

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

NEWSLETTER

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**Waterbirds 2005 Conference held
in Tainan**

The 27th meeting of the International Waterbird Society, the Waterbirds 2005 Conference, was held from November 25 to 27, 2005, in Tainan, Taiwan, and attended by approximately 300 people, including researchers from Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand, South Korea, Hong Kong, the Republic of Colombia, India, Japan, Russia, France, Great Britain and other regions. Experts, scholars, NGO representatives and officials from Taiwan were also present. This was the first time that the conference had been held in Asia.

The main theme of the conference was Avian Disease and the Migration of Birds. Other topics included the transmission of avian flu between wild birds and poultry and the effect of avian flu on the bird ecology, waterfowl migration, the conservation of the Black-faced spoonbill, and bird conservation in Taiwan in general, as well as other issues.

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Co-chair of the conference, Dr. Robert Butler, senior research scientist with Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service and adjunct professor of Biological Sciences at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, said that ornithologists had recently observed a notable reduction in the number of shorebirds around the world. Academics were highly suspicious that the highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) might be the reason for this drop, he said. If a link were indeed established, this would have devastating consequences for wild birds and the natural environment.

Dr. Butler's statements highlighted the main concern of many at the conference that some uninformed individuals and politicians

were calling for a cull of wild birds and to drain wetlands to prevent the spread of H5N1 by wild birds. Ornithologists and bird experts from around the world called on people to look objectively at the facts about avian influenza and to thoroughly investigate the origins of any virus and the paths of its spread. Singling out wild birds as a scapegoat was irresponsible and irrational, they said, and would create an ecological disaster if action was taken to eradicate wild birds. During the conference, scientists from around the world agreed to establish a contact network and mechanisms for cooperation in order to understand the real reasons for the reduction in global shorebird populations and to put forward effective measures for nations to combat avian influenza and prevent the culling of innocent wild birds.

Furthermore, the conference also looked at the recent incident in which a consignment of mesia finches from Taiwan was blamed for introducing the avian flu virus H5N1 to Britain, resulting in Taiwan being labeled as an avian flu infection area. The virus was found in only some of the 53 finches that died in quarantine in south England. They were part of a consignment of 100 finches from Taiwan. After investigating the incident in more depth, Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine (BAPHIQ) stated that the mesia most likely died after being infected with H5N1

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from poultry during transit. They made a formal statement affirming that Taiwan is still an avian-flu-free zone.

Regarding efforts to conserve the rare and endangered black-faced spoonbill (*Platalea minor*), a total of five papers were given at the conference. South Korean researchers confirmed that a total of seven small off-shore islands were now known spoonbill breeding grounds. They said that they had found that spoonbills tend to return to their place of birth to breed. According to their research, the birds' breeding success rate was approximately 50%. The Wild Bird Society of Japan reported on satellite telemetry tracking research on 12 black-faced spoonbills. Researchers found that the fastest bird took only five days to fly 1,400 kilometers. They also discovered that the birds' migration route was relatively fixed, taking them from Okinawa via Kyushu to the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, researchers found that the migrating spoonbills rested temporarily at fixed wetland habitats.

Finally, several conference participants said that Taiwan was a highly suitable location for the development of eco-tourism activities. Executive secretary of the International Taiwan Birding Association (Canada), Jo Ann Mackenzie, established a website for birding in Taiwan (<http://www.birdingintaiwan.com>). The site introduces various bird-watching activities

on the island.



ICCAT Slashes Taiwan's Bigeye Quota

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), November 20, 2005, ruled that Taiwan's annual quota for bigeye tuna in 2006 will be slashed by about 70% as punishment for over-fishing by Taiwanese fishing ships on the high seas. The 2006 total allowable catch quota for Taiwan was reduced to 4,600 tons from 14,900 tons in 2005. In addition, Taiwan will be required to reduce its bigeye tuna fleet to just 15 vessels from almost 100.

The decision was made by the ICCAT at its 19th Regular Meeting of the Commission in Seville, Spain from November 14 to 20, 2005 and followed accusations by Japan in 2004 that Taiwanese fishing boats had been engaging in illegal over-fishing and fish laundering activities. Measures taken by the Taiwan government subsequently to regulate the industry, including revoking licenses, were deemed insufficient to effectively manage Taiwanese ships operating under flags of convenience and stamp out continued illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activity by Taiwan's fishing boats.

