INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

Vol. 19 No. 2

Jun. 2011

Published by Society for Wildlife and Nature

2011 International Symposium on Black-faced Spoonbill and Coastal Wetlands Conservation

Between April 7th and 9th, Taijiang National Park Headquarters and the Endemic Species Research Institute jointly hosted the 2011 International Symposium on Black-faced Spoonbill and Coastal Wetlands Conservation. Conservation NGOs from countries and regions concerned with conservation of Black-faced Spoonbill, including Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Macao, Vietnam and Taiwan, were invited to attend. More than 250 participants joined the event. During the symposium, 24 conservation reports were presented regarding the possible causes of the population reduction this winter, while various conservation initiatives and directions for future international cooperation were also discussed.

Black-faced spoonbill is one of the globally endangered species. More than half of the worldwide black-faced spoonbill population overwinter in the Tsengwen river estuary. Yet around Chinese New Year in 2011, the population showed a marked decline. Wildlife Conservation Society of Tainan expressed hope that the relevant authorities may proactively seek out the real causes of the reduction.

Taijiang National Park Headquarters speculated potential causes for such reduction including: The unusually low temperature between late last year and early this year combined with the stronger than usual northeast monsoon might have forced the Black-faced Spoonbills to seek out shelters along seawalls of aquaculture ponds. While these are better wintering options against the wind, they are much more difficult for population surveys. Faced with this great habitat

spread, the existing survey crew is insufficient to fully cover the enlarged area. In addition to this, local fishermen changed operation methods of their aquaculture ponds due to shifting economic demands. This lead to a great decrease in the foraging area for Black- faced Spoonbills.

Due to the maturing aquaculture techniques for high economic value fish species, much of the aquaculture ponds in southwestern costal Taiwan had changed their operations to adopt the new method for higher economic output. The original aquaculture ponds friendly to black-faced spoonbill foraging disappeared in the process, creating food shortage for the birds.

Scholars from several countries proposed the concept of environmental subsidy to resolve this issue. It had been suggested that the agricultural governance agencies may provide a seasonal aquaculture suspension subsidy to reduce deep water aquaculture area during the fall and winter. To ensure the preservation of foraging areas for Black-faced Spoonbills and other migratory birds, owners of mixed-species aquaculture ponds that provide food for the Black-faced Spoonbills should also be subsidized.

Taijiang National Park Headquarters proposed to cooperate with Tainan University to utilize the western part of the Chiku campus, and proceed with the Ecological Aquaculture Program for Traditional Aquaculture Fisheries Cultural Industry Development Strategy and Ensuring Food Source of Black-faced Spoonbills. The program calls for more than 10

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hectares of experimental aquaculture ponds to act as foraging areas for Black-faced Spoonbills during this fall and winter, in the hope of gradually relieving the foraging crisis for Black-faced Spoonbills.

In addition, concerning the diffusion of Black-faced Spoonbill outwards, Taijiang National Park Headquarters will initiate a radio-tracking program for Black-faced Spoonbills in 2012 in order to discover more roosting locations and get a better grasp on the overwintering population size of the Black-faced Spoonbills.

At the same time, concerning the recently formed new habitats with stable Black-faced Spoonbill populations, Taijiang National Park Headquarters will also seek out aquaculture fisheries within 3 to 6 kilometers of such places that are suitable for Black-faced Spoonbill roosting and document the sizes and locations into a survey database. A thorough overview of local water source and hydrological system will be performed to evaluate the potential of creating new foraging habitats for Black-faced Spoonbills.

This international symposium is also in line with the mission of United Nations Convention on Migratory Species, which advocates for international cooperation in protecting globally important migratory species, such as Black-faced Spoonbills.

At the closing ceremony, delegates from attending countries jointly signed the "Black-faced Spoonbill and Wetland Conservation Declaration". It was agreed to strengthen ties between regions through visits, and to implement cooperation programs on Black-faced Spoonbill and Wetland. Involved regions will also take turns to hold symposiums and workshops by providing funding, organization and administrative support in the future.

Tainan City mayor Lai, Ching-Te also joined the signing of the conservation declaration and stated that Tainan City government will protect the wetlands and work towards the goal of zero wetland loss.

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Marine National Park Headquarters work to save the Migratory birds in Dongsha Atolls

To enhance the rescue and conservation of migratory birds in the Dongsha Atoll Marine National Park, Marine National Park Headquarters had selected conservation research personnel from the Dongsha Management Station to receive avian injury rescue training from Endemic Species Research Institute. By using the expertise in actual wild bird rescue mission in Dongsha Atolls during the migratory season, two wild birds were successfully released after full recovery from injuries.

Dongsha Atolls National Park is located at the northern part of the South China Sea. Dongsha Island is the only island to fully protrude above the sea surface among the surrounding atolls. By the unique combination of its convenient geographical location, abundance of food in both overland and surrounding marine habitats, the dense and widely distributed woodlands throughout the island and the minimal level of human interference, it has become a way station for migratory birds during their travel to breeding grounds or wintering areas.

As Dongsha Atoll National Park is positioned right in the path of migratory birds, wounded, weak or sick migratory birds are often encountered. To shelter these precious yet delicate travelers, Marine National Park Headquarters sent specially selected conservation personnel to receive emergency injury rescue and recovery training from the Wild Life First Aid Station in Endemic Species Research Institute. The curriculum included initial status assessment on injured birds, proper restraint, temporary holding for injured birds, feeding and training before reintroduction to the wilderness after recuperation. Equipment for injury rescue are also purchased and transported to Dongsha Island.

