10 Years Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force!!
Special Issue: News Bulletin No. 12, August 2014

Update August 2014: Contents

The largest Spoon-billed Sandpiper ever created, Rudong, China April 2014 *Jing Li*

The Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) News Bulletin is a regular, half-yearly update of activities of the SBS Task Force of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP). The News Bulletin is edited by Dr. Christoph Zöckler, Coordinator of the EAAFP SBS Task Force

Mission:
The East Asian and Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) aims to coordinate the conservation activities identified in the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Single Species Action Plan for the species, which was commissioned by BirdLife International. The activities in the Action Plan are regularly reviewed and updated by all Flyway Members and a growing network of active supporters and groups in the Flyway countries, and beyond.

The Task Force originates from the establishment of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Team (SBS RT) in 2004, when several partners active in the conservation of this globally threatened wader met in Edinburgh. With the growing level of activity, the finalization of the Action Plan in 2008 and a growing network of partners, organisations and supporters the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) was formed at the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) meeting in Korea in February 2010. In December 2010, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) was officially endorsed as one of the first species Task Forces by the Partnership under the EAAFP Shorebird Working Group. The key implementing organisation for the SBS TF is BirdLife International through its partner Birds Russia. It is chaired by the Government Partner of Russia. Task Force members consist of the EAAFP Government Partners of key range states for the species and international conservation organisations. These are: the Russian Federation, Japan, People's Republic of China, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Union of Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh and India, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT), Wetlands International, a representative of the EAAFP Shorebird Working Group and experts and conservation organisations from principal range states and other partners.

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In figures:

2366 mist nets between Zhuhai to the Leizhou Peninsular

41 SBS spring minimum in Rudong, China

45,000 shells used to create the largest ever Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Rudong, China

4 out of 8 flagged breeding adults return to the breeding grounds

'8' head –started in 2012 returned to the breeding grounds in Chukotka

6 Conservation Community Groups established in the Gulf of Mottama

32 eggs collected for head-starting

Foreword from the Editor

Dear friends and colleagues,

Two years ago I had the privilege to lead the annual summer expedition to the breeding grounds in Meinypilgyno, Chukotka and among many other activities we began our head-starting program. I must admit I was very skeptical from the beginning and remained so until we suddenly received the report of lime-green '8' bird, which was resighted in Taiwan this April, flagged as one of 9 head-started birds in 2012. This indeed was sensational. For almost two years the bird has been elusive somewhere on the wintering grounds, survived all the pressures on migration and now, two years old, the bird was on its way back to the breeding grounds. Even more astonishing is the fact that our Russian team in Meinypilgyno managed to pick it out on the remote breeding grounds about 30 km from its birth place. Not only that. They confirm it's a female and breeding with a nest of three eggs and the male is now, in July leading one chick. The head-starting works and it looks promising for the set of 16 released young in 2013, which are hopefully return next year. Two of those have already been observed in China and Thailand. We reported in our last newsletter. Congratulations to WWT and BirdsRussia, who are skillfully and patiently executing this project.

There are still many questions, such as, where are the other eight birds released in 2012? What happened to the other four 2013-flagged adult birds that did not return in 2014? Also, we still patiently wait for the captive population to start breeding, but there is no doubt we have created a huge network of observers along the flyways, raised awareness in every country and internationally, set up many ambitious conservation programmes in almost all flyway countries, created the largest ever SBS picture and put the species up front of the global conservation concern 11th place of the globally top 100 most threatened birds. You can read about all of this and many other stories in more detail in this issue.

This year the SBS Recovery Team, now Task Force of the EAAFP is ten years old and I think we have many reasons to rejoice. We are looking back at a long list of successful conservation work in all flyway countries. We like to thank all our donors and supporters, who contributed with financial and technical support, many of them right from the beginning, such as the Keidenran Nature Conservation Fund and the Manfred-Hermsen Foundation, but among many others also BirdLife International with its Species Champion Programme and the RSPB, who both stepped up their support in recent years. Another important reason to celebrate is the huge network of committed people that have joined the Task Force and is enjoying working on SBS conservation. And certainly it has been fun for all of us most of the time to work on this little sandpiper. For the third year the breeding population in Meinypilgyno is stable. It is still early to say, but we may have halted the decline? But we cannot be complacent. Let's use the momentum created for the species and continue with our efforts to save the species and its crucial habitats along the entire flyway.

Dr Christoph Zöckler, Coordinator SBS TF, August 2014

Foreword by Minoru Kashiwagi, Ramsar network Japan

Dear friends and colleagues,

Congratulations to the tenth anniversary of the launch of Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Team! The Recovery team was a predecessor of the EAAFP Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force. It was organised at the Waterbirds around the World conference in Edinburgh, UK in April 2004. The launch was the beginning of coordinated activities to conserve the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, SbS. 'Recovery' team signifies a strong commitment of the people to take concrete action to recover the population. The founders wanted not just to save the threatened species, but to recover it. It means that they recognised the necessity of strong actions that are practical and effective, on the basis of scientific knowledge from past expeditions.

The first recent survey of SbS in the breeding site in Chukotka started in 2000 as an International Arctic Expedition into the easternmost region of Russia. It is a breeding site of many threatened waterbird species. Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy and the Russian Academy of Sciences called for the expedition focussing particularly on the decline of SbS. In response to his call, I joined in the expedition team in 2002. In the first expeditions my focus was on Dunlin, a dominant shorebird species in Japan. The shorebird population has decreased remarkably in the past 40 years with coastal habitat loss due to economic development in Japan.

The first three expeditions from 2000 to 2002 revealed a sad reality that the decrease of SbS was more serious than expected as compared with the two major surveys of Russian ornithologists in the 1970s and 1980s. The expedition members tried to tell the situation to many people. However, there was no significant response in the beginning and no action started. This is why the people launched the Recovery Team in Edinburgh. After the launch the Team made all the efforts possible: releasing papers on SbS population; drafting the SbS Action Plan for the Bonn Convention with conservationists and NGOs, ornithologists, government officials on the migration route; starting monitoring surveys in flyway countries at stopover and wintering sites of the species; requesting international organisations to take action for the species; and also working on EAAFP to organise a task force within the framework of the partnership.

Unfortunately, the rate of decline still increased. The global population of SbS is now less than 100 pairs. It may well be thought that everything we have done was in vain. But, I would rather say that we have barely started our project to protect and conserve the species. If we did not start the Arctic Expeditions, and had not launched the Recovery Team, the species of SbS would have been lost by now, without any data on the population status, no knowledge of the impact of development, and continued hunting and trapping in the wintering sites and on the flyway. But, in reality, we have improved knowledge of its population, know more about the major sites of its stop over and wintering and started implementation conservation actions. We have established a Task Force within EAAFP, a framework of government and NGOs, where we coordinate our activities of active members and organisations. We are receiving huge support nationally and internationally. The Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund, one of many supporting organisations, was the first to help and has been continuously supporting our work until now. Among the many conservation initiatives the breeding efforts *ex situ*, in UK and Russia, seem promising as shown by returning of a head-started individual. Local people in many countries are starting to realise the importance of conservation.

We can look back to ten years of successful activities, but let's keep going and strengthen our efforts of conservation in each habitat of the species' flyway!

