



**SECRETARIAT OF THE EAST ASIAN–AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY PARTNERSHIP**

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# **2024 Small Grant Fund for Working Groups and Task Forces Report**

## **Flights of the Black-faced Spoonbill: Connecting Habitats, Communities, and Commitments - International Conference for the Black-faced Spoonbill's Future**

**Project Duration: Sep 2024 – Apr 2025**

**Country: Hong Kong S.A.R, China**

*Submission Date: 31 March 2025*

## GRANTEE OVERVIEW

Describe your organisation by filling out the table below.

<b>Grantee Details</b>	Yat-tung Yu Director <a href="mailto:yyattung@hkbws.org.hk">yyattung@hkbws.org.hk</a> / <a href="mailto:bfspoonbill@hkbws.org.hk">bfspoonbill@hkbws.org.hk</a>
<b>Organisation</b>	The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Type of organisation: (NGO)
<b>Country</b>	Hong Kong SAR, China
<b>List any contributions that your organisation or yourself might have been involved for the protection of the migratory waterbirds and their habitats across the East-Asian Australasian Flyway below.</b>	

*Brief summary of your contributions. If applicable, please include the year, Flyway Network Sites, type of activities, and other relevant information.*

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) has significantly contributed to the conservation of migratory waterbirds along the East-Asian Australasian Flyway. HKBWS was actively involved in the management of a Flyway Network Site – Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site (also a flyway sister site with Incheon), where a regular and comprehensive waterbird monitoring programme was commenced and executed by the HKBWS in the early 1980s. Wintering waterbird population trends in Deep Bay from 1998 to 2017 were also analysed to evaluate threats and inform conservation. HKBWS has also advocated the China Coastal Waterbird Census, a monthly survey of waterbird populations and critical habitats.

HKBWS also manages and restores wetland habitats in Hong Kong, supporting diverse waterbird populations since 2012. Black-faced Spoonbill and Shorebird Tracking studies conducted by the HKBWS also demonstrate waterbird migration connectivity in the East Asia region. The project tracks waterbirds' migratory routes in Hong Kong to inform conservation strategies both locally and regionally.

The annual International Black-faced Spoonbill Census, coordinated by HKBWS since 2003, monitors wintering population trends and distribution across the flyway. This has been a pivotal conservation activity for this species, and over 200 surveyors have participated in this census in recent years, demonstrating its effectiveness in promoting species conservation.

Mr. Yat-tung Yu, Director of HKBWS and Coordinator of the EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group, has made significant contributions through research and conservation. Since 1998, he has studied the Black-faced Spoonbill's habitat, feeding, and population trends, providing valuable insights into its ecology and migratory threats. He is also one of the editors of the CMS International Single Species Action Plan for the conservation of Black-faced Spoonbill published in 2010.

The EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group, established in 2013, coordinates conservation using the International Single Action Plan (2010). It includes representatives from all principal range states and focuses on preserving important breeding, staging, and wintering habitats. The group encourages information exchange, shared database, and wetland management for spoonbill and other waterbirds. Mr. Yu oversees these activities and ensures stakeholder collaboration.

## 1.1 PROJECT SUMMARY

<b>Project Title</b>	Flights of the Black-faced Spoonbill: Connecting Habitats, Communities and Commitments - International Conference for the Black-faced Spoonbill's Future
<b>Location</b>	Hong Kong S.A.R, China
<b>Project Budget</b>	USD 5,000
<b>Co-funding</b>	The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society – USD 5,000 WWF-HK – USD 22,428 Mangrove Conservation Foundation – USD 500
<b>EAAFP Working Group or Task Force</b>	Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group
<b>Relevant EAAFP Strategic Plan</b>	KRA 1.1, KRA 1.7, KRA 2.1, KRA 3.2, KRA 3.3, KRA 4.3, KRA 5.2.2, KRA 5.2.3., KRA 5.3

### Project Overview and Outcomes

*Please provide a brief summary of your project. In the summary, please include its objective and its location (Name of Place, City and Country), and explain the significance and relations of the species and its location (in link with [EAAF Key Species](#) and [Flyway Network Site](#)) for your project. Please also discuss how this project contributes to the implementation of the [EAAFP Strategic Plan 2019-2028](#).*

This project – International Conference for the Black-faced Spoonbill’s Future was organised with objectives including raising awareness and promoting cooperation for the conservation of the Black-faced Spoonbill among key stakeholders, strengthening networks and encouraging research to address knowledge gaps, evaluating of the implementation of international conservation plans, and encouraging stakeholders to participate CEPA activities.

