



Spoonbills Speak

echoes across the Pacific

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SAVE INTERNATIONAL is proud to announce the upcoming academic year is our 10th! We are planning activities throughout the year, the first of which will be our annual **GREAT SPOONBILL MIGRATION** on October 17th. This year we will host a 5pm reception at UC Berkeley's Wurster Hall just following awards for outstanding spoonbill sculptures. Please mark the date and join us for this special day.

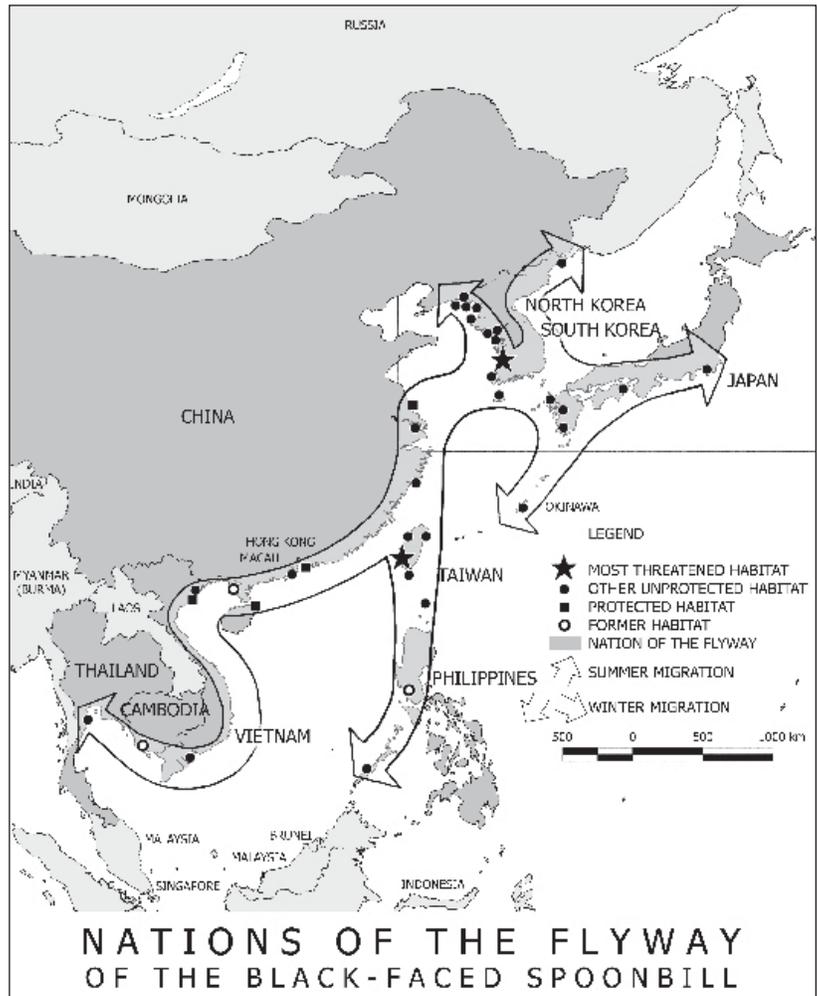
In this double-edition newsletter we highlight those countries beyond Taiwan that the Black-faced Spoonbill calls home and share some particularly inspiring tales of people working to protect their flyway.

MAINLAND CHINA

Along China's twelve-thousand-mile-long coast line are several important Black-faced Spoonbill (BFS) habitats. Almost all are winter habitats in the southeast part of the country. In 1998, a local fisherman from a small town called Shih-chen in northeast China found one pair of spoonbills and a nest on a rock about half a mile off the shore. This "man-shape rock," called by local people later, is the first breeding habitat of BFS found outside North Korea.

The local fisherman who first found this spot is named Chin-shan Chou. He started searching for BFS in 1996 because he heard there was a \$200 thousand RMB award for whoever found BFS breeding habitat. After finding the birds, Chou stayed on the rock every day to protect the nest and await the expert who would authenticate it and grant him the award. When the experts finally came, he was disappointed. Although they were very excited about his finding, they also let him know that there was no such award.

