

---

# Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force

## News Bulletin No 26 · Mar 2022



In memory of  
**Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy**  
1968 - 2022





© EAAFP SBS Task Force

*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 Christoph Zöckler with assistance of Elena Lappo and 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.*

**Chair:** **Dr Evgeny Syroechkovskiy** †

**Coordinator:** **Dr Christoph Zöckler** (Manfred Hermsen Foundation) [christoph.zoekler@m-h-s.org](mailto:christoph.zoekler@m-h-s.org)

**Assistant Coordinator:** **Sayam U. Chowdhury** Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project  
[sayam\\_uc@yahoo.com](mailto:sayam_uc@yahoo.com)

**Disclaimer:** *The responsibility for opinions expressed in articles rests solely with their authors, and their inclusion in this Newsletter does not constitute an endorsement by the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Taskforce or the EAAFP of the opinion expressed therein. This includes any assertion of territoriality in any maps in this publication. We employ in our newsletter and other outlets designations in conformity with United Nations practice.*



# Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force

## News Bulletin No 26 · Mar 2022

In memory of Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy



Foreword from the Editor .....	4	Baz Hughes .....	34
Foreword from Elena Lappo .....	5	Nigel Jarrett .....	35
Evgeny's key life stations .....	7	Helena Jefferson .....	36
<i>Tributes by:</i>		Minoru Kashiwagi .....	37
Bird Conservation Fund BCF .....	10	Chris Kelly .....	38
BirdsRussia .....	12	Hilger Lemke .....	39
Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna CAFF ...	14	Jing Li .....	40
East Asian-Australasian Flyway Part. EAAFP ...	16	Andrey Maksimov .....	41
Mangrove Conservation Fund MCF .....	17	Tong Mu .....	42
Naturschutzbund Deutschland NABU .....	18	Taej Mundkur .....	45
Pyae Phyo Aung .....	21	Tom Noah .....	46
Gill Bunting .....	22	Debbie Pain .....	48
Jimmy Choi .....	23	Phil Palmer .....	49
Sayam U. Chowdury .....	24	Courtney Price .....	50
Nigel Clark .....	25	Chairunas Adha Putra .....	52
Jochen Dierschke .....	26	Rodney Russ .....	53
Matthias Fanck .....	27	Beatrix Schwehm .....	54
Vivian Fu .....	28	Jonathan Slaght .....	55
Jens Gregersen .....	29	Pavel Tomkovich .....	56
Alexander Hellquist .....	30	Nikolai Yakushev .....	57
Stefanie Hermsen .....	33	Christoph Zöckler .....	58
		News in brief .....	61
		The last Page .....	62

## Foreword from the Editor

Dr. Christoph Zöckler · Manfred Hermsen Foundation, SBS TF Coordinator · March 2022

The loss of our dear friend and chairman Evgeny Syroechkovskiy has been a major blow to our Task Force and a tragedy for his family and very many friends. It also comes at a time, when our work has been severely hampered by the pandemic and its restrictions. While these though, have been overcome by the many versatile teams of our Task Force, Evgeny is truly irreplaceable and it will be very hard to compensate for his loss and to move on.

In this special issue we would like to look back at Evgeny's life and in particular his involvement within the activities of SBS conservation. This volume serves as a review of his work and achievements as well as a celebration of our friendship with Evgeny. Many of us have fond and vivid memories of times engaging with Evgeny in our conservation work and beyond. The many tributes we compiled in this issue show the diversity of skills and interests he had as well as the inspiration Evgeny has provided for many, if not all of us. I think we all have learned a lot from him.

During our many Skype consultations last year, in early summer Evgeny alerted me to his concerns that there might be a major conflict in Ukraine. At the time I dismissed this as too pessimistic but kept his words in my mind ever since. We all now know what has happened and how right he was. It goes to show how his intimate understanding of the Russian society enabled him to foresee the best possibilities but also the worst for Russia and most of his world. I am missing his judgement very much already.



Needless to say that these events will add another order of magnitude to the complications our Task Force faces. As things are currently developing, they might not be as easily circumvented as the COVID pandemic. Yet, I am determined to try and hope that the strength and resilience within our Task Force, which is so much a result of the efforts by Evgeny, will enable us to rise to this challenge too. I strongly believe that it would be Evgeny's wish that we continue in his spirit and follow his path of conservation, mutual understanding of nations and cultures and peace among people and nature.

## Foreword from Elena Lappo

When Christoph told me that this issue of the SBS newsletter is dedicated to Zhenya, I thought how amazing how this little bird united all of us and how Zhenya united friends, colleagues, who were working together to study and save the SBS. However, now it is not so important what was more important. For the last 22 years, Zhenya engaged with SBS and its conservation, and this is only a little less than half of his life and more than a half of his "adult" life.

I'm flipping through the pages of this issue like a family album, thanks to you, friends from all over the world – UK and Germany, Japan and China, India and Myanmar, Bangladesh and Denmark, Indonesia and Sweden, New Zealand and Russia, USA, Canada, Iceland and many others... Thank you all!

I just like to add a little bit from my side: Zhenya was a happy and successful person. He managed,

like very few of our generation of Russians, to do what he wanted and loved, and almost not to do what he did not want and did not like. He knew how to gather colleagues and friends around him, colleagues became friends, and friends became associates.

We all learned a lot from him – how to get joy from life, from communication with friends, from travelling, and from work with birds, not only in his beloved tundra, but also in uncomfortably hot climates. But if birds and friends are around – then everything will work out.

It seemed that there was nothing unattainable for him, even in our country of "unlimited impossibilities", as Christoph describes Russia. Zhenya taught us how to address these "impossibilities", often in what appeared to be impossible solutions. He loved to solve tricky challenges with many unknowns. It was exciting for him. It was always





*Cambodia 2010*

very interesting and calm to be with him, watching the unfolding of the most impossible plans. Life with him has always been filled with colorful pictures; the most striking of which were our expeditions to different parts of our country and the world. Zhenya presented me the real treasure – so many fantastic places around the world, that we visited together!

In this regard, I like to thank the SBS – which lives (and, I hope, will live) in one of the brightest and most mysterious places in the world – the coastal lagoons of Chukotka, lost among the chain of mountains, on the coasts of Kamchatka with the backdrop of its majestic volcanoes, shallow waters shining with a mirror – tidal coasts of China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and other Asian coasts...

The search for SBS – is always an adventure. We will continue without Zhenya, but in his memory.

*Elena Lappo  
Moscow*



*At Moscow Zoo with grandson Slava*

## Key life stations



*Evgeny and his mother Helena Rogacheva in Dacha near Moscow with Laika dog Yukhta*

### Evgeny Syroechkovskiy 18 May 1968 - 25 January 2022

- **Born** in Moscow to Helena Rogacheva and Evgeny Syroechkovskiy Sen.
- With his parents **travelling to Siberia**, Yenissei River already at an early age, first time in Siberia when he was 2 years old.
- **School:** Moscow English school number 29 – special English school.
- **University:** Degree at Department of Biogeography PHD 1999 at Institute of Morphology and Evolution on Brent Geese.



*The parents: Helena Rogacheva and Evgeny Syroechkovskiy Sen.*



*Evgeny (right) with Sergey Volkov, Christoph Zöckler, Marcus Stensmyr and Inokentin Nikulin near the administration of Deputatsky during the parliamentary election in 1996*

- **Married** to Elena Lappo January 1988.
- **Daughter** Anna Syroechkovskaya September 1988.
- **First Arctic expedition** to Taimyr with father 1988 to Sibiryakova Island, in 1989 to Gydan peninsula, in 1990 – first expedition to Taimyr: Knipovich Bay with Pavel Tomkovich and Elena Lappo.
- Great Arctic Reserve Taimyr inauguration with parents in 1993.
- Russian-Swedish expedition Tundra Ecology in 1994.



