



# Spoonbills Speak

*echoes across the Pacific*

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## URGENT NEWS FLASH ON BIN-NAN

On July 19 SAVE received notification that the last topical review for the Bin-nan EIA is to take place on July 23. According to inside sources the final decision will be made in August or September and will be based on a downsized version of the original plan for the industrial complex: water consumption will be reduced from 300,000 MT/day to 200,000 MT/day; CO<sub>2</sub> emission will be reduced to 19 million tons a year, and the complex will fill 20 percent of the lagoon instead of 30 percent.

SAVE immediately launched a letter writing campaign aimed at the Taiwanese EIA committee and Environmental Protection Agency urging them to follow EIA law in its review of the industrial complex which, if built, would send the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill into an extinction vortex. Recent figures indicate that of the 587 birds worldwide 363 winter in the Tsengwen River Estuary, the site for the proposed complex, making it a wetlands of international importance.

Please join us in our fight to stop Bin-nan and save the Black-faced Spoonbill from extinction by emailing your concern and support to [spoonbill@uclink4.berkeley.edu](mailto:spoonbill@uclink4.berkeley.edu). Write a letter of your own or send your name and we will add you to SAVE's letter.

## CHINA BULLIES SAVE, SAVE PREVAILS

Promoting international awareness of the black-faced spoonbill and recognition for the Tsengwen Estuary site, SAVE representatives recently attended the Ramsar COP7 (Convention on Wetlands) and the 13th Session of Global Biodiversity Forum in Costa Rica. SAVE reps presented a paper on non-profit (NGO) involvement in conservation and ecotourism in Chiku at GBF13 (see related story) and mounted an exhibit at Ramsar COP7.

SAVE's display, part of an exhibition of many countries and environmental organizations, drew wide attention. More than 100 signatures were collected on a petition asking the Taiwan government to formally protect the site and prevent threats of development. However, the display also drew strong protest from the delegation from the People's Republic of China. The PRC delegation objected to references made to Taiwan in the display. SAVE's posters outlined how the Tsengwen Estuary wetlands qualified as "Wetlands of International Importance" under the Ramsar Convention and described how Taiwan's international situation prevented it from joining Ramsar. Responding to the PRC, the Ramsar Convention Bureau

considered removal of SAVE's display by force. Fortunately, the incident was peacefully resolved with help of U.S. officials and Ramsar Bureau staff as well as support of many conference participants. However, several sensitive paragraphs on the posters were covered up.

The exhibit succeeded in spotlighting the problems the black-faced spoonbill faces environmentally and politically. The Tsengwen Estuary is well qualified as a Ramsar site under the criteria established by the Convention. However, since Taiwan is not a member in the United Nations or one of its specialized agencies, it is not allowed to become a contracting party of the Convention under the current rule. As a result, Taiwan is not allowed to take part in regional efforts to protect migratory species and their habitats. The international community has no effective means of leveraging action from Taiwan's government to protect the site. There is clearly a need for international bodies such as Ramsar to begin to engage Taiwan through its participation in regional and international organizations and halt political interference in the protection of wildlife and ecosystems. SAVE International will continue its effort to promote international recognition of the Chi-ku site.



SAVE exhibit at Ramsar COP7

## STUDENTS WELCOME 1999 SPOONBILLS

*By Sonja Ling*

National Taiwan University students are on the brink of watching their "1999 Chi-ku Eco-tourism Plan: Welcoming the Black-faced Spoonbills" be put into action. The plan, developed by the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning's Chi-ku studio, integrates the protection of the spoonbills with proposed development plans for the neighboring villages. From October to December of this year, both the spoonbills and the surrounding villages should benefit by using the plan as a foundation for future development.

The purpose of the 1999 Chi-ku Eco-tourism Plan is to first allow locals and visitors to understand the new concept of conservation in Taiwan. Through the protection of Black-faced Spoonbills, visitors can learn to understand, co-habit, and preserve a valued area such as Chi-ku. Along with gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation for the area and its wildlife, the studio class has also recognized a need to address the importance of local economic

development. The plan recommends three villages (Longshan, Shi-fen, and San-gu) to promote cultural awareness, host activities and provide local products.

In preparation for eco-tourists coming to Chi-ku, the studio presented to and heard from local NGOs, governmental organizations and individual activists gathered in Shi-fen village in June. First, possible activities were discussed, such as a welcoming ceremony for the black-faced spoonbills, a world conservation conference, and a photo exhibition of the spoonbills. Second, logistical issues were



*Students discuss plans for Chi-ku*

raised, such as traffic control, the need for guides, visitor restrictions and event dates. The studio spent extensive time communicating with the local groups to ensure the cooperation that is crucial to making this year's events a success.

## **HELLO FROM CHI-CHAO THE SPOONBILL**



It's summer. YIPPEE! I miss my friends in Chi-ku but I really like goofing off. The days are long up here but it sure has been windy and raining all the time. What are you guys up to? When does school start? Oh, I almost forgot. I heard an amazing rumor. Someone said that these scientist guys who have been studying us found some new nests in northern China. Maybe there's hope for us after all. Gotta go.

Love, Your Friend, Chi-chao.

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## **SAVE SHINES AT INTERNATIONAL FORUM**

This spring SAVE Executive Committee's Jeff Hou was formally chosen to present a paper at the 13th Global Biodiversity Forum preceding the Ramsar Convention in San Jose, Costa Rica. Hou presented at a workshop on "Wetlands and the Private Sector," focusing on the involvement of NGOs in the conservation and development of ecotourism at the Chi-ku Wetlands.

Hou presented the Chi-ku case and the process of grassroots mobilization. He outlined the NGOs role in the alternative plan based on sustainable development. Hou provided examples of how each group is finding its niche, from the local fisherman providing boat tours to the environmentalists (local and international) advocating for formal protection.

Hou concluded his presentation with a reminder of the problems that still lie ahead for these groups. The lack of formal protection and the weak involvement of the local and national government create obstacles to long-term conservation efforts. This lack of protection and coordination is resulting in both new and continued threats to the area, including the Bin-nan Industrial Complex and proposed projects such as a coastal highway, municipal incinerator and international airport. In addition, despite Chi-ku's significant ecological value, it is not formally recognized by international bodies such as the Ramsar Convention.

Hou's presentation generated a lively discussion that followed. Many members of the audience hailed the Chi-ku case as a successful grassroots campaign that deserves world attention. Several participants also expressed concerns over the lack of formal international recognition and protection for such an important site. For more information on the conference, check out the Virtual Global Biodiversity website at <http://vgbf.geog.ucsb.edu>.