Chou became frustrated and decided to abandon the nest and get back to his normal life. But he just could not take the birds and the fragile eggs off of his mind. Three days later, he went back to the rock and found that the almost-hatched eggs had been taken by local people. The fact that BFS parents lost their baby birds due to his rash decision struck him. From then on, Chou became the angel of Black-faced Spoonbills. He sold his boat in order to build a little shelter on the rock.



Every year from May to September, he stayed on the rock, protecting the birds and the nests. He educated himself about the species by checking out books from all over the country and ordering academic journals. His observations and records fill over 30 notebooks. People taunted him, his family blamed him, but he has never given up playing his role.

Under Chou's protection, the BFS population on Man-shape Rock has grown from 2 to 25 in four years and in 2000, Man-shape Rock and the surrounding area was finally designated a national wildlife protection zone. Chou now has an even bigger dream—to find other small islands along the coast where BFS breed and have the whole region be a world-class wetland reserve.

HONG KONG

Not far from the main wintering sites for Black-faced Spoonbills in Taiwan, Hong Kong hosts another quarter or so of the spoonbill population each winter. From only 20 when first counted in 1982, the number of spoonbills visiting Hong Kong has risen to over 260 last year. The spoonbills, along with thousands of other migrating birds from dozens of other species, stop over at the wetlands of Mai Po Nature Reserve (MPNR) and Inner Deep Bay, between the New Territories of Hong Kong and mainland China. Despite protection under the Ramsar Convention and monitoring by the Chinese government and the World Wildlife Fund, these wetlands still face several threats: water pollution from agricultural runoff in mainland China and from Hong Kong, the conversion of mudflats and fishponds to industry or other uses, a proposed bridge across Deep Bay where the spoonbills feed, and disturbance by human tourists.

Private citizens are joining in the effort to help the Mai Po Nature Reserve -- among them, the five Hong Kong chapters of the Rotary Club. Having already worked with the World Wildlife Fund by renovating the Visitor's Center at MPNR in 2002, Rotarians looked to Mai Po again when choosing their Centennial Community Project the next year. Members of the five chapters contributed a variety of professional expertise and raised funds to renovate the Peter Scott Field Studies Centre and establish the Rotary Centennial Institute for Wetland Conservation. They chose a black-faced spoonbill emblem as the mascot for the Centennial Project. The renovated building and new institute opened in early 2005, and the Institute published a guidebook for visitors to MPNR soon after. Schoolchildren and adults visit the center to learn about the ecological value of wetlands and the ways in which people can protect them.



Synchronized spoonbills

MACAU

Once a simple fishing village on the China coastline, Macau was colonized by the Portuguese in the 16th century and became the first European settlement in the Far East. The region consists of a tiny peninsula with bridges to two islands, which totaled just 18 sq. km. in 1991. Rapid development, including an abundance of casinos, has led to massive filling of coastal waters, bringing the land area up to 28 sq. km. by 2003. On this small parcel of land live half a million people, making Macau one of the most densely populated spots in the world. Despite all this development, Black-faced Spoonbill numbers are actually up -- 1990 records show only six spoonbills wintered here, while by 2003, numbers had increased to 46 spoonbills.

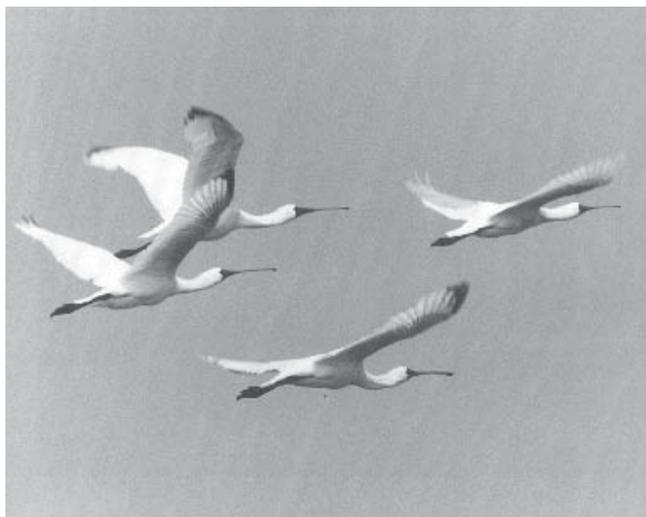
In 1987, Portugal officially returned control of Macau and it became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, similar to neighboring Hong Kong, which lies 60km to the east. The Macau SAR Government declared 65 ha at two separate Black-faced Spoonbill wintering sites as a wetland nature reserve in 2001. While an important first step, reports show that proper management of these sites is lacking.