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Taiwan's 2006 bigeye tuna quota would have been 16,500 tons, but the ICCAT reduced the quota to just 4,600 tons: 3,300 tons for fleets targeting bigeye and 1,300 tons as by-catch for fleets targeting albacore tuna. In addition, the ICCAT also stipulated strict conditions to which Taiwan's vessels must adhere. It ordered Taiwan to strengthen management of fishing fleets and to cut the number of long-line tuna boats registered in Taiwan. A maximum of 15 vessels will be permitted to engage in bigeye tuna fishery. This is a significant reduction from the approximately 100 vessels that participated in this fishery in 2005. Taiwan's conduct will be subject to a review at the next general meeting of the ICCAT in November 2006.

In response, the Fisheries Administration (FA) of Taiwan said that it would cut a further 97 large-sized long-line vessels from its tuna fleet in 2006, in addition to the 63 boats already cut back in 2005, to reach the targeted total reduction of 160 vessels. This will more closely match vessels to quota. Boats that are forced to cease operations will be granted a subsidy under regulations for enforced fishery closure. Furthermore, to eradicate illegal activities by Taiwanese fishing boats, the FA will strengthen its management of tuna fishery with measures including sending observers out on all Atlantic bigeye tuna fishing operations, prohibiting the

transfer of catch to other boats at sea, and requiring operators to stop at designated ports for stringent, regular inspections; observers will be sent out on at least five percent of all long-line tuna vessels, which will not be permitted to transfer catch to another boat at sea unless one of the two vessels has an observer onboard; all fishing boats will be required to dock at specified ports for regular inspections and catch samples, accounting for between five and 10 percent of catch, will be taken at the port; all vessels will be prohibited from off-loading catch at ports that do not have an inspector from Taiwan.

In addition, fishing vessels of between 20 and 24 meters will be required to install vessel monitoring systems (VMS). Furthermore, to control and manage IUU fishery activities, the FA will make a definitive list of all foreign-flagged (flag-of-convenience) vessels that are owned or controlled by Taiwanese citizens. This is aimed at effectively severing all financial and other ties with the operators of boats suspected of IUU fishing activities and should prevent Taiwanese from operating these boats.

The FA called on members of the Taiwan fishing industry to realize that global fish resources belong to the world. Officials urged Taiwanese fishermen to follow international fishery laws and to cease all fishing activities

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not included in the scope of such regulations. They reminded the fishing community in Taiwan that it was suffering punishment by the ICCAT for the illegal actions of a handful of people that had tarnished Taiwan's international image and rights. The FA pressed Taiwan's fishing industry to act responsibly and to follow all conservation and management agreements passed by various regional fishery management organizations, as well as the relevant laws and regulations of Taiwan. Officials said that the only way for Taiwan to regain international respect and trust at the next general meeting of ICCAT, thus ensuring Taiwan's share in the international tuna industry, was for Taiwanese fishermen to change their way of thinking and to revolutionize the industry through self-restraint.



Jane Goodall Roots & Shoots Asia-Pacific Center Established

National Tsing Hua University established the first Jane Goodall Institute Roots & Shoots Center in Asia on November 25, 2005 at its Yilan Campus. The center is located within the historical Taiwanese residence, the Chen Family Jianhutang, in Yilan County. In the future, the center will focus its work on training

ecological guides throughout Taiwan and undertaking environmental research projects in cooperation with other Asia-Pacific nations.

Renowned primatologist and conservationist Dr. Jane Goodall was in Yilan to open the new center. In addition to highlighting the plight of chimpanzees in Africa and talking to local students, Dr. Goodall also planted several trees (*Litsea hypophaea* Hayata) outside the center alongside students and local officials to improve the environment in Yilan. It was her first visit to the county.

The deputy director of the preparatory office for National Tsing Hua University's Yilan Campus, Dr. C. H. Wang, said that he had personally approached Dr. Goodall about establishing a Roots & Shoots Center in Taiwan, while participating in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2002, as a non-governmental representative. After a long and thorough selection procedure, the JGI chose Taiwan's National Tsing Hua University over nine other prestigious universities in Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam to establish Asia's first Roots & Shoots Center at Yilan's Chen Family Jianhutang, a traditional center for culture, history and ecology.

The Asia-Pacific Roots & Shoots Center will undertake ecological diplomacy through

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cooperation with other Asia-Pacific nations using project and research funding from the United Nations, the World Bank, and other global organizations motivated by the Jane Goodall Institute, as well as training ecological guides in Taiwan's schools, communities and various local governments, said Wang.

Founded by British primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall, JGI is a global nonprofit organization that empowers people to make a difference for all living things. JGI is dedicated to creating healthy ecosystems, promoting sustainable livelihoods and nurturing new generations of committed, active citizens around the world. Its Roots & Shoots program inspires youth of all ages to make a difference by becoming involved in their communities. Each Roots & Shoots group plans and implements service-learning projects that promote care and concern for animals, the environment, and the human community.



