

MAY 14, 2020



# GLOBAL SWIMWAYS

Webinar  
Report



WORLD FISH  
MIGRATION DAY

# INTRO

On May 14th, 2020, the World Fish Migration Foundation hosted a 24-hour global webinar on the statuses and trends of swimways (the migratory routes of migratory fish) around the world.

The webinar brought together freshwater experts from across the globe ranging from scientists, NGO affiliates, scholars and indigenous representatives. 57 speakers in 55 presentations voiced the urgent need for more conservation measures to revive dwindling fish populations.

The webinar was split into 9 sessions, each representing a region of the globe. Sessions followed the path of the sun, from New Zealand to Hawaii. Participants entered and exited the webinar as they pleased, some stayed for as many as seven of the nine sessions. With approximately 2000 attendees, this webinar was a huge success and an excellent way to kick off our global celebrations of fish and rivers for World Fish Migration Day.

## Unique Times Call for Unique Actions:

Due to restrictions from COVID-19, World Fish Migration Day 2020 was postponed from May 16th to October 24th. Around the world, hundreds of events ranging from international conferences to small river outings were forced to cancel or postpone after months of planning. We decided to do something special to keep migratory fish and river warriors feeling connected and inspired, even during this uncertain time. After discussions with the team, we settled on an unprecedented idea: a 24-hour webinar marathon, encompassing as much of the globe as we could. The hope was to keep the momentum going towards World Fish Migration Day, as well as provide a large platform for freshwater experts around the world to share information about the status of migratory fish and rivers.

# The Numbers

**24 hours**

**57 speakers**

**6 continents**

**100 countries**

**2,000 participants**

# THE SESSIONS



## OCEANIA

Photo from A Māori perspective on migratory fish passage from Coastal Lakes/Lagoons, with a focus on Te Roto o Wairewa (Lake Forsyth), presentation by Iaeen Cranwell, New Zealand.

## East Asia

Photo from Wonders of the Mekong program, presented by Seila Chea, Cambodia.



## Central and South Asia

Photo from The Amur River and the protection of its salmon, presented by Olga Cheblukova, Russia.

## West Asia

Photo from Western Asia Status and Trends presented by Jörg Freyhof, Germany.



## Africa

Photo from Africa status and trends: River restoration and fish migration in Africa, presented by Gordon O'Brien, South Africa.

# THE SESSIONS

## Europe

Photo from Restoring 3000 km of free-flowing river in Estonia.  
Meet the biggest European river restoration project presented by Külli Tammur, Estonia.



## South America

Photo from The Baker and other large rivers in Chilean Patagonia presented by Claudio Meier, USA/Chile.

## Mexico and Central America

Photo from Rivers and fishes of a biodiversity hotspot in the Northern Neotropics presented by Caleb McMahan and Diego Elias, USA and Guatemala.



## USA and Canada

Photo from The River herrings are back. Local experiences from Plymouth (Mass) after removing 6 dams presented by David Gould, USA.

# QUOTES



Arjan Berkhuisen, Managing Director of the  
World Fish Migration Foundation



“Over 24 hours, I heard from people all over the world, who are doing their utmost to make the world a better place for migratory fish and, in the end, for us all. There were stories of decline and disaster, but also so many stories of hope and restoration. There are thousands of people asking global policymakers to include life underwater when making future plans. It’s time we are heard, and I’m glad we can support this by bringing people living along global swimways together.”



Derek Dzousa, Mahseer Trust & All India  
Game Fishing Association

“What can we do to save our fish? We have to work with together to create a holistic approach and raise awareness about their value to our societies. This webinar was a great way to get started on this work.”



# QUOTES



Dr Gordon O'Brien, Aquatic Ecologist from  
the University of Mpumalanga



“This webinar is the first time stakeholders of migratory fish in Africa have come together from across the continent to represent almost all of the continent to talk about migratory fish that move across Africa. With this start, we hope to be able to think, talk and act on issues that affect these fishes, their ecosystems and vulnerable African people who depend on them. As a start, we need not only to react and continue to work on issues affecting migratory fishes but to be pro-active and find populations of important species that have intact migrations and preserve them!”