In January 2015, the 8th Meeting of Partners of EAAFP will be held in Hokkaido, Japan. We will organise a small workshop on SbS with the participants and local people, and launch a nationwide link for recovery and conservation of SbS and shorebirds. I hope the link of people in Japan would facilitate to share the experience of monitoring in Japan with local people in other countries along the flyway.

KASHIWAGI Minoru, Ramsar Network Japan / EAAFP SbS Task Force Member of Japan

3) Update on activities in Myanmar

Pyae Phyo Aung@Phyolay (BANCA)

From 16 to 21 December 2013, BANCA conducted a survey of SBS in the Gulf of Mottama. During this time, two survey teams (BANCA) went to Gulf of Mottama. At the same time team (Sittwe Nature Conservation Association, SNCA) went to Nanthar Island to carry out the monitoring of Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Robert Sheldon from RSPB joined the Mottama survey team. At that time, unfortunately the Mottama team suffered from bad weather conditions, and was delayed by two days and stayed overnight in paddy field near the stream because the tide did not arrive due to the extreme wind. A total of 46 SBS was recorded; 35 SBS from Gulf of Mottama (not the whole Gulf) and 11 SBS from Nanthar Island. A single Red-necked Stint was recorded with breeding plumage colour in Gulf of Mottama during the survey.

Waiting the tide and stayed overnight in the paddy field

The tide was delay and the boat was dragged to the nearest downstream to meet upcoming the tide

In January 2014, BANCA conducted the monitoring of alternative livelihood providing program in the Gulf of Mottama funded by Wildfowl & Wetland Trust (WWT). Bird Hunters from the Gulf of Mottama gave up hunting completely after the agreement had been made with BANCA in 2010. At the moment, some of the Bird Hunters are actively participating with BANCA in Environmental Conservation Activities.

BANCA collaborated with MOECAF and displayed Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation activities on 40th Mon State Day (19th March 2014), in the Setse Beach, Thanphyuzayat Township,Mon State. During the celebration, BANCA encouraged to Government about the Ramsar Site processes.

The livelihood support materials supported by BANCA are more than 3 years old and most of them are beyond their life. This is the additional support provided to the Bird Hunters to change their livelihood from Bird hunting as to support the Bird Conservation activities in the Gulf of Mottama. During the wintering season, BANCA conducted bird watching training to Local Conservation Groups (LCG) bird survey team, monitoring the population of migratory waders. During the training period, one of the LCG member is very enthusiastic in bird watching and shared the knowledge back to the locals. The last survey for this year is in March 2014 and BANCA team recorded two SBS with flag (EA), which one is with light green colored flag and the latter one is blue and yellow color in Gulf of Mottama. This year 2014, two new LCGs were recruited in Gulf of Mottama due to the recommendation of the existing LCGs.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper with flag light green colour (EA)

Explaining about the Spoon-billed Sandpiper by LCG member and bird watching training in Gulf of Mottama

In 2014, BANCA carried out a pilot project on Sustainable Resources Use Development Plan (SRUDP) in the seven villages of East Coast in Mottama Gulf. Moreover, we provided five fresh water ponds to resolve the problem of drinking water scarcity in the villages associated with the Gulf of Mottama and to gain effective participation of local community for conserving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and also designating the Gulf of Mottama as a RAMSAR Site.

This year, BANCA senior management levels went to Mon State and met with Mon State Government and discussed about the designation procedure of Ramsar site because GOM is not under management of Nature Wildlife Conservation Department, Ministry of Environmental Conservation And Forestry (MOECAF). On 17-18 May 2014, BANCA gave wetlands management training in Kyaikhto Township in Mon State, in collaboration with MOECAF Staff officer. The training was funded by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). About (50) participants who are Local authorities (from Forest Department, Department of Fishery, Township Administration, Ministry of Agriculture) and Local Villagers (Village Heads and Local Conservation Group Leaders/ Members) attended this training. During this training, MOECAF staff officer gave presentations on 'wise use of wetlands', 'law enforcement', 'about Ramsar', 'wetlands management' and BANCA gave 'CEPA'. Workshop training included focus group discussions on the wetlands management procedure and all the participants highlighted the illegal fishing problem in the Gulf of Mottama. This is an important issue for the long term sustainability of the Gulf. The output of workshop training is that the audience became well known about the Ramsar and the threats and current situation of Gulf of Mottama. During Monsoon season, BANCA is carrying on consultation workshop meeting in the Gulf of Mottama to designate as Ramsar.

Dr. Saw Mon Theint, Chairperson of BANCA, was interviewed on Myanmar Sky Net's Up To Date channel and broadcasted about the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation with community participation and encouraged the designation of GoM as a RAMSAR Site.

Chairperson of BANCA, Dr.Saw Mon Theint talked about Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Myanmar

Acknowledgement
Thanks to Darwin Initiative, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB),Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) who gave the funds for Spoon- billed Sandpiper Conservation program in Myanmar.

4) Report of SBS observations and illegal mist netting surveys in SW Guangdong during winter and spring 2014

Jonathan Martinez

The 2014 winter and spring surveys essentially focused on monitoring of well-known sites of interest for Spoon-billed Sandpiper or with heavy poaching pressure on shorebirds to assess the importance of poaching during northward migration.

Five visits were made to Xitou (Yangxi – Guangdong province) on 11 of January, on 28 of February to 03rd of march, 30th of march, 03rd of April and 21st of April of. Two visits were made to Fucheng (Leizhou – Guangdong province on 02nd of Janurary and 01st of April), and single visit was made to Goukou (Leizhou) Guangdong) on 1st of April and Donghai Island, Qiantangzhen and Huangpozhen (Ahangjiang – Guangdong) on 2nd of April.

Illegal Mist netting

Attention was paid to all illegal mist nets that were reported to the forestry department in November 2013 and have been cleared-up and that no new mist net had been set up. Only parts of the sites that were covered during the November 2013 surveys has been surveyed due to lack of time, I've focused on the sites for which we haven't received any feedback from the Forestry dpt, (as they usually send us evidence that they visited most of the places we've reported to them to clean the mist nets, except a few ones) or presenting big risk for SBS or shorebirds. Counting all mist nets from the map, a total of 2366 mist nets were reported only in one week from Zhuhai to the Leizhou Peninsular by me and Richard Lewthwaite in November 2013.

Mist nets that were obviously recently set up were found at only one place on 2nd of April at Qiantangzhen and were duly reported to the forestry dpt, as well as a few mist nets that obviously haven't been found by the forestry dpt following November 2013 report were reported again with better indication concerning their location.

At Qiantangzhen, several mist nets were found on islands on half drained fishponds, most of them were holding dead shorebirds. No access without boat was possible, so I wasn't able to check which species had been caught, but some of the birds were dead for a long time already. I suspect that these mist nets have been set up later after my visits there in November. We later received the confirmation from the Forestry dpt that they've been to this place following our report and that they found a boat to clean all the mist nets but they've confirmed us that they've clean most of the mist nets there during fall, so we can confirm that these mist nets were set up following the visit of the Forestry dpt in November. It may be important to ensure that important areas are surveyed regularly to make sure mist nets are not set up again soon after the visit of the Forestry dpt. There was also a flock of 2000 or more shorebirds on adjacent drained ponds.

