
Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force

News Bulletin No 24 · May 2021





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The Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) News Bulletin is a regular, half-yearly update of activities of the SBS Task Force of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP). The News Bulletin is edited by Dr Christoph Zöckler, Coordinator of the EAAFP SBS Task Force with assistance of Sayam U. Chowdhury. Layout by Matthias Fanck.

Mission:

The East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) aims to coordinate the conservation activities identified in the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Single Species Action Plan for the species, which was commissioned by BirdLife International. The activities in the Action Plan are regularly reviewed and updated by all Flyway Members and a growing network of active supporters and groups in the Flyway countries, and beyond.

The Task Force originates from the establishment of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Team (SBS RT) in 2004, when several partners active in the conservation of this globally threatened wader met in Edinburgh. With the growing level of activity, the finalization of the Action Plan in 2008 and a growing network of partners, organisations and supporters the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) was formed at the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) meeting in Korea in February 2010. In December 2010, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) was officially endorsed as one of the first species Task Forces by the Partnership under the EAAFP Shorebird Working Group. Implementing organisation for the SBS TF is BirdLife International through its partner Birds Russia. It is chaired by the Government Partner of Russia. Task Force members consist of the EAAFP Government Partners of key range states for the species and international conservation organisations. These are: the Russian Federation, Japan, People's Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Union of Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT), Wetlands International, a representative of the EAAFP Shorebird Working Group, the Mangrove Conservation Fund (MCF), Fauna Flora International (FFI) and experts and conservation organisations from principal range states and other partners. We are grateful to the Manfred-Hermsen-Stiftung, Bremen, the RSPB and NABU, MCF and the International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC) for their continued support of the SBS Task Force and Spoon-billed Sandpiper projects across the range states.

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Spoon-billed Sandpiper
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Watercolor on paper, 2021

Foreword from the Editor

Dr Christoph Zöckler · Manfred Hermsen Foundation, SBS TF Coordinator · May 2021

Most of us, including myself, were hoping that after a year later, the pandemic would be over and lockdown and travel restrictions would be removed. But this is not the case. In fact the situation is much more complex. We are finding ourselves in a new world, with new rules that our Task Force must adjust too. Often the perspective is distorted from the current view point. While in many countries the situation seems to have been under control for many months, the crisis remains high in some or resurges again in others. The virus is currently raging on the Indian subcontinent, affecting both local people and our team in Bangladesh. Russia is still very badly affected. Myanmar is not only suffering from the pandemic but in addition has to deal with political turmoil. Any travel between countries is still nearly impossible. Despite this backdrop it is almost a miracle that all our teams were able to perform the annual winter survey, even though some, such as the Myanmar team had to choose quite a different route this year. The coverage of sites was also higher with more than 50 sites were counted this year.

However, overall the news for the Sandpiper is not good. The decline in total numbers on the wintering sites confirmed the fears raised after the poor breeding season last year: The population continues to decline and the decline is observed at almost all sites. Slightly higher numbers in Southern China and Northern Vietnam reflect a better coverage but also point to a northward shift in the wintering area.

This continued decline is frustrating. Considering all the hard work and conservation successes that have been achieved at so many places along the flyway, we still seem to have missed some major issues that continue driving the decline. The hunting pressure in the Russian Far East might be more severe than we assumed. The new report on hunting on Sakhalin is grim reading. Both Kamchatka and Sakhalin require a major effort in



tackling the hunting crisis in this part of Russia, for all migrating shorebirds of the flyway, not just Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

The restrictions on travelling also meant that meetings in person were still impossible. The number of virtual meetings though increased, too many already for some, but a selection of the recent events is available for you to browse. The lack of personal meetings has not alienated us from each other and the team is still strong, although I personally am missing meeting many friends and companions in the fight to save the species. And our international collaboration needs to be that strong to face up to new challenges along the flyway. We would like to thank all our many supporters, who have stuck with us and continued to support us through these difficult times. Thank you very much and I hope you enjoy another issue of our bulletin.

Guest Foreword

Mihir Kumar Do · Conservator of Forests, Wildlife and Nature Conservation Circle, Bangladesh Forest Department, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bangladesh

Bangladesh is well known for its rich biological diversity. It is astonishing that such a small country in South Asia supports 710 species of birds including 310 migratory species. The country supports 78 Globally Threatened and Near Threatened avian species. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper is one of the five Critically Endangered birds that still occur in Bangladesh and the country hosts one of the most important wintering areas for the species in the world. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper visits us every winter and spends approximately six months in the intertidal mudflats of coastal Bangladesh. Highest recent counts from Bangladesh include minimum 70 individuals in 2016, comprising 48 birds in Meghna Estuary and 22 birds in Cox's Bazar.

Bangladesh became a member of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership in 2010. Under this membership, the Bangladesh Forest Department has been working closely with the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force and Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project since 2010. The country has designated six Flyway Network Sites, so far three of which are coastal sites (Sonadia Island, Nijhum Dwip National Park and Ganguirar Char). These three sites support the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper and many other species of conservation concern including the Nordmann's Greenshank and Great Knot. In 2018, the Bangladesh Forest Department included Ganguirar Char as Flyway Network Site - which was discovered by shorebird experts in 2015 and supported 45 Spoon-billed Sandpipers.

In addition, Bangladesh Forest Department has developed a Wildlife Management Plan for Sonadia Island in 2018.



Bangladesh Forest Department has initiated to conserve the migratory birds and their habitats with conservation and management of the Flyway Network Sites as priority areas. We are very much hopeful to continue the collaborative work with the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership and other national and international organizations for the conservation of the globally threatened shorebirds in Bangladesh.

My best wishes to the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force and everyone involved and I look forward to hearing more Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation success stories across the flyway in the coming years.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper in webinars: October 2020 – March 2021

Sayam U. Chowdhury

Members and supporters of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force had participated in several webinars on shorebird and wetland conservation between October 2020 and March 2021. Details and recordings of these webinars are given below:

1. "Inspiring Actions for Migratory Shorebird Conservation: success stories from the East Asian-Australasian Flyway", hosted by BirdLife International in collaboration with BirdLife partners in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway on 9 October 2020.

SBS talks:

- Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the wintering grounds by Sayam U. Chowdhury
- Acquisition and management of Pak Thale salt pans for shorebird conservation by Ayuwat Jearwattanakanok

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSxwS-0KeD8>

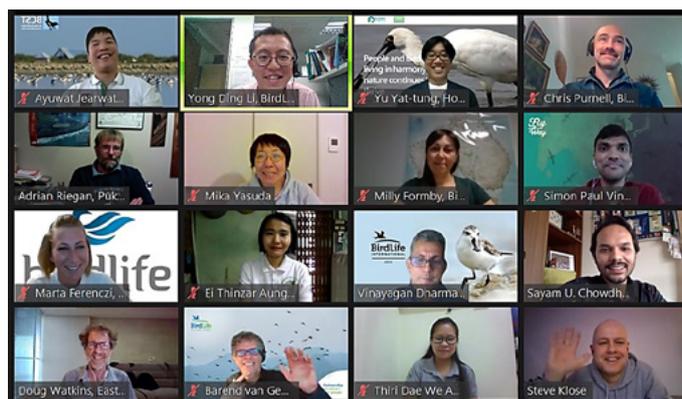
2. "How can legflags on birds guide conservation", hosted by the East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership, BirdLife International and Oriental Bird Club on 10 October 2020.

SBS talk:

- Using the world's smallest satellite tag to find wintering and stopover sites of the one of the world's rarest birds; The Spoon-billed Sandpiper by Nigel Clark

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7dXrQ2B7Yg>

3. "The Magic of Migration: Actions that keep migratory birds flying across borders", hosted by BirdLife International on 14 October 2020.



