



Black-faced spoonbill, Photo © Kisup Lee

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▫ Introducing the improved EAAF website

January 2014

With a busy team of interns, the Secretariat is at work developing a better set of web resources at: www.eaaflyway.net. The improved website will continue to be a hub of information to find updates and information on all the key species, Working Groups (species expert groups) and Task Forces (conservation activities), the Flyway Site Network – important migratory waterbird sites nominated by EAAF, as well as the latest news from the EAAF Secretariat, Partners and about the East Asia-Australasian Flyway in general.

The site has migrated to a WordPress platform. Here it can benefit the Secretariat by providing much more user friendly and easy-to-update web administration. Partnership and Related News can be easily updated with nifty blogging function. Development of the site is made much less demanding by the WordPress package.

There are already many resources developed on the site, but we will soon be able to go live with multi-language resources on the Partnership and map features to help guide users through the Flyway Site Network and Partners pages.

The new design was created by the talented intern Angela Choi, who worked hard on most of the website development with the assistance of interns Sungyeon Hwang and David Broughton.

▫ EAAF/Ramsar Joint Site Manager Workshop, Manila

September 2013

EAAF, together with the [Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands \(SCPW\)](#), the [Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau \(PAWB\)](#) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Government of the Philippines, the [Ramsar Convention Bureau and the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia \(RRC-EA\)](#) conducted an “Asian Regional Workshop on the Management of Wetlands and Flyway Sites” on 24-27 September 2013 at the Asian Institute of Management Conference Center in Makati City.

The aim of the workshop is to enhance the management capacities of wetland site managers. This was realised through the sharing and documentation of lessons learned and best practices in the conservation of wetlands of international importance, and of migratory waterbirds and their habitats. The 4-day event included presentations, visiting field sites and workshops designed to explore and share learning



Asian Regional Workshop on the Management of Wetlands and Flyway Sites © EAAF



Asian Regional Workshop on the Management of Wetlands and Flyway Sites © EAAFP



Asian Regional Workshop on the Management of Wetlands and Flyway Sites © EAAFP

experiences and provide models from the Region to help wetland managers become more effective in their daily work.

Participants came from 15 countries (13 in the EAAFP region), representing a variety of sites, including several **EAAFP Flyway Network Sites (FNS)**. The EAAFP Chief Executive and Science Officer gave presentations and led individual sessions, as well as holding many side-meetings related to identification, nomination and conservation of FNS, particularly in the Philippines. The Science Officer held a session with existing site managers to encourage them to fill out missing or outdated Site Information Sheet forms and the Chief Executive held a parallel session with future site managers to discuss criteria and nomination processes.

A full account of the program, including links to presentations can be found at:

<http://www.psdn.org.ph/wetlands/news9a.htm>

The outcomes of the meeting included:

- *Demonstrating to partners and site managers that FSN designation has concrete benefits in terms of capacity building and information sharing*
- *Encouraging nomination of future FSN sites, particularly for Philippines*
- *Increased recognition of FSN sites and the Flyway Site Network*
- *Encouraging sites to submit updated information, geographical boundaries*
- *Strengthening collaboration between EAAFP, Ramsar Secretariat and RRC-EA*
- *Increase awareness among site managers about the importance and proper techniques of waterbird bird monitoring at sites*
- *Follow up with Philippines on site nominations and with Dec 2014 Research Forum*
- *EAAFP hopes to hold future joint training workshops in collaboration with Ramsar in 2014.*

▫ EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group meeting

October 2013

The inaugural meeting of the EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group was held on 12 October 2013 at the EAAFP Secretariat in Songdo, South Korea.

The objectives of the Working Group, which includes representatives from all of the principal range states of Black-faced Spoonbill, are to:

- (1) preserve important breeding, staging and wintering habitats for the Black-faced Spoonbill;
- (2) encourage joint and coordinated management efforts between Flyway Network sites and reserves in all distributed regions;
- (3) promote exchange of information among different countries and agencies, to maintain and share a database on the Black-faced Spoonbill information and important sites;

(4) carry out studies and research on the Black-faced Spoonbill conservation and

(5) promote the sustainable use of wetlands, particularly tidal areas, and communication, public awareness and education in the region.