The efficiency of the Forestry dpt mist nets cleaning was really obvious at Huangpozhen, that was one of the black spot during the March and November 2013 surveys with about 300 mist nets found in a very small area of marshes and fishponds. Only a few very old mist nets were found holding freshly dead Barn Swallows on it, I've reported (through Fion Cheung from WWF HK) them again to the Forestry dpt with better indication.
I've enjoyed watching a very nice flock of shorebirds on drained fishponds adjacent to the marshes with nice diversity including a stunning Asian Dowitcher in breeding plumage.

I've found evidence of illegal mist net poles at Goukou on a sandbar used by shorebirds for roosting, but the nets had been destroyed a long time ago. This site was having a single line of 4 mist nets in November 2013 that was presenting very big risk for shorebirds, I decided to destroy them by myself at that time as I was worried the Forestry dpt will not go there for just 4 mist nets. I found a very freshly dead adult Black-tailed Gull for which I wasn't able to determine the cause of death, but both feet of the bird had been cut off!!!

On 3rd of April 2014, as I was spotting shorebirds on the beach at Xitou, I noticed 4 poachers on a boat that were shooting large Gull using rifles. We called our local contact at the forestry dpt as well as the police. The police arrive soon after we called them but with very little willing to take any action (it seems they found the situation risky due to poachers were carrying rifles), luckily they were followed very soon by a boat from the PRC army from a local navy base with several soldiers carrying machine gun, one of the soldier on the boat had received my phone number through our forestry dpt contact and called me to ask indication concerning the position of the poacher boat, we manage to explain to them where the boat was and they finally manage to catch the poachers. I've spent the afternoon at the army base to arrange a deposition. The poachers were using two doves with cut primaries, they were leaving the doves in the water to attract the gulls and easily had shot 17 of them using this method, mostly Black-tailed Gulls, but also Heuglin's Gull. A dead Lesser Sand Plover was also amongst the birds present on the boat, and I found several dead shorebirds and an injured Sanderling on the beach at the same time, confirming that they were killing any birds that were flying in reach of their weapons. I've never found dead shorebirds on the beach before, but this time I easily found 6 or 7 dead body including one Lesser Sand Plover I flagged in August 2012. There were also several slightly rusty empty cartridges on the beach that let me think that these poacher came here several times before. The cartridges were presented to the army as evidence that the poachers came here before, but it seemed that they didn't paid much attention to it.
The boat as well as 4 rifles and about 50 ammunition were seized, the 4 poachers were caught and jailed awaiting a judge sentence, that was going to be very likely about 3 years in jail because they were having weapons, BT Gull and Heuglin's Gull are both protected in Guangdong at province level and may help to make the sentence more heavy.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper

SBS were found only at Xitou. None was found at Fucheng despite intensive search on all known roosting site, but it seems according to Tong Menxiu that SBS are also using the northern part of the mudflat that I've never covered before, so it is possible that I've overlooked some birds on the north side of the river estuary.

A single individual that was very likely an adult (after careful checking from Nigel Clark on picture) was present on the shorebird roost on the beach on 01st of March. The same roost was carefully checked on 28 of February and on 2nd march but I failed to find the bird on it on this two dates. The bird had clearly a problem using one of its leg as I never saw it on both of its leg.

One SBS was seen on 5th of December 2013 and I'm wondering if it could be the same bird as on 1st of March 2014 that has wintered on the site using different roost from a day to another…. Only a single visit was made between this two date and the bird could have been very easily overlooked during this visit.

3 SBS were present on 30th of March at Xitou including very likely the same bird with the injured leg present on 1st of March.
Weather conditions were very poor and not surprisingly the same 3 birds were still there on 3rd of April, confirming that Xitou is a regular stop-over during spring migration for SBS. It is the 3rd consecutive year that the site is holding SBS during northward migration. To date there is only a single record in fall (on 5th of December 2013).

5) Update from Rudong, China, Spring 2014

Jing Li SBS in China
Spoon-billed Sandpiper in China has a fruitful Spring, other than previous years, Rudong team first organized big-scale Spring survey with international experts; see also report by Guy Anderson on the findings. The international team also contributed a lot in training new waterbird surveyors, local community staff and gave 3

talks in Yangkou and Nanjing (the capital city of Jiangsu Province) ;

For environment education part, a big breakthrough is that Spoon-billed Sandpiper work together with a leading local company, Yangtong Investment Company, the first alliance project is the biggest hard clam Spoon-billed Sandpiper, a 15m by 15 m, white Spoon-billed Sandpiper by 45 000 shells of hard clam by 75

volunteers from Shanghai, Nanjing, Changzhou and Rudong. The project was supported by the British Birds Trust Fund.

You can follow up the event of April 26th by the video on youtube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEpeMqEVpzs&feature=youtube_gdata_player

https://twitter.com/crystalsbs/status/469994757465186304

The Juegang Primary school are bigs fans of Spoon-billed Sandpiper, they have a room for SBS open for whole county and kids show their love with all different art forms. The kids journalists also published an official proposal to all kids and their family in Nantong to protect Spoon-billed Sandpiper, the content resemble all the conservation actions the Rudong team focus;

the image kept permanently at Links Hotel at Yangkou

6) Surveying SBS in Rudong, spring 2014

Guy Anderson, Andrew Baksh, Robert Bush, Adam Gretton, Jing Li, James Phillips, Zhang Lin.

In April and May 2014, the first comprehensive spring survey for SBS, and other key waterbirds, in Rudong was carried out by an international team from the UK, USA and Australia, together with the local conservation network 'SBS in China'. This follows two years of coordinated autumn surveys in the same area. The aims of the survey were to cover the main spring passage period for SBS in South Eastern China – late April to late May, to determine a minimum number of individuals present in the area during this period, to understand the timing of SBS occurrence in spring and to search for colour-marked individuals. An available field team size of 4-6 on each survey day suggested that repeated surveys of a small number of key sites would be the best use of observer time. Three key sites were surveyed repeatedly, based on the results of the 2012 and 2013 autumn surveys and previous experience of Zhang Lin and Jing Li. Following the site names used by Tong Menxiu *et al.* (2014), these were: (1) Dong Tai (North), (2) Yankou East of Temple + Feng Li (combined) and (3) Dong Ling (South).