Screenshots of webinars focused on Spoon-billed Sandpiper and flyway conservation

SBS talk:

- Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper by Sayam U. Chowdhury

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpq3FwPfbqo>

4. Four talks on SBS TF's work during the "1st East Asian-Australasian Flyway Shorebird Science Meeting", was hosted by the National Institute of Ecology, Seocheon-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, Republic of Korea on 3-5 November 2020.

SBS talks:

- 20 years of Spoon-billed Sandpiper studies: conservation successes/challenges by Evgeny Syroechkovskiy

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3rMSdxY31k>

- Promoting alternative livelihoods in Myanmar and Bangladesh reduce hunting pressure by Sayam U. Chowdhury

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tU1-BAgtpM&t=76s>

- Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper – finding and protecting unknown sites by Nigel Clark

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIQIKsq5uF8>

- Important shorebirds sites of Bangladesh status, threats and conservation by Sayam U. Chowdhury

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0x6aKUeBO2U>

5. Three talks on the conservation of the "Spoon-billed Sandpiper", hosted by BDI Citizen Science, South Africa in February 2021.

SBS talks:

- An introduction to an endangered bird, the

Spoon-billed Sandpiper by Elena Lappo & Evgeny Syroechkovskiy

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FX8dNHDCUj0>

- The breeding grounds of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the Chukotka Peninsula in Far Eastern Russia, and the conservation work to save this endangered species by Elena Lappo

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0syXPMw9wk>

- International initiatives for the conservation of this endangered species by Elena Lappo & Evgeny Syroechkovskiy

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7snLBooGt6o>

6. "Spoon-billed Sandpiper & the East Asian-Australasian Flyway", hosted by the Oriental Bird Club on 20 March 2021.

SBS talks:

- The Spoon-billed Sandpiper Story by Christoph Zöckler
- Pak Thale Nature Reserve: a privately-owned reserve for shorebirds by Ayuwat Jearwattanakonok
- The importance of satellite tagging for Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation by Nigel Clark

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=293XGxD0J5A>

7. World Migratory Bird Day on 8 May 2021 hosted by EAAFP

Once again, EAAFP celebrated World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD). Christoph Zöckler is answering questions of the audience regarding SBS decline: <https://youtu.be/GR0kiSAY0lQ>

ICFC supported project update: 2020-2021

Sayam U. Chowdhury, Pyae Phyo Aung, Ayuwat Jearwattanakanok, Jing Li and Scott Hecker

Since 2016, The International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC) has been supporting the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force to carry out direct conservation work at the most important wintering areas in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and South China. The project employed local guards, helped to build temporary camps and removal of illegal mist nets to protect the shorebirds from hunting; as well as facilitated legal and sustainable livelihoods as an alternative to hunting, and helped establishing no-hunting bylaws among Village Conservation Groups with support from local governments and educating the local communities.

ICFC shorebird conservation landscapes across four Asian countries supported approximately 60,000 waterbirds of 60 species including a minimum of 66 Spoon-billed Sandpipers in 2020-2021. These areas also supported globally endangered 85 Nordmann's Greenshanks, 2,079 Great Knots and ten other globally near-threatened species.

In 2020-2021, Covid-19 pandemic had restricted the travel between provinces making it difficult for field staffs to carry out activities at different project sites. However, despite these difficulties, there has been some major progress in all four countries where ICFC operates through local partners.

Conservation work in Bangladesh mainly focused on Sonadia Island, where local guards conducted regular monitoring at shorebird sites to prevent hunting and organized a campaign in village streets using loudspeakers reminding the villagers that bird hunting is strictly prohibited by the wildlife protection act in Bangladesh. Other Spoon-billed Sandpiper sites including Chittagong coast and Nijhum Dwip National Park were also visited as part of the Bay of Bengal survey. A school campaign was organized, where approximately 300 school children and five school teachers participated.

Apart from regular monitoring and patrolling at the key sites in South China, a workshop was organised by SBS in China on 6-7 March 2021, where 17 local waterbird surveyors, volunteers and government officials from Jiangsu, Fujian, Hainan, Guangdong, and Guangxi participated.

Nature Conservation Society-Myanmar (NCS) partnered with local NGO Rakhine Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (RBANCA) for regular patrolling and shorebird monitoring at Nanthar Island and its surrounding areas. RBANCA carried out monthly patrols around the island and did not observe any bird hunting during this period, but recorded other threats (e.g. sand mining). NCS produced 2,000 copies of Spoon-billed



Figure 1: ICFC supported project sites



School campaign on migratory shorebird conservation, Bangladesh
Sayam Chowdhury



Campaign in village streets using loudspeakers around Sonadia Island, Bangladesh
BSCP

Sandpiper factsheets in Burmese and English, RBANCA team organised small groups education and awareness activities in collaboration with local site guards and police force members.

Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST) has put more focus on the capacity building for the local conservation group (Pak Thale Bird and Nature Conservation Club) and strengthen the relationship with local stakeholders including both governmental and local residents. BCST has also completed the construction of a birdwatching hide, the visitor shelter and signage around Pak Thale Nature Reserve. Monthly bird surveys were also continued despite the difficulties in traveling due many restrictions related to the national outbreak of Covid.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper workshop at Fangchenggang, 6-7 March 2021, China
SBS in China



Small groups education and outreach activities at Nanthar Island, Myanmar
RBANCA

About the International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC):

ICFC was founded in 2007 to advance the long-term preservation of nature and biodiversity in the tropics and other priority areas worldwide. Its Shorebird Conservation Initiative was launched in 2015 with a focus on endangered, threatened, and declining shorebird populations primarily during their migratory non-breeding season. To date ICFC has invested over \$30 million toward its overall efforts in 34 countries in direct support of in-country non-profit organizations. For more information visit our website: www.icfcana.org.

The revised National Key Protected Wild Animal List of China

Chi-Yeung Choi, School of Environmental Science and Engineering, Southern University of Science and Technology, Shenzhen, China

What happened?

On the first of February 2021, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration and the National Park Administration released the revised National Key Protected Wild Animal List of China (hereafter NKPWA list) 国家重点保护野生动物名录 (<http://www.forestry.gov.cn/main/5461/20210205/122418860831352.html>).

What is it about?

According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Conservation of Wild Animals 野生动物保护法 (version implemented on 1-January-2017), the NKPWA list should be formulated by the agencies of the State Council supervising the conservation of wild animals. These agencies should make scientific assessments base on the latest data and publications so that the NKPWA list could play an important role in conserving rare or endangered wild animals, maintaining biodiversity and promoting ecological civilisation.

The first NKPWA list was compiled and implemented on 14-January-1989, with very few minor amendments made in the last three decades. The first major revision of the NKPWA list started in September 2018, following the requirement to revise the NKPWA list every five years in the latest Law of the People's Republic of China on Conservation of Wild Animals. The final version was approved by the State Council on the 4 January 2021 after consultation with experts from various research institutes, local government representatives, stakeholders and general public. All the 476 species listed in the original NKPWA list were retained while 517 previously non-listed species were added to this revised version, yielding a total of 988 animal species on the revised NKPWA list. The key criteria considered during the revision process included the species'

- 1) endangered level with reference to IUCN Red List;
- 2) ecological role and function;
- 3) similarity with other listed species;

- 4) compatibility with international regulations and;
- 5) national and international attention.

A precautionary approach was taken for species with uncertain natural range and distribution.

What does it mean to shorebird conservation?

Nine species from the Family Charadriidae and Scolopacidae were added to this revised NKPWA list, together with the two existing shorebird species, this yielded a total of 11 shorebird species on the revised NKPWA list (Table 1). The Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* and Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* were listed as Class 1 protected species while the rest as Class 2 protected species.

