



# Spoonbills Speak

echoes across the Pacific

A Project of Earth Island Institute

<http://saveinternational.org/>

## ON-GOING FUKUOKA EXCHANGE



Site visit at Imazu, Japan

Continuing SAVE's effort to protect and promote Black-faced Spoonbills and their habitats, SAVE traveled to Fukuoka, Japan, in November for a series of workshops and site visits. It was a great confluence of SAVE members from two countries, including Professor Hiroko Koike, Satoru Matsumoto, Manami Ikeda, Professors Hisashi Shibata and Tomoya Ishibashi, Ayano Takata, Haruka Ishibashi, Yoon Kametani, Fiona Cundy, Randy Hester, and Marcia McNally. The Fukuoka University Landscape Architecture laboratory hosted. The Americans were given a taste of Fukuoka and its surrounds, being toured in historic Dazaifu by local engineer Mai Tagaki and attending a sumo wrestling match.

Fukuoka's Hakata Bay is an important migratory stopover for the spoonbill. However, most of the natural tidal flats have been filled and destroyed in this area, causing a decline in the number of birds in Fukuoka in recent years. Some of this decline has been attributed to changes in Wajiro Tidal Flat after its frontal waters were filled to make the artificial Island City, including port and harbor facilities and a new urban area. Even though the island began to be built over 20 years ago, some of it remains vacant. The remaining undeveloped land will include a habitat park at the northeast corner of the island. Fukuoka City has proposed a plan for this park, but this plan would be too small and would not have appropriate habitat for the migratory birds passing through the Hakata Bay area. To evaluate the city's proposal against the needs and alternatives for bird habitat on Island City, the Landscape

Architecture and Community Design laboratory at Fukuoka University, directed by Dr. Hisashi Shibata, formed a partnership with SAVE International and the Wetland Forum in Fukuoka.

In spring and summer 2011, SAVE evaluated past proposals for the wildbird park using the latest known science on the Black-faced Spoonbill, habitat creation, water management, the health benefits of nature, and sustainable development, and submitted a report in September 2011 with three new Island City alternatives for Fukuoka citizens to consider. While in Fukuoka in November, SAVE members went to Island City with Port officials to see the status and process of filling and to discuss the city's attempts to maintain the local ecosystem. This meeting was critical for SAVE to understand the existing site conditions and to make realistic design proposals for a wildbird park.

Based on that field visit, SAVE created an alternative grading and planting plan for a 16-hectare area where a fill and compaction project is currently on-going. The logic – minimize cost by moving the earth only once to accomplish the soil stabilization goals of the Port and to achieve adequate habitat for the bird species the park is intended to support. Although the 16-ha park by itself would not provide enough foraging area for all the spoonbills stopping over in Hakata Bay, with nearby Wajiro tidal flats, the Tataru River, and Imazu, the Fukuoka area can support its part of the migratory spoonbill population. The 16 ha would also be large enough to allow the birds to feel safe, as park users would be kept beyond the birds' "scare distance".



Research team at Island City, Japan

Four design proposals for Island City were presented at a public workshop on November 15th which was attended by environmental activists, public officials including Vice Mayor Motoki Yamazaki, and members of the press. The workshop consisted of small groups in round tables with facilitators, where participants voiced their opinions and ideas. Ideas and suggestions have been tallied and will be part of a report submitted to the City of Fukuoka and the Port.

--- BY YOON-JU CHANG KAMETANI & MARCIA MCNALLY

## SAVE CHINA WORK ADVANCES



SJTU Research Team

SAVE members Randy Hester and Marcia McNally went to Shanghai for an exchange with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University research team, formed to study the Black-faced Spoonbill in China. Under the leadership of Professor Shan Yin, a SAVE Executive Committee member, the 7 students who have joined the team have begun to document where the spoonbill can be found in China, what habitat it prefers, and what threaten the bird's survival there.

As part of the exchange, the team returned to the Chongming Dongtan National Wildlife Reserve (Reserve) for the second time in two years. As previously reported, the Reserve landscape is dynamic due to natural sedimentation and an invasive North American species of *Spartina* (*S. alterniflora*, smooth cordgrass) that has taken over. But Reserve managers have had great success in the last year removing the *Spartina*. According to Chen Dong Tang, the Reserve's vice director, the prescription has been labor-intensive but straightforward. After the *Spartina* was cleared from a diked area at the western edge, water was pumped in to a depth of 50 cm (20"). The *Spartina* rotted and native bulrush came up in its place. Within days, birds that hadn't been seen for years reappeared. Since then, 500 to 600 Whiskered Terns (and at least 100 of their

nest) have been spotted, along with 2-3,000 Black-tailed Godwits, and 10 species of ducks at a density of 5,000/month during migration peak.