*Evgeny with Pavel Tomkovich and Chris Kelly on top of the vezdikhod in the Golden Range north of Anadyr June 2000*



*Expedition with international researchers and nature conservation specialists to base camp near Mys Vostochny, Pyasina Delta, Taimyr on occasion of the Inauguration of the Great Arctic Reserve, 1993. From left: Kalina, Klaus Dierssen, Peter Prokosch, Lena Deriougina, Yuri Ostrovskiy, Katja Bourskaya, Andrey Moroz, Bjorn Frantzen, Natasha Salomatina, Gerard Müskens, ?, Carl Carlsen, Erik Zimen, Alla Boere, Klaas van Dijk, Andrew St Joseph, Zhenya, Peter Venema, Evgeny Syroechkosvkiy Sen., Hans-Günther Bauer, Sergey Larionov*

- **First self-organised international Arctic expedition** in 1996 to Yano-Indigirka tundra.
- Expedition to Gydan with Ukrainian ornithologists 1999.
- First expedition to Chukotka 2000.
- First discovery of **Meinypilgyno** in 2001, followed by 16 further expeditions to Chukotka. Last expedition to Chukotka 2020.

Assignments within Russia:

- Since 2011 leader of the Russian Society for Conservation and Studies of Birds (**BirdsRussia**).
- Senior Advisor on **Arctic Biodiversity** and migratory bird Conservation to the **Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology**, based at All-Russian Institute for Environment Protection.



*Evgeny at the EAAFP meeting in Songdo, Korea with representatives from Myanmar (Zau Lunn left) and from Bangladesh (Tapan Dey right). Roger Jensch (EAAFP) and Taej Mundkur (Wetlands International) in the background*



*In Kamchatka, 2009*





*Evgeny in the centre at the last physical Task Force Meeting in Hainan, December 2018*

- **Head of Arctic Biodiversity Conservation Centre** of All-Russian Institute for Nature Conservation (2010-2015).
- **Scientific researcher** in the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Sciences (1990-2010).
- **Director of Arctic Ecology** and Anthropology Research Centre (1995-2012).
- Since 2006 Russian **representative to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership** (EAAFP) appointed by Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology.
- **Chairman of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force** of EAAFP (since 2010).
- **CAFF chair** 2011-2013.
- **Vice-President** of the Migratory Bird Commission of International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation CIC (2004-2010).
- Since 2014 **Chair of Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative AMBI** of CAFF.
- Since 2014 Russian Coordinator of Technical Advisory Commission for the **Russia-China bilateral** convention on conservation of migratory species and their habitats.
- Representing Russia in other **bilateral agreements**, such as Russia-Japan, Russian-US.



## Bird Conservation Fund BCF

On behalf of the Bird Conservation Fund and many North American colleagues who had the pleasure of Evgeny's great company, we are devastated by his loss. Evgeny was a truly tireless and enthusiastic conservationist who built such important bridges across the Bering Straits to many of us involved in protecting birds and great landscapes.

Russia had such a warm, generous and passionate ambassador, and while there are many other Russians committed to this work, we will dearly miss our friend, Evgeny.

*Graham Chisholm*  
*Bird Conservation Fund*

Evgeny was larger than life itself, always smiling, easy to be around, and most importantly, always hopeful. When I asked him if he thought the Spoon-billed Sandpiper would survive, he replied that he thought it would, especially with the Head Start Program. I casually handed him my business card and said that if he was ever in California I would take him out on one of my pelagic trips. Imagine my surprise when he managed to make an offshore trip with me from Half Moon Bay, CA in September of that same year.

He was a shining light and true diplomat for conservation of so many Arctic birds. Impossible to replace him.

*Debi Shearwater*



*Graham and Evgeny looking over San Francisco*

**E**vgeny visiting the People's Republic of Berkeley California for a salon talk about Spoon-billed Sandpipers where I met him. Although he had a terrible head cold, he persevered. I can imagine the entire Spoon-billed Sandpiper recovery process was like a giant head ache, and perseverance was key to making progress, international intractable progress, that along with colleagues of the Task Force, have helped to stave off extinction for one of the most charismatic birds, if not the MOST charismatic in the world. . .

Thank you for the honor to remember him.

*Mark Rauzon  
Bird Conservation Fund*



*Evgeny with Mark and Chris Collins (Heritage Expeditions)  
at Meinypil'gyno*

## BirdsRussia

Evgeny Syroechkovskiy graduated from the Geography Faculty of Moscow State University. While still a student, he began participating in Arctic expeditions, and the Arctic became the main place of his field work. During his life, he participated in more than 30 expeditions in remote areas of the Far North; he organized many of these expeditions himself.

Evgeny was the initiation of the setting up of BirdsRussia. This environmental conservation NGO was organized at the founding congress on May 20, 2009. At the same congress, Evgeny was appointed director, in which post he worked until his death. He was a key figure of BirdsRussia. Thanks to his energy, constant generation of new ideas and establishing good contacts with foreign partners, BirdsRussia successfully developed and became the leading non-governmental organization for the protection and study of birds in Russia.

The “calling card” of ROSIP was a series of projects for the conservation and restoration of Spoon-billed Sandpiper, launched under the auspices of this organization and subsequently became widely known thanks to the media. Afterwards Evgeny will be best known to many as the indefatigable Chair of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force.

The second important activity of BirdsRussia was the work on rewetting disturbed peat bogs, also initiated by Evgeny Syroechkovskiy. With the support of Manfred-Hermsen-Stiftung and NABU, were successfully rewetted large areas of drained fire-hazardous peat bogs in the Moscow and adjacent regions, and habitats of different birds including waders were improved.

Evgeny was the member of the bureau of the Commission on Rare and Endangered Animals and Plants at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology of the Russian Federation. The main task of this commission was to prepare a new, substantially modified and supplemented Red Data Book of the Russian Federation. With his direct participation, a team of leading Russian ornithologists was formed – specialists in each of the bird species suggested to list in the book. A group of ornithologists - fighters for nature protection, formed under the informal leadership of Evgeny, managed to list into the Red Data Book several rare and vulnerable bird species from the list of hunting species, overcoming the fierce resistance of the hunting lobby.

The Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative, which he chaired, was created from his vision, following his chairmanship between 2011 – 2013, on behalf of Russia, of the Arctic Council’s working group on the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna. One of his key pieces of work was the Shorebird Atlas of the Arctic.

But his legacy is much wider, championing issues to address the illegal killing of birds on the flyway, the conservation of geese, seabirds and Asian land birds (especially the Yellow-breasted Bunting). He was a titan for conservation and will be very sorely missed. We owe it to Evgeny to continue the fight for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and its highly threatened birds, especially ‘his’ Arctic-breeding migratory birds which are shared by the countries of the flyway.

He was a rare example of someone able to comfortably bridge relations between governments,



*Evgeny at the first meeting of the Russian-Chinese Working Group on realization of the agreement of governments of the People's Republic of China and Russian Federation on cooperation in conservation of migratory birds and their habitats in Moscow 2015*

including leading the Russian delegation in the implementation of bilateral migratory bird agreements with China, Russia and Japan, and engagement with non-governmental organizations such as BirdLife International.

Evgeny Syroechkovskiy was an amazingly talented and extraordinarily efficient person, a wonderful scientist and an outstanding organizer. There are irreplaceable people who come into the world and

create their own universe in it. Evgeny built such an universe, and everyone who came into contact with it was drawn into its orbit. We are just beginning to understand the extraordinary bright take that this man left in the lives of his friends and colleagues.