All these works focused on the Black-faced Spoonbill, an EAAF key species listed as globally endangered by the IUCN, with a small population of only 7,000 individuals. Some important sites for this species have been designated as Flyway Network Sites, such as the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site. Therefore, the BFS conservation activities are highly relevant to the management of the Flyway Network Sites. Organising this inaugural EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group International Conference was a significant step forward in coordinating conservation efforts for this iconic species across the East Asia region.

During the meeting, we engaged in further discussions and analyses of significant sites for the Black-faced Spoonbill. These sites serve as the foundation for developing a comprehensive network of international importance for this species. Additionally, meeting participants actively contributed to enhancing communication, education, and public awareness regarding the Black-faced Spoonbill and its habitats. Research on information gaps and threat assessments has been proposed as a priority, as participants are eager to enhance their knowledge and facilitate the exchange of information on the Black-faced Spoonbill. Site managers shared their experiences and demonstrated best practices in wetland management. Furthermore, a new action plan with a wide-ranging approach to enhance the conservation status of the Black-faced Spoonbill has been formulated and is currently in the drafting phase. These outcomes collectively demonstrate the significant contributions made by the meeting to the implementation of the EAAFP Strategic Plan 2019-2028.

## 1.2 PROJECT DETAILS

### **Detailed Project Implementation Process and Methodologies**

*Describe the process of your project, including timeline, methodologies, field work, interview, conference, etc. Please include analysis of your process, if applicable. (Any visual aids, including maps, graphs, tables, flowcharts, photos, etc. are strongly preferred)*

The preparation work for the meeting started in September 2024, including securing co-funding, invitations of 38 Black-faced Spoonbill experts, and finalisation of meeting schedules and logistic arrangements.

During the conference, attendees shared the latest information about their sites in regard of the Black-faced Spoonbills, reviewed and revised the existing action plan for addressing immediate concerns and identifying currents and knowledge gaps, that ensures the revised action will align with the latest conservation needs and recommend research topics that could help provide answers. Fieldwork at Mai Po Nature Reserve and Long Valley Nature Park showed Black-faced Spoonbill's habitats in Hong Kong and the wetland management practices in both places.

On the last day, meeting participants had several group discussions in four aspects including CEPA, Site Management, Policy and Law Enforcement, and Research more detailed discussion and information sharing were made by all participants which is used for formulating the framework of the revised international single species action plan.

The concluding session of the meeting was dedicated to discussing the membership of the EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group. The meeting concluded successfully, with a total of 25 members being recruited. Notably, 11 of these members have also become core group members of the BFS WG, necessitating an increased time commitment from the core group to the BFS WG.

For more details, please refer to the programme itineraries.

### **Problems Encountered/Adjustments/Challenges**

*If there were some changes made, please indicate them and explain (ex. unexpected circumstances, sudden cancellation, etc.)*

During the preparatory phase, we endeavoured to disseminate invitations through the EAAFP's designated contact points to the representatives of Vietnam and the Philippines. Both countries are home to significant wintering grounds for the Black-faced Spoonbill. However, this communication channel proved ineffective, resulting in the delayed delivery of our messages and invitations. Consequently, their country representatives were unable to attend the meeting. One representative expressed that the invitation should be sent three months prior to the event, as country representatives require time to process and submit their applications from their respective offices.

During the meeting, all presentations, discussions, and information exchanges were conducted smoothly and efficiently. In fact, meeting participants could now gain valuable insights from their practical experience with this species and its habitats. Consequently, all participants could share a wealth of information, knowledge, and experience. However, due to funding constraints, the meeting could not be extended beyond its original duration, which would have allowed for more comprehensive discussions. Several topics, such as establishing additional flyway sister sites and compiling a comprehensive list of significant sites for the Black-faced Spoonbill, could not be adequately addressed within the allocated time frame.