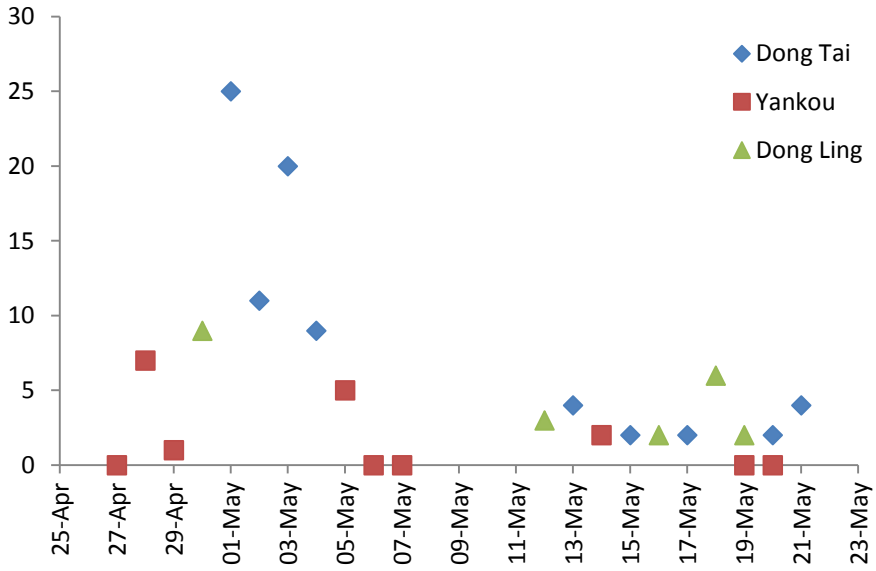
Despite rapid rates of land claim taking place along the Rudong coast, the mudflats in many places are still very large (20+ km wide in some areas at low tide) making systematic, repeated wader surveys challenging! Due to different topography, the three key survey sites were easiest to survey for SBS at different stages of the spring-neap tidal cycle. No sites were surveyed on the 4 lowest neap tide dates (8-11 May) as the high tides remained far from the seawall on these dates, with waders remaining widely scattered over very large areas of exposed mudflat. Searching significant numbers of small waders for SBS is only realistically achievable when the high tide is high enough to push birds close to the seawall. However, at some sites, the highest spring tides also provide difficult survey conditions: the tide rises so rapidly that waders are pushed very quickly up to, and over, the seawall, often to distant and inaccessible roosting sites. The time available to get close enough to wader flocks to have a realistic chance of detecting SBS is therefore small, on both rising and falling tides. The best surveying conditions occur when the combination of tide height and topography concentrate birds within a few 100m of the seawall for a few hours either side of, and during, high tide. Therefore our whole spring study could be divided into two effective survey periods, coinciding with medium to spring high tides: 27 April - 7 May (early), and 12 – 21 May (late). Surveys were conducted on each day during these two periods. On each survey date, individual observers (or pairs or observers) covered different, often adjacent, areas of mudflat, and attempted to search different wader flocks and avoid overlap with each other. After each survey, it was essential for the whole team to compare notes, estimate the total numbers of waders present, estimate the total number of small waders effectively searched thoroughly for SBS, and determine a minimum number of

SBS recorded between all observers. Recording plumage details of individual SBS, using a standardised score, can assist with deciding whether or not two observers may have recorded the same bird. Thousands to tens of thousands of waders were recorded at each site on each date. It became clear that on average each observer had to thoroughly search between 1000 and 5000 small waders on the intertidal mudflats to have a good chance of detecting one SBS.

Maximum numbers of SBS at each site were recorded in late April or very early May.

Site	Max no. SBS recorded at each site	Date
Dong Tai (south)	25	01-May
Yankou (E of temple+Feng Li)	7	28-Apr
Dong Ling (central)	9	30-Apr

Assuming no double counting between these sites on these dates (reasonable in our view) this gives a minimum of 41 individual SBS present during the survey. This is almost certainly an underestimate of the true number of individuals present in Rudong in spring 2014, due to (i) incomplete survey coverage of all potentially suitable intertidal habitat along the whole Rudong coast,(ii) high likelihood of missing some individuals on a given date at any site, (iii) possible turnover of individuals moving through Rudong.
The seasonal pattern of numbers recorded is revealing. Numbers of individuals recorded peaked in late April and early May, on all three sites. The highest numbers were recorded at Dong Tai (central), with a peak of 25 individuals minimum on 1 May. Numbers of SBS clearly declined between the early and late spring survey periods, although a small number were still present during our final survey dates up to 21 May. This suggests that some SBS are leaving the Rudong coast in early to mid May, and probably staging elsewhere, presumably further north, before migrating to the breeding grounds (typically arriving in the first few days of June). One area for future survey work to focus on should be to determine key spring staging areas for SBS between Rudong and Chukotka.



Seasonal pattern of SBS numbers recorded at three sites in Rudong (no surveys conducted from 8-11 May)
We found two colour-flagged individual SBS; lime green 04 (Dong Tai, 1 May) and lime green 05 (Dong Tai, 2 May).

These were both marked as adults in summer 2013 in Chutkotka. Lime green 05 had been seen at Khok Kham, Thailand from 30 November 2013 to 30 March 2014. Both were only seen on single dates in Rudong, suggesting that at least some SBS don't spend a long at individual sites there in spring. Happily, both 04 and 05 were subsequently seen in Chukotka in early June 2014. At least one apparent first year individual (not flagged) was seen on several dates at Dong Tai. Any evidence of over-summering first year SBS at Rudong would be very valuable as it remains largely unknown where these birds spend their first (non-breeding) summer.

In terms of observed threats to SBS in Rudong, the rapid rate of claiming intertidal areas, both existing and planned, is clearly the biggest issue in the long term. Our highest counts of SBS and both colour-flagged individuals were seen at Dong Tai – in an area prominently and publically planned for land claim within the next 10 years.

Female '05' stopping over in Rudong May 2014, Guy Anderson

Two mist-nets were seen set on mudflats at Dong Ling. The SBS in China team were aware of these; they had been present for several months and were now in a poor state of repair. Although old remains of a few birds could be seen in them, their poor, and apparently abandoned, state suggested only very limited risk of further birds being trapped. Channels and very soft mud prevented close examination/removal of these nets. The possibility of continued hunting in the future is still an issue of concern on this coast however, as reports of trapping using nets and poison taking place in October 2013 suggest (Thomas 2014).

Large numbers of wind turbines are present along the seawalls in Rudong with a large offshore wind farm present on mudflats near Yankou. It is unknown whether or not these structures have any negative effects on SBS or other staging waders – either through collision or effective loss of feeding habitat through displacement. Large numbers of waders, including SBS were observed both feeding and roosting within a few 100m of turbines at Yankou however, suggesting that displacement may not be the biggest threat these birds currently face on this coast.

Data from this survey will be written up more fully in due course. The ability to better understand total numbers of staging SBS and stopover periods of individuals is currently limited by the availability of individually marked birds in the population. The ongoing efforts to colour-flag both adults and juveniles (both wild-reared and head-started) on the breeding grounds, and any future possibility of colour-marking during the non-breeding period are to be warmly welcomed. Our survey results suggest that future spring survey periods for SBS at Rudong could be profitably extended from mid April to the very end of May.

The survey was supported financially by RSPB, with observer time provided through the RSPB's sabbatical programme, Natural England's staff development programme and the generosity of Andrew and Robert in volunteering their own time. Nigel Clark provided invaluable guidance and support from the early planning stage onwards.

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7) Colour-flagged Spoon-billed Sandpipers are back to their breeding grounds

As it has been informed earlier, a concentration of breeding Spoon-billed Sandpipers (SbS) in vicinity of Meinypilgyno Village in southern Chukotka was found in 2001, and monitoring of the local population was established and continues since 2003. Banding as well as individual colour-marking (by use of unique combinations of colour bands for adult birds only) of breeding SbS was also started at the same time for various purposes. One of the outputs of this colour-marking was published by Christoph Zöckler et al. (2010). However, because of the sharp SbS population decline in 2000s (ibid.) and very limited reporting about colour-marked SbS from the flyway it was decided in 2007 to stop focused banding of birds, especially catching of adults on nests to exclude any possible harm to birds from researchers. Only chicks were occasionally banded when found in later years.