SAVE is working to establish ties in Macau to better monitor known spoonbill habitat sites and find out what else can be done to further habitat protection. We are intrigued to discover how this extreme density of people and spoonbills can coexist harmoniously in the future and curious about how the unique politics of this region may affect policy and protection efforts.

THE PHILIPPINES

Prior to sightings in 2001, black-faced spoonbills had not been spotted in the Philippines since 1914. After the Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan sent posters of black-faced spoonbills to the Philippines, the first birds were soon spotted on Sabtang Island in the Batanes Islands Protected Area. The local community, the Ivatans, immediately embraced the spoonbill and took action to ensure its protection.

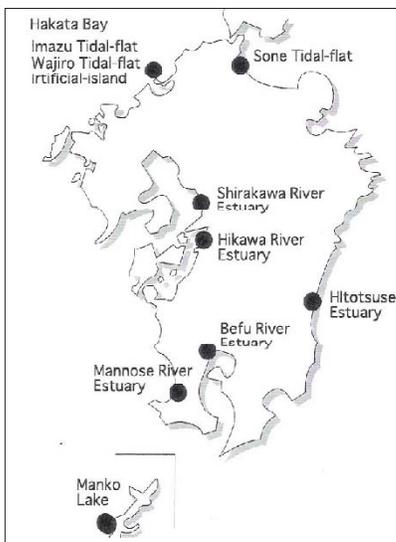
Batanes is the Philippines' northernmost province. The group of islands that make up Batanes lie in a vast expanse of water where the Pacific Ocean on the east merges with the South China Sea on the west. In close proximity to the islands off the south coast of Taiwan, the native islanders in the Batanes have cultural similarities to Taiwanese island communities.



All the islands have intermittent stretches of sandy beaches and rocky shorelines. Sabtang Island is dominated by steep hills and mountains and deep canyons. Exposed to cool and extremely windy weather, typhoons occur at an average of eight times a year. The rough environment has shaped all aspects of the native residents' lifestyle. The Ivatans have formed a close knit, self-reliant community as a means of coping with the harsh and isolated environment in which they live.

The Ivatans maintain a strong conservation ethic and community involvement is a priority in addressing the conservation issues facing their community. Conservation issues which threaten their traditional way of life include: agricultural expansion, land conversion, excessive resource extraction, loss of natural habitats, and foreign fishing poachers.

These ethics played an important role in the discovery of a Black-faced Spoonbill. After a local resident on Sabtang Island alerted authorities about the presence of a spoonbill in his village, the Batanes Islands Protected Area park rangers and Ivatan community immediately took action to ensure the bird's safety. The Ivatans held a meeting to discuss ways of protecting the spoonbill. Proud to have such a rare bird on their island, they passed a new local ordinance, specifically urging people to protect the bird. This was done just days after the local meeting. This action is a wonderful example for communities all along the flyway.



Major BFS habitat sites in Japan

years. 320 species of birds have been observed in Hakata Bay, 60% of the known bird species in Japan. Black-faced Spoonbills winter in the Kyushu area, but bridge construction and wetlands reclamation have disturbed their habitat.

Japan has a well-organized bird conservation coalition led primarily by the Japan Wildbird Society. Scientists from Japan were instrumental in bringing the serum to Taiwan during the botulism outbreak in 2002-2003. A