The participants were from South Korea, China, Japan, BirdLife International, NEASPEC and EAAFP. The Chair, Coordinator and key core members of the Working Group have been appointed and approved, but additional members may be added in the future. The work priorities were agreed as:

- Increasing awareness and visibility of the Working Group and identifying how to involve all interested persons in its activities,
- Continuing to update conservation activities on the EAAFP website,
- Continuation of the marking and satellite tracking work and winter census,
- Collection and dissemination of communication, education and awareness materials,
- Undertaking habitat studies and develop and lead conservation actions.



□ EAAF Migratory Shorebird Stakeholder Workshop, Hong Kong

December 2013

A three-day EAAF Migratory Shorebird Stakeholder Workshop was hosted by WWF-Hong Kong in early December 2013. Its aim was to focus international attention on the ecological crisis facing migratory shorebird populations along the flyway and to develop a flyway-wide Migratory Shorebird Conservation Plan. The workshop brought together 23 key stakeholders including two Government agencies, seven non-government organisations with international conservation programs for migratory waterbirds, three

More detailed plans for 2014 will be developed through future meetings and discussions. Visit the website of the: [Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group](#)



Black-faced Spoonbill Feeding © Chung Yun-Tak



EAAF Stakeholder Workshop, Hong Kong. © Bena Smith

waterbird conservation networks and three shorebird research organizations. This included the EAAFP secretariat, and Chairs of the Shorebird Working Group and Chair of the Yellow Sea Taskforce and the Monitoring Taskforce of the Partnership.

The event included presentations from participants, breakout sessions to discuss key issues such as threats facing migratory shorebirds and critical shorebird sites in the flyway, as well as a field trip to the Mai Po Nature Reserve, a Flyway Network Site. Workshop participants focused their effort on how to make the most strategic contribution to the problem and concluded in respect of the importance of tidal flats in North Asia to the migration cycle of shorebirds and the continued loss of those flats due to land claim and conversion to unfavourable aquaculture e.g. Sea cucumber farms, the Yellow Sea is the priority geographic region within the Flyway for action. Participants expressed alarm at the sheer number and scale of coastal land claim projects underway on the China side of the Yellow Sea as shown by recent satellite imagery. Other issues highlighted at the workshop included the need for further research on the migration routes of shorebirds that spend their non-breeding periods in Southeast Asian countries.

The major achievement of the workshop was consensus on the process to develop and implement



EAAF Stakeholder Workshop, Hong Kong. © Bena Smith

the Conservation Plan. At the heart of the plan is a novel approach to initially focus on 'collaboration' sites/ regions that are developed with view to their replication by other local governments and coastal Provincial/ Prefectural Governments around the Yellow Sea. A draft report on the stakeholder workshop including presentations and outcomes can be requested from Mr. Bena Smith < bsmith@wwf.org.hk >, Conservation Manager – Regional Wetland Projects at WWF-Hong Kong.

A consultation document is expected to be available in early 2014, and the final plan itself launched at the MoP 8 of the EAAFP. Chairs of the three relevant Working Groups and Taskforces within the EAAFP will

circulate a copy of the draft to their members. Other EAAFP members are invited to contribute to the development of the Plan during the consultation phase by contacting Mr. Bena Smith at the above email address.

birds, key habitats and the ecosystem services that they provide. Destination Flyways uses an innovative approach to promote and enhance



their conservation.

By providing a framework for sustainable tourism management and diversifying the tourism venues along the flyways,

Destination Flyways will generate revenue for improved management of biodiversity and spread

the benefits of tourism to local communities, while creating attractive experiences for tourists.

