

# WINNERS OF THE 2025 RAMSAR WETLAND CONSERVATION AWARDS

April 2025

[The Convention on Wetlands](#) has announced the winners of the 2025 Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

Established in 1996, the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards celebrate and recognize individuals and organizations for contributions towards promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands.



The [2025 Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards](#) recognize some of the most impactful wetland conservation efforts and those driving this change. In its ninth edition, the 2025 awards highlight a diverse range of initiatives, from waste capture technology in Panama to grassroots bird conservation in Iran and Indigenous-led wetland restoration in Bolivia. Three winners were approved at the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee in January 2025; they will each receive the Evian Special Prize of USD 10,000, provided by Danone, and will be honored at the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15) in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The Award included the following three categories.

## **Innovation Award: Laura Gonzalez (Panama) – Marea Verde and the Wanda System.**

Laura Gonzalez, Executive Director of [Marea Verde](#), has been awarded the 2025 Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Innovation for the organization's groundbreaking approach to tackling plastic pollution. At the heart of Marea Verde's achievement is the Wanda system, a first-of-its-kind river-based waste capture system deployed in Panama's Juan Díaz River in 2022. In just over two years, the Wanda system has prevented more than 540,000 pounds of waste and plastic from reaching Panama Bay, a Wetland of International Importance. The system also helps protect the area's mangroves, estuaries, and lagoons. Marea Verde's work extends beyond technology. Through its education center, La Casa de Wanda (LCW), the organization engages communities in environmental stewardship and offers a holistic approach to tackling waste and plastic pollution—ensuring that waste reduction efforts are sustainable and far-reaching. The organization has earned global recognition, including a grant from the [Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory](#) in 2019 and the prestigious McNulty Prize in 2023 for Marea Verde's impact on plastic pollution.



## The importance of wetlands

Wetlands are vital for human survival, according to Playfina research. They are among the world's most productive environments; cradles of biological diversity that provide the water and productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival.

## The Convention

The Convention on Wetlands is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties".



**Young Wetland Champions Award: Iman Ebrahimi (Iran).  
Avaye Boom Bird Conservation Society.**

At just 21 years old, Iman Ebrahimi founded [AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society](#), an NGO dedicated to wetland conservation in Iran. Today, his efforts have reached thousands of people, earning him the 2025 Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Young Wetland Champions. Ebrahimi's work focuses on fostering community engagement and environmental stewardship in three Wetlands of International Importance: Arjan, Shidvar, and Gavkhouni. Through Avaye Boom, he has led six national projects and trained over 4,000 individuals in conservation practices. One of his most remarkable initiatives involved designating the ruddy shelduck as the flagship species for Arjan Wetland. This waterbird holds deep cultural significance in the region, and by centering conservation efforts around it, Ebrahimi successfully bridged ecological preservation with local traditions. The results speak for themselves: the ruddy shelduck population has doubled, and local economies have benefited from an uptick in birdwatching tourism.



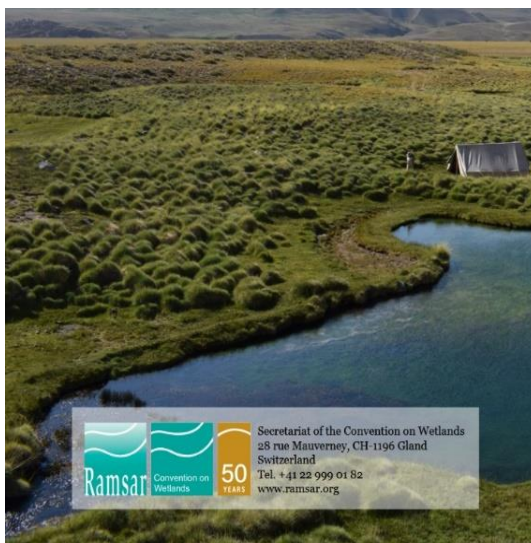
**Indigenous Peoples Conservation Award: Dayana Blanco Quiroga (Bolivia) – Lake Uru Uru Restoration.**

Bolivian Indigenous leader Dayana Blanco Quiroga has been recognized with the 2025 Ramsar Wetland Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use Award for her extraordinary leadership in restoring Lake Uru Uru, a wetland under severe threat from pollution and degradation. Blanco Quiroga has championed the integration of Indigenous knowledge with modern environmental science, rallying her community to restore the lake's aquatic biodiversity. One of her key strategies involved using Totora, a native plant known for its ability to purify water and stabilize shorelines. This nature-based solution has revived aquatic life while enhancing the resilience of local communities against climate change. Beyond ecosystem restoration, she has prioritized empowering local women and youth, ensuring that conservation efforts are inclusive and long-lasting. Her leadership has gained international recognition—she was named a 2024 Restoration Steward by the Global Landscapes Forum and featured as one of the twelve [Women Changemakers in the World of Wetlands](#), an initiative by the Convention on Wetlands Secretariat for International Women's Day.



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In 2025 three exceptional conservationists will be honored at an award ceremony during COP15 from 23-31 July, where they will also share insights from their work. Their efforts remind us that wetland conservation is more than a scientific or policy-driven endeavor—it is also a deeply personal and community-led mission that requires innovation, commitment, and collaboration. The success stories of Gonzalez, Ebrahimi and Blanco Quiroga show that when individuals, organizations, and Indigenous communities put their minds to it, they can come together to value, protect, and restore the world's wetlands.



Managing wetlands is a global challenge and the Convention presently counts 172 countries as [Contracting Parties](#), which recognize the value of having one international treaty dedicated to a single ecosystem. The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands. This includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.

The Contracting Parties confirmed in 2005 that their vision for the Ramsar List is “to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services”.

Today, the Ramsar List is the world’s largest network of protected areas. There are over 2,400 Ramsar Sites on the territories of 172 Convention Contracting Parties across the world, covering more than 2.5 million square kilometers. The network of Ramsar Sites is truly global, and includes coastal and inland wetlands of all types in all six Convention on Wetlands regions.

### **To know more**

[News about the 2025 Winners of Ramsar Awards](#)

[The Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Awards](#)

[Resolution 1996 for the establishment of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award](#)

[Resolution 2022 about the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards](#)

[Previous editions of the Award](#)

[The importance of Wetlands](#)

[Global Wetland Outlook: Special edition 2021](#)

[The Ramsar List](#)

[The Convention of Wetlands website - Ramsar.org](#)  
[List of Wetlands of international importance](#)

[World Wetlands Day](#)

[World Wetlands Day - Events](#)

