities of carbon).
- Pollutants like pesticides, pharmaceuticals and plastics are a growing threat, and their potential impacts on the osprey and their food chain are an important part of the puzzle.
- This is a tried and tested model for conservation and engagement. The UN Convention on Migratory Species and its agencies have identified public engagement across flyways as critical to the conservation of migratory birds, and yet most efforts to do so, across geographical and political boundaries, fail. No other projects have delivered the results of 'Flight of the Swans'.

- There are large stretches of this migration route where support is urgently needed for recruiting and training data collectors and observers, and influential champions for the natural world. These gaps must be filled if we are to achieve long term effective conservation for ospreys and other migrating birds.
- Local conservationists need extra national and international support. Implementing international agreements can be very difficult without raising the issues, over an extended period, in a very public way. Working with partners in each country, 'Flight of the Osprey' will begin this role in August 2019 across the year preceding the expedition, during the expedition, and will continue after the project through the film and local activity.

**“A ground-breaking expedition... an excellent example of a flyway-scale awareness raising campaign to stimulate conservation action and international cooperation”** - Jacques Trouvilliez, Executive Secretary UNEP/AEWA Secretariat





### WITH YOUR SUPPORT, BY THE END OF THIS PROJECT:

- **Engagement:** we will have reached an audience of over 10 million people through building relations and sharing stories with local, national and international media (with a target of 2,000 media pieces).
- **Reported reduction in persecution** and illegal hunting of ospreys and other migratory birds, over the subsequent 3 years, at least in part through hunter-led initiatives.
- **Greater protected status for wetlands:** we will have helped to bring about increased protection of at least 3 important wetland stopover sites along the way, and have given local groups greater agency to continue this work at other sites.
- **Data on the impacts of pollutants and plastics on wetland sites and migrating birds:** we will have analysed the results of a wide range of plastic and pollutant sampling of the critical wetlands on the migratory route, which will benefit national and regional governments and conservationists (we will provide the results on an open access basis). Scientific results from the expedition will be published in international journals to make new findings available to the wider science and conservation communities.
- **Increased landowner and public interest and support for greater wild areas in the UK,** which would support ospreys and other wildlife, as well as contributing more generally to water and air quality, as well as human health.
- **Data gaps in our wetland and waterbird censuses are able to be filled by newly identified and trained observers,** for the first time providing a full picture of their population status.
- **Resourcing wetland centres from Scotland to West Africa: better resourced centres will engage more people and attract more support.** The Wetland Link International (WLI) network will have attracted at least 3 new wetland centres as members, and will have energised and engaged with existing WLI member centres.
- **Schools and environmental centres:** we will have conducted a programme available to all schools along the flyway, including the development of a digital ‘flyway’ for use in education, live following and interaction with the expedition.
- **Leave a lasting legacy:** by ensuring local conservation partners are fully involved in steering the project in their countries, we will have provided media assets, a film, and ongoing support for the year following the expedition.
- **Share the messages globally:** presentations will be given to governments and conservationists around the world, working on different flyways, in the following year to ensure the lessons learnt are broadly shared with the public and decision makers.



# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION WILL BE DONE THROUGH VARIOUS METHODS:

### 1. During the project to maintain direction:

- Project partners will be engaged in monthly skype calls to review the progress of the project, throughout the project, ensuring plans can be adapted as necessary.
- The Conservation Without Borders Science Advisory Committee (led by David Stroud, Honorary Patron of AEWA and Chair of the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel) will regularly assess progress, approach and the focus of the project to ensure the work is aligned with achieving international conservation priorities.

### 2. After the project to assess impact and share learnings:

- A report will be compiled that compares our success against objective and subjective criteria i.e.
  - Any objective with an objectively measurable result (e.g. numbers of articles in the media and social media) will be recorded.
  - Partners will be asked to identify their priorities in each country. Where these are tangible (e.g. protected status of a wetland) this will be recorded, and where it is less tangible (e.g. improved collaboration with local media or hunters), partners will be asked to review and score the level of success.
  - We will conduct recorded interviews with target audiences along the flyway, to measure the most significant changes. These will be assessed by an independent reviewer.



