

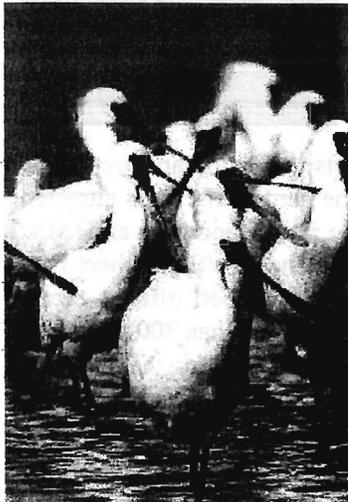
Spoonbills Speak

echoes across the Pacific

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DELEGATION PUSHES FOR MORE HABITAT



A delegation of U.C. Berkeley graduate students and Professor Randy Hester traveled to Taiwan to lobby for the black-faced spoonbill, and came home with good news. Key legislators and the head of the federal Tourism Bureau responded positively to the group's call for preserving and expanding the endangered bird's habitat in southern Taiwan.

More than 40% of the world's black-faced spoonbills, roughly 500 birds, spend the winter at one spot, near Chiku Lagoon in Tainan County, Taiwan. Taking abandoned salt lands north of this roosting area, in Tainan, Chiayi and Yunlin counties, and restoring them to mud flats and ponds could help the spoonbills establish a sustainable population and evade extinction. Spoonbill habitat restoration and expansion is being seriously considered in a tourism management plan the federal government is beginning for a coastal National Scenic Area in the three counties.

During the October trip, Hester; Berkeley doctoral student Wenling Tu (co-founder of the Taiwan Environmental Action Network); and three students from Hester's spring 2003

environmental planning studio, Holly Selvig, Shay Boutillier and Ariel Ambruster, gave presentations at a conference in Yunlin and Tainan Counties on ecotourism and environmental management. Hester talked about how counties in spoonbill territory can attract international ecotourists by preserving nature, the local landscape and traditional culture. The students shared their research on impacts of an international airport and free-trade industrial zone proposed for 22 km² within the spoonbills' foraging area.

The Chiku International Airport, if built, and its accompanying development could lead to spoonbill extinction by eliminating habitat. It could also destroy the qualities that make the area potentially attractive to tourists. Hester and the students are hopeful that the ecotourism plan will be implemented instead of the airport.

However, while in Taiwan, the group was dismayed to learn of Tainan County's latest development scheme for the Chiku area: a racetrack. SAVE International will be formally expressing its opposition to the plan.

ALONG THE ROAD TO ECOTOURISM

Written by UC Berkeley grad students and recent ecotourists Shay Boutillier, Holly Selvig, and Ariel Ambruster

As first-time visitors and ecotourism advocates, we left Southern Taiwan feeling that it has the potential to attract international tourism – a type of nature/culture tourism. However, the region is not quite there yet.

Coastal southern Taiwan has a unique natural asset – the black-faced spoonbill – as well as wetland ecosystems that feature soldier crabs and many different varieties of other birds. A visit here could be packaged with visits to other parts of the island, with their dramatic mountain scenery and unusual species, or stand alone as an intensive cultural exploration of life in the breadbasket of Taiwan.

Cultural attractions include quiet fishing villages, traditional Chinese courtyard homes, Chiku Lagoon oyster farming, fish-pond farming, ceramic salt ponds, temples, and historical sites in Tainan City. A vestige of the region's salt-making economy, Salt Mountain, attracts locals, and could beckon internationals with the addition of historical artifacts and exhibits.

Still, some aspects of the region, we felt, could pose barriers to attracting international tourists. For example, the region's hazy air quality is at odds with the landscape; it obscures views and may conjure up images of large industrial plants



The egrets perched in these mangrove wetlands could soon share their home with an expanded population of black-faced spoonbills.

or car-choked cities. The vast flat landscape of Tainan County, which defines and memorializes the region, is threatened by poorly placed development, which may also ruin the quaintness of farm and fishing villages. Efforts to attract local tourists through commercial gimmicks, such as race-tracks, could turn off international ecotourists. And international tourists will want bikeways, small boating trips or other ways to experience the landscape that do not involve large tour buses.

Some area residents are cultivating appreciation for aspects of their own traditional culture but many are lured by the comforts of modernization.

We toured a small village in Chiayi County where residents are beginning to see the economic development potential of their traditions and way of life. One resident had a studio where he made sculptures out of oyster shells; around the corner, we found a traditional curved adobe grain-storage structure.

Nearby, a woman sat in front of her lovely courtyard house, its tile roof supported by turquoise-painted wood braces. But across the street, she said, is a house that is much prettier; we turned and saw the Taiwan equivalent of a cheap, spec-built monster home: a huge three-story brick-finished rectangle.

Respect for traditional culture is increasing as people begin to believe that preservation is a route to economic develop-

ment. An opportunity to boost international tourism might come in 2008, if Taiwan Expo is held in Tainan County, as county officials hope.



Salt Mountain

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7TH ANNUAL GREAT SPOONBILL MIGRATION

On a sunny autumn afternoon, a flock of black-faced spoonbills congregated on the campus of UC Berkeley for a few hours before scattering to nearby dorm rooms. This seventh annual Great Spoonbill Migration brought scores of bird sculptures to grace the lawns near Wurster Hall on Thursday, October 9. The event culminated an assignment in Professor Randy Hester's undergraduate class, ED1, aimed at hopeful architects and landscape architects. Intended to be ornaments for the garden, the birds attracted the public eye to the plight of the actual spoonbills and to the work of SAVE. Guest-reviewers and SAVE members Barbara Butler, John Liu, and Derek Schubert offered expert insight to the birds' creators, while more than 300 passersby expressed their own opinions by voting for the People's Choice. At the end of the day, most of the students took their work away, but two of the best (and most durable) birds will roost permanently in the redesigned courtyard of Wurster Hall.



LETTER FROM CHI-CHAO THE SPOONBILL



Hi guys,

We made it back to Chiku just in time to see some old friends and new faces from Berkeley. I did a flyover when they arrived and I think they were kinda impressed!

We're really hoping that this winter goes better than the last. I know you guys are working hard to help us spread out and get a bit more comfortable. Keep up the good work, we appreciate it!

Love, Your Friend, Chi-chao