### 1.3 PROJECT RESULTS

1. A notable outcome of the meeting was the formulation of a revised framework for the Single Species Action Plan for the Black-faced Spoonbill, which is now scheduled for publication in 2026. In addition to the existing network of the European Association for the Conservation of Birds and the Environment (EAAFP), the drafting of this new action plan received support from the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC), which also provides funding for the Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group (BFS WG) to develop this new action plan. Furthermore, during the meeting, all experts concurred that the introduction of new renewable energy projects, such as onshore and offshore wind farms, solar energy infrastructure in wetland habitats, and avian diseases, poses significant threats to the Black-faced Spoonbills and their habitats.

2. The EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group has been reformed and revitalised. The former membership of the EAAFP BFS WG consisted of six members since its inception, but the number had decreased due to retirements and death. This inaugural international meeting of the EAAFP BFS WG presented an opportune moment to reform and recruit new members for the WG. Numerous meeting participants expressed a keen interest in joining the WG, as they all shared a strong desire to participate in international collaboration to safeguard the Black-faced Spoonbill. A total of 25 new members joined the EAAFP BFS WG, including the chair, coordinator, and two existing members, bringing the total membership to 29 after the meeting. Furthermore, a core group within the WG was also established, as the WG requires dedicated individuals to plan, promote, and organise activities for the group.

### 1.4 COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION, AND AWARENESS (CEPA)

*Please provide details on any CEPA-related activities associated with your project.*

During the meeting of the EAAFP BFS WG, the activities of CEPA were extensively discussed. Meeting participants unanimously agreed that the conservation of the Black-faced Spoonbill necessitates public engagement. Consequently, all parties concurred on the establishment of an International Black-faced Spoonbill Day on the third Saturday of March annually. This initiative aims to enhance Black-faced Spoonbill conservation efforts by emphasising the issue to a broader audience, including both the public and transboundary stakeholders. Furthermore, the celebration of the Black-faced Spoonbill's migration from the south to the north on that day is envisioned as an international collaboration program employing a flyway approach.

### 1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

*Please provide suggested actions or improvements based on your findings. Sustainability focuses on how the project's outcomes or benefits can continue over time or be maintained.*

*Please also include how the outcomes of your project might be applied in future research or its implications for future research.*

By establishing a dedicated Black-faced Spoonbill Day, we can substantially enhance public awareness and foster community engagement, which is paramount for the ongoing protection and conservation of this endangered species. This initiative will not only educate the public about the significance of this unique bird and its habitat but also encourage fundraising efforts that are essential for sustaining research and conservation initiatives.

Furthermore, regular discussions and revisions within a dedicated working group are indispensable for the long-term sustainability of Black-faced Spoonbill conservation efforts. These collaborative meetings will facilitate the exchange of insights, enable the assessment of progress, and facilitate the adaptation of strategies as required. This meeting could not gather representatives from all the range countries of this species, such as Vietnam, Russia, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The EAAFP BFS WG still aims to organise future meetings to engage these countries in the BFS conservation activities. By cultivating a culture of continuous improvement and open dialogue, we can ensure that our advocacy remains effective and responsive to the evolving environmental landscape. Collaboratively, these efforts will contribute to the securing of a brighter future for the Black-faced Spoonbill, thereby ensuring its continued survival and prosperity for generations to come.

## 2. BUDGET REPORT

Please provide a table for the expenditure breakdown. See example below.

International travelling costs (Flight) for guests (8 pax) (HKD3501.64+3278.93+2973.43+2919.86+1344.24+3095.6+3095.6+2911=HKD23,120.3=USD2,964.14)	2,964.14 USD
Other Local transportation and per diem (26 pax)(Taxi, Cross border Bus, High Speed Rail etc.) (HKD10,600+95.1+258.7+607.6+84+689.9+856.4=HKD13,191.7=USD1,691.24)	1,691.24USD
Shutter Bus on 26 Feb for 18 pax (HKD1,600=USD206)	205.13 USD
<b>Total</b>	<b>HKD37,912= USD4,860.51 (Exchange rate: 7.8HKD:1 USD)</b>

## ANNEXES

1. Financial Report
2. List of participants
3. Detailed Programme Itineraries
4. Photo documentation