It is forbidden to hunt, capture, kill, sell, acquire and use any of these species. For research or other special reasons, permission granted by the agencies of the State Council supervising the conservation of wild animals, provincial authority and county authority is required for Class 1 protected species, Class 2 protected species and non-listed species, respectively. Any violation could lead to criminal liability and penalties, with the severity depends on the protection level of species, number of animals involved and whether any animals were found. Heavier penalties are in place for the hunting, capturing or killing of species listed on the NKPWA list than non-listed species. In addition to the heavier penalties mentioned, criminal liability will be pursued for the selling, acquisition or using of species listed on the NKPWA list but not for the non-listed species. Therefore, the revised list and related law may discourage the poaching of shorebirds and other wild animals and it will provide prosecutors, conservation practitioners and public with a stronger legal basis to charge violators in mainland China. The inclusion of some relatively 'common' species such as the Ruddy Turnstone and Broad-billed Sandpiper may further discourage illegal shorebird hunting by making this activity less profitable to poachers.

Table 1. The shorebird species (Family Charadriidae or Scolopacidae) and their respective protection class in the revised National Key Protected Wild Animal List of China

Family	Common name	Scientific name	Class	Note
Charadriidae	Sociable Lapwing	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>	2	New
Scolopacidae	Wood Snipe	<i>Gallinago nemoricola</i>	2	New
Scolopacidae	Asian Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>	2	New
Scolopacidae	Little Curlew	<i>Numenius minutus</i>	2	Retained
Scolopacidae	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	2	New
Scolopacidae	Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	2	New
Scolopacidae	Nordmann's Greenshank	<i>Tringa guttifer</i>	1	Uplist from Class 2
Scolopacidae	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	2	New
Scolopacidae	Great Knot	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	2	New
Scolopacidae	Spoon-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pygmaea</i>	1	New
Scolopacidae	Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	2	New

What else should be done in the next round of revision?

A few shorebird species were not included on the revised list but deserve the consideration of listing, which is scheduled for revision every five years. These species included the Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* and Red Knot *Calidris canutus*. These species rely heavily on the wetlands in China during migration stopovers and their populations have declined significantly over the last few decades in Australia (Clemens et al. 2016; Studds et al. 2017) and in some cases, also in China (Choi et al. 2020).

The inclusion of nine new shorebird species on the NKPWA list is an encouraging step toward better shorebird conservation in China. This positive change will encourage researchers, especially those in China, to publish their observations and analysis (e.g. population trends of shorebirds) more frequently to provide decision makers with the scientific basis for assessment. Moreover, up-to-date assessment on the IUCN Red List is critical as this is one of the important references in deter-

mining the NKPWA list. As the conservation-related laws become more and more robust, it is important for those who are responsible, as well as the general public who cares, to take advantage of these changes and enforce the related legislations to conserve shorebirds and other wild animals in China.

References

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2021 South China Spoon-billed sandpiper (SBS) winter census

Chen Qing on behalf of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Alliance



Abstract

China SBS winter census is conducted annually to assess the distribution and population of this critically endangered species. This year, the census was conducted on January 15-18, covering most of the SBS wintering sites from Hangzhou Bay in the north to Beibu Gulf in the southwest. We recorded a total of 61 SBS individuals during the 2021 winter census, taking up 8% (or more if global population lower) of the global population (773 individuals of all ages, Green et al. 2021). The largest wintering site is Leizhou Peninsula, where 33 individuals were recorded.

Introduction

Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* is categorized as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List since 2008. It breeds on coastal tundra in the north-east Siberian Arctic and sub-Arctic zones, molts in the Yellow Sea region (Yang et al., 2020), and migrates to south-east Asia in the middle of the non-breeding season (Chang et al. 2020). Until recently, the estimated world population size of SBS was 490 mature individuals (95% CL = 360–620) and 773 individuals of all ages (95% CL = 569–978), declining at a rate of 9% per year during 2009–2016 (Green et al., 2021).

Systematic winter census in China started from 2019, organized by Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Alliance. Each year, over 100 observers

from more than 20 organizations participate in the survey, making also good use of increased public awareness raising at the same time as well. This report presents the result of the census undertaken in January 2021.

Methods

The methodology of this census has been the same as the previous year. Census was held in mid-January when wintering population is relatively stable. The dates scheduled coincided with the overall winter census organized by the SBS Task Force and with the spring tides in Leizhou. All counts in the census were made with binoculars and telescopes, and the survey time varied at different sites depending on local condition. Most of the survey were made on the mudflat at lower tides, artificial high tide roosts were also scanned when allowed.

Results

We recorded a total of 61 SBS individuals in China (Fig. 2). This figure shows a 24% increase from the previous winter (49 individuals). Based on our SBS winter census from 2019 to 2021, we can see a gradual increase in the number of SBS wintering in Minjiang Estuary, Yangjiang, Leizhou Peninsula, Qinzhou, Fangchenggang. Leizhou Peninsula is the largest wintering site in southern China, where in 2021 33 SBS were recorded, taking up 54% of the total count (Table 1).

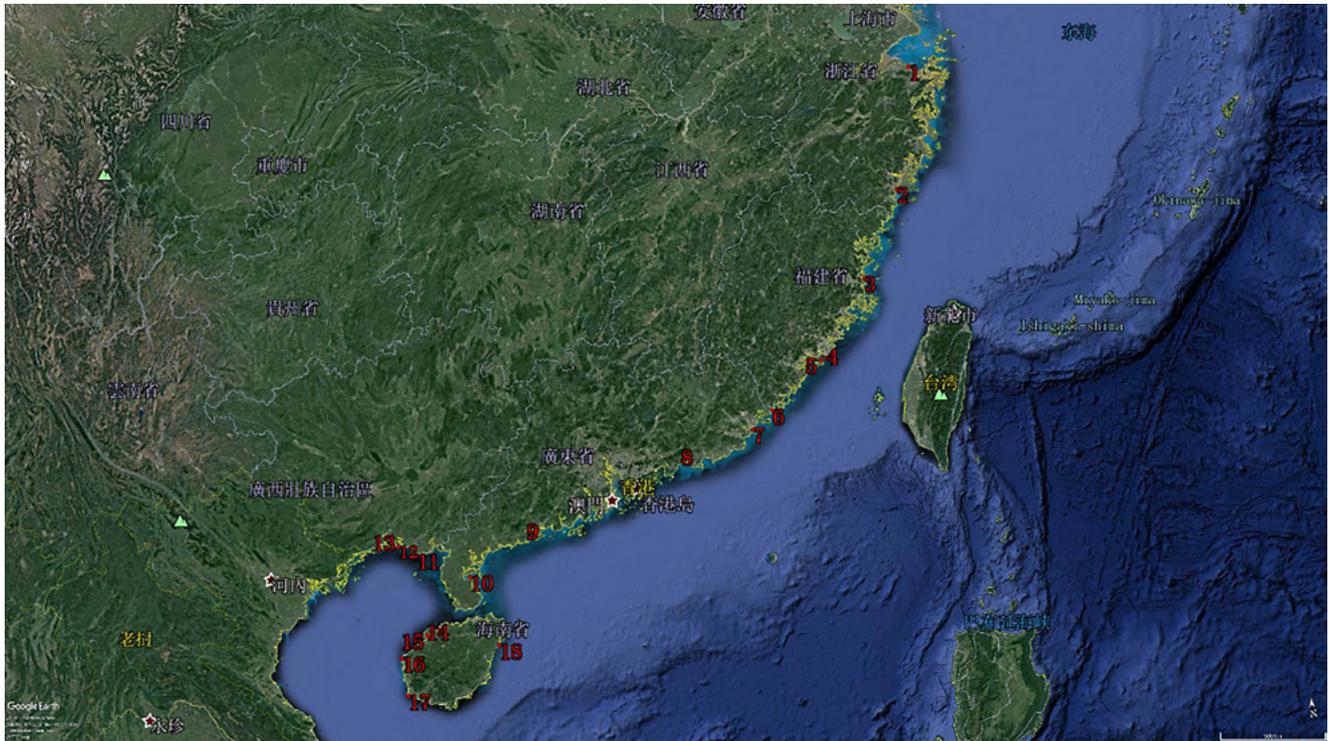


Fig. 1: The SBS winter census sites in 2021

1 Zhejiang Hangzhou Bay 浙江杭州湾 2 Zhejiang Wenzhou Bay 浙江温州湾 3 Fujian Minjiang Estuary 福建闽江口
 4 Fujian Quanzhou 福建泉州 5 Fujian Xiamen 福建厦门大嶼岛 6 Fujian Zhao'an 福建诏安 7 Guangdong Santou 广东汕头
 8 Guangdong Haifeng 广东海丰 9 Guangdong Yangjiang 广东阳江 10 Guangdong Leizhou 广东雷州 11 Guangxi Beihai 广西北海
 12 Guangxi Qinzhou 广西钦州 13 Guangxi Fangchenggang 广西防城港 14 Hainan Xinying 海南新盈
 15 Hainan Danzhou Bay 海南儋州湾 16 Hainan Dongfang Sigen 海南东方四更 17 Hainan Yinggehai 海南莺歌海
 18 Hainan Wenchang 海南文昌

