

【For Immediate Release】

HONG KONG, 11 April 2019

**25 years of conservation**

**Black-faced Spoonbill may no longer be endangered**

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) coordinated The International Black-faced Spoonbill Census 2019 that was undertaken from 25 to 27 of January. During the 2019 census, a total of 4,463 Black-faced Spoonbills was recorded, a 13% increase compared to that of the last year.

***Steady rise in population: Black-faced Spoonbill is expected to be listed as “vulnerable”***

The International Black-faced Spoonbill Census has been carried out since 1994, nearly 200 senior birdwatchers, conservationists, researchers, and ornithologists participated at the same time at more than 100 sites all over the world. Census results from the past 25 years show that the population of Black-faced Spoonbill (BFS) is rising steadily. Mr Yu Yat-tung, the Research Manager of HKBWS anticipated that “the Black-faced Spoonbill may be downlisted from “Endangered” to “Vulnerable” in the near future. This is an extremely rare but very encouraging event in bird conservation. However, the Black-faced Spoonbill is still considered to be at high risk of unnatural extinction and ongoing conservation, research and monitoring are still needed.”

***25-years of conservation work for Black-faced Spoonbill sees hope rising steadily***

Comparing data from the past 5 years, there is a steady growth in population of BFS, not only in a few places but in most of the main wintering sites of BFS in Japan, Taiwan, Deep Bay (Hong Kong) and mainland China.

BFS conservation began in the early 90s, and has come a long way, including research, tracking, advocating, lobbying and public education as well as collaboration across difference countries and regions. The BFS’s population has now increased from fewer than 300 individuals to nearly 4,500 this year. We believe that this is a big step forward for bird conservation and is also a step away from extinction for the BFS. It is wonderful to see greatly increased public awareness of BFS in most countries across its range and the name of BFS go viral: this is a source of great encouragement for everyone involved in its conservation.

***HKBWS urges protection of fishpond to meet its’ population increase***

It is hoped that the population of BFS will continue to grow steadily, hence there are two main directions for future conservation. First is the need to increase the capacity of current wintering sites. Census results from Jiangmen and Leizhou Peninsula are good examples of



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what is needed: these are newly established wintering sites of BFS: in Jiangmen numbers increased from 23 to 61 from 2015 – 2019; whilst in the Leizhou Peninsula numbers grew from 4 to 14 from 2014-19.

The second main conservation direction is to increase the carrying capacity of the current wintering sites; this is the focus of conservation in Hong Kong and Deep Bay. Census data there shows that more than 30% of BFS were recorded in fishpond areas, indicating that fishponds are an important habitat for BFS. In addition to the Hong Kong Fishpond Conservation Scheme which has been in operation since 2012, HKBWS suggests that a proactive conservation policy is needed, both to maintain fish farming operations and the integrity of fishpond habitat in order to raise the carrying capacity of BFS in Hong Kong and Deep Bay. For instance, the government can prudently scrutinize the potential conservation implications of every relevant development submission. Further, as Mr Yu added, “Every one of us can help BFS conservation by consuming delicious locally-raised fishes!”

#### About HKBWS

HKBWS was founded in 1957. In 2013, it became the Partner of BirdLife International. The society is also a registered charitable institution. The objectives of HKBWS are: to promote appreciation of birds and bird watching, to conduct various surveys and studies about birds and their ecology, and to conserve birds and their living habitat in order to achieve our vision “People and Birds together Nature Forever”.

#### About The International Black-faced Spoonbill Census

The International Black-faced Spoonbill Census was organised since 1994, nearly 200 senior birdwatchers, conservationists, researchers, and ornithologists conducted at the same time in more than 100 sites all over the world.

Photos, video and other information download link: <http://bit.ly/2VCpvJp>

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