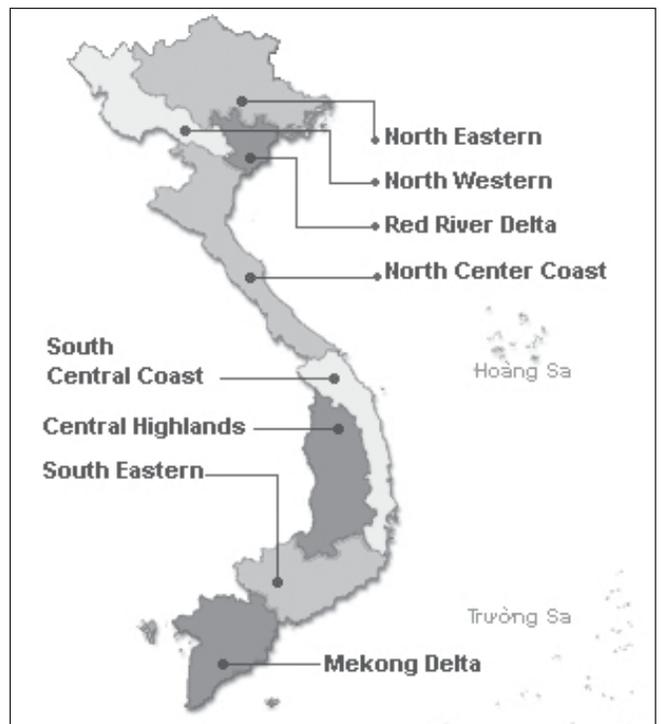
country once rich with wetlands, Japan has lost 6000 ha of tidal flats due to land reclamation over the last 20 years. On the up side, there are 33 designated RAMSAR sites in Japan, 20 of which were just added to the list last year. The program for a luncheon celebrating this event featured a spoonbill logo, shown at right.



VIETNAM

Vietnam is one of four major wintering sites for the Black-faced Spoonbill. However, despite the rise in numbers globally (1,475 birds recorded by BirdLife International in 2005) the number of birds recorded in Vietnam has been in decline over the last ten years.

Black-faced Spoonbills have been recorded along the entire coastline of Vietnam, from the Red River Delta in the north to the Mekong Delta in the south, although many of these southern birds are thought to be vagrants and are seen in very small numbers, sometimes just one bird. The main site for spoonbills in Vietnam is the Red River Delta, home also to many other endangered species. In 1989, the Xuan Thuy National Nature Reserve in the delta was named a RAMSAR wetland of international importance by the United Nations. Despite this designation, the spoonbill faces many challenges, the five most important being: 1) Loss of habitat, specifically intertidal habitat; 2) Hunting (while less of a threat in protected areas, outside of these areas hunting still presents a real threat that will require legislative action to overcome); 3) Human disturbance in the densely populated Red River Delta



Map of Vietnam

through activities such as fishing, shellfish harvesting and domestic animals; 4) Pollution from agriculture and aquaculture run-off; and 5) Disease transmission from poultry and other domestic birds.

BirdLife International continues to be a strong presence in Vietnam, monitoring the annual populations of the Black-faced Spoonbill and working with staff in nature preserves to bring awareness to members of the public through education programs for school children and others. Vietnam is rich in bird species, serving as host to 850 species, 33 of which are globally threatened, and 22 species with a restricted range, 10 of which are endemic to Vietnam.

We look forward to developing stronger ties with Vietnam and local conservation groups in order to expand our knowledge of the challenges facing the species there and to be a voice for strategic land use planning.

KOREA

Black-faced spoonbills were once easily seen along the west coast of the Korean peninsula. Spoonbills breed primarily on uninhabited rock islands along the western seashore in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. In the past, due to national security concerns, it has been difficult for researchers and environmentalists to conduct studies on spoonbills in this region. However, a warming relationship between the two political states has allowed researchers and environmentalists to access parts of the DMZ, and in particular, the many rock islets and the Han River Estuary. The late Dr. Kim Sooil and the NGO, Korean Federation of Environmental Movement (KFEM), produced significant research in spoonbill behavior, foraging habits, habitat conditions and characteristics.



Spoonbill young off the west coast of Ganghwa Island

Although the research on spoonbills is relatively young and there is still a lot to learn, researchers and environmentalists are optimistic about the future. The effort of dedicated researchers and environmentalists is going far to educate the public and bring awareness of this important species in Korea. Hosted by KFEM, international conferences have been held in Korea every summer and winter since 2004. SAVE was excited to be a part of the

2005 conference and looks forward to future cooperation in protecting important habitat in Korea, an area which is key to the longevity of the Black-faced Spoonbill.

HELLO FROM CHI-CHAO THE SPOONBILL

Hi guys,

Wow, have I really known you all for 10 years already? That's incredible. We've been through a lot together and it sure is nice to have friends like you when the chips are down. Thanks for everything!



Well, I'm off to Chiku for the winter. Hope we get a chance to see each other sometime soon...

Love, Your friend, Chi-chao

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