Nevertheless, in 2010s, when various conservation activities for SbS have been initiated both on breeding and non-breeding grounds there was an obvious gap in information about survival of SbS, also about their movements on the breeding grounds and on the flyway. That is why Nigel Clark have suggested resuming colour-marking of SbS with engraved leg flags (ELFs) and provided ELFs for banders. In 2012 only 9 chicks raised in captivity ('head starting' project) were flagged with ELFs of light green colour which is the regional code for southern Chukotka. In 2013 more birds were flagged in the area: 8 adults on nests, 3 wild chicks and 16 headstarted juveniles. The wild birds got light green ELFs, while headstarted birds got white ones.

Being in the field again in summer 2014 we were hoping for returning of most our colour-flagged SbS back to their breeding sites in our monitoring area. We did not expect return of young birds because they normally spend their first northern summer somewhere on the non-breeding grounds, while alive adults had to return. Based on the former data (ibid.), Nigel Clark has calculated that with about 70% of survival rate the highest probability is for returning of 5 or 6 adult SbS out of 8 colour-flagged in 2012. In reality by late June 2014 we were able to find only 4 flagged adult SbS (50%) back to the study area which is less than expected (however, small sample size should be taken into account).

The infamous monument pair ‘01’ and ‘02’ returning back to the breeding ground, early June 2014

A difference in the return rate between two kinds of habitat in use is of interest. In 2013, we flagged 4 adults on two nests in moraine hills and the same number of birds on flat tundra of the coastal plain at the eastern end of the monitoring area. Three of the returnees (one pair with ELFs ‘01’ and ‘02’ and male ‘04’) are back to their former territories in the moraine hills in 2014.

The female '05' only spotted a month before in Rudong made it safely to Meinypilgyno . It paired with another male some 13 km distant from last year's pair, all Photos: N. Syestnova

At the same time none of four adults with ELFs marked on the coastal plain found in the same area in 2014, however, one female (ELF '05') has moved 12.9 km west to the moraine hills (by the way, this is the longest ever documented between-year movement of an SbS on the species breeding grounds). These limited data may indicate that the moraine hills is the preferable habitat for SbS at least in some years. This fact gives us a hope that we may find one or two more adults somewhere else in a remote area later during our surveys of this summer.

For getting more reliable data about the current survival rate of SbS and their movements we are continuing colour-flagging of SbS in 2014. By late June we caught on nests and newly flagged 13 adult SbS on nests in Meinypilgyno and collected 32 eggs for their artificial incubation and headstarting. Unfledged wild chicks and headstarted juveniles will be banded and flagged later in the season.

Pavel Tomkovich, Nikolai Yakushev, Egor Loktionov

8) Head-starting works – First hand –reared breeds in Meinypilgyno, Chukotka

The first hand-reared spoon-billed sandpiper has returned to breed in Chukotka, Russia, where it was hatched two years ago.

WWT aviculturist Roland Digby has reared 24 spoon-billed sandpipers over the last two summers on their breeding grounds in north eastern Russia, giving them a head start to ensure they survived their crucial first days of life.

Once released, the birds migrated 5,000 miles to south Asia, facing exhaustion, starvation and illegal hunting along the way. There has been a two year wait to see if any will survive to return to breed.

Now one of the group has been seen back at its birthplace by researchers from Birds Russia, Pavel Tomkovich and Egor Loktionov. They reported that the bird is looking heavy, indicating that she is a female carrying eggs and ready to breed for the first time. After two years she could become the first hand-reared spoon-billed sandpiper to produce offspring in the wild and add to the species' fragile population.

The hand-rearing is an attempt to stabilise the species' population before it becomes extinct. Rearing and releasing birds on the breeding grounds increases the number of young birds in the wild in autumn by about 25%. Meanwhile conservationists are tackling the illegal hunting and habitat loss that is behind the decline (see other articles in this and previous bulletins).

The bird hatched on 14 July 2012 from an egg of a clutch collected for artificial incubation on 22 June. After fledging it was released on 10 August and was last seen on the Russian breeding grounds on 17 August 2012. The next sighting was on 7 April 2014 by Chung-Yu Chiang and Chin-Shi Hsu at Kinmen Island, Taiwan, on the edge of the tropics. She was subsequently seen by Pavel Tomkovich and Egor Loktionov near Meinypilgyno, on the edge of the Arctic Circle on 18 June 2014.

Soon after a nest was found by the Russian team. One chick hatched. The pair had a clutch of 3 eggs with one infertile egg and one embryo died at hatching stage. The male partner of '8' has been looking after the single chick up to end of July when it was not seen again.

This is a remarkable proof that the head-starting is working and we hope that many more head-started birds will return in the coming years.

The project is part of a multi-pronged international attempt to save the spoon-billed sandpiper. In case the birds in the wild suffer further losses, the only reserve flock in the world is being reared in a biosecure facility at WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre. In the near future, eggs from the Slimbridge flock could be flown to Russia to be hatched and released as an insurance against the species falling into extinction quicker than it can be saved in the wild.

‚8' stopping over on 7 April 2014 at Tzu-Hu, Kinmen County(Taiwan) photo Chiang Chung Yu

Head-started female '8' on return to the breeding site in Chukotka Photo Pavel Tomkovich & Egor Loktionov

The spoon-billed sandpiper conservation breeding programme is a collaboration between WWT, Birds Russia, Moscow Zoo and the RSPB working with colleagues from the BTO, BirdLife International, ArcCona and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force.

Roland Digby (WWT), Chiang Chung Yu (Taiwan), Pavel Tomkovich, Evgeny Syroechkovskiy (Birds Russia)

9) New BirdLife Project at the Geum Estuary in Korea

Rio Tinto, through the Rio Tinto – BirdLife International Partnership Programme, is providing funding until end 2015 for a pilot project on migratory bird conservation within the East-Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) to help achieve their commitment to Net Positive Impact on biodiversity, and to help safeguard seven species of shorebirds found at Rio Tinto managed solar salt operations in Western Australia. After exploring a number of different options using a novel framework developed by BirdLife, the Geum Estuary in South Korea was identified as a project site due to its importance for migratory birds, the positive political environment and the conservation opportunities at the site (including through the development of ecotourism). Co-funding has also been secured. A MoU was signed between BirdLife and the local government (Seocheon County) in April 2014, and a workplan has been drafted.

In May 2014, Cristi Nozawa and Becky Rush of BirdLife International - Asia Division travelled to South Korea. During this trip, a contract was signed with Kwanmok Kim and Young-Min Moon, who will act as joint Project Coordinators in Korea. Cristi and Becky, along with Spike Millington and Minseon Kim of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), also met with the Seocheon County Government, the National Institute of Ecology and the National Institute of Marine Resources, all of whom expressed support for the project and interest in being involved in the delivery of the workplan. A representative of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was also present, as the Geum Estuary is one of eight sites in their new 'Destination Flyways' project aimed at conserving migratory birds through tourism. To top it off, thanks to Spike's keen eyes, they even saw a Spoon-billed Sandpiper during the trip to Yubu Island in the Geum Estuary.