This project is led by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and key partners include EAAFP, UNEP, CMS, AEWA, Ramsar, CBD, UNESCO, BirdLife International Wetlands International and IUCN. With their sound experiences with in this field of conservation and tourism, these organisations have joined forces to implement the Destination Flyways project. The project is designed to develop biodiversity-related tourism products in selected locations of important migratory bird flyways. Two sites have been selected for EAAF out of a total of eight sites in Central Europe, Central and East Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Australia. The names of each site will be announced in the near future. The key objectives are (1) enhanced conservation of key habitats and species, (2) enhanced local livelihoods, (3) tourism promoting sustainability and behavioural change and (4) effective implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

For more information, please visit: <http://biodiv.unwto.org/content/flyways>

Destination Flyways – Turning one billion tourists into one billion opportunities to protect the world’s original long-distance travellers

In 2012, a record one billion tourists crossed international borders—a true milestone in international travel and a clear sign of the strength of the tourism sector. The Destination Flyways project channels this strength into a force for global biodiversity conservation and enhanced livelihoods for local communities by creating a network of sustainable and resilient destinations.

Each year, millions of migratory birds set out to travel the world, flying along established routes, or flyways. Spanning continents and oceans and used by a myriad of bird species, the flyways represent one of the most spectacular and valuable assets of the world’s natural heritage.

Migratory birds depend upon a chain of vital sites along their journey for breeding, staging and wintering. These sites are often managed under different conservation schemes but due to their natural values they are also endowed with great tourism potential. However, external pressures continue to grow, representing a threat for migratory



World Migratory Bird Day

▫ World Migratory Bird Day 10-11 May 2014 – Migratory Birds and Tourism

World Migratory Bird Day 2014 will take place on the weekend of 10-11 May 2014. Please save these dates in your calendars!

World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) is a global initiative devoted to celebrating migratory birds and for promoting their conservation worldwide. World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) was initiated in 2006 by the Secretariat of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). It is an annual awareness-raising campaign highlighting protection of migratory birds and their habitats. On the second weekend each May, people around the world take action and organise public events such as bird festival, education programmes and birdwatching excursions to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day. In 2013, over 350 separate awareness-raising events were held in 88 countries to mark World Migratory Bird Day 2013.

The theme for 2014 will be linked to the topic of tourism and migratory birds, focusing on the global bird – and wildlife watching industry and sustainable tourism as a vehicle to conserve migratory birds and

their habitats. It is planned to work closely with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in promoting the “Destination Flyways” Project which focuses on the protection of migratory birds and their habitats and the creation of sustainable livelihoods for local communities through the development of innovative tourism products along the world’s major flyways. Individuals and dedicated organisations around the world will be using World Migratory Bird Day to draw attention to migratory birds and the need to conserve

them, through activities such as bird festivals and bird watching trips, public discussions, exhibitions, presentations, bird rallies and other educational and public events. The WMBD posters and press material will soon be available. For more details, contact either wmbd@eaflyway.net or contact@worldmigratorybirdday.org

▫ North-East Asian Sub-regional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC); expert group meeting for key migratory birds

October 2013

The [North-East Asian Sub-regional Programme for Environmental Cooperation \(NEASPEC\)](#) organised the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Conservation and Rehabilitation of Habitats for Key Migratory Birds in North-East Asia on 10-11 October 2013 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The meeting brought together national experts and other stakeholders to review sub-regional and national challenges related to the conservation of migratory bird species and their habitats. It also aimed to develop the implementation plan for project components; including joint surveys and studies, capacity building on habitat management, strategies for habitat conservation and rehabilitation, and awareness raising on habitat conservation.



Expert Group meeting for key migratory birds © EAAFP



Expert Group meeting for key migratory birds © EAAFP



Expert Group meeting for key migratory birds © EAAFP

The EGM gathered national focal points for this project along with national experts from China, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation (via video link). The East Asia-Australasian

Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) was represented by several staff and EAAFP focal points from concerned countries were also present.

The Meeting shared information on the details of the three NEASPEC flagship species: Black-faced Spoonbill, Hooded Crane, White-naped Crane, including protection status, population size, migratory routes, major threats, monitoring actions and methodology. Major threats shared at the Meeting include changing habitat conditions and population status from the change of land use, human disturbance, natural climatic variance, and water management practices.