*Alexander Mischenko  
President of BirdsRussia*

## Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna CAFF



*Tom Barry with Evgeny in the cold*

**I**t is with heavy hearts that CAFF mourns the passing of Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy.

Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy was a long-standing and essential fixture in Arctic science, Russian ornithology and migratory bird flyway conservation. He was a world authority on bird conservation, and the world relied on him. He was instrumental in countless conservation successes in the Arctic and beyond.

Dr. Syroechkovskiy first became involved in CAFF over 10 years ago via its Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme. He served as CAFF Chair during the 2011–2013 Russian Federation chairmanship, the conclusion of which was marked by the successful release of CAFF’s Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, a seminal publication to which he also contributed his extensive knowledge. He spearheaded the development of

CAFF’s Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI), encouraging the Arctic Council to address the conservation of declining populations of Arctic-breeding birds. He knew the Arctic Council was in a unique position to bring together diverse actors with a common goal to protect species that connect us all.

“Evgeny had great passion, energy and perseverance in the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, and the skills, knowledge and networks needed to succeed,” said Mia Rönkä, CAFF Chair. “Evgeny’s presence and character made an unforgettable impression. He will be missed and remembered in CAFF, in the Arctic and beyond. His work lives on in Arctic biodiversity conservation, and we will continue his work.”

His contributions to CAFF built on his life’s work. Dr. Syroechkovskiy frequented the Rus-

sian Arctic, studying migratory birds and their breeding grounds for over 35 years, carrying on his family's legacy of Arctic nature conservation. The rapid population decline in several species concerned him greatly. His passion, in particular, revolved around the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper (Spoonies). In the early 2000s, he and colleagues sounded the alarm on its dramatic population decline; over 90 percent gone in 40 years. He initiated field work in Chukotka to further investigate this small bird with the charismatic bill. The precious Spoonie would most likely be extinct if not for his efforts, not least to: help develop and then chair the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership; secure the species as a flagship for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway; and help develop in the "headstarting" program, where scientists keep careful watch over new generations of Spoonies to protect against the elements and predators. He helped build an international network of researchers and conservationists passionate about this species, with enthusiasts dotting the globe.

Dr. Syroechkovskiy was a giant in Russian ornithology and nature conservation. He was director general of BirdsRussia, deputy director of the All-Russian Research Institute of Environmental Protection, and advisor to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. He implemented bilateral agreements between Russia and several Asian nations. Dr. Syroechkovskiy's reach was truly global. CAFF Secretariat staff would catch up with him across time zones and countries, following his dispatches from across the world, as he worked across cultures and languages to rally scientists and politicians towards conservation.

"Evgeny was such a strong character, a great friend and a pleasure to know and work with. He had a huge presence, with enormous energy, com-

mitment and passion for conservation, especially his beloved Spoon-billed Sandpipers," said Tom Barry, CAFF Executive Secretary.

"Evgeny was a force. Watching him work and listening to him talk, you knew this man was doing exactly what he should be doing. He was passionate," said Courtney Price, AMBI Global Coordinator. "I will miss him. He was a lot of fun to be around. I know I will look back with gratitude at the time I was lucky enough to spend with Evgeny."

It is an immense loss to many at CAFF. Dr. Syroechkovskiy had boundless energy, a wonderful sense of humor, a big personality, and such passion for his work. In meetings and collaborations he was driven, ready with encouragement, knowledge and strategy to shape projects and their deliverables. Afterwards, he regaled with entertaining stories, heartfelt speeches, the occasional song, and always shared celebratory libations. His passing is a great loss to us all and we will all miss our dear friend and essential colleague.

We send our deepest condolences to his wife and scientific partner Elena Lappo, daughter Anna Syroechkovskaya, and his wide network of friends and family.

*Tom Barry, Secretary CAFF and  
Courtney Price, Iceland*

## East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership EAAFP

It is with deep sadness that the EAAFP Secretariat received the news that Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, Representative of the Russian Federation to EAAFP and Chair of Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force passed away on 25th January, 2022, after fighting against recent illness.

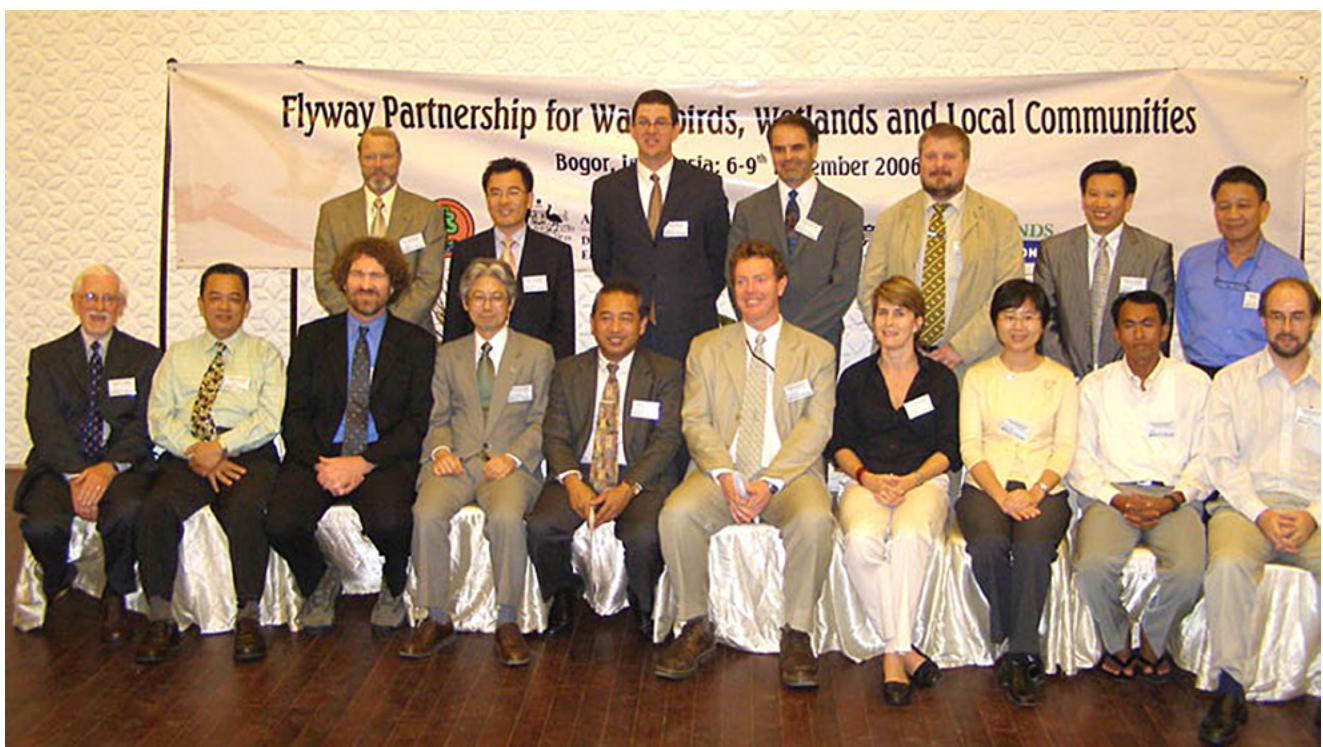
Evgeny was a passionate and dedicated scientist and conservationist actively promoting the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Flyway. Russia is a critically important country in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, supporting the breeding populations of so many migratory waterbirds. Evgeny was unceasing in his efforts to encourage and support international cooperation to save these species throughout their migratory ranges.