Becky Rush, BirdLife-Asia

10) Conserving Habitats for Globally Important Flora and Fauna in Gulf of Bangkok, Thailand

The western Inner Gulf of Thailand is a wetland of national importance but is not protected. The area contains various kinds of coastal ecosystem including mud-banks, sand beaches, mangroves, salt-farms, and estuary ecosystems. The inner gulf covers the coastal area of 7 Provinces with a coastal front of some 195 km. The coastal area is dominated by large inter-tidal mudflats which are very important for shore birds migrating to Thailand during the winter season. The area has been identified as one of three sites most important for shore bird in South East Asia. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper has been identified at two sites within this area. The first is at Kok kham Sub-district in Samut Sakhon and the second in Leam Phakbia sub-district in Petchburi.

Kok kham sub-district is a rural area approximately 8km from the nearest city of Samut Sakhon. The district covering 44,906,25 rai or 71 sq.km is dominated by salt farms and aquaculture ponds. This area is in the process to become an EAAF network flyway site in Thailand.

Reclamation of mud flat areas in its passage south and wintering groups present one of the most significant challenges to the species. While this has not occurred in Thailand the development of coastal defenses in the Gulf has changed the ecology of some mud flat areas while in other areas extensive mangrove replanting programmes have either changed the ecology of, or reduced the mudflat areas. While this has not happened at Kok kham current efforts of mangrove plantation to reduce coastal erosion will need to be carefully monitored to assess its impact on mudflat areas.

More significant at Kok kham and surrounding areas is the ongoing conversion of traditional salt-pans into aquaculture ponds, changes in the management regimes of salt pans and complete conversions of land-use related to industrialization threaten key wintering sites. In Kok kham the conversion of salt pans into non-agricultural land uses it restricted by a Royal Decree from 1938, which limits the area of salt pans to agricultural use. This however has not prevented significant conversion of salt-pans to, currently more lucrative; aquaculture ponds. Land outside this specific area also remains vulnerable to habitat degradation and change as well as the impacts and pollution from poorly regulated industrial and agricultural production.

During GEF-5, the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) and Zoological Park Organization (ZPO) with support from UNDP have developed the project **"Conserving Habitats for Globally Important Flora and Fauna in Production Landscapes"** under the GEF-5 focal area on biodiversity. The aim of the project is ***mainstream the conservation of globally important and endangered biodiversity into the management of production landscapes through improved management of critical habitats***. At the national level, it will develop a legislative, regulatory and enforcement framework to guide and manage the conservation of endangered species and its critical habitat.

These approaches will be piloted for three species namely the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *(Eurynorhynchus pygmeus)*, Eastern Sarus Crane *(Grus antigone sharpii)*, and Water Lily *(Crinum thaianum)* in 3 distinct geographical locations. Within each location the project will also build the capacity of local authorities, communities, private sector groups, and NGOs to develop environmentally friendly goods and services, which can provide a sound economic basis for ongoing critical habitat management and economic development.

Some key elements of the project will include: 1) designation of Environmental Protection areas to protect critical habitats 2) development of Provincial Level environmental management plans which include specific conservation and recovery plans for the critical habitat and relevant endangered species 3) developing long-term sustainable financing strategies to enhance the economic basis for and feasibility of ongoing environmental conservation for examples; the production of environmentally friendly goods and services, incentive based approaches to habitat conservation and 4) providing support to local stakeholders to improve their capacity to implement ecosystem friendly approaches through identification of priority options for changes in land use management practices, development of training modules for extension workers on identified areas, and development and provision of training to key local stakeholders.

The project is designed to strengthen and complement ongoing efforts in Thailand to conserve globally significant ecosystems and biodiversity with production landscapes. The project will support actions to strengthen capacities of key institutions at the national and local levels to assess and monitor impacts of development on ES Critical Habitats, including application of EIA procedures, strategic environmental assessment, and ensuring integration of biodiversity-compatible practices in sectoral plans and strategies. These approaches will not only benefit directly to endangered species and critical habitats but improve the quality of the wider environment within Thailand helping to reduce negative impacts of development and strengthening planning mechanisms.

Wanlop Preechamart (ONEP, Bangkok)

"SBS IN ART"

Elena Lappo

In the last Newsletter (No.11) we started a new feature – "Spoon-billed Sandpiper in ART", and the first interview was with Jens Gregersen - the Artist from Denmark

This time Elena Lappo interviews **Evgeny Koblik**, Russian animal artist, scientist, zoologist and geographer, traveller and scientific editor of a popular TV show about wildlife. Working in the Zoological Museum of MSU, he has published more than 1,000 color and black and white drawings, illustrated about 35 books (including foreign editions). He also created the logo of our SBS Task Force (!), and many other pictures for T-Shirts and other souvenirs, produced by SBS Task Force Team for fundraising. The first time he visited the High Arctic was in 1984 (Polar Urals, Bolshezemelskaya Tundra, Taimyr, Chukotka, Wrangel isl.). He visited Chukotka again in the 2000s to take part in filming documentaries on the islands and coasts of the Bering Sea.

Evgeny Koblik in tundra-like landscape in the Argentinian expedition

- *E.L: Evgeny, when did you start drawing birds and other animals, do you remember your first experience?*

Flying SBS in breeding plumage

- E.K.: The first bird I painted was an owl, struggling with a snake which I did probably, when I was three or four years old. I might have done even earlier, but I am not sure. The most difficult was to paint the owl's wings (as I had no idea of their actual shape; so it turned out something semicircular, like ladybird wing. I could not do a beak as well. Of course, to the middle of the owl's 'face' which was painted en face I put a beak from a side. Since then I painted probably about 700-800 species of birds, and many of them more than once, as it was with Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

SBS with brood

- *E.L: Where did you see your first Spoon-billed sandpiper – or first heard about it, or maybe read, or seen...?*

- *E.K:* I knew about this remarkable sandpiper - a nesting endemic of Russia from my school days. I have read about it and saw pictures. But one day I was lucky enough to see it in the wild. The first time I saw it briefly it was in 2006 in the lower reaches of the river in the south Nykchekveem, Chukotka. Much better I was able to see it two years later in the summer of 2008 at Russkaya Koshka spit northeast off Anadyr. That season we've been making studies with my colleague - a wonderful Danish ornithologist and animal artist Jens Gregersen (see interview with Jens in Newsletter No 11). We were mapping the territories of displaying males, looking for nesting sites, and even managed to find a nest with a clutch. In December 2011 I participated in an expedition to identify wintering SBS along the coasts of South Vietnam led by Vladimir Morozov. We were lucky - at the Mekong Delta we found a group of about 8 birds.

SBS and Nordmann's Greenshank wintering in East Asia

- *E.L.: How, where and when did you draw your first Spoon-billed Sandpiper?*

- *E.K.:* My first black-and-white drawings of the SBS were made in the mid 1990s. Since then I have painted about a dozen more SBS in various plumages, sometimes in the form of humorous sketches, or for graphics and color illustrations at the books, and for graphics on T-shirts, logos, emblems as well. Unfortunately, unlike Jens Gregersen, I rarely have enough time for sketching birds directly in the field. So I do my drawings already in Moscow - at home or at work - in the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University. For this postponed job I use my photos and recollections, impressions from meeting the birds in the wild. My colleagues and friends purposefully engaged in the study and rescuing campaign for SBS - Paul Tomkovich, Evgeny Syroechkovsky, Elena Lappo periodically ask me to draw SBS for regular projects, and I'm always happy to respond.

