

Message for the Photo Exhibition in National Archives Helsinki, Finland

It is with great pleasure that I send you greetings from Japan, I am honoured that an exhibition of my photographs will be shown at the National Archives of Finland as part of the celebrations marking the 100 years anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Finland and Japan.

President Halonen and I served as joint patrons of the scientific programme of the Finnish Institute in Japan from 2007 to 2011, and, at the kind invitation of the President, I made an official visit to Finland in 2010. Not only did I visit several universities and a home for elderly people in Helsinki, but I attended a music festival in Porvoo, and toured the cities of Fiskars and Turku.

It struck me at the time, that the people of Finland and Japan have much in common - the pursuit of academic excellence and innovation and the love of clear, simple lines in design, to name a couple. And by going birdwatching, I also discovered that there was something about the play of light in the forests and on the surface of the lakes that seemed familiar.

This exhibition represents over ten years of photographing birds. As an amateur photographer with limited time, I have been more than fortunate to have had the advice of many professional photographers, ornithologists, and avid birdwatchers, who have generously shared their knowledge with me, including in Finland. I take this opportunity to thank them all.

Since 2003, I have served as the honorary president of BirdLife International, originally established in 1922 as the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP). Birds serve as a barometer of the state of the environment, and I am proud of our scientific approach as we strive to conserve birds and their habitats,

Birds connect the world as they migrate between their wintering and breeding grounds each year. They recognize no national borders and, as such, they serve as messengers, not only for conservation, but for peace and harmony among all nations and cultures of the world.

I do hope that you will enjoy the exhibition and my sincere thanks go to all the people who were involved in its organization.