Objectives of the proposed survey were reviewed at the meeting. These include selecting key sites for conservation of target species; undertaking a comprehensive survey for the development of a conservation plan; and establishing a subregional monitoring scheme and information sharing network.

Also reviewed at the meeting were the proposed criteria for target sites, including sites enlisted under international programmes (including EAAFP Network Sites; sites requiring urgent rehabilitation and management through international support; and sites requiring improved local community involvement as a key condition. After review of the criteria, the Meeting agreed to pay particular attention to scientific significance; strong relevance to international cooperation and implications of local community participation. On the basis of these recommended criteria, the Meeting identified the target sites as follows:

- **Black-faced Spoonbill:** *Xingrentuo/Yuanbaotuo at Liaoning (China); Hakata Bay (Japan); and Incheon (ROK)*
- **Hooded Crane:** *Lindian (China); Izumi (Japan); and Cheonsu Bay (ROK)*
- **White-naped Crane:** *Dauria International Protected Area and adjacent territories (including Onon for Mongolia and Dalai Lake for China) of Dauria ecoregion (China, Mongolia and Russian Federation);*

A joint study will focus on trans-boundary areas including Dauria International Protected Area (DIPA-China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation) and the Korean Demilitarized Area (DPRK and the ROK). The final confirmation of selecting DIPA is subject to the consultation with the national focal point of the Russian Federation. With regard to the study at the DMZ, the Meeting recommended efforts to actively explore the possibility of the involvement of DPRK in the joint study.

▫ Ramsar workshop on the design and operation of wetland education centres

November 2013

Wetland education centres are essential for learning and training about wetlands for coexistence between humans and nature for the benefit of both people and biodiversity. On 4-8 November 2013 the



workshop on best practices for the design and operation of wetland education centres was held in Cheonsu Bay (Seosan, South Korea). Cheonsu Bay is home to tens of thousands of migratory waterbirds along the East Asian -Australasian Flyway.

There has been growing interest in the development of wetland education centres, but in recent years there have been concerns that greater attention has been paid to the construction of the building rather than to the delivery of communications, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) activities. To counter this, a workshop was held to bring together over 100 participants from 15 countries to share experience and knowledge for those who will be involved in the development of future centres. Participants discussed how to set up a project establishing a centre, ensure the financial sustainability of the centre's operation, and



deliver the best location, sustainable building design, interpretation and programmes. A good practice identified was the need to agree a project master-plan with the stakeholders, based on considerations such as the objectives of the centres, its location, an assessment of the possible number of visitors, and the cost of construction and operation, bearing in mind that the centre would need to be financially self-sustaining. In addition, participants stressed the importance of putting in place a system to collect feedback from visitors, and of ensuring that the interpretation and programmes are flexible enough to allow improvement based on that feedback. The outcomes of their discussion along with case studies will be published in an online handbook in early 2014.

The workshop was kindly hosted by the municipal government of Seosan City, and organized by the Environmental Ecosystem Research Foundation (ERF), the Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RRC-EA) and the Ramsar Secretariat. The Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea, is generously funding the production of the online handbook in both English and Korean. It

is hoped that additional funds will be made available to translate it into other languages.

▫ Australasian Ornithological Conference

December 2013

The Australasian Ornithological Conference is a biennial bird-related conference, including scientists and bird-enthusiasts from Australia and New Zealand. This year it was held in Auckland, New Zealand in 4-7 December, 2013.

Before the conference, EAAFP Science Officer, Judit Szabo, spent a day looking at a potential EAAFP site in Manukau Harbour with David Lawrie, from Miranda Naturalists' Trust, and Bruce McKinlay, of the NZ Department of Conservation. At Manukau, around 12,000 migratory shorebirds could be observed, mostly Bar-tailed Godwits and Great Knots.