Chongming Dongtan National Wildlife Reserve was recently awarded the title of best wetland in China. But the Reserve staff isn't resting on its laurels, with plans for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of *Spartina* clearance in the works. The SAVE-Jiao Tong team has been asked to participate, in particular to set up an experiment in which we would design one small area of the core area of the Reserve for spoonbill habitat, and monitor spoonbill activity to assess the impact. According to Vice Director Tang, they know how to remove the *Spartina*, but they want evidence-based theory to guide them in habitat creation. "We want to build habitat and find out if the birds really like it. The birds now stay in one area – density is high. We need to spread them. We need researchers to conclude our results and compare them to others. When tide is up, they need a place to eat – they need a living room and a kitchen." Tang's prediction? – if they reconstruct habitat, 50,000 birds will come.

--- BY MARCIA MCNALLY

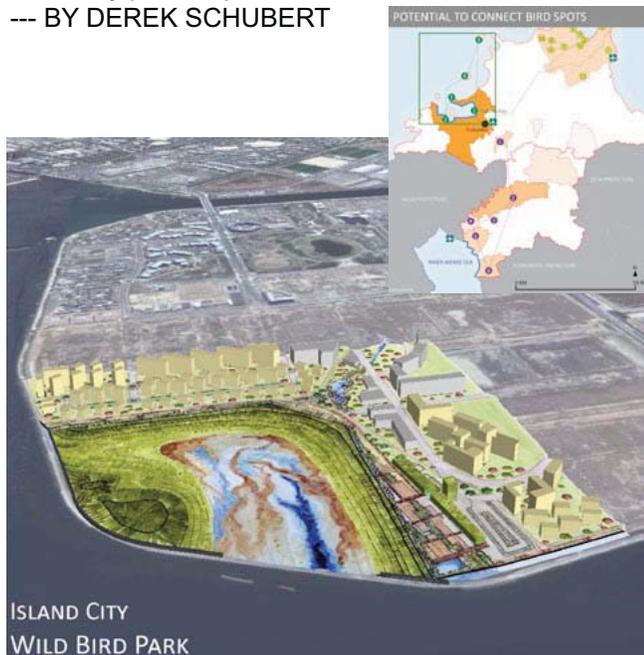
## ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING STUDIO ZOOMS IN ON JAPAN

In February, SAVE guided a class of graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley, in creating plans to protect and improve habitat for Black-faced Spoonbills and other birds around Fukuoka, Japan. The effort was the latest in SAVE's fifteen-year partnership with the Environmental Planning studio (LA205) in the university's Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning.

Over the years, the LA205 studios have generated many plans crucial to preserving the spoonbills' habitat, and many students and alumni have stayed involved with SAVE; former LA205 student Kelly Janes, for example, was the studio's Graduate Student Instructor this year. She now serves as SAVE's Communications Director. The lead professor of the studio, Dr. G. Mathias Kondolf, Department Chair and a member of the SAVE Advisory Committee, invited SAVE to lead a new spoonbill-related module, so Professors Randy Hester and Marcia McNally and three other Berkeley-based members of the SAVE Executive Committee—Fiona Cundy, Yoon-ju Chang Kametani, and Derek Schubert—chose to extend SAVE's recent work for Fukuoka and the larger Hakata Bay area [see "On-going Fukuoka Exchange" in this issue and "From LA205: Student Research on Current Habitat Threats", Summer 2011] The twelve graduate students in the studio this year worked as two complementary teams. One team studied the legal and political mechanisms to protect habitat in Japan,

suggested ways to tie birdwatching into the existing network of tourist activities in Fukuoka and adjacent prefectures, and identified the sites best suited for protection. The other team designed a site plan for a 16-hectare wildbird park at the northeast corner of the artificial Island City in Hakata Bay; the team also consulted with hydrologists on a safe and sustainable way to create tidal-flat habitat by breaching the concrete seawall that rings the island and reshaping the new shoreline. SAVE will continue to work with our colleagues in Fukuoka to make sure the plans are scientifically, politically, and financially sound, and are ultimately put into place.

--- BY DEREK SCHUBERT



Excerpts from presentations by the LA205 studio

on Promoting Ecological Knowledge, Creating Wildbird Habitat and Working With NGOs. Masato Dohi, Hiroko Koike, Tsai Jiung Chiau, Sheng Lin Chang and Gina Dello Russo presented models for agencies working with community volunteers in different cultural contexts.

