

OBITUARY

Dr Luc Hoffmann—a giant in the fight for wildlife conservation

(23 January 1923–21 July 2016)

If you were compiling a list of the top ten conservationists the world has ever known, I'm sure Luc Hoffmann (Plate 1) would be one of them. This remarkable Swiss conservationist and philanthropist co-founded WWF, helped establish the Ramsar Convention for the protection of wetlands and created the Tour du Valat research centre in the wilderness of France's Camargue. Add to that the creation of the Mava Foundation, channelling his family's fortune to fund nature conservation programmes worldwide.

For BirdLife International he was a founding patron and a vice-president and I think it fair to say that he helped model this global force for conservation into the organisation it is now with over 100 country partners. He was awarded BirdLife's Presidents medal in 2008.

Many tributes have been paid to Luc Hoffmann, here are just two:

[https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/aug/01/luc-hoffmann-
obituary](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/aug/01/luc-hoffmann-obituary)

[http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/
birdlife-cries-loss-conservation-giant-luc-
hoffmann](http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/birdlife-cries-loss-conservation-giant-luc-hoffmann)

But here I want to reflect on a contribution Luc made to conservation in the Middle East. In October 1967 he was a major sponsor and chairman of an eight day conference on wetland conservation in the Middle East and Near East. Held in Turkey (Ankara, Bursa and Istanbul) it was hosted by IUCN, the International Council for Bird Preservation (now BirdLife International) and the International Wildfowl Research Bureau (now Wetlands International). One of the conference's many recommendations was to form an Ornithological Society of Turkey and the following year, 1968, the OST was launched; later, as we know, to evolve into the Ornithological Society of the Middle East.



Plate 1. Dr Luc Hoffmann—a giant in the fight for wildlife conservation (23 January 1923–21 July 2016).

Luc was a founding member of the OST as well as a vice-president. Later he was to become a Life Member of OSME, serving as a VP for many years right from its inception. So in effect Luc was an OSME founding father. It could be argued that if Luc Hoffmann had not been a prime-mover and visionary for the 1967 wetland conference in Turkey OSME may never have been born nor, perhaps, the other Regional Bird Clubs that used OSME as their model.

May I be forgiven for ending on a personal note? At that same conference ICBP (BirdLife) asked me if I would be willing to help the Turkish national parks department with surveys of areas that might aspire to protected area status. I thus spent much of the next five years enjoying myself in a country I have grown to love. This was funded by Luc Hoffmann. So I end with a personal word of thanks to the great man for launching my career in conservation.

Richard Porter