At the start of the conference, on the Tuesday, Judit led a symposium on the role of Australia and New Zealand in reversing shorebird declines in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The introductory talk



Part of the impressive flock of migrants (mostly bar-tailed godwit) in Manukau Harbour. ©Judit Szabo

on the scientific needs for waterbird conservation in the flyway, was delivered by Judit herself. This was followed by a presentation by Jimmy Choi (Massey University, New Zealand) on his work on shorebird numbers, composition, and mass gain at two staging sites in China. Danny Rogers, from the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, then followed up with a talk on the implications of the loss of habitat at Saemangeum on Great Knot, a still very sobering topic, but one that included a silver lining in evidence suggesting a few good breeding years for Great Knot recently.

Richard Fuller, (University of Queensland, Australia), provided an update on the population trends and tidal flat loss work coming out of the University of Queensland shorebird project, and Rob Clements, (University of Queensland, AUS), finished off the presentations with a talk on modelling inland wetland suitability across Australia. After the symposium the conference engaged in an hour long meeting including discussion with the audience. The ideas discussed are being written up to form a discussion paper, to be distributed in the not too distant future.

▫ **First Asia Parks Congress**

November 2013

With the generous support of the Ministry of Environment of Japan, Spike Millington, EAAFP Chief Executive was able to attend the [First Asia Parks Congress in Sendai](#), Japan on 13 – 17 November, 2013.

The Congress brought together 800 representatives from protected area agencies, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and youth and civil society from 22 countries to share experiences, improve networking and communication and set future agendas for protected area management in Asia. Jointly organized by the Government of Japan and IUCN, the outcomes of the meeting will lead directly into the World Parks Congress, to be held in Sydney,

Australia in 2014.

Spike participated in the Working Group on International Cooperation for Protected Areas and gave a presentation on the role of Protected Areas in the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. He also participated in meetings to establish a Regional Partnership for protected areas in Asia and provided input based on the experience of EAAFP as a multi-stakeholder, regional partnership.

A number of side-events included one on Collaboration for Conservation of the Yellow Sea Ecoregion, organized by WWF Japan and including presentations by WWF Japan, WWF China, Birdlife International and the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem project.

Congress participants agreed by consensus to “Asia Protected Areas Charter” as a guideline based on Asian experiences for the reconciliation between nature conservation and development in the region. Productive and constructive discussions at six Working Groups also led to the formulation of “Message from the 1st Asia Parks Congress to the IUCN World Parks Congress, Sydney 2014”

For details of the Congress, please visit the APC website at: www.asia-parks.org

▫ Films highlighting valuable Flyway Sites

Mai Po Inner Deep Bay, Hong Kong

Mai Po Inner Deep Bay, Listed EAAFP Flyway Network Site and Ramsar Site, has a high ecological value for its habitat and migratory waterbirds. The site supports 400 species of waterbirds, mainly migratory waterbirds, for stopover and wintering. One of the most characteristic species in Mai Po is the Black-faced Spoonbill. The site supports almost 400 birds which is 15% of the world population of this endangered species. The bay has been well-managed by WWF Hong Kong and administrated by Hong Kong government. They have habitat conservation and management and research monitoring programmes including bird ringing and undertake public education to raise public awareness on the high ecological value of habitat and migratory waterbirds.

A WWF-Hong Kong produced video, available in both English and Chinese can be found here:



Still shot of the film

English:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZf5dYzxmX4>

Chinese:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7xlg6NV9II>

Seocheon Tidal Flat, Republic of Korea

Seocheon Tidal Flat, including Yubudo and Geum River Estuary, has been designated as an EAAFP Flyway Network Site and a Ramsar Site to recognise the international importance of the site for many endangered species of migratory waterbirds such as Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. Yubudo supports 3% of the world population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper which has been listed as Critically Endangered by IUCN.

The videos in both English and Korean can be found via the following links:



Still shot of the film

English:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZfTfdEUX2U>

Korean:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTieUajKSmA>

▫ Hand-reared Sandpiper travels 8,000km

In November 2013, a rare hand-reared spoon-billed sandpiper was spotted for the first time in the wild, more than 8,000km from where it was released in Russia.