In terms of waterbird abundance, 15 survey sites were home to 80 species of 70,542 waterbirds (Fig. 3, Table 2), of which the waterbird group with the highest abundance was shorebird (accounting for 75%). Lack of whole-waterbirds survey data in Santou, Haifeng, and Hangzhou Bay can explain the decline of waterbirds abundance from 2020 to 2021. A total of 60,000 waterbirds were found at the 12 sites where a whole waterbird survey was conducted in both 2020 and 2021. Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* were the most abundant species.

Among the recorded 80 species, five species are

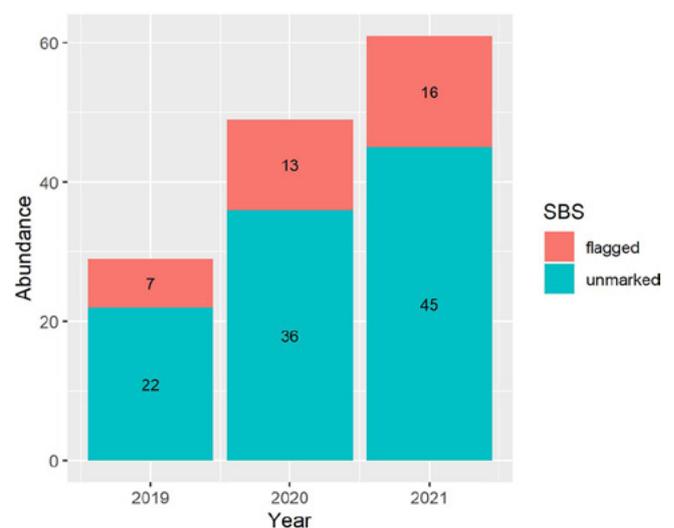


Fig. 2: Summary of SBS winter census 2019-2021. In 2021, we surveyed 18 sites (37 plots), among which 4 plots were added to those of the previous year (18 sites 33 plots), but no SBS were found in those new plots.

Table 1: SBS record in 2021 winter census

Province	Site	Survey Plot	Survey Date	SBS count
Fujian	Minjiang Estuary	Meihuatan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Shanyutan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	3
	Quanzhou	Taxikou	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Jiangqi saltpan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	3
	Xiamen	Dadeng Island	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Zhao'an	Gongkougang	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
Guangdong	Haifeng[1]	Lake		0
		Lian'anwei		0
	Shantou[2]	Hanjiangkou	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Haojiangkou	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Leizhou[3]	Hebei	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	33
		Tujiao 2	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Xiwan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Dongli	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Yangjiang	Mumian	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Moyangjiangkou	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Pinggang	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Xitou	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	4
Guangxi	Beihai	Fengjiajiang	2021/1/15-2021/1/17	1
		Xichang, Hepu	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Zhulin saltpan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Qinzhou	Haiwei-Yangwu	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	3
		Fangchenggang	Bailangtan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17
	Jintan		2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Shaluoliao	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	5
	Shanxinsha Island	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	1	
Hainan	Xinying	Dongchang	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Guangcun	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Danzhou bay[4]	Danzhou Bay mudflat	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	5
		Xinying saltpan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Dongfang Sigen	Mianqianhai saltpan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Changhuanjiang	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Yinggehai	Yinggehai saltpan	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
	Wenchang	Huiwen	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
Zhejiang	Hangzhou Bay[5]	Hanzhou Bay	2021/1/16-2021/1/17	0
		Wenzhou Bay	Linkun mudflat	2021/1/16-2021/1/17
			Rui'an mudflat	2021/1/16-2021/1/17
Total	18	36		61

listed in the first class protection and nine species in the second class in the National Key Protected Wild Animal List of China. Moreover, one species is listed as Critically Endangered, four as Endangered, three as Vulnerable and seven as Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List.

Conclusion

Long-term monitoring can provide important data for waterbird population and habitat quality assessment, it is also the basis of adaptive wetland management. In January 2021, we recorded 61 SBS in total (16 with engraved flag). 21% of the survey locations were found within protected area (Leizhou, Xinying, Haifeng, Minjiang Estuary), and 59% of the SBSs were found in these areas. Local NGOs has also paid attention to some of the sites under no protection but with the high biodiversity like Danzhou Bay, Sanxinsha Island. This combination of NGOs and protection force from government provides a good reference for future conservation work.

From the feedback of observers, illegal hunting has been dramatically reduced in recent years, due to the strengthening of law enforcement and amending the wildlife protection laws in 2021. But human disturbance from tourism, aquaculture, and marine products collection raises new concerns. Collaborative conservation work is in need to mitigate these threats.

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北京市企业家环保基金会 Beijing Entrepreneur Environmental Protection Foundation

中山大学 Sun Yat-sen University

香港观鸟会 The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
中国林业科学研究院亚热带林业研究所 Re-

Table 2: Waterbirds abundance at each site in January 2021

Province	Site	Species	Waterbird abundance
Fujian	Minjiang Estuary	32	5089
	Xiamen	25	3614
	Quanzhou	29	2118
	Zhao'an	4	1018
Guangdong	Yangjiang	22	10502
	Leizhou	32	8315
Guangxi	Beihai	25	10039
	Qinzhou	28	11414
	Fangchenggang	29	6555
Hainan	Xinying	24	1641
	Danzhou Bay	29	7216
	Dongfang Sigen	26	928
	Yinggehai	10	1102
	Wenchang	18	991

search Institute of Subtropical Forestry, Chinese Academy of Forestry

温州野鸟会 Wenzhou Bird Conservancy

福建省观鸟协会 Fujian Birdwatching Society

睢鸠生态 Xiamen Jujiu Ecology Technology Co., Ltd.