He led the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Team in the early days back in 2004, finalizing the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Single Species Action Plan of CMS in 2008, and created the EAAFP

Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force in 2010. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper became a flagship species for the Flyway. In 2010 population trends predicted the extinction of this species by 2020. But Evgeny's work, together with dedicated colleagues from Chukotka to Myanmar and Bangladesh, has given the species a fighting chance at survival.

But it was not just Spoon-billed Sandpiper. As a member of the Russian delegation of the Arctic Council Working Group on the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Evgeny contributed to advance the conservation of other Arctic-breeding species, including through establishing the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI).

Evgeny's loss leaves a huge gap in migratory waterbird conservation in EAAF. But his passion and enthusiasm has inspired others to dedicate their lives to saving these amazing and charismatic species. His legacy lives on in those efforts.



*EAAF Partnership Launch, 2006, Indonesia*



## Mangrove Conservation Fund MCF

We first met Evgeny in a SBS TF expedition to Zhanjiang in December 2018. For the first time, MCF faced a group of passionate scientists and conservationists focussed on SBS, among which we were impressed by Evgeny's spirit of science and cooperation. A week later, during the EAAFP MOP10, MCF and BFU launched a SBS project. Evgeny talked with us about the current status of SBS, what work has been done and what actions have been taken worldwide, and what might be helpful to this endangered species. He showed a high degree of interest in our plan and provided valuable suggestions. After the MOP10, he visited us in Shenzhen, we further exchanged views on wetland conservation. Evgeny encouraged us to go deep into the wild, focus on some key habitats like Tiaozini, strengthen cooperation and exchanges with international partners. He warmly invited MCF to join the SBS TF. After this visit, he came to China twice in 2019, witnessed the founding of the SBS alliance and saw the role it played in mobilizing civilian conservation forces in China. MCF also got the chance to visit Chukotka and participated in one of the expeditions Evgeny had organized. After this impressive visit, MCF started to support conservation work in Russian and ASEAN countries.

The journey for migratory birds from breeding ground to wintering ground is one of the greatest life journeys in the world. These adorable creatures connect us together. Evgeny saw MCF entering the SBS conservation area, supported our work from the field to the strategy. We learnt a lot from working with Evgeny. He knew very well how to cooperate with different people from different countries, with different background, to build consensus around a shared vision. His science concepts, his great awareness and innovation has helped to establish friendship from different fields and respond to an unparalleled opportunity for change. He will always be remembered as a good friend, a great mentor, and a distinguished



*Evgeny with Chinese representatives in Meinypilgyno 2019*

leader for the conservation of Spoon-billed Sandpipers and the millions of migratory birds. His passing is a huge loss for the international nature conservation community. His spirit and legacy will continue to inspire many more to devote to flyway conservation.

Let's move on! May humankind and nature coexist in harmony!

*Mangrove Conservation Fund  
Shenzhen, China*



*Evgeny and MCF in EAAFP MOP10, 2018, Hainan, China*

## Naturschutzbund Deutschland NABU

At NABU, we enjoyed close cooperation with Evgeny and BirdsRussia. With his passing, we have lost a great colleague and an outstanding conservationist.

I will never forget how three years ago, on a Russian cruise ship off Kamchatka, we talked late into the night about saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and the plans to create the huge new nature park "Land of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper". We talked until he had to return ashore in the last rubber dinghy — the Russian customs have no mercy. No one could resist him. Together with the Manfred Hermsen Foundation, NABU actively supported both projects and continues to do so today.

I will remember him as I have met him at his dacha almost four years ago for his 50th birthday — cheerful, full of energy, and just a little crazy.

NABU has supported BirdsRussia and its membership in the BirdLife network, and we will continue to do so after Evgeny's passing as his legacy.

*Thomas Tennhardt*  
*Director of the International Department*  
*Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union*  
*(NABU)*



Meeting with the German Support Group at NABU headquarters, Berlin, 2016





## Pyae Phyo Aung

In 2010, when I started to join the Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation in Myanmar, I heard the name 'Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy' aka Zhenya has initiated the investigation of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Nanthar Island and Gulf of Mottama, Myanmar since 2008 together with Dr. Christoph Zöckler. Later in 2010, the international scientific community realized that the Gulf of Mottama is crucial for Spoon-billed Sandpipers and other migratory shorebirds.

Evgeny was an enthusiast and supported the designation of the Gulf of Mottama as a Ramsar Site

by advocacy of the local and national government in collaboration with various partners across the flyway. In 2017, the Gulf of Mottama was designated as Ramsar site, and later in 2020, Nanthar Island and Mayyu Estuary were as Ramsar site too.

I would like to express, that without Evgeny's support Spoon-billed Sandpiper flyway conservation will be much more difficult. Let's try to keep up his vision!

*Pyae Phyo Aung, aka Phyolay Myanmar*



*Evgeny addressing the 11th SBS TF meeting in Mawlamyine, Myanmar Jan 2018*

## Gill Bunting

Of my many memories of Zhenya it was hard to know which to choose. Many relate to food, as I have frequently had the honour and responsibility of feeding him, but I decided to write about his skill in managing teams of people in difficult circumstances.

I first experienced this on the expedition to Chukotka in 2002, which I joined with Christoph. At the end of one particularly long, freezing day, travelling on the roof of a vesdikhot, we stopped for the night where some local fishermen were camping. Zhenya must have noticed I was feeling cold and tired, so assigned me the task of lighting a fire. This not only gave me some purpose and provided warmth, but allowed him to enjoy the horror of the fishermen that he would let a western woman be responsible for such a thing. He then had the added enjoyment of my reaction to the story when he told me later what had happened.

The second story took place a couple of years later when the tables were thoroughly turned! In January 2005 we flew to Kolkata on the first expedition to look for SBS on its wintering grounds. For various reasons only about 50% of the team actually arrived in India on time, so we headed south to the coast and started looking. Two days later we received news that the rest of the team had arrived and having bruised my foot on a mangrove stump, I offered to go and collect them. Dr Maheshwar, kindly volunteered to come along and help organise transport and translate. He chose a very small mini-bus for the trip, which I tried to explain, might not be quite large enough for the task....

The first member of the team was easy to locate, a British birdwatcher called Kevin was sitting in full view outside the airport, watching the Black Kites circling overhead. But my luck wasn't to last. Dr. Maheshwar spoke to various taxi drivers and confirmed that the others had left the airport for



*Anna, Gill, (standing stone), Lena and Zhenya, still standing after a visit of the whiskey distillery on Islay 2004*

two different hotels and were several hours ahead of us. By some miracle of telecommunications (this was 2005) I received a text from Lena, with the name of their hotel. When we arrived there, through the mele of Kolkata traffic, the Russian party had taken over the hotel lobby and were having breakfast. Dr. Maheshwar looked pretty shocked at the amount of luggage and acknowledged that we would need a second car.

Having completed my mission, I slumped into a corner of the taxi. I became aware of Zhenya, laughing heartily at my relief and exhaustion. I was rather proud that he told me how much fun it was to watch someone else do all the organising he normally undertakes.

I remain amazed as to how anyone could think and operate at that level of intensity for weeks at a time – one day had been quite enough for me – he is indeed very much missed.

*Gill Bunting  
Cambridge*

## Jimmy Choi

Thanks Evgeny for your amazing effort to conserve migratory birds. Your active participation in many meetings with decision-makers along the flyway together with other like-minded colleagues' effort, has yielded positive changes in many places. Your approachable and optimistic nature, knowledge in birds and dedication in conservation make you an excellent mentor for young fellows to learn from. Thanks for your hard-work over the years, leaving us with some Spoon-billed Sandpipers to watch and valuable wetlands to work on. Thank you again and you will be missed.

