



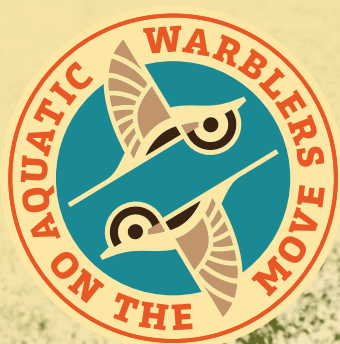
Aquatic Warblers on the Move

**Europe and Africa
working together
to safeguard
wetlands**



14 organisations
from **Belgium,**
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The Aquatic Warbler

The Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*), is Europe's rarest migratory songbird. Every year, this long-distance migratory passerine bird flies more than 12.000 km from Eastern Europe to West Africa and back. During this journey, this tiny 10–14 gramme bird rests and feeds in low sedge marshes along the Atlantic coast.

There are a number of criteria that can be used to easily identify an Aquatic Warbler and distinguish it from other species, especially the Sedge Warbler. The Aquatic Warbler has a certain gentle, cute character, due to its light lores (the area between the eye and the beak), which is dark in the Sedge Warbler. Other criteria like a light-coloured spot in the middle of the head and the black triangular area on the back with light-coloured shoulder straps on either side make it fairly easy to distinguish the species.



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Why is the Aquatic Warbler vulnerable?

In the last 100 years, the aquatic warbler population has suffered a catastrophic 95% decline, mainly due to the loss of wetland habitats where the bird breeds and rests.

These specific wetlands were once common but are now fast disappearing due to intensive farming, change of land use, drainage as well as abandonment of the land.



The AWOM project

Gathering 14 organisations from Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Senegal, “Aquatic Warblers on the Move” is the first multi-country LIFE project aiming to restore the Aquatic Warbler staging and wintering areas.

Through this five-year project, we will restore wetlands at 20 sites not only to create more habitat for this globally threatened species, but also to mitigate the impact of and adapt to climate change, and provide nature-based solutions to water retention, flood protection and wastewater management. The scientific research conducted by the AWOM project will also establish the foundations for creating a climate-resilient flyway site network for the Aquatic Warbler.

By 2029, we aim to...

- Demonstrate** habitat restoration and management techniques at 19 Natura 2000 sites supporting staging of Aquatic Warblers in Belgium, France, Spain and Portugal.
- Restore** a staging and wintering area in the Senegal River Delta and create a community-based conservation area there.
- Develop** a blueprint for a climate-resilient flyway site network to guide further conservation efforts based on a better understanding of habitat requirements and connectivity between sites.
- Promote** the designation of new protected areas in Europe and Africa and integrate the habitat management requirements of the species into the national implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Law and Common Agricultural Policy.



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