TENTH MEETING OF PARTNERS TO THE PARTNERSHIP FOR EAST ASIAN – AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY  
Changjiang, P.R. China, 10-14 December 2018

**Document 14**

**Migratory Species of Conservation Concern in the ASEAN Region**

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**Summary**

The Southeast Asian region supports a large number of short-distance migratory waterbirds. Of this, many species are known to undertake wet-dry migratory movements in response to seasonal monsoonal patterns.

As a result of widespread habitat loss and degradation, especially that of inland freshwater and riverine wetlands, many short-distance, migratory waterbirds are now listed under the IUCN Red List as globally threatened. This includes the Sarus crane *Antigone antigone* (VU), greater adjutant *Leptotilos dubius* (EN) and the masked finfoot *Heliopais personatus* (EN).

This information document seeks to highlight the conservation needs of short-distance migratory waterbirds in the Southeast Asian region and to promote discussion on regional collaboration and cooperation on shared priority species of conservation concern. .

**1. Introduction**

The East Asian–Australasian Flyway is widely considered the largest and most threatened of the world’s four major migratory bird flyways. This is due to the large-scale loss and degradation of the coastal and inter-tidal wetlands across in the region, which are used as key staging and wintering areas by a majority of the migratory species in this flyway. In recognition of these issues, the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership was established in 2006 to provide a flyway-wide framework to promote the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats along the EAAF. Of the 22 countries along the EAAF, 18 (80%) have so far joined the Partnership.

In recent decades, conservation effort and resources in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway region have prioritised globally threatened long-distance migratory waterbirds that either stage and/or over-winter in wetlands in eastern Asia, especially in the Yellow/West Sea region. These include shorebirds (spoon-billed sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea*, spotted greenshank *Tringa guttifer*), gulls (Saunder’s gull *Saundersilarus saundersi*, relict gull *Larus relictus*), ducks (Baer’s pochard *Aythya baeri*, scaly-sided merganser *Mergus squamatus*), cranes (White-naped *Antigone vipio*, hooded *Grus monacha*, Siberian crane *Leucogeranus leucogeranus* and red-crowned crane *Grus japonensis*), spoonbills (Black-faced spoonbill *Platelea minor*), storks (Oriental stork *Ciconia boyciana*) and herons (Chinese egret *Egretta eulophotes*).

In contrast, there has been far less effort and resources allocated to conserve the many short-distance or intra-tropical migrants, many of which remain poorly studied. Many of these species migrate within the Southeast Asian region and neighboring areas in the EAAF (e.g. southern China, north-east India, Bhutan). A number of these short-distance migrants typically undertake wet-dry season migratory movements, in response to the seasonal monsoon patterns that characterizes the Southeast Asia region. These short-distance migrants includes many species of storks, cormorants and pelicans that breed in mainland Southeast Asia, including the spot-billed pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* and the Sarus crane *Antigone antigone*. Like long-distance migratory species, short-distance migrants in the ASEAN region are also increasingly impacted by habitat loss and degradation of inland wetlands (including riverine wetlands), as well as localized hunting pressures in Southeast Asia. This has resulted in many species being now recognized as globally threatened under the IUCN Red List.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest and involvement of the ASEAN member states in the conservation of migratory waterbirds. This has led to the establishment of an ASEAN Network on Wetlands and Migratory Waterbirds Conservation (WMWC) in March 2017 following the recommendations from the 8th and 9th Meetings of Partners (MOP8/MOP9), a regional initiative with the aims of, (1) facilitating cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experience, (2) providing support to site-level managers, (3) coordinating and facilitating the implementation of conservation projects and, (4) providing strategic recommendations to the relevant ASEAN working groups. Recognizing this, there is therefore an urgent need to identify threatened short-distance migratory waterbirds and their conservation requirements in the ASEAN region. This is necessary to further promote cooperation and collaboration among ASEAN member states (AMS), as well as organizations and experts in the region, and thus contribute to supporting the work of the ASEAN Network on Wetlands and Migratory Waterbirds Conservation.

**2. Migratory waterbird species of concern for Southeast Asia**

A preliminary assessment was made to identify short-distance, migratory waterbird species of conservation concern for Southeast Asia and neighboring countries. The results of this assessment (Table 1) includes a number of globally threatened species with key populations in Southeast Asia. This includes, for instance, the masked finfoot *Heliopais personatus* (EN) and the Sarus crane *Antigone antigone* (VU) as well as species that migrate between Southeast Asia and adjoining countries, such as Japanese night heron *Gorsachius goisagi* (EN). This assessment also identified a number of species whose populations show declining trends but their conservation status has not yet been upgraded on the latest IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, including the watercock *Gallicrex cinerea* (LC) and Schrenck’s bittern *Ixobrychus eurhythmus* (LC).

The assessment also identified some widely-shared causes of decline for these species. This includes the conversion, loss and degradation of their wetland or forest habitat, as well as unsustainable and/or illegal hunting. Efforts to conserve these species would necessarily involve addressing the different drivers of threat affecting these species, regional cooperation as well as the sustainable management of key sites for these species. For instance, efforts to conserve the eastern (migratory) population of the Sarus crane (ssp. *sharpii*) in mainland Southeast Asia can be expected to include strengthening the management of protected areas important to the species, such as the breeding grounds in Preah Vihear Protected Forest and Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary and wintering grounds in the Ang Trapeang Thmor, Boeung Prek Lapouv and Anlung Pring Sarus Crane Reserves in Cambodia, as well as the adjacent Tram Chim National Park and Kieng Luong in Vietnam.

Table 1. Tentative list of globally threatened and declining short-distance migratory bird species in the ASEAN region. The IUCN Red List threat categories for each species are provided in parenthesis.