Twenty-five of the critically endangered birds have been raised over two years by an Anglo-Russian conservation team on the Russian tundra, before being released to join their wild-born counterparts in migrating to South-East Asia. Until now it was unknown whether any would be spotted before they return to



Hand-reared SBS chick before being released in Russia © Roland Digby

Russia to breed at the age of two so the news one has been seen in Thailand, on the coast near Bangkok, and another in southern China was welcome.

WWT Head of Species Conservation Department, Baz Hughes said:

“This is really exciting news. We now know that spoon-billed sandpipers, raised by our avicultural staff on the Russian tundra, can migrate with their wild counterparts to wintering areas a quarter of the way around the globe.”

Conservationists take eggs from wild spoon-billed sandpiper nests, prompting the parent birds to lay a further clutch. The hand-reared chicks are safe from predators and, with the wild-raised chicks from the second clutch, it increases the total number of birds fledging by up to ten times. The hand-reared birds are all marked with small white plastic leg flags. Marking birds allows them to be identified later and helps reveal information about their movements and behaviour.

Christoph Zöckler, Coordinator of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership’s Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force commented:

“We’ve learnt an enormous amount about spoon-billed sandpipers’ movements over the last few years but there are big gaps. While we still don’t know all the places they stop over on migration, we can’t protect them or address any threats they face there.”

More information on reporting sightings of spoon-billed sandpiper and the spoon-billed sandpiper taskforce: [Taskforce webpages](#).

▫ Yellow Sea mudflats - few mudflats are more important

The 2-minute online radio show, BirdNote, aired an episode in November, featuring Dr Nils Warnock, on the Importance of the Yellow Sea to Migrating Shorebirds.

Dr Warnock, Director of Audubon Alaska, interview by Todd Peterson, discussed the importance of the Yellow Sea area mudflats as fuelling stops for migrating shorebirds,

The short interview also highlighted the decline of species, which rely on the refueling stop to enable long migrations covering the extent of the East Asia-Australasian Flyway, not forgetting to mention the pressure put on these coastal habitats by the developing economies of China and Korea.

The podcast is available to listen and download at the BirdNote website: www.birdnote.org

[SOURCE: BirdNote]

▫ GFN Bohai Report 2013 Published

The [Global Flyway Network \(GFN\)](#), in the [Bohai Report 2013](#), reports on the field work of Red Knot’s northward migration through Bohai Bay in China from April to June 2013.



Red Knot (subspecies *piersmai*) © Adrian Boyle

In total, 4,615 marked shorebirds in EAAF were recorded, including 613 sightings of colour-banded birds from North West Australia. Bohai Bay is of vital importance for the [Red Knot](#), notably *piersmai* subspecies.

The vast area of commercial salt ponds, adjacent to the inter-tidal area, is evidently important for migratory shorebirds to feed and roost before heading to their next destination in Russia. The team returned stunning counts of 95,000 birds in a single pond, and individual counts representing 34% of the EAAF [Curlew Sandpiper](#) population and 33 % of the EAAF Red Knot population. The salt ponds are a critical high tide roost and should be included in any conservation initiative.

The continuing pressures are obvious with the continuing development of industrial and housing on, and adjacent to, the inter-tidal area. Despite direct destruction of the inter-tidal area slowing this season, huge building projects are taking place in the former salt pond habitat. The report gives details of a proposal to help secure the future of this area.

The full report can be found at here:

<http://globalflywaynetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GFN-Bohai-Report-2013.pdf>

▫ Savvy Godwit equipped for climate challenge

BBC Science Correspondent Jonathan Amos reports on a story about the bird that makes one of the most extraordinary journeys on Earth. With an 11,000km from Alaska to New Zealand every autumn, the bar-tailed godwit makes the world's longest no-stop migration. Mr Amos explained how researchers believe that the Bar-tailed Godwit is probably savvy enough to cope with climate change.

The Godwit relies on the right type of winds to make this epic journey. Computer modelling indicates that these winds could become less favourable in the future. However, scientists say the godwit's ability to

judge weather conditions means it should rise to the challenge.