A comparison of habitat creation projects in Japan, Taiwan, China and the U.S. led to new networks of scientists, planners and citizens across the flyway jurisdictions. Ma Qiang and Niu Dong-Liang presented their innovative experiments at Shanghai Chongming Wildlife Reserve. Sharon Danks and Lisa Howard of Bay Tree Design worked directly with Shin Tsen School officials on plans for the ecological schoolyard being developed there. Over and over presentations showed how essential the approach to preserving biological diversity that SAVE pioneered is. The development of jobs suited to local people, adequately sized core habitats and expressions of unique local community values provided the foundation for most of the successful cases shown. The four day conference was attended by over 200 people representing at least eight nations.

--- BY RANDY HESTER



Sister School Signing, Taiwan

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WETLAND BREADBASKET

The International Conference on Wetland Breadbasket, jointly sponsored by the Southwest National Scenic Area Administration and local governments, was held in Tainan, Taiwan May 3rd-6th. The conference was convened by NSA Director Cheng Jung-Feng, Ph.D. and Fuchang Tsai and John K.C. Liu of National Taiwan University. SAVE International's projects were a focus of numerous papers. A recurring theme was how bold the NSA plan for Stepping Stone Habitat Expansion was. That plan was developed by SAVE nearly a decade ago. One highlight of the conference was a tour of case projects ranging from new spoonbill habitats to bed and breakfast facilities. SAVE, UC Berkeley, and NTU had planned and helped implement. UC Berkeley's delegation to the conference was led by Department Chairman Matt Kondolf. SAVE members presented papers in each of the three conference tracks

## SAVE SISTER SCHOOL PROJECT

In March of 2012 SAVE International spearheaded a new Sister School Project. The Project creates a partnership between the Grass Valley Charter School in California and the Shin Tsen School in Taiwan. On the coast of Taiwan in Budai, the Shin Tsen Elementary School has direct views of Spoonbill habitat and has incorporated our favorite endangered species as a key element of their curriculum. Located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, the Grass Valley Charter School is a pre-K through eighth grade Expeditionary Learning School which focuses on environmental education. This project will allow young environmentalists to share their culture with students half a world away by communicating lessons they've learned about environmental stewardship. The Sister School was



SAVE & friends visit Shin-Tsen Elementary School in Jia-Yi, Taiwan

the biggest wow! of the International Conference on Wetland Breadbasket. On May 5, at 1:30 pm Taiwan time, the Shin Tsen School Principal, the National Scenic Area Director, Chiayi County Official and SAVE representatives signed the Sister School's Proclamation. A flood of over two dozen media and official photographers surrounded the officials as they signed. The Shin Tsen School Principal then presented a birding telescope, made at Shin Tsen, as a gift to their Sister School. Shin Tsen students use similar telescopes to observe Black-faced Spoonbills and other bird species in their natural habitat right outside their class room windows. Officials saluted SAVE Communications Director Kelly Janes and Merry Byles-Daly, the Grass Valley Charter Teacher participating in the project, for initiating the program. Others asked for quiet so as not to awaken the California students in the middle of their night. On May 6 many of those officials attended a workshop to make a plan for the expansion of Shin Tsen School programs in ecological education, alternative energy and ecotourism.

--- BY KELLY JANES

## **SAVE International**

save.spoonbill@gmail.com

SAVE International  
c/o Earth Island Institute  
2150 Allston Way Suite 460  
Berkeley, CA 94704

## **SAVE HAS REINFORCEMENTS!**



Photos with officials at reserve

Professor Shan Yin of Shanghai Jiao Tong University recently formed a spoonbill research team to support SAVE's work on Chongming Island and in China. They are students in Landscape Architecture. Please welcome: Yu Pei, Kely Meng, Elinor Mao, Lija Xu, Yuqian Wang, Yu-hang Wen, and Beikun Zhang.

## **MESSAGE FROM CHI-CHAO**

Has it really been three years since I wrote to my friends at SAVE? My dear Junichi reminded me. Our grandchildren said we could just "twitter" and you would hear, but I guess that means something different to old birds like us. Many of our new neighbors, including some who flew in from China or Japan, can't stop talking about the great work SAVE is doing. I tell them I knew SAVE back when we were both youngsters! When you come to Korea later this summer, they'll be excited to meet you.

Love, your friend, Chi-chao.