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| **Species** | **Range states** | **Habitat type** | **Key threat(s)** | **Key sites for protection** |
| **Globally Threatened species under the IUCN Red List** | | | | |
| Masked Finfoot  *Heliopais personatus* (EN) | Breeds India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Cambodia, (may potentially breed) but winters in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore | Swamp forest, mangrove forests; also coastal and inland wetlands, e.g. swamps, tidal creeks, flooded forest, and lakes. | Habitat loss and degradation due to forest clearance for agriculture conversion; habitat disturbance due to logging activities and increased traffic and fishing activities on waterways, hunting of adults | **Myanmar** Tamanthi and Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary  **Cambodia** Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary  **Thailand** Ao Phang-nga, Khao Yai National Park  **Malaysia** Taman Negara |
| Greater Adjutant *Leptotilos dubius* (EN) | Localized breeding in NE India, and NW Cambodia; disperses widely across mainland SE Asia | Swamp forest and other inland wetlands, including grasslands, cultivation, marshes and forested pools (e.g. trapeangs) | Habitat loss and degradation (e.g. swamp forest around Tonle Sap), hunting of adults and collection of chicks. | **Cambodia** Prek Toal Bird Sanctuary and other reserves on the Tonle Sap Lake  **Vietnam** Tram Chim National Park |
| Japanese Night Heron  *Gorsachius goisagi* (EN) | Breeds only Japan; winters mainly in the Philippines, also Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia. | Breeds in lowland and hill forests (Honshu); winters in forest, and adjacent cultivation; also in swamps and rice fields. | Habitat loss due to deforestation for timber, firewood and subsistence agriculture (kainguin). | **Philippines** Quezon National Park, Mount Apo Natural Park  **Indonesia** recently recorded in Belitung |
| Sarus Crane  *Antigone antigone* (VU) | Breeds mostly Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos; winters Cambodia and Vietnam | Breeds open forest, winters in grasslands (flooded, dry), agricultural fields, freshwater marshes and ponds | Habitat loss and degradation due to drainage and conversion of wetlands to agriculture; ingestion of pesticides, hunting of adults and collection of eggs/chicks. | **Cambodia** Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, Ang Trapeang Thmor, Boeung Prek Lapouv and Anlung Pring Sarus Crane Reserves  **Vietnam** Tram Chim National Park, Kien Luong Wetlands  **Thailand** Huay Jorrakaemak Reservoir Non-Hunting Area  **Myanmar** Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, sites in Ayerwaddy Delta |
| Indian Skimmer  *Rynchops albicollis* (VU) | Localised breeding populations in India, Nepal, Bangladesh; formerly bred widely in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam; disperses widely during non-breeding season, reaching Myanmar and rarely Thailand. | Breeds on riverine sand bars; disperses widely to coastal wetlands, including coastal mudflats and open wetlands in non-breeding season | Habitat loss and degradation; damming of major river systems in the region has disrupted hydrological regimes (especially on the Mekong, Irrawaddy and their distributions), resulting in habitat loss | **Myanmar** Nanthar Island, Gulf of Mottama Ramsar Site; other yet to be identified wetlands in upper Myanmar.  **Cambodia** Mekong tributaries in western Cambodia |
| Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemericola* (VU) | Breeds in the Himalayas and winters at lower elevation, e.g. northern Vietnam, Myanmar, north Thailand and Laos. | Breeds in alpine meadows and marshes but winters in swampy ground in and at the edge of evergreen forest and marshy grassland and scrub. | Habitat loss and degradation especially in key wintering habitats, e.g. evergreen forest, wooded wetlands, marshes and swamps, hunting | **Vietnam** formerly Hoang Lien National Park |
| **Globally Near Threatened species under IUCN Red List, and other species whose populations are declining based on available data** | | | | |
| Spot-billed Pelican  *Pelecanus philippensis* (NT) | In SE Asia, mainly breeds in Cambodia (Tonle Sap) and disperses to Thailand and Vietnam; small numbers present in Myanmar, but no known colonies | Swamp forest, freshwater marshes, vegetated edge of ponds and lakes, coastal mudflats, rarely working wetlands | Disturbance at breeding colonies (e.g. cutting of nesting trees), invasive plants, hunting and poaching of eggs and chicks, populations in Indonesia (Sumatra) and Myanmar has declined rapidly and on the verge of extirpation | **Cambodia** Prek Toal Bird Sanctuary and other sites on the Tonle Sap Lake  **Myanmar** Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary |
| Black-headed Ibis  *Threskiornis melanocephalus* (NT) | Occurs across much of South, SE and East Asia. In SE Asia, mainly breeds in Cambodia, with small numbers elsewhere (Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia) | Swamp forest, freshwater marshes, vegetated edge of ponds and lakes, flooded grassland, agricultural fields, coastal mudflats and mangroves | Population decline thought to be moderately rapid due to hunting, habitat loss and disturbance at breeding colonies. | **Cambodia** Prek Toal Bird Sanctuary and sites on the Tonle Sap Lake  **Myanmar** Gulf of Mottama  **Indonesia** Berbak-Sembilang National Park  **Vietnam** Tram Chim National Park |
| Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea* (LC) | Occurs across much of South, SE and East Asia. | Freshwater marshes, vegetated edge of ponds and lakes, flooded grassland, agricultural fields | Population thought to be declining due to habitat loss and degradation, and over-hunting for food in SE Asia, including in Indonesia and Malaysia | Widespread |
| Schrenck’s Bittern *Ixobrychus eurhythmus* (LC) | Breeds in China, SE Russia, Korea and Japan. Winters across much of SE Asia. | Breeds freshwater marshes (incl. reed beds), vegetated edge of ponds and lakes, winters in freshwater marshes, and forested streams and rivers (including mangroves) | Habitat loss and degradation, hunting | Widespread |