深圳市观鸟协会 Shenzhen Bird Watching Society

南方科技大学 Southern University of Science and Technology

凤凰于飞 (筹) Fenghuangyufei (in preparation)

茂名市观鸟会 (筹) Maoming Bird Watching Society (in preparation)

广东湛江红树林国家级自然保护区 Guangdong Zhanjiang Mangrove National Nature Reserve

湛江市爱鸟协会 Zhanjiang Bird Watching Society

海口番薯湿地研究所 Hainan Duotan Wetland Research Institute

海南观鸟会 Hainan Bird Watching Society

海南新盈红树林国家湿地公园 Hainan Xinying Mangrove National Wetland Park

美境自然 Guangxi Biodiversity Research and Conservation Association

北海观鸟会 Beihai Bird Watching Society

广西红树林研究中心 Guangxi Mangrove Research Center

广西天籁自然观察与教育中心 Guangxi Tiannai nature observation and Education Center

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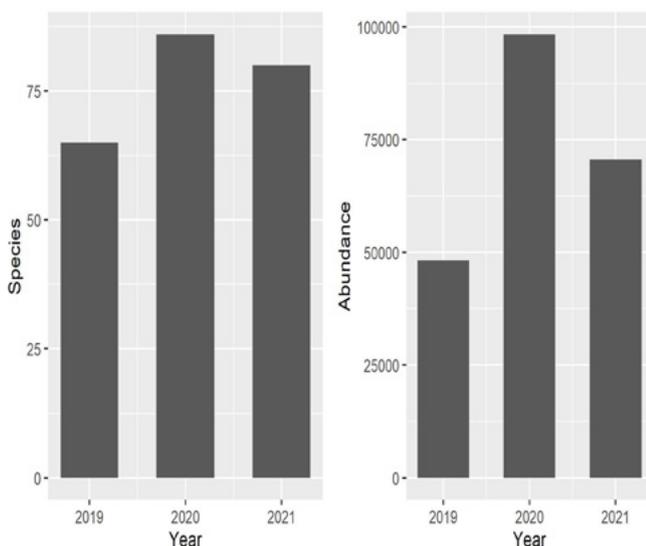


Fig. 3: Summary of SBS winter census 2019-2021

New site in the Gulf of Tonkin coast of northern Vietnam for Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea*

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Introduction

The coastal wetlands along the shallow Gulf of Tonkin spanning northern Vietnam and southern China (including the island of Hainan) are known to provide critical wintering habitat for several species of globally threatened waterbirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (Pedersen & Nguyen 1996; Li et al. 2020). These include significant congregations of Saunders's Gull *Saunder-silarus saundersi*, Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* (Pedersen & Nguyen 1996; Pedersen & Nielsen 1998). Many of the most important wetlands in Vietnam have been inventoried and identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) by Viet Nature and BirdLife International in 2002 (BirdLife International & Forest Inventory and Planning Institute 2001; Tordoff 2002; Tordoff et al. 2004). However, there are large gaps in knowledge in the distribution and current status of threatened migratory species in many of these wetland sites, thereby hampering their long-term conservation.

In Vietnam, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper was formerly known to occur regularly on the Gulf of Tonkin coastline (especially in Xuan Thuy National Park and the coast of Thai Thuy, see also Nguyen et al. 2000; Tordoff 2002; Zöckler et al. 2016; BirdLife International 2021) but there have been very few recent records until four individuals (nearly 0.7% of the known population) were surveyed and documented by the BirdLife Partner, Viet Nature over the winter of 2020-2021 during Black-faced Spoonbill-focused monitoring surveys (Le, T.T. in litt). A well-known satellite-tracked individual, 'KY' staged briefly in the

coastal wetlands of Haiphong in the winter of 2019-2020, and another tracked individual 'KT' staged just further north for a week in December 2017 (Chowdhury, S.U. in litt.), and suggested that that the species may occur here more regularly without being detected. To better understand the conservation status of wintering Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other migratory waterbird congregations in the coastal wetlands in northern Vietnam, we undertook a series of rapid exploratory surveys over the mid-winter period in 2020-2021 (January) with a focus on the extensive coastline between Ninh Binh (Day River) and Quang Ninh provinces, which has been identified through spatial modelling where the species may occur (Weston, J. in litt.).

Key findings and discussion

We found a maximum of four Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Hai Phong, in Cat Hai District during our surveys (Figure 1), which represent the first records of the species at this site. The first individual was detected at a sandy area of coastline (Figure 2, coordinates: 20.791498, 106.805642), followed by a second group of three individuals at another area of sandy-muddy coast (coordinates: 20.7819426, 106.7891874) on 22 January 2021. Birds were seen among large flocks of small-bodied shorebirds such as plovers and other Calidrid sandpipers (e.g. *Dunlin C. alpina*). Other important species detected during our survey in Cat Hai includes Saunders's Gull (VU), Great Knot (EN), and large numbers of Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (NT) (<2,500 individuals). In total we recorded as many as 9,000 individuals of 19 waterbird species in the coastal wetlands around Hai Phong, Cat Hai island.

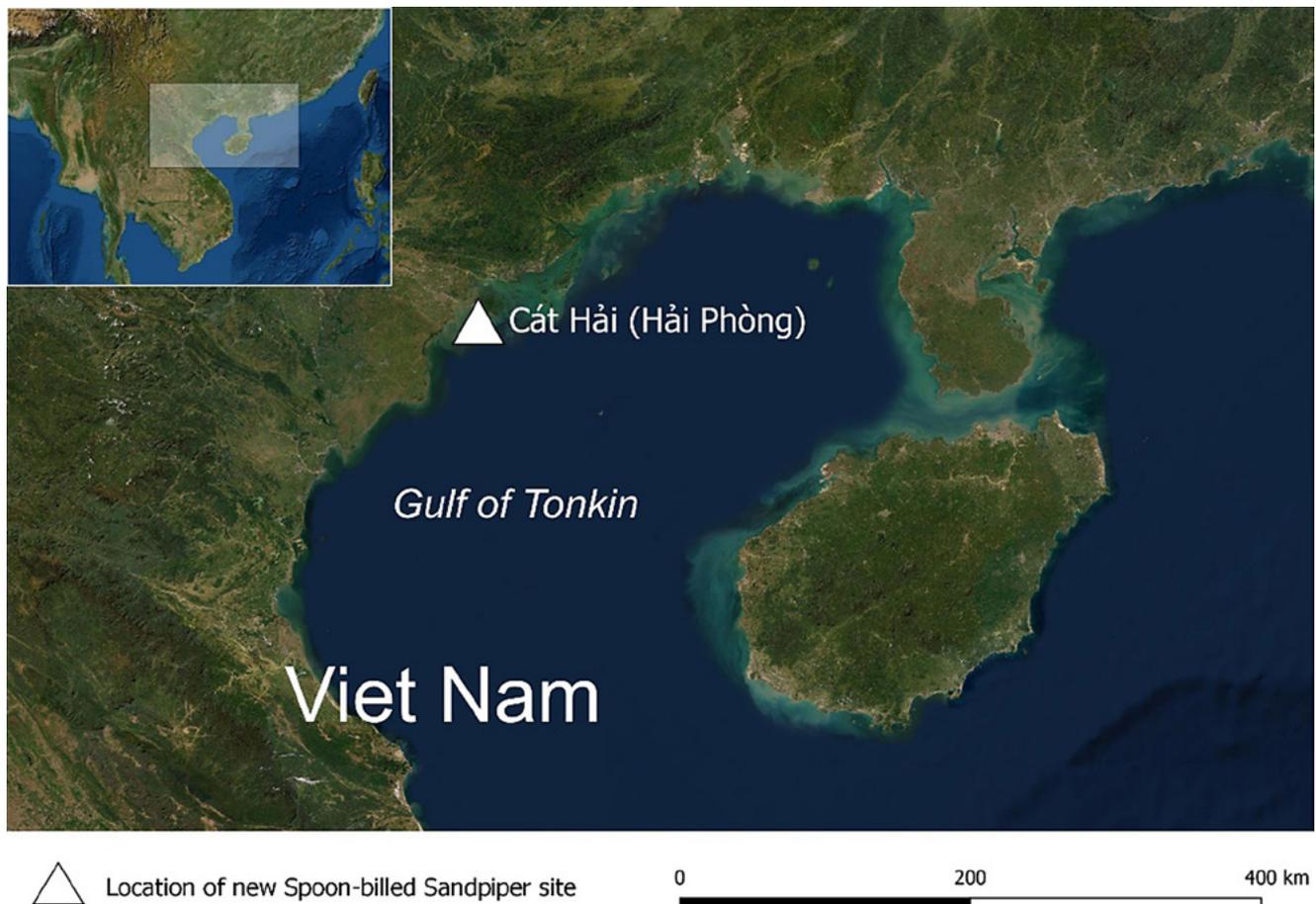


Figure 1. Map of Cat Hai district, Hai Phong. Inset map shows the north Vietnamese coast in relation to its location in Southeast Asia and southern China (Map source: ESRI).