*Jimmy Choi  
China*



## Sayam U. Chowdury

I cannot believe you are no longer with us Zhenya. You have been a true inspiration for me and many others like me. I have learnt so much from you in the past decade. Your dedication, passion and leadership skills allowed us to achieve many impossible things for bird conservation in the world.

I cannot imagine saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper without your leadership. I will forever cherish our days and conversations in the field or in meetings.

*Sayam U. Chowdury*  
*Bangladesh*





## Nigel Clark

People say that you should not speak ill of the dead. In the case of my good friend Zhenya this is not a problem at all because there is no ill to speak. We did have our different views at times but we always discussed them without rancour and either agreed the solution or understood each others position and agreed a way forward. This was a measure of the man, a passionate conservationist and brilliant politician. These two qualities enabled him to achieve a vast amount in his all too short life.

There was another side to Zhenya, the person that I always looked forward to seeing. He was great company and loved everything in life from historic buildings, everything about nature and the environment, food and drink, especially vodka! There are so many great memories like sheltering under a tree during a tropical downpour while on a trip after the Task Force meeting in Palembang with Zhenya recounting previous great rain storms, or the evenings relaxing in the pool at our hotel during the meeting having conversations about important things interspersed with swimming a length and watching the nightjars flying over and occasionally drinking from the pool!

Then there is Zhenya's love of food and drink, and I vividly remember the occasion at Meino when we had just put the first satellite tag on a breeding Spoonie. As soon as it had gone Zhenya pronounced 'time for a celebration'. Out came smoked salmon bread and the other parts of our lunch and a piece of driftwood was found to act as a table on the back of our ATVs. Suddenly a bottle of vodka appeared to

wish the spoonie on its way. The delight on Zhenya's face that we had both got a bird marked and had the means to celebrate was plain to see! When Zhenya was the host he made sure that you enjoyed the food and drink as much as he did, even if you ended with headaches the next day!

There is no doubt that Zhenya was a very persuasive character. After a Spoon-billed Sandpiper meeting at Slimbridge I was due to give Zhenya and Lena a lift back to Cambridge and it was soon clear that Zhenya would like to make a detour on route. So we ended up stopping in Worcester for a couple of hours to visit the cathedral that is almost 1,000 years old in parts. I spent half the time finding somewhere to park the car but that did not matter as it was clear to see that both had been fascinated by all the ancient architecture and the history including the tomb of King John who died in 1216. The rest of the two and a half hour journey to Cambridge was not dull as we discussed everything they had seen on their visit. I probably would never have visited this grand building if it had not been for their wish to pack as much into their visit to the UK as possible and my life would have been all the poorer for it.

Zhenya has left me with so many fond memories that I will reflect on in the coming months and years. I will try not to be sad but be glad that I was lucky enough to have been a friend of Zhenya.

*Nigel Clark  
SBS Task Force Scientific Advisor  
Norfolk, England*



## Jochen Dierschke

**B**ack in June 2009, we were on an expedition to northern Kamchatka to check if the southernmost possible breeding sites of Spoon-billed Sandpiper are still occupied. Our group consisted of eight people from Russia, Germany, Britain and Sweden. We split into two groups, surveying different areas. In my group were Christoph, Tom and Fjedor and we camped at Kajum, south of Ossora, though we didn't find any Spoonies there. We were supposed to be picked up by boat to get our flight back to Petropavlovsk, so on our departure day we packed our tents, but the boat never arrived. Next day we waited again in vain. The 3rd day was the day of our flight. Fortunately, Evgeny had already arrived in Ossora and started to prove his organizing talent. The boat needed to arrive at noon to make it just in time for our flight. The local fishermen, who were supposed to pick us up, did not arrive in time, as expected. Therefore Evgeny haggled with the local major to delay the flight.

The plane was one hour late anyway, the major agreed to delay it for another hour, but still we did not arrive in time. Then Evgeny started to involve the pilots in a discussion about satellite transmitters, showed them a tag of an Ivory Gull they found on the expedition. The discussion gave us one more hour and finally we were transported by a car directly to the plane without any security checks, entered the plane in clothes still wet from the boat trip, including a gun, knives etc. Evgeny ended the discussion and the plane could take off – including us. Without the communication skills of Evgeny we would definitely missed the plane!

Thanks to all participants for an excellent trip, but especially to Evgeny, who made this trip possible, but also for his great company – we will all remember him!

*Jochen Dierschke  
Heligoland*



## Matthias Fanck

Zhenya is no more with us. Hard to imagine that this strong and unvincible guy lost his last fight. There were by sure numerous occasions in his life to perish before. He was not killed let's say by a Kamchatka bear nor by a Sunderbans tiger, he did not drown at a shipwreck in the Bering Strait or an arctic boat accident. It was not a MI-8 helicopter crash, he survived the daily madness of the Moscow road traffic and even Covid, but he died of a mean disease against which all efforts were in vain. "Life is designed with unfinished lines that another sings" (Patti Smith).

I met Zhenya first in the summer of 1993 actually accidentally on occasion of the inauguration of the Taimyr Sapovednik, the Great Arctic Reserve at Dudinka which he attended together with Lena and his friendly parents, with Peter Prokosch, unforgotten Erik Zimen and an illustrious international group of early Arctic conservationists and local authorities. Years passed until we met again, then in connection with the Spoon-billed Sandpiper project for which I had and still have the honour to lay-out the half-yearly Task Force Newsletter.

A nice opportunity to enjoy his world experience and great sense of humour was the equally legendary as unsuccessful search for wintering Spoon-billed Sandpipers in India's Ganges Delta in 2005 – together with a wonderful international team of ornithologists. Unforgettable as he "explained" (in Russian) the special issues of the main Ganges' arm Hooghly River while steering one of the colourful wooden ships that we used during our research – with the captain on his side.

When I was allowed to join an international team of ornithologists at Meinypilgyno, the "capital of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper", in 2016, Zhenya was not with us. But we met at a long stopover at Moscow's Vnukovo airport in a merry circle with Lena, old friend Andrey Maksimov, Egor Loktionov



*"My India is great", Indian Sundarbans, 2005*

(entering the airport in full hunting gear with rifle strapped on), Roland Digby, Marjorie Schwartz and Tom Noah.

Not only do I hope, no, I am sure that the SBS conservation project is so strong now and its numerous participants are so widespread and skilled not only along the flyway that we can (and must) continue and bring it to a good end once – in the name and the memory of Zhenya.

*Matthias Fanck  
SBS Task Force, German Support Group*

## Vivian Fu



I was lucky enough to have met Evgeny at the early stage of my career in the conservation field. I remember that was during the EAAFP 6th Meeting of Partners in 2012 in Indonesia. I was only joining the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force due to the project I was working for at that time, and hardly know anybody at the meeting. During the break time of the meeting, Evgeny greeted me and talked to me for a long time, telling me the importance of every seemingly-tiny work for conservation. It was after that meeting that made us realize the gap in southern China for Spoon-billed Sandpiper, and began to seek support and resources to fill in the gap. The third-largest wintering site of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Guangzhou, China, was later confirmed.

Over the past decade, we met several times in different meetings, not only about Spoon-billed Sandpiper, but also land birds like Yellow-breasted Bunting, indicating his influence on a wide range of issues. Evgeny would not waste time on chit-chat whenever we met, he went straight into conversations about our work, learning situations and progresses, giving quick responses and sharing opinions. Evgeny was an excellent model as a scientist and a conservationist who is irreplaceable. His passion to protect birds and nature will be relayed by many of us who are inspired by him.