“They are very adept and savvy about when to leave Alaska, in being able to pick times when the atmospheric conditions are favourable for the journey to New Zealand – when there are good tailwinds,”



Bar-tailed Godwit, Photo © Dave Bakewell

explained David Douglas, a wildlife biologist with the United States Geological Survey in Anchorage.

“We don’t feel that we see enough change that we should be concerned that they won’t have the opportunities to complete the migration as magnificently as they do now.

“We can raise other questions about the quality of their feeding grounds and things that they need to fuel on to make the migration – are they going to be intact and available? Those are entirely different kinds of questions.

“But as far as atmospheric circulation is concerned, at least in terms of the winds, we don’t see a train wreck coming.”

Mr Douglas, speaking in San Francisco at the American Geophysical Union (AGU) Fall Meeting, has been investigating the future prospects for the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica baueri*), famed for its



Photograph of E7 © Keith Woodley

extraordinary annual odyssey.

The bird leaves New Zealand in March to fly around 10,000km to feeding grounds in China and Korea. And then in May, the Godwit undertakes a 6,000km trip to western Alaska to breed and nest, before returning directly to New Zealand across the Pacific in August/September. It is this final leg that amazes biologists.

One celebrated Godwit, known as E7, was recorded by satellite tag in 2007 to have covered 11,500km in eight days. Mr Douglas has been wondering how the godwit might fare in a changed climate that also alters wind patterns in the Pacific. Working with colleagues at the University of Illinois, the team has modelled atmospheric circulation conditions towards the end of the century.

At the moment, the bird makes use of tailwinds on the backsides of low-pressure systems passing across the northern Pacific. The research found these systems in future will likely move North, and that, on average, what the scientists call the net tailwind index will show some degradation. In other words, there will probably be fewer opportunities when conditions are optimum. But tagging studies have demonstrated also that the Godwit seems to have a knack of picking the optimum moment whenever it does arise.

“Our empirical studies have clearly shown that these birds don’t depart on random,” said Mr Douglas.

“They’re very good at cuing in on when the conditions are just right. And so when we look at these modelled runs and the variability in the available windows, we see there are still ample

opportunities for them to pick good windows of time to make this migration, despite the overall mean being reduced.”

The energy required to fly non-stop for thousands of kilometres is huge. This leads to the Godwit taking on an enormous fat store before setting out on its marathons. There continues to be concern about the bird’s current or future status, and much of this relates to this fuelling phase and the fact that some of its feeding grounds are being diminished. In China and South Korea, for example, recent years have seen increasing reclamation of the tidal mud flats where the bird forages.

[SOURCE: BBC SCIENCE]

▫ Australasian Shorebird Conference on 20-21 September 2014 in Darwin, Australia

The next Australasian Shorebird Conference will be held in Darwin on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September 2014. The conference will be hosted by the Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods at Charles Darwin University and will be held at CDU’s Casuarina campus. We encourage you to submit symposia proposals and abstracts on key issues concerning shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The Symposia submission deadline is 15 March 2014. Further details will be made available through the AWSG website: www.awsg.org.au.

▫ A rare treat for Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary

A report from the Philippines: on a rare sighting at the Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary, [Cebu Daily News, November 2013](#).

Staff at the Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary (OIWS) in Lapu-Lapu City reported the sighting of a rare and endangered migratory bird. The bird, a Black-faced Spoonbill, was spotted on November 26, 2013.

In his report, OIWS assistant superintendent

Reginaldo Bueno said that staff saw the Black-faced Spoonbill searching for food on the sanctuary's 1,028 hectare mud flat in the company of Chinese egrets.

Bueno reported that it was the first time the bird has been seen on Cebu, and the fourth time it was spotted in the entire country. The bird spent five days in the sanctuary before flying away to an undetermined location.

The Black-faced Spoonbill is listed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

"It usually spends the winter in Taiwan, Vietnam, South Korea, and China," Isabel Montejo, Regional Executive Director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The Spoonbill breeds on the western coast of the Korean peninsula, Liaoning province on mainland China and the Tumen estuary in Russia.