Our onshore and boat-based survey of the coastal flats in Cat Hai (part of the An Hai IBA) is the first comprehensive survey of this site in recent years, and reveals a small, previously unknown wintering population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper here (up to four observed but more could have been present), as well as wintering populations of globally threatened waterbirds such as Saunders's Gull and Black-faced Spoonbill (recorded along during field travel between sites). Our surveys also detected large concentrations of shorebirds species, including several species nearly meeting the 1% criteria and species rare in northern Vietnam such as Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*. Our discoveries demonstrate the limited knowledge of wintering waterbird concentrations along the

Gulf of Tonkin outside Xuan Thuy, and the need for longer-term exploration and monitoring work with counts that overlap with the passage and wintering period of migratory waterbirds. There is a need for more comprehensive surveys spanning a longer period to better understand where shorebirds are concentrated at when feeding at low tide and the roosting sites at high tide to develop plans to protect biodiversity in this area. Our surveys also demonstrate that hunting is a persistent and widespread threat to wild birds at many points across the Gulf of Tonkin coastline, and consistent with surveys carried out by Viet Nature and other local NGOs (also Nguyen et al. 2020). There is a clear need for stronger government action to tackle illegal hunting, especially on the use of

mist-nets in the various wetland sites along the Gulf of Tonkin.

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Figure 2. One of four Spoon-billed Sandpipers seen on the coastal intertidal flats at Cat Hai, Hai Phong Bui Thanh Trung



Winter Surveys from Myanmar

Pyae Phyo Aung, Ren Naung Soe and Christoph Zöckler

Nature Conservation Society Myanmar (NCS) carried out this year winter survey at the same core area in eastern Gulf of Mottama as in 2020 from 24-31 January 2021. This year's survey team was forced to depart from the Aung Thar Dan village located at the West side in Yangon Region, due to COVID-19 restrictions and crossed the channel first into Mon State by bigger boat on the 24th January 2021. There was not enough water to move the big boat at first and the survey team investigated the shorebirds nearby. On the second day on the 25th January 2021, the water level was high enough during the afternoon high tide and the boat started to move closer to the channel. The survey at the west coast was carried out for one day on 26th January 2021. The survey area was very muddy and small mangrove stands were found near the boat anchor point. Due to boat anchor and water level problems of the big boat, the survey team spent two days at the west coast. In mean time, small boats from eastern Gulf of Mottama departed on the 26th January 2021 for meeting the survey team at the assembly point at the survey point on 27th January 2021. On the 27th January evening, all the boats from East and West were gathering at the east coast and transferred the field gears to the small boats for the survey at the east coast, the big boat was anchored at a safe area to wait for the survey members to return back. The survey was timed to cover the highest spring tide because the boats could access all of the intertidal sandflats only during the high spring tide period and shorebirds were more concentrated at spring tides and gather in large flocks. This way we were less likely missing large flocks and counted the total numbers of small shorebirds (Aung et al. 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020).

A total of 56,681 waterbirds of 48 species were recorded in the Gulf of Mottama. Of these, the large majority of over 46,600 shorebirds of 27 different species were identified. The estimated number

of small waders was about 56,000 in the survey areas. This is again much lower than observed in previous years and can only partly be explained by a marginally smaller coverage of the survey area. About 8,000 birds comprised of gulls, terns, herons and egrets. The most abundant species in 2021 were Black-tailed Godwit (NT) exceeding 14,000 individuals, representing now 10% of the flyway population. Whiskered and White-winged Terns were again in smaller numbers than in 2019 and previous (see Table 1). The Gulf of Mottama has become one of the most important flyway sites for the species. The survey team observed only a total of 17 SBS from 3 different locations in the survey period from 24 Jan - 2 Feb (see Fig 2). In total only two flagged Spoon-billed Sandpipers were recorded; one was Yellow (flagged on migration most likely in Tiaozini, Jiangsu Province, China) and another one Lime Green (flagged on the breeding grounds in southern Chukotka, Russia).

Despite almost complete coverage of all small wader flocks the total number of Spoon-billed Sandpipers were only 17 this year. Based on 166 flock counts and a lower than usual proportion of the globally threatened sandpiper the total number of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the Gulf of Mottama in January 2021 was only 42! This is a substantial decline but in line with a general decline of small waders. Figure 1 shows the continuing decline of the species over the past 12 years:

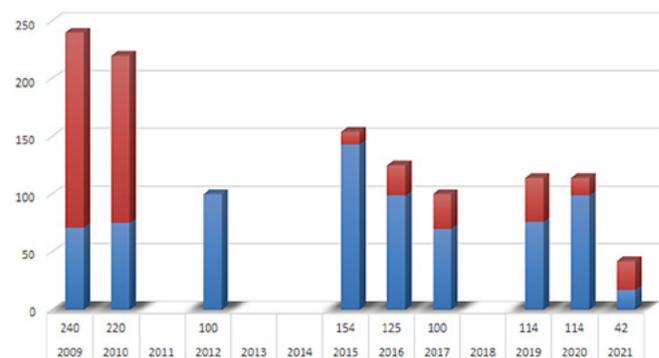


Figure 1: Total No SBS, Years,
Colours: ■ Observed ■ Estimated additional birds

The Rakhine Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (RBANCA) team carried out the monthly shorebird population survey at Nanthar Island from October 2020 to March 2021. A total of 40 species of waterbirds were recorded between October 2020 and March 2021 with the highest number (2,562) and (2,581) in January 2021 and March 2021 respectively. The most abundant species was Kentish Plover, followed by Stints. This year, the number of Stints was more observed than Lesser Sand Plover compared with last winter count. A maximum of five Spoon-billed Sandpiper was recorded from December 2020 to March 2021, with two flagged birds (Lime 27 returned for the eighth time!) and yellow CU

flagged on migration in Tiaozini, Jiangsu Province, China. The strong decline from 18 to only five birds this year is worrying but unfortunately in line with the observation in neighboring areas in Bangladesh and Gulf of Mottama. Also the high proportion of flagged birds in Bangladesh and Nan Thar Island is worrying and pointing to a much smaller world population (see summary of winter counts).

Moreover, RBANCA team conducted regular patrolling at Nanthar Island and its surrounding areas and carried out CEPA activities in collaboration with the township Forest Department and Boarderguard Police Force.



Small flocks



Investigating where to anchor before low tide Pyae Phyo Aung

Table 1: Summary results of the key common shorebird species during the 2020 mid-winter count period in the Gulf of Mottama in comparison with 2019 and 2020 (Aung et al 2019, 2020), increasing species marked in green, declining in red

Species	Scientific name	No in 2021	No. in 2020	No. in 2019
Lesser Sandplover	<i>Charadrius mongolicus</i>	6,340	14,508	16,385
Red-necked/Little Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis/minuta</i>	3,884	4,760	7,690
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	2,235	4,512	3,003
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	7,107	3,727	10,997
Pallas' Gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	2,988	2,835	84
Whiskered/White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida/leucopt.</i>	5,925	2,435	8,088
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	14,392	2,310	5,625
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	856	2,138	1,909
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	5,378	1331	809