Logo for SBS TF

- *E.L.: What is the brightest "SBS story" you ever had?*

- E.K.: Well, obviously as many birdwatcher would be, I was highly impressed by my first encounter of SBS in the wild and was able to see it close. And I was as lucky as to meet first a displaying male in the breeding plumage! But maybe even brighter impression I had from the first time we found a nest with a clutch. It was absolutely outstanding as we were quite ready to give up after many hours searching for it when it seemed the birds just fooled the scientists. And the true euphoria it was when in Vietnam after four weeks of search, we were able to see the first wintering SBS among Red-necked Stints. *(Ed. – these two species are relatively close to each other and similar looking except the bill and they are often together on migration – so, to distinguish the SBS among RNS you need to check hundreds and hundreds small waders through the scope)*

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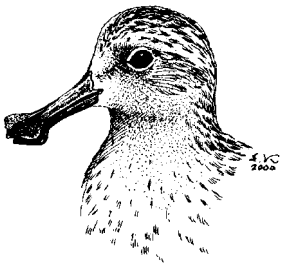
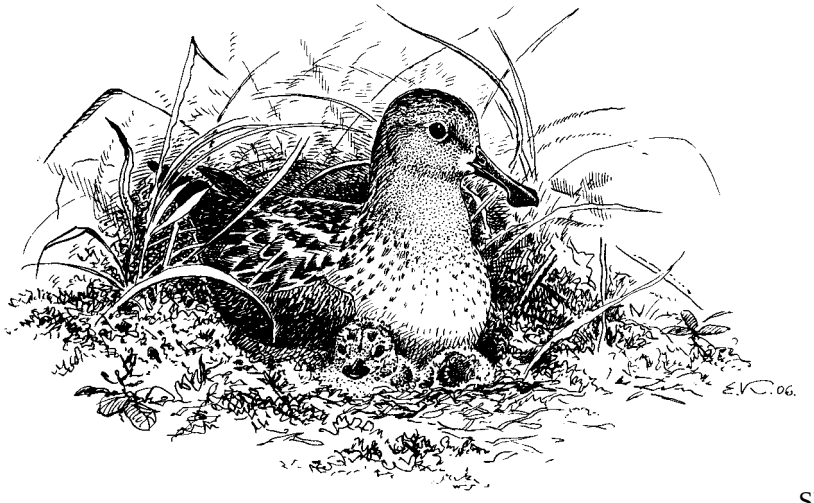
SBS in winter - young and adult birds (on the ground and in flight)

- *E.L.: Why do you think we "need" the SBS at all - for people and the planet?*

- E.K.: I think when we loose any species of living creatures on the planet - this is an irreplaceable loss. - Just because no human can re-create what has been given by nature. Every loss seems to be seriously affecting the sustainability of ecosystems and life at whole on our planet - and who knows when the line of no return will be crossed and what would be the last drop to start up a catastrophe? Also I just feel sorry when I think that this pretty and unusual bird - one of the jewels of Russia - might be lost forever.



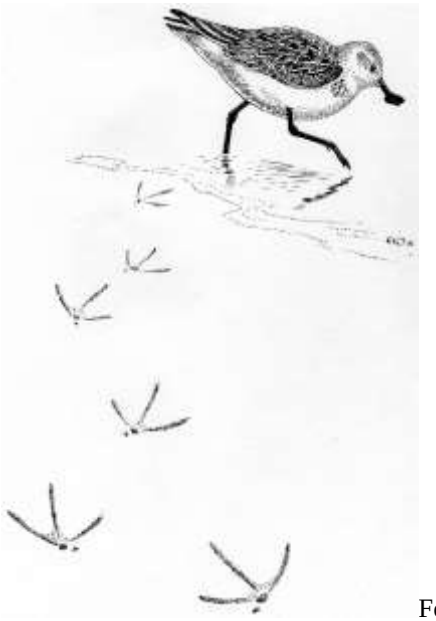
Portrait of SBS



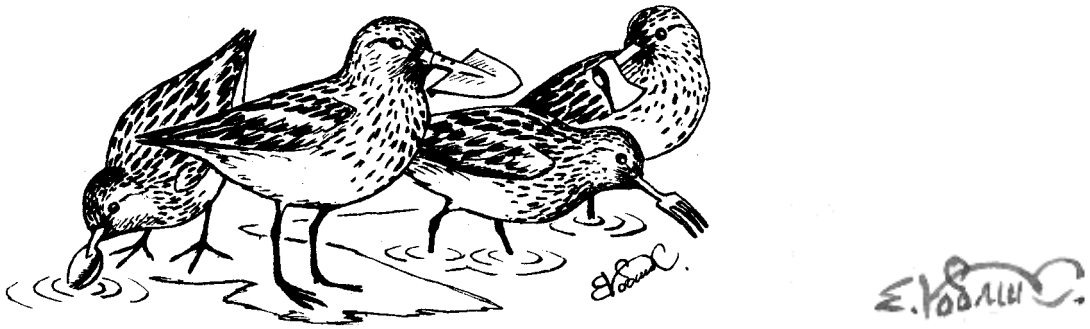
SBS on the nest

- *E.L.: What contribution can artists make to save SBS?*

- *E.K.:* As the saying goes "it is better to see once than hear a hundred times"! I think it is necessary for people to have an idea about the bird not only from the lines of the text, but also from seeing its image. So it might be much more effective to reach the hearts of everyone and create a sense of belonging.



Footprints of the SBS



Evolution of the SBS bill: shovelbill, forkbill and other strange birds (caricature)

12)News in brief

Spoon-billed sandpiper is No 11 of globally most threatened birds

The EDGE Project an initiative of the Zoological Society of London identified the top 100 threatened birds in the world. The Spoon-billed sandpiper is ranking at No. 11 http://www.edgeofexistence.org/birds/species_info.php?id=2043

CEPF grant for HKBWS in South China to reduce hunting pressure

China: Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has been granted USD 100K by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) for a project to address illegal hunting of shorebirds in Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces in southern China, which include non-breeding sites for SBS such as Behei, Leizhou and Shantou. The objectives are: (1) to build the capacity of local civil society organisations and volunteers to monitor illegal hunting and participate in education and awareness activities; (2) to conduct an environmental education programme in local schools and awareness activities targeted at local communities and government agencies on the importance of intertidal wetlands for migratory birds and the need to tackle illegal hunting; and (3) to monitor illegal trapping in coastal wetlands and pass on information to the local authorities.

A one-day national workshop on illegal bird hunting is scheduled to be held in November 2014, organised by BirdLife in association with China Ornithological Society (with whom BirdLife has an MOU for work in China) and the State Forestry Administration. The aim is to discuss a strategy to address hunting, including how civil society organisations can support the work of the relevant government agencies.