*Vivian Fu  
Communication Officer, East Asian-Australasian  
Flyway Partnership Secretariat*

## Jens Gregersen



Many people from Denmark – but also many people from around the world – have written in memory of Evgeny – both as a friend and as a passionate human. The way he dedicated his life to protection of nature he was such an inspiration for so many of us.

I am so very grateful that I met Evgeny and got to know him – such a strong fieldman and scientist, so respected from all of us, who worked with him. I am very happy for the two seasons (2006 and 2007) we were on expeditions together. I have very fond memories – the expeditions were real highlights in my life. Unfortunately Evgeny was too busy to go to the Anadyr region afterwards –

but I am happy and appreciate the confidence he had in me, to go there on my own again – leading tours to Russki Koshka. Also that recent tour to Alkatwaam in 2019. It was the year we did meet in the park in summer – Lena, with daughter Anna and grand son.

I send all my thoughts to Evgeny's family in this dark time – even light is increasing and spring is now in sight. And I wish to continue to contribute in the field and with artwork.

*Jens Gregersen  
Denmark*

## Alexander Hellquist



Evgeny's dedication to the conservation of the birds of the Russian Arctic – at their breeding grounds, along their flyways, and in their winter quarters – will constitute a lasting legacy for which he will be remembered. With his warm and charismatic personality, Evgeny combined tireless commitment and extensive knowledge with a cheerful and laid-back attitude to hardships inherent in field expeditions, and the ease by which he befriended and built trustful relationships with people and communities has no doubt been pivotal for the achievements of the SBS Task Force.

I will always be grateful to Evgeny for providing me with opportunities to visit hard-to-reach places in the Russian Far East, and I carry joyful memories of fun and interesting discussions I had with him, his wife Elena, and Phil Palmer around campfires

and in worn-down but cozy kitchens in desolate settlements in northern Kamchatka in 2009.

*Alexander Hellquist  
Stockholm, Sweden*









## Stefanie Hermsen

This is very sad news!!! Such a fine and kind person! I remember him only in the best ways! For example, I remember his words, when my dog Paco always tried to run ahead in our park in Bremen, Evgeny said: "That's his mission".

What a big loss and I am so sorry for the family and I hope his legacy can continue.

*Stefanie Hermsen  
Manfred-Hermsen-Foundation  
Bremen*



*Meeting with Manfred-Hermsen-Foundation, Bremen 2015*

## Baz Hughes

**M**y main memory of Evgeny was that he was a tough negotiator, exceptional politician and conservationist, a good and trusted friend and a good laugh. Always supported and accompanied by his beloved Lena.

Evgeny always led from the front, from his heart and by his best example – whether that was at the many, many international meetings he attended and at which he represented his government, as well as the wider conservation community; in the field or down the pub with us. He was an inspiration to us all and will always continue to be so.

With help from his lifelong friend and confidant, Christoph, he galvanized action. And galvanized people all across the flyway to help save the species so dear to his heart. And dear to the heart of many conservationists, local people and schoolchildren along the Spoon-billed Sandpiper's flyway, and to the villagers in Meinypil'gyno. Evgeny built an amazing team at BirdsRussia, many of whom we at WWT now value as dear friends. He was also a great supporter of WWT's captive breeding programme and champion of our joint Anglo-Russian head-

starting programme which has helped reduce the population's decline. There is still a lot more work to be done but the Russian team has stepped up to the mark and taken over the lead on headstarting.

Under the leadership of Christoph and Sayam, the wider EAAFP SBS Task Force, and the national in-country Support Groups the SBS Task Force has established, we now have the international framework needed to save Spoonie.

Our in-country partners have been forging ahead admirably with Spoonie conservation in these times when COVID has restricted international support. Notwithstanding the difficulties we face in the world today, we can all still work together to save the Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

Without Evgeny, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper would probably already be extinct today. Let's keep going guys, and save Spoonie in memory of our never, ever forgotten leader, Evgeny.

*Baz Hughes*  
*Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust WWT*



*Elena Lappo, Nigel Clark, Tanja Giggs, Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, Christoph Zöckler and Baz Hughes at Slimbridge*

## Nigel Jarrett

I barely knew Evgeny, yet he made me feel, on each of the half dozen occasions I was privileged to be in his presence, that he knew me thoroughly, that he wanted to listen to me and that he liked me. He seemed to know everybody thoroughly and he seemed to like them too. He never said a bad word about anyone. He “saw the best” in people. He knew how to inspire and how to enable people to perform at their best, at their highest level, often in extreme conditions, for Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation. He did this by showing his respect and appreciation for peoples’ efforts. To feel appreciated by Evgeny was intensely motivating. He made me feel tremendously motivated AND confident in my work.

In June 2011, we collected 20 Spoonie eggs from nests around Meinyopil’gyno to begin the journey of Spoonie “Conservation Breeding” and “Head-starting”. In early July that year we had to move the eggs to Anadyr... the first leg of the birds’ journey to Slimbridge. The eggs would be moved, just as they were hatching in portable incubators, on the *Spirit of Enderby*, the ice-strengthened expedition boat. Evgeny was on the boat. When

he arrived my world changed. The impossible was suddenly probable. Evgeny did everything that was possible to ensure those eggs were translocated safely and that they would hatch.

He did everything to support the avicultural team. He not only “physically” organised the transfer of heavy kit bags from the field camp to the ship, then the disembarkation of the same to a remote “out-of-town” location to raise chicks, but 48 hours was there alongside the team to understand the dilemmas, to weigh up strategies and always stayed calm to select the right one swiftly and commandingly. The word limit precludes details here.

Suffice to say Evgeny was the kindest, most supportive inspiring leader I will ever know. Evgeny was a conservation colossus of consummate calibre and his legacy, with the dedicated work of all those people he inspired, will be the saving of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

*Nigel Jarrett  
Conservation Breeding Manager  
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust WWT*



*Evgeny radioing Rodney Russ on the Spirit of Enderby to tell him Spoon-billed Sandpiper eggs and chick were about to embark*

## Helena Jefferson

This is very sad news indeed. Evgeny was a lovely, kind, man and SO dedicated to saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, which is such a fabulous little bird. He inspired experts and also enthusiasts (like me) to donate time, expertise and/or money towards the work of saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, as well as personally encouraging me to actively get involved. I had four wonderful opportunities to actively search and/or monitor Spoonies and he was very instrumental in encouraging my interest and participation. He was also a very kind and generous person with his time and energy to educate others to learn about this mysterious, little, migrant. I am so very glad I am still able to continue supporting the Head-starting/Captive Breeding programme in Russia and Slimbridge through WWT.

Rest peacefully dear Evgeny and thank you for your time and patience with me in North East Russia, Birdfair and China.

With many thanks Christoph and Nigel for your kindnesses to me too on my journey of falling in love with this fabulous little bird and encouraging me to become passionately involved with helping to save it.

*Helena Jefferson  
England*



*Evgeny talking with Helena (top right) during the finding of the new SBS site at the 2011 Heritage Expedition*

## Minoru Kashiwagi

It was in Brisbane, Australia, in March 1996, when I met Evgeny for the first time. He made a presentation as one of young Russian ornithologists in a pre-conference to the sixth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, Ramsar COP 6. After the COP, I participated in the North-West Australia Wader and Tern Expedition of the Australian Wader Study Group AWSG and found the Russians there. We became good friends through the expedition.