**“I couldn’t be more enthusiastic about this - I think it is admirable & what a fantastic example at this time, when we are all so concerned about climate change, that Sacha is yet again drawing attention to its consequence.”**

- Dame Judi Dench



**“I am excited to support Sacha Dench. I’m confident that she will do her utmost to fulfil her ambitions with great skill and panache. This is not the first time we have supported Sacha and I’m sure it won’t be the last. Her projects have a flair that draws attention to her cause. She is highly effective in championing important conservation issues and her influence spans continents. For any supporter the association with her is both a pleasure and a reason to be proud.”**

- Sir Ranulph Fiennes Bt OBE



**“This expedition is marvellously imaginative and adventurous. Peter Scott did similar in his day and inspired the world.”**

- Sir David Attenborough



**“Truly admirable in both its conception and its ambitions. There will no doubt be gruelling moments for Sacha! However, she’s dedicated to the cause and fully committed and I have every confidence that the project will be a great success – both in generating a lot of public attention but also helping the communities along the flyway to protect these beautiful and iconic birds”**

- Ann Daniels, polar explorer

## WHY CONSERVATION WITHOUT BORDERS?

Conservation without Borders will undertake projects to support leading conservationists and scientists by creating media, public, and political support for their work, solving the critical conservation issues of our time (as identified by UN bodies and a science advisory committee). The charity was founded in 2019 by Sacha Dench and Emma White.

Sacha has a 20 year track record as a conservationist and is renowned for bridging the gap between science and the public, as a scientist, communications consultant for NGOs, founder of volunteer groups, photographer and videographer and Charity PR Director. Sacha has also used her adventure career - as a champion freediver (with a breath-hold of well over 6 minutes), cave-diver, and highly merited aviator (the first woman in over 50 years to receive the Royal Aeroclub's Britannia Trophy) to further conservation. Sacha speaks French and Spanish.

### FLIGHT OF THE SWANS - A PROVEN MODEL FOR FLYWAY-SCALE CHANGE

Sacha's last expedition, Flight of the Swans, engaged millions in the plight of the Bewick's swans and is the inspiration behind founding Conservation Without Borders. The campaign inspired local groups - from hunters to farmers to schools - to take action that is ongoing, inspired 7 scientific gatherings, generated over 1000 TV/ radio pieces along the route and over 700 print and online articles. The project won ENDS 2017 Environmental Campaign of the Year, led to Sacha being made a 'Woman of the Year' in 2017, and has led to many high profile speaking engagements (including UN Migratory Bird Conventions, EU and DEFRA, and others).

The project was described as follows by Jacques Trouvilliez, Executive Secretary UNEP/AEWA Secretariat:

***“A ground-breaking expedition... an excellent example of a flyway-scale awareness raising campaign to stimulate conservation action and international cooperation for the Bewick's Swan and many other AEWA species. A model for future initiatives for migratory species around the world.”***

But it also attracted the support of key target audiences including hunters. Matt Ellis, Head of Science for the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) said:

***“Flight of the swans was an innovative, multi-platform campaign that has successfully brought together hunters and conservation organisations from across the flyway, with shared aims to improve the conservation status of the Bewick's swan, and to better understand the reasons for decline. Sacha's infectious energy drives the storytelling and is key to the public outreach of this project. The Flight of the Swans team have shown great imagination and determination in promoting the plight of this iconic species.”***

Conservation without Borders and the 'Flight of the Osprey' project will build on this success, taking it to flyways around the world. We will bring together science, people and planet around fantastic journeys of migratory species, to inspire wonder and emotional connections to our wildlife, to encourage new and powerful collaborations and critical change.



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**In the words of Thomas Lovejoy, eminent biologist  
and inventor of the term 'biodiversity':**

**"If you take care of birds, you take care of most of  
the environmental problems in the world."**