First ever SBS in Koh Kaip NR, Cambodia

A ten day expedition was organized, beginning Jan 24th from Koh Kong city, Cambodia. The objective was to locate suitable wader habitat with the focus on finding/observing spoon-billed sandpiper, a bird never recorded in Cambodia. A team was assembled including a boatman, a cook, a local guide familiar with the region's coastal waters, a photographer and a naturalist. Our guide/trip logistician was Paul Everingham. He provided the trip with 2 man kayaks that were essential for the work, allowing us close access to the mudflats, as well as acting as a blind. We spent 8 nights on the boat, mooring in sheltered waters giving access to habitats of interest. In the mornings, we would motor to chosen areas and launch the kayaks. The western shore of Koh Kapik is dominated by mangrove forest fronted by mudflats. There are 2 areas of flats, separated by a small headland. The northern flat is the longest, estimated at 6km. At high tide there is a line of higher mud that remained dry and holding all roosting birds. The length of exposed area is estimated at 700 meters. As tide drops the area extends and the birds spread into the newly available feeding areas. Very few waders were noted away from the middle third of this beach

South of the headland is a smaller beach/mudflat (1.3km) that becomes available with falling tides. Small numbers of waders were observed along this stretch. Only 3 species were recorded here.

The site presents challenges to access. The depth of soft mud made it difficult to climb onto the flat, sinking well beyond knee level when exiting the kayak. One can work up to higher, drier back beach area and observe from there, but it requires an arduous climb through the mud.

By using flat bottom, wide beam kayaks, we found that we could approach the wader flocks closer than on foot. All photography was done from the water's edge. Mornings generally had easterly or northerly breezes which swung around mid-day and came off the water from the west. This created a chop that made observation difficult and became a hazard to the camera equipment. For this reason, afternoons were used to transit between areas and to search for other suitable wader areas.

3 sites were visited to the northeast and southeast of Koh Kapik in an attempt to find other roosting/feeding areas for waders. None were found and virtually no flocks of waders were noted flying around the area. The inner areas of the bay had over 100 large sand mining vessels either moving or moored. Offshore larger ships were loaded for the export trade. The degree of disturbance seems obvious in water turbidity. We chose to limit our explorations of the estuaries of other rivers entering the bay based on the lack of any positive findings and the scope of the industrial activity.

On Jan 24 2014 around mid-day PN noted a small wader exhibiting a hyperactive feeding behaviour in a shallow pool left behind by falling tide. Some areas of the beach are exposed in irregular heights allowing shallow water to remain behind. Much of the beach is a smooth run of mud down to the water's edge. After flushing twice, good looks were obtained, allowing a positive identification of Calidris pygmeus, Spoon-billed sandpiper. The photographer was alerted to its presence and documentary images were obtained. This represents the first known record of this species for Cambodia. Repeated attempts to relocate the bird or discover others were fruitless. During our survey 19 species of waders were present and an attempt at counting gross numbers yielded 1554 birds. 5 species of tern were present at the roost as well.

Howie Nielson

Time off as a monk for some months

This exactly has done Ren Nou Soe, our Task Force Member from Sittwe, Rakhine Myanmar. In spring he has become a monk for several months

Ren Nou Soe (centre) with family and friends at the monk ceremony in Sittwe, April 2014

Spoon-Billed sandpiper Conservation Video from Bangladesh

A new conservation video from our TF members in Bangladesh
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJSZs69fILI

Latest: Chukotka 2014 breeding birds seen at Rudong!

The first re-sighting of a marked bird from this breeding season has been observed in the Rudong mudflats. On 15 August a bird with a green flag and 09 engraved has been observed in Yangkou, Rudong among three birds in total. On the same day another green flagged bird without engraved figure in Jianggang among eight Spooners.

'09' just arrived in Yangkou, Rudong on 15 August 2014 Photos Zou Weiming

The Spoon-billed Sandpipers were marked on their breeding grounds in vicinity of the Meinypilgyno Village, Chukotka, Russia (62deg 32min N, 177deg 03min E). The bird with plain (not engraved) flag on right tibia cannot be identified individually. We only know that this position of a flag indicates that the bird has been originally marked as a chick, most likely also from Meinypilgyno before 2012.

The bird with lime green engraved leg flag '09' on its left tibia was marked as female on her nest on 15 June 2014 when her eggs were picked up for the 'Head Starting' project. Later this female together with her male produced a replacement clutch of eggs (3 chicks hatched on 18 and 19 July). We did not observe this female after 19 July. Her standard metal band number is MOSKVA KS18828.

Tong Menxiu, Zhang Lin, Pavel Tomkovich

Latest News from Kamchatka

By 24th of August a Birds Russia Expedition on the West Coast of Kamchatka near Sobolevo trapped four young Spoon-billed Sandpiper among many other waders so far with in mist nets. Three of them got Kamchatka code flags (black and yellow) and were released. On 24 August a head-started bird from the first early August release by Roland and his team with the code "M9 + red ring" was caught in the mist net. The bird was in good shape (weight: 30 gram, within the range 25-33 gram of weight of other wild young SBS caught same days). According to Nikolay "M9" had left Meinypilgyno before August 8 so it take it at least around 17 days to cover the distance of about 1300 km straight line from Meinypilgyno to Sobolevo. "M9" was measured and released by Yuri and seen later behaving all right in the flock with red-necked stints. Photos have been taken and will be available when the team will get access to the internet. There are big groups of both young RNS and Dunlins going from this area direction to North Sakhalin Island or south sea of Okhotsk. It looks like the Spoon-billed Sandpiper are joining those birds but more observations are needed to clarify this. So far over 1800 waders were ringed and color flagged with the Kamchatka code. One Red Knot marked few weeks ago has already seen in Rudong. Hopefully, also marked SBS will be recorded from Rudong this autumn.

As the hunting season opened mid August lots of shooting of waders is going on around this place, which is rather well populated compared to Kamchatka scale. Sobolevo is the village supporting trans-Kamchatka gas pipeline. Gas fields are increasingly developing around West Kamchatka lagoons. Hunters so far are much more focused on big waders, which are so far numerous around the lagoon (Whimbrels and Godwits) but it

can't be excluded that they occasionally switch to small wader flocks shooting while big waders will depart the area. Our small team doesn't have the time and capacity to focus on wider hunting surveys so only some occasional observations of hunters are available.

The expedition is funded by a company based in Hong Kong and the RSPB. It will continue and there is hope to catch more Spoon-billed sandpiper. A more comprehensive report is planned for the next issue

Yuri Gerrassimov and Evgeny Syroechkovskiy (Birds Russia)

Сохраним кулика-лопатня

Мыныгйипгъэн вылпатъек

ヘラシギを守ろう

넓적부리도요를 구하자

拯救勺嘴鷸

Hãy bảo vệ loài Rẽ mỏ thìa

รักษ์นกชายเลนปากช้อน

ရေ ညောင့်နှုတ်ဝိုင်းငှက်များ တည်တံ့ဖို့ တို့များဝိုင်းဝန်းထိန်းသိမ်းစို့

Selamatkan Kedidi Paruh Sudu

চামুচ-ঠুঁটো বাটান বাঁচান

கரண்டி மூக்கு உள்ளானை

காப்பாற்றுவோம்

Rettet den Löffelstrandläufer

Save the Spoon-billed Sandpiper