Taiwan and Japan Strike Basel Pact on Hazardous Waste

Following 12 years of negotiations, Taiwan finally forged a bilateral agreement with Japan on December 1, 2005 on hazardous waste movement in the spirit of the Basel Convention. The inking of the agreement marks

the first time that Taiwan has entered a bilateral pact on environmental protection with another country based on an international treaty.

The landmark Basel Convention, which arose from worldwide concern about the movement and disposal of hazardous waste, in particular the major concern of waste being exported from industrial nations for cheap disposal in inadequately prepared sites in developing countries, came into being after the United Nations invited 116 countries to participate in the development of a framework for controlling the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. On March 22, 1989, these nations were made original signatories to the Basel Convention.

As of August 2005, 166 countries, including the European Union, were party to the convention. Nations that have ratified the Basel Convention are allowed to ship hazardous waste to, from or through only other parties to the convention. Due to its unique political status, Taiwan is not a signatory to the convention. However, the convention allows parties to the convention to develop separate bilateral agreements with non-party trading partners as long as the agreement reflects the environmentally sound management of waste. Taiwan wants to use this model to develop bilateral agreements with other nations, according to officials at the Environmental

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Protection Administration.

EPA officials said that, since 1994, Taiwan has been negotiating Basel convention-based pacts with several countries. Numerous formal and informal talks between Taiwan and Japan were conducted, culminating in the signing of the Association of East Asian Relations and the Interchange Association Japan's Agreement on the Control of the Transboundary Movement and Disposal of Hazardous Waste. The signing ceremony was the final flourish to the 30th Taiwan-Japan Economic and Trade Conference that was held in Tokyo from November 30 to December 1, 2005. Yang Ching-hsi, deputy director-general of the Department of Waste Management under the EPA signed the bilateral agreement on behalf of the Taiwan government in a ceremony that was also attended by the head of the Fifth Section of the Department of Waste Management, Huang Cheng-chung.



Crow Butterfly Marking in Taiwan

A project to uncover the mystery of crow butterfly migration in Taiwan continued in December 2005 with the marking of over 2,000 butterflies at Maolin Township, Kaohsiung County in southern Taiwan.

Over two days, more than 80 volunteers captured crow butterflies at the Purple Butterfly Valley. The butterflies were marked with codes on their wings and then released back into the wild. The codes will be used to track their migratory routes. The activity, entitled 'Finding the Crow's Way Home', was sponsored jointly by Chung Hwa Telecom, the Taipei Nature and Ecology Education Foundation and the Butterfly Conservation Society of Taiwan.

Taiwan is the northern limit of tropical butterfly habitat and Maolin's Purple Butterfly Valley is used by crow butterflies to over winter. It is the only winter nesting ground on a par with butterfly valleys in Mexico and California in the United States, which provide winter shelter for monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) from the border between the US and Canada. Although butterfly valleys are not uncommon throughout Taiwan and the rest of the world, over-wintering butterfly valleys like the Purple Butterfly Valley at Maolin and those in Mexico and California, where large congregations of certain species amass to spend the winter, are extremely rare.

In contrast with over-wintering habitats in Mexico and the US, which are populated by only one species of monarch butterfly, Taiwan's Purple Butterfly Valley provides temporary shelter to at least four species of

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butterfly belonging to the genus of *Euploea*, under the family Danaidae. In some places, as many as 12 species of butterfly aggregate there, making it a highly diverse butterfly valley.

When the winter monsoon comes down from the northeast, tens of thousands of adults congregate on clumps of trees throughout southern valleys like Maolin. More than 90% of these congregations are made up of four principal crow butterflies: *Euploea mulciber barsine*, *Euploea eunice hobsoni*, *Euploea tulliolus koxinga*, and *Euploea sylvester swinhoei*. In addition, six species of tiger butterfly (the Ceylon blue glassy tiger (*Ideopsis similis*), the Dark blue tiger (*Tirumala septentrionis*), the Blue tiger (*Tirumala limniace*), *Parantica aglea maghaba*, *Parantica sita nipponica*, and the Chocolate tiger (*Parantica melaneus swinhoei*)) can also be seen intermittently. Sometimes, even the vastly different Dark-veined tiger (*Danaus genutia*) can be seen mingled amongst the vegetation here.

To implement the crow butterfly marking project, which began in 2000, volunteers gave up their free time to go to Maolin to catch the over-wintering butterflies and mark them. So far, marked individuals have been recaptured in Miaoli, Changhua and Yunlin counties. Their migration route is estimated to stretch over 150

kilometers. The project also provides information about the life span of each species. One individual was recaptured in Miaoli County six months after being marked.



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