When Evgeny started the survey of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SBS) four years later as expedition leader, he looked for funding sources and asked me and Masayuki Kurechi and the Japanese Association for Wild Geese Protection provided core funding for the first survey in 2001 in southern Chukotka. That survey contributed to confirm that Vaamochka near Meinypil'gino was the main breeding site of Greater White-fronted Geese migrating to Miyagi, Japan.

I was able to get funding for SBS surveys from the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund, KNCF from 2002 on behalf of Japan Wetlands Action Network, JAWAN, and later as Ramsar Network Japan, RNJ. KNCF is a funding agency of a league of economic organisation in Japan. KNCF was one of the core funding sources during the first

period and has been supporting SBS surveys until recently, including Evgeny's visit to SBS sites in Japan in 2018.

Evgeny's request was not only funding but my participation in Chukchi survey. Changing my focus from Dunlin and leaving Japan for 6 weeks was not an easy question. Focus only on a single rare species may result in indifference to degradation of environment for other species. But Evgeny told me, "the Dunlin nests close to SBS". In fact, as I participated in the surveys on the breeding sites, I came to recognise the importance of the conservation of both threatened and dominant species. Since then, we have been working together in many SBS-related issues and for waterbird conservation on the flyway. I respected his love of birds and the science as a researcher, and more of his passion to open practical ways resulting in real conservation. He went to the Chukchi Government and almost succeeded in establishing the 'Land of Spoon-billed Sandpiper' around Meinypil'gino. He also did everything he could at various levels, like going himself to the local school to tell children not to shoot birds with slingshots.

*Kashiwagi Minoru  
Ramsar Network Japan*



*Indian Sundarbans 2005*

## Chris Kelly

Early in 2001, inspired by the paintings of Peter Hayman and the paper by Joseph Dixon, I became beguiled by the little known Spoon-billed Sandpiper and I was desperate to study them on their breeding grounds. Through a series of chance conversations I was put in touch with Zhenya. I emailed him in the spring of 2001 and before I knew it I was invited to join an expedition to north Chukotka taking place in the summer of 2002.

In mid May 2002 I met up with Zhenya in Moscow and was immediately drawn by this hugely charismatic man. Despite his size he had the most gentle and cultured of voices. I was mesmerized by his tales of his adventures in the Arctic, in particular the discovery of the large population of Spoonies at Meinypilgyno which he and his team found in 2001. Throughout the summer of 2002 I was to discover that Zhenya could just make things happen that no one else would even attempt. This was a total eye-opener for me. How he got us to north Chukotka and back still to this day mystifies me. By turning his charm on the right people he managed to get us on a series of planes and finally a helicopter to a remote village on the north coast of Chukotka.

I think Zhenya deeply loved the Arctic and its people and at heart was an explorer. He would gain as much pleasure from talking to subsistence hunters as with scientists or the governor of Chukotka. His ability to relate to all people puts me in mind of Kipling: “If you can walk with the crowd and keep your virtue, or walk with Kings nor lose the common touch”. The summer of 2002 will be one of the most memorable periods of my life and being paired with Zhenya for survey work I spent many happy hours talking about the ecology



of the place. I remember vividly travelling with Zhenya by dog sled across frozen Lake Neshkan in the charge of two, not entirely sober, Eskimos.

Subsequently I went on other expeditions to both Chukotka and Myanmar with Zhenya and I never tired on listening to his tails of derring-do. He was also the most forgiving of men. In 2002 I caused him no end of trouble getting lost in the mountains necessitating a helicopter to look for me. Despite that he forgave me and somehow managed to avoid me having to pay for it.

By his gentle encouragement and wry way of seeing things he enabled me to do things I never thought possible. He changed me in many ways. Of all the things he taught me the most influential was never to give up until there is absolutely no way forward. I will miss him.

*Chris Kelly  
Norfolk, England*

## Hilger Lemke

I am deeply grateful to the few but very memorable moments I could share with Evgeny. His outstanding personality, not only as great ornithologist and most talented ambassador for a holistic flyway-centred conservation approach, has immediately captured me with its incredible warm-heartedness, its witty excitement and its instantly contagious optimism.

His friendly way of welcoming me when I joined the SBS taskforce group as volunteer fieldworker the first time was enormously encouraging. Together with his wonderful wife Lena he made us feeling like a super-spoonbill-sandpiper-family - what an inspiring adventure. I will carry this with me forever - thank you Evgeny. Rest in peace.

*Hilger Lemke  
SBS Task Force, German Support Group*



*At Rudong, China during the 2015 search. School children created this huge Spoonie in front of our humble hotel*

## Jing Li

I can't remember exactly what year I first met Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, however, it was in Rudong when I first heard from him a place called Meino, the home of Spoon-billed Sandpiper. He was the first Russian scientist I have ever known and cooperation since then last over ten years.

Evgeny was undoubtedly a scientist with great vision. In 2008, Lin, me, and Menxiu first saw a good number of Spoonie. Evgeny and Christoph realized Jiangsu might be the missing puzzle piece of the life history of Spoon-billed Sandpiper. We soon were contacted by the SBS Taskforce and soon, we worked together with these scientists as Dr. Christoph Zockler, Dr. Nigel Clark, and Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy in the most beautiful mudflat of the Yellow Sea. Evgeny lead the team to confirm the rediscovery of the Jiangsu coast, the most important habitat for Spoon-billed Sandpiper, and he called for international cooperation,

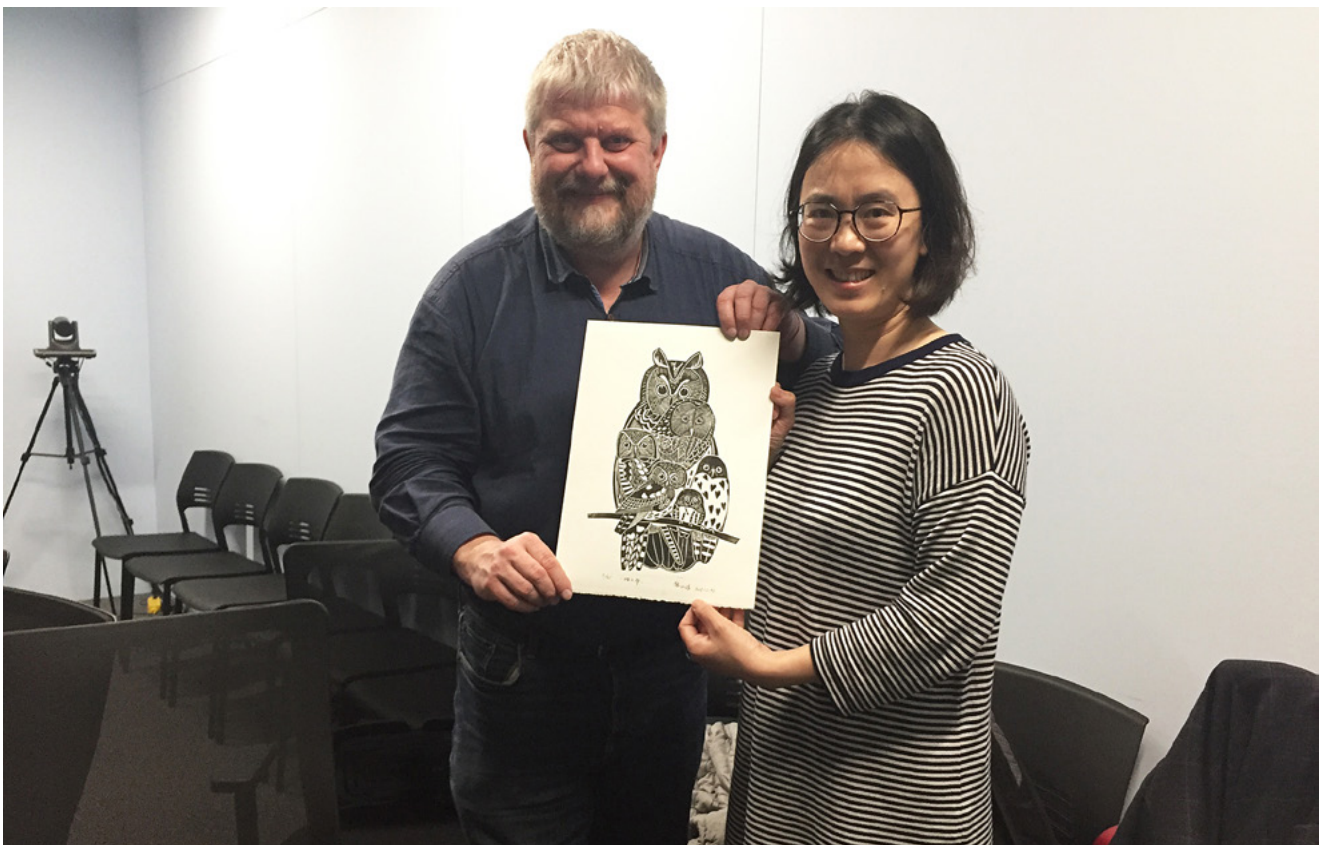
more than that, he talked to the National Forestry Bureau and set the goal for a continuous effort that lasted to now. Most important to me, he and Christoph decided to support us, when SBSinChina was a nobody in the conservation group, and this give us a lot of opportunities to learn, develop and contribute to the bird and the Yellow Sea.