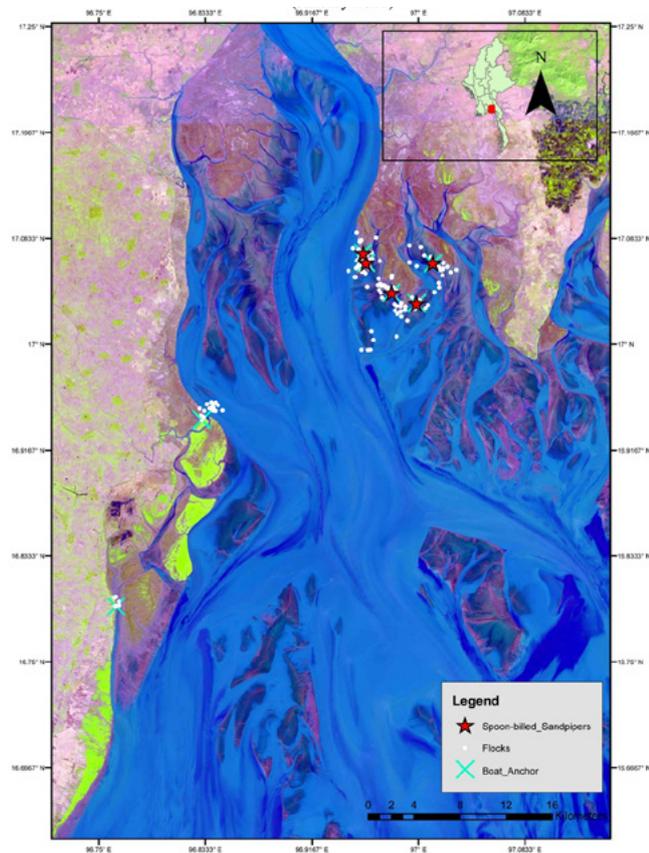


Figure 2: Distribution of Spoon-billed Sandpiper sightings in Jan 2021. Light Green cross are depict camp sites or boat anchor points from where surveys have been undertaken on foot. White points represent flock count sites and red stars sites with SBS observations.



Launching the big boat not without difficulties Pyae Phyo Aung



Patrolling activities at Nanthar Island



Spoon-billed Sandpiper (Lime 27) at Nanthar Island , January 2021

Ren Naung Soe

Summary of SBS winter counts 2021 and proportion of flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper

Christoph Zöckler, Pyae Phy Aung and Sayam U. Chowdhury



2021 survey in Gulf of Mottama

Tagu Films

Between 15 and 31 January 2021 our annual simultaneous winter count took place across the entire known winter range. Again, this year's survey was organised and coordinated by the SBS Task Force for the sixth time. This period in January also coincides with the long-running international mid-winter counts by Wetlands International. It is also the period when little movements of wintering birds take place between sites. Simultaneous counts can provide a good overview of the overall wintering population, allowing comparisons and trends with previous years if the coverage was similar.

In 2021 despite Covid-19 related travel restrictions, we again have had a big turnout and the largest number of sites counted so far. Table 1 shows the count data for sites visited during the period in January 2021 from a total of over 50 sites in five countries.

The total of 137 SBS is - despite the increase in coverage - much lower than previous years and cause for major concern. While the numbers in the northern part of the wintering area in Southern China and Vietnam have slightly increased,

all other areas recorded a decline, in Bangladesh and Myanmar by over 2/3 across almost all sites! It appears the Spoon-billed Sandpipers may be shifting their wintering range further to the north but at the same time also continued to decline. Of course, we still might have missed some important sites, but it is becoming increasingly less likely that major sites with large numbers have been missed during the coordinated winter count. Table 2 summarises the total number of birds counted in January and compared with previous years. It shows an overall sharp drop in numbers and that a significant proportion of the population has either not been found or disappeared.

Proportion of flagged birds

In total, 25 out of 137 recorded SBS were leg-flagged, which is about 22.3% flagged birds in winter 2021 (see Table 3), a similar proportion of flagged birds as the winter before, when 24.5% flagged birds were recorded. Considering that the proportion is overall similar across the wintering area and also similar to those of the previous year, this high percentage of flagged birds is another concern for the overall low number. The high proportion of flagged birds in several differ-

Table 1: Numbers of SBS in 2021 at different wintering sites compared with numbers in 2020

Site	Country	No. of SBS 2021	No. of SBS 2020	Observers/organisation
South China total of 36 sites	CHI	61	49	Chen Qing <i>et al.</i>
Haiphong	VTN	4	1	WWT
Red River Delta (3 sites)	VTN	4	-	Bao Nguyen/DLY
Mekong Delta (2 sites)	VTN	5	6	Bao Nguyen/DLY
Pak Thale	THA	4	8	BCST
Khok Kham	THA	2	3	BCST
GoM (166 flock counts)	MYM	42	114	PPA <i>et al.</i> (NCS)
Nan Thar	MYM	5	18	RNS
Sonadia	BGD	4	12	SUC <i>et al.</i> (BCSP)
Nijhum Dwip	BGD	2	6	SUC <i>et al.</i> (BCSP)
Chittagong	BGD	3	4	SUC <i>et al.</i> (BCSP)
Total		136	221	

ent wintering sites is very concerning and might indicate that the global population is much lower at the moment.

In order to calculate from the proportion of flagged birds to the overall global population size we would need to know how many of the flagged birds were still alive at the time of the survey in Jan 2020. However, this is not known at the moment, but we can calculate the number of flagged birds that have survived until the previous winter and numbers range from 57-63. As we know there were about 20 more adult and juvenile

birds flagged that survived the breeding period last summer, we can add this likely number. This number can be slightly higher and assuming none of those previously flagged have died, we can conclude that a maximum of 80 flagged birds might be still alive. This does mean that the global population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper is not more than 330-340 birds. More detailed analysis also from the flagged birds on the breeding grounds is necessary to provide an updated global population estimate for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. This would also mean that we are still missing a little more about 50% of the wintering population during our counts.

Table 2: Total wintering numbers of Spoon-billed Sandpiper over the past six years

Year (Jan)	Total count	Remarks
2015	258	Without Leizhou in China
2016	249	Full coverage of known sites
2017	117*	incomplete
2019	193	Near full coverage
2020	221	Full coverage
2021	137	Full coverage

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We like to thank Mangrove Foundation (MCF) for coordinating winter counts in South China, Nature Conservation Society-Myanmar (NCS) in Myanmar, Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST) in Thailand, Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project (BSCP) in Bangladesh, Bao Nguyen and Ding Li Yong in Vietnam. We are also grateful to our many donors for supporting this important monitoring scheme.

Table 3: Proportion of flagged birds at different sites of the flyway in 2021 compared with those observed in 2020

Site	Country	SBS 2021	Flagged % birds	SBS 2020	Flagged % birds	Source		
South China total	CHI	61	16	26%	49	13	27%	MCF
Gulf of Mottama	MYM	17 (42)	2	12%	105	24	23%	NCS
Nan Thar	MYM	5	2	40%	18	2	18%	Ren Nou Soe
Pak Thale	THA	4	2	50%	8	3	38%	BCST
Khok Kham	THA	2			3	1	33%	BCST
Chonburi	THA	1						BCST
Sonadia	BGD	4	2	50%	12	3	25%	SUC <i>et al.</i> (BCSP)
Nijhum Dwip	BGD	2			6	2	33%	SUC <i>et al.</i> (BCSP)
Chittagong	BGD	3	1	33%	4	1	25%	SUC <i>et al.</i> (BCSP)
Mekong Delta	VTN	5			6	1	17%	Bao Nguyen/ Ding Li Yong
Red River Delta	VTN	8						Bao Nguyen/ Ding Li Yong
Total counts		137	25	22.3%	204	50	24.5%	



SBS census working on the flat, 16 January 2021

Chen Qing

Hunting pressure on shorebirds on Sakhalin Island

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Note: This is a short abstract of a 99-page article

INTRODUCTION

The assessment of the hunting pressure on shorebirds in Sakhalin Oblast in 2020 is the second investigation, organised by BirdsRussia together with the Working Group on Shorebirds of Northern Eurasia (WGW NE) to study the hunting pressure on shorebirds in the Russian Far East after Kamchatka in 2019.

EAAFP shorebird populations are in a poor state.