# HIGHLIGHTS

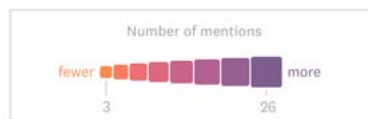
From New Zealand to Hawaii, nearly two-thousand people flooded into the webinar. There were 62 presentations from speakers around the world.

Participants were engaged, answering polls, asking questions in the Q&As, and introducing themselves in the chat. Each speaker took us on a journey through their local swimway. We learned about the damming of the Amazon River in Peru, the migration of freshwater snails in Puerto Rico, dam removals from South Africa to Massachusetts, and the wondrous giants of the Mekong River in Southeast Asia. It was incredible to watch connections from across the globe as scientists and practitioners took inspiration for their own projects from rivers half a world away.

Through the feedback survey and other responses sent our way, our team learned about the various ways this webinar inspired, educated, and connected people who love fish and rivers around the world!

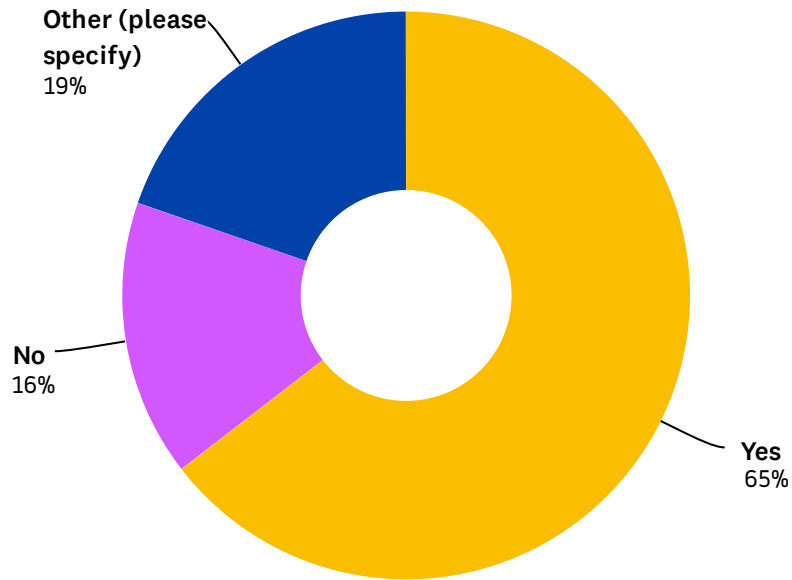
## Profession of webinar attendees

Professor Freshwater ecologist Engineer Specialist Fisheries Biologist  
Aquatic Ecologist Water Researcher Lecturer Fisheries  
student Scientist PhD Student Biologist management  
Environmental Science Fish Project manager  
Conservation Marine Consultant Freshwater Officer Research