After receiving the training for emergency avian injury rescue, seven cases of injured birds have already been handled in Dongsha Island between March and early April this year. The species involved include the White-breasted

Water Hen, Ruddy Turnstone, Little Egret and Great Egret. Although the birds were mostly in bad condition upon being found, the White-breasted Water Hen and Ruddy Turnstone have already fully recovered and were later released back into the wild after careful nursing by conservation workers.

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Specimens of Extinct Animals and Plants Returned to Taiwan from Germany and Russia

Through international cooperative specimen exchange programs, National Museum of Natural Science (NMNS) of ROC received donation of precious specimens from Senckenberg Deutsches Entomologisches Institut (SDEI), Germany, including two butterflies now extinct in Taiwan, *Euploea phaenareta juvia* Fruhstorfer and *Danaus plexippus*. A specimen of *Lysimachia candida* was among the specimens donated by the Komarov Botanical Institute, which is a new record species that is already extinct in Taiwan. Many of these precious specimens finally returned to Taiwan after more than a hundred years.

The specimens exchange and donation ceremony was held on April 12th by the NMNS. Delegates from SDEI, Germany brought more than three hundred insect specimens, among which more than two hundred were collected over a hundred years ago in Taiwan. Delegates from the Herbarium of Komarov Botanical Institute, Russian offered a batch of plant specimens from Taiwan with over a century of history.

To find the lost insect holotype specimens of Taiwan, Dr. Chan Mei-Ling at the Museum's Zoology department went to SDEI in Germany to seek out Taiwanese insect specimens and found a large number of collections. Since then the two parties have started a collection exchange program. When the NMNS held the Taiwanese Butterfly Special Exhibition last year, the German counterparts agreed to provide a number of specimens, including two butterflies currently extinct in Taiwan, *Euploea phaenareta juvia* Fruhstorfer and *Danaus plexippus*.

According to Dr. Chan, the German biologist Hans Sauter was the first naturalist to systematically collect animal specimens during his extended stay in Taiwan. Among the specimens, both the *Euploea phaenareta juvia* Fruhstorfer and *Danaus plexippus* were collected between 1908 and 1909. *Euploea phaenareta juvia* Fruhstorfer was the largest butterfly of the *Euploea* genus in Taiwan, which was common in southern Taiwan before the 1950s but went extinct during the 1960s.

Danaus plexippus was extensively recorded in surveys before the 1930s, yet disappeared completely afterwards. This pair of *Danaus plexippus* was collected by Hans Sauter in Nantou. The other more than two hundred specimens were also collected more than a hundred years ago, and would greatly help entomological research in Taiwan.

Meanwhile, Dr. Yang Chung-Yu went to Russia to find plant specimens. He discovered that Seikichiro Yano, who served at the Japanese Embassy in Russia during the early years of Japanese occupation in Taiwan, had collected plants extensively throughout Taiwan, Lanyu Island and Green Island between 1896 and 1897. Almost all of his more than 500 pieces of plant specimens were held in the Russian herbarium.

While cataloging the batch of specimens with the Russians, Dr. Yang found that the Primulaceae plant *Lysimachia candida* was never found nor recorded in Taiwan, making this species a precious new record that went extinct before it could be known. Also found was a specimen of *Cephalanthus Naucleoides* DC. (Common button-bush) which is now a protected species extinct in the wild. These findings filled part of the gaps in the history of Taiwanese plant collection.

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Kaohsiung joined the Local Action for Biodiversity Program

At the Resilient Cities 2011 Congress held in Bonn, Germany on June 3-5, delegation of Kaohsiung City government signed the Memorandum of Understanding of Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) with other cities worldwide, becoming the 51st member city of LAB.

LAB is a program initiated by ICLEI in 2006 with the aim of helping local governments to perform assessment and survey on local biological species, building related database, while drawing up action plans and strategies to promote local biodiversity.

ICLEI is the first international organization formed by local governments pursuing sustainable development. Kaohsiung became the first member city to join from Taiwan 5 years ago. This year is the second time that the Kaohsiung city government attended ICLEI world congress. The 22 delegates attended the annual congress from June 3th to 5th, in order to understand the main issues under discussion in United Nations and European Union, and exchange governance experience on adapting to climate change with other international participants.

One of the focus points of joining the convention for Kaohsiung is to observe how international cities operate climate change adaptation funds. With a history of being dominated by heavy industrial sectors, industrial carbon emission makes up more than 70 percent of total emission in Kaohsiung City, making it the city with the highest emission in Taiwan. Attempting to reduce carbon emission through public transit or renewable energy provided very limited emission reduction for Kaohsiung. To speed up the infrastructure building for a low carbon emission city, the city government will propose a climate change adaptation fund for review by the city council.

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Lunpi Chih Declared as Major Wildlife Habitat

Lunpi Chih is a lake at the altitude of 820 meters above sea level in the Qilan (Chilan) mountain area of Yilan County with an area of

0.4 hectares. Luodong Forest District Office entrusted National Yilan University to perform an ecological survey. The results indicated that the tributary area and surrounding forest contained more than two hundred species of animals and plants. To protect this gem of native biodiversity in Taiwan, Lunpi Chi is declared as the "Qilan Major Wildlife Habitat" for protection according to the Wildlife Conservation

Act. Luodong Forest District Office pointed out that Lunpi Chih is an important representative area of shallow lake wetlands. According to the survey, the tributary areas of Lunpi Chih and surrounding forest contains 213 plant species, 2 reptilian species, 7 amphibian species and at least 11 water-dwelling insects. Among them, the rare water plant species *Brasenia schreberi* and *Sparganium fallax* Graebne are important highlights.

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International Conservation Newsletter

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