Compared with other flyways in the world, shorebird populations on the EAAF are the least numerous despite the maximum diversity of species. Hunting in the north-east of Russia has a negative impact on the populations of all species of shorebirds, both rare and those considered relatively “safe”. The apparent stability of relatively abundant species is very fragile and depends on many factors, such as hunting. However, the lack of information at present does not allow an assessment of the hunting pressure on shorebirds. Our project aims to fill this gap.



We conducted a special survey on hunting of shorebirds, at Sakhalin oblast in 2020. For one month ornithologists met with hunters, local residents, officials, conducted surveys, questionnaires and directly observed the hunting process at a model plot.

PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the project is to assess the level of shorebird hunting in the northern part of the EAAF in the north-east of Russia. The project focused on shorebird species, prioritised by EAAFP. Special attention was given to Far Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel and Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Whimbrel is a popular hunting species in the Far East of Russia and hunting has a significant impact on the number of this species. Far Eastern Curlew is listed as globally endangered in the IUCN Red List. In Russia it is a protected species and included in the Red Data book. Nevertheless, hunters quite frequently harvest Far Eastern Curlew together with Whimbrel due to misidentification, but often also on purpose, as it is highly desired by many hunters. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper is critically endangered and one of the rarest shorebirds in the world.

An important objective of the project is to identify current and historic population trends of different species and the impact of hunting (both legal and illegal bird harvest) as well as other factors.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

1. The Sakhalin survey showed that Kamchatka is not the only region in the Far East of Russia where intensive shorebird hunting takes place. The scale of such hunting turned out to be even larger than in Kamchatka.
2. Hunting of shorebirds is deeply rooted in society and remains widespread on Sakhalin. The proportion of hunters who intentionally hunt shorebirds and the size of the harvest is significantly larger than in those areas of Kamchatka.

3. Shorebird populations of Sakhalin are much less well studied than those of Kamchatka. For more effective conservation measures, shorebirds should be better studied.

4. According to official data, there are 23,000 hunters on Sakhalin, 30% of whom or 7,500 receive a permit for autumn hunting, which does include shorebird hunting.

5. The number of hunters has increased, despite overall decline in population. In recent years, road construction on the island made coastal areas more accessible for hunters.

6. According to old hunters, hunting of shorebirds peaked in the 1970s and 80s and likely contributed to the decline in many shorebird populations at those times.

7. Among shorebird species, Whimbrel is the main hunting target on Sakhalin, also Woodcock in the South and also Snipe. As informal interviews showed, many hunters also intentionally shoot Far Eastern Curlew.

8. Small and medium-sized shorebirds are mainly harvested under the following circumstances:

- by children and teenagers, who do not legally hunt but get trained to become hunters;
- in the absence of other game, in order not to return home empty-handed;
- by some gourmet hunters who consider it a delicacy.

9. In order to save cartridges hunters shoot dense flocks, when harvesting small and medium-sized shorebirds. This results in a large number of wounded birds that die later and a significant number of killed birds that remain unrecovered.

10. A majority of hunters lack the ability to distinguish shorebird species. The only exception is Whimbrel, which is often not considered to be a shorebird. Less than 15% of Sakhalin hunters know the names of shorebird species that can be hunted. Their practical ID skills are even worse. The level of the ecological education is extremely low. Nobody has been conducting any educational work on Sakhalin.



Shorebird counts at the Piltun bay together with ornithologists, constantly working in Sakhalin – V.B. Zykov and Z.V. Revyakina



Hand-out materials for questionnaires and surveys of hunters

11. Many Sakhalin hunters intentionally shoot Far Eastern Curlew and can identify it in the wild. This knowledge allowed us to estimate that approximately 1,100 birds were harvested in 2019.

12. Hunting in the Far East of Russia is a more significant factor in the population decline of shorebird species along the EAAF than previously thought. International collaboration need to continue, including under EAAFP, together with AMBI-CAFF and bilateral agreements.

13. The sustainability of Whimbrel hunting in Sakhalin is doubtful. The current harvest level is critically high. There is a clear long-term trend in the decline of the population. A temporary moratorium on hunting is proposed for the population to recover.

14. Sakhalin is an important stopover site for the species. Spoon-billed Sandpiper were recorded by many researchers during spring and autumn migration. Unfortunately, the main Spoon-billed Sandpiper sites in Sakhalin coincide with those of active shorebird hunting. To harvest shorebirds, hunters often shoot dense flocks consisting of several species, which often consists of Spoon-billed Sandpipers. Thus, they could easily become victim of any such practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The surveys confirmed that there is a significant impact of hunting on many shorebird species in Kamchatka and Sakhalin. In order to create a complete picture for the northern section of the Flyway, it is recommended to continue the research in Khabarovsk Krai, Magadan Oblast and Primorsky Krai,
2. There are different trends of Whimbrel on Kamchatka and Sakhalin. We should identify the reasons for this difference. Different migratory groups of this species might be predominant in Kamchatka and Sakhalin. Research with satellite and GPS/GSM transmitters is recommended to develop conservation measures, streamline the monitoring to be able to make more precise estimates of the Whimbrel population in the region.
3. There is a shortage of systematically collected qualitative data on the population dynamics of all the shorebird species which inhabit Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. It is difficult to assess the status of populations of separate shorebird species. There is much miscellaneous data from different sites in different years. The monitoring of Far Eastern Curlew, Nordmann's Greenshank, Great Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, and Spoon-billed Sandpiper should be streamlined. It is advisable to conduct counts during shorebird migration in the



Harvest inspection at the Piltun bay. A rack specially prepared to hang harvest. They can fit hundreds of birds



A Dunlin wounded by a hunter at the Odoptu bay, Okhinsky district

summer-autumn period in the north of Sakhalin, together with daily control of hunters' harvest. It will allow to assess the proportion of harvested Far Eastern Curlews, Godwits and other species in the Whimbrel harvest.

4. The south-western coast of Sakhalin, important for the nesting and migration of shorebirds, has been very poorly studied. The most important bays (Tyk, Viakhtu, Lakh river estuary) lack in data on species and numbers. This is the place where Spoon-billed Sandpiper stayed for a long time (Qing, Syroechkovskiy et al, 2020) and where the habitats of Nordmann's Greenshank remain. The areas are difficult to access and surveys will require special funding.

5. It is important to revise the population status of Nordmann's Greenshank, which has disappeared from the majority of known nesting sites on Sakhalin (V.B. Zykov and Z.V. Revyakina per. comm.). Although we have no data of harvest, we are aware similar species (Common Greenshank, Redshank) been harvested during the nesting period in many bays of the island. Taking into consideration the fact that hunters lack the skills to identify this species (even harvested), local hunting may well play a key factor in the decline of the species.

6. Long-term monitoring of shorebird stopovers

at the state natural reserve Poronaisky should be developed. The reserve administration is interested in the long-term observation of ornithological data. However there are currently no ornithologists in the reserve.

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News in Brief

Chukotka

A team of eight members of BirdsRussia under the lead of Nikolay Yakushev left on 16th May for Anadyr in Chukotka and weather permitting will arrive soon in Meinypilgyno for this summer breeding season and head-starting. We will report more in the next newsletter.

E.E. Syroechkovskiy



*Arrival at Meinypilgyno, view from Helicopter, 1 June 2016
Matthias Fanck*

China

During spring survey in April there were a few records of SBS in Jiangsu coast, including 3 in Li-anyungang, at least 4 Tiaozini and 1 at Rudong in April. There were likely more at Tiaozini and the next newsletter will report more details.

Jing Li



Dongming LI, Tiaozini, April 2021

The last Page



Mareike Schlaeger is an artist from Southern Germany and she is in love with nature. With her camera, the watercolor brush and with the felt needle she pictures what she discovers and likes outside.

One of her latest inventions is a cute Spoonie made of felt. And, you have to love it!

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