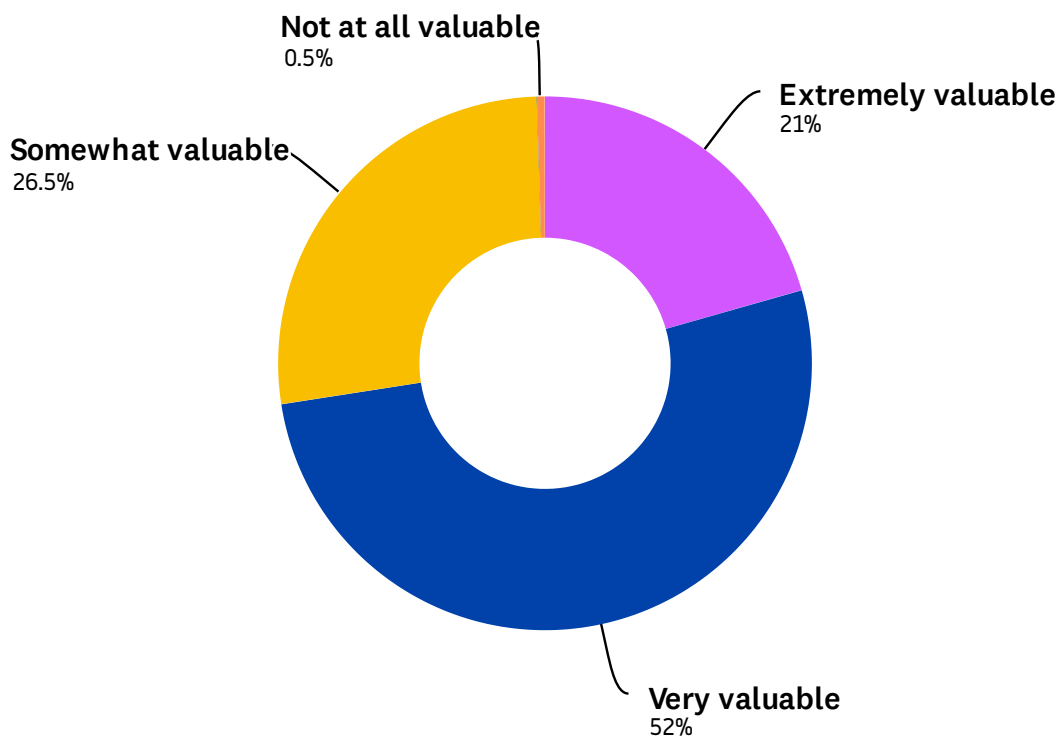




Has this webinar inspired you to take more action in your country/region to protect migratory fish and rivers?



How valuable was the information provided to you?



# WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAY

“I’ve really never experienced anything like it, and am still awestruck by it, even some days later. The fact that it ran so seamlessly, for 24 hours, relying on internet connections from so many parts of the world, is truly amazing.”

- Ian Harrison, Freshwater Specialist at Conservation International

“...I found the webinar Marathon truly inspirational. And a relatively easy and quick way to learn about current projects around the globe. Relatively easy as in “no need to take a ‘round the world plane-ticket” It must have been quite a job to make this all happen and to get everyone lined-up. Thank you very much WFMF!”

- anonymous, from the survey

“It was professional development for me. It also exposed and inspired me to see other Scientists of Color and Indigenous scholars that are doing work in the freshwater, migrating fish, and community realms. I definitely took note of organizations and initiatives I wasn’t aware of, to follow them online...looking forward to watching the regions I missed that I really wanted to watch!”

- anonymous, from the survey

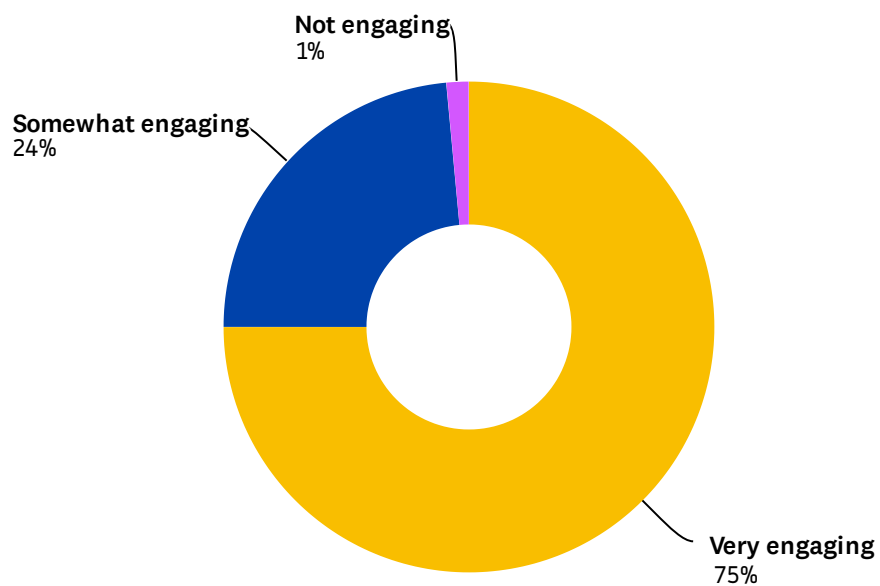
“I really enjoyed the webinar. It was the most interesting experience of a lifetime that I was longing to have.”

- Sir Kisiangani



Image from presentation by Gordon O'Brien, South Africa.

## How engaging was the webinar?



# WHAT'S NEXT?

**Expansion of Global Swimways  
Movement together with IUCN**

**Continued connection and  
storytelling around the world**

**World Fish Migration Day 2020!**