Outside breeding season, the species is found on tidal mudflats, mangroves, fishponds, marshes, estuaries, swamps, lakes and other brackish wetlands.

"The recent sighting of this rare species in OIWS will become a priority in monitoring the population and period of stay. We will enforce strict protection," Montejo said.

The Black faced Spoonbill has been seen in the Batanes Protected Landscape and Seascape, Candaba Marsh in Pampanga in January 2009, and last in Cabusao, Camarines Sur, January 2013. Three individuals are currently wintering in Candaba Marsh.

Notable shorebirds found in the OIWS are the Asian Dowitcher, Chinese Egret, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit and Red Knot.

From September to November, thousands of shorebirds migrate to OIWS and south to Australia and New Zealand after breeding in China, Russia and Alaska following the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Soon after winter, from March to May, the shorebirds begin their northward migration, thousands of them

passing by OIWS en route to breeding areas in the northern hemisphere.

[SOURCE: CEBU DAILY NEWS]

▫ The mystery of why so many birds fly in a V formation may have been solved

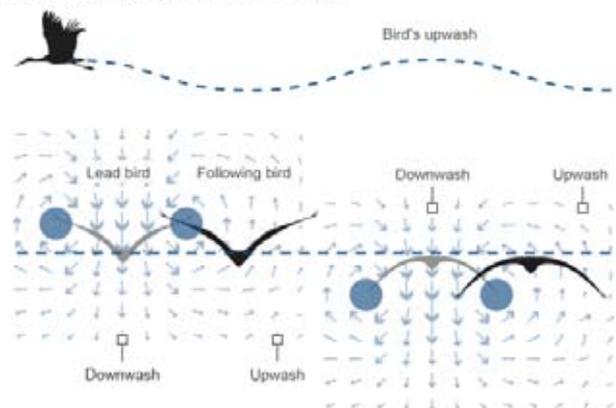
Scientists from the Royal Veterinary College fitted data loggers to a flock of rare birds that were being trained to migrate by following a microlight. This revealed that the birds flew in the optimal position - gaining lift from the bird in front by remaining close to its wingtip. The study, [published in the journal Nature](#), also showed that the birds timed their wing beats.

A previous experiment in pelicans was the first real clue to the energy-saving purpose of V formations. It revealed that birds' heart rates went down when they were flying together in V. But this latest study tracked and monitored the flight of every bird in the flock - recording its position, speed and heading as well as every wing flap.

Fitting tiny data loggers to these critically endangered ibises showed that the birds often changed position and altered the timing of their wing beats to give them an aerodynamic advantage. Lead researcher Dr Steven Portugal from the Royal Veterinary College explained:

"They're seemingly very aware of where the other birds are in the flock and they put themselves in the best possible position. This makes the most of upward-moving air generated by the bird in front. This so-called "upwash" is

How birds take advantage of the V formation



Source: Nature

created as a bird flies forward; whether it is gliding or flapping, it pushes air downward beneath its wings. Downwash is bad ... Birds don't want to be in another bird's downwash as it's pushing them down."

But as the air squeezes around the outside of the wings, it creates upwash at the wingtips.

"This can give a bit of a free ride for the bird that's following, So the other bird wants to put its own wingtip in the upwash from the bird in front."

Researchers were also surprised to find that birds also timed their wing beats perfectly to match the good air off the bird in front, putting themselves in the best possible position to make the most of upward-moving air they generate.

Just as the birds save energy by gaining lift from other birds, many companies that are developing unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, are looking to copy the energy-efficient V formation.

"Elucidating this mechanism might go some way to helping [companies] understand how they can replicate that with their plane formation to save fuel," said Dr Portugal.

But for scientists, it is the insight into a remarkable natural phenomenon that is truly exciting. Dr Portugal adding:

"They're able to sense what's going on from the bird in front, where this good air is coming from and how to position themselves perfectly in it ... So from a sensory point of view, it's really incredible."

[Source: BBC News/Nature](#)

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