In Chinese, we have a poem for a hero who died in his early career:

壮志未酬身先死 长使英雄泪满襟  
*"Sacrifice before achieving triumph makes heroes sorrowful with tears"*

The connections built by Evgeny shall not break and we shall follow his vision.

*Jing Li*  
*SBSinChina*





## Andrey Maksimov

Zhenya Syroechkovskiy was a giver. Not a taker, but a giver. There is such a rare type of people.

Today we already have to talk about him in the past as “he was”. In the beautiful past tense when he was.

Zhenya has died. A lot of people have to think about how to live with him now, and not just family and friends, also many for whom he created an environment, created a goal, a workplace, after all. Zhenya is a geographer, biologist, director of the NGO BirdsRussia, coordinator of a great number of environmental projects. And, of course, the flagship project for the conservation of the SBS.

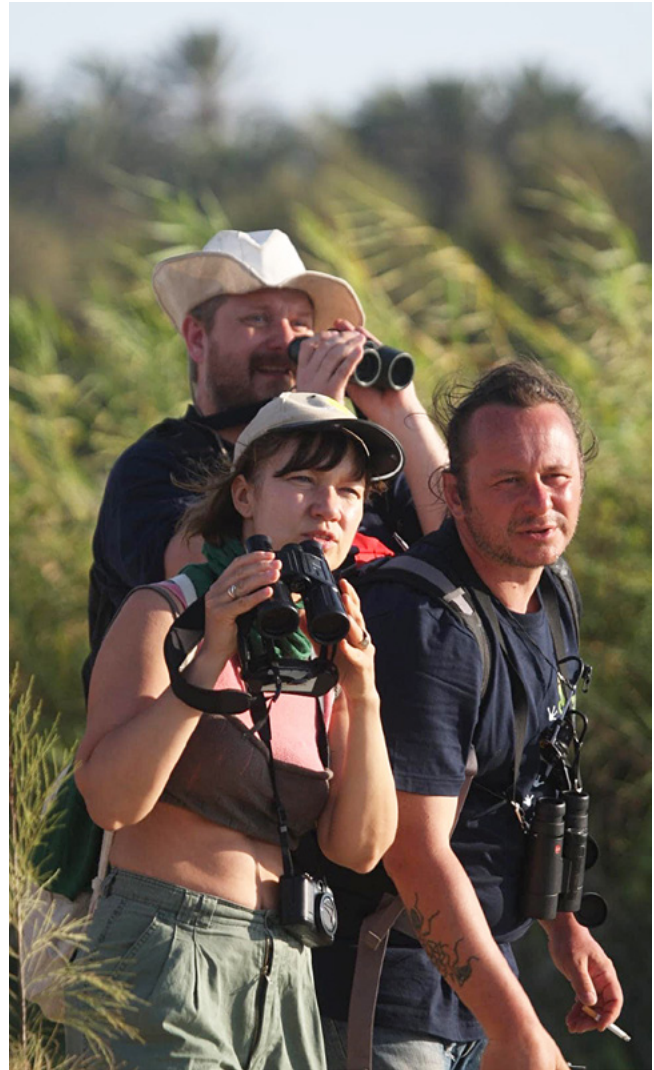
Save and recover – that was his way. He spent all of himself, all of his life to give something to the world, to save something for us. Zhenya tried to leave behind nature reserves and natural parks, saved species of animals and scientific papers. As usual, “not thanks, but in spite of.”

He was a fighter. His life has turned out well and he was successful

Today, his friends and like-minded people moan his loss. It's not entirely clear how to live on without him. I hope we will be able to continue, not spoil, but bring to realization some of Zhenya's undertakings. And it will be very difficult for all of us to cope with all, that he took on all by himself. Zhenya was a bright, talented, warm person.

For me, he was not only a friend, he was a guide from the artificial and fake world to the living and real world.

*Andrey Maksimov*  
*Moscow*



*Three russian heroes in Myanmar*

## Tong Mu

Evgeny opened the door to the Russian arctic for me, and, I believe, for many others too: a mysterious, attractive, and super diverse world that is often heard of, but nearly inaccessible by the outsiders. Not only do I have the chance to work with and learn from a team of excellent shorebird researchers and conservation practitioners, I feel myself a valued member of the team, who is contributing to real and practical conservation that is making positive changes. Having managed a small field crew working in much developed coastal regions in China, I can hardly imagine the time and effort he and the team had spent on managing the logistics at a remote fishing village in Far Eastern Russia, to make the lives of researchers and visitors, like me, comfortable and welcome. It is even harder to imagine the hardship and obstacles he faced during the tens of summers he had spent in the real wild to survey Spoon-billed Sandpipers and other waterbirds, and the rest of time in those years in negotiating and liaising with stakeholders, policymakers, and local communities.

I still remember the reoccurring conversations we had about Spoonie conservation in China. I could see the frustration in Evgeny's eyes, telling me how little he could do as a foreigner, even with the multiple official and unofficial titles and ties he held. Yet, we are where we are, with many sites secured and protected, many researches and campaigns going on, and many more people caring and loving Spoonies in China and many other countries, which could not be achieved without his persistence and dedicated work in Russia, along the Flyway, and across the world.

I am extremely fortunate to have met and known Evgeny since the very beginning of my career working on shorebird ecology and conservation. I owe much to the cares and trust he put into a young researcher, for which I am deeply grateful.

*Tong Mu  
Shanghai*







## Taej Mundkur

### EVGENY – THE CANDLE OF THE NORTH

Long before we met, I had read about Evgeny's amazing work in organising expeditions in eastern arctic Russia to study breeding geese, shorebirds and other waterbirds. I have had the pleasure of corresponding, meeting and interacting with Evgeny on innumerable occasions over the last decades.

We first met in the early 1990s when Evgeny became a strong supporter of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy for which I served as coordinator. The Strategy provided the framework for international cooperation across the flyways for over a decade and the basis for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership. Evgeny's astute advice was critical to navigate the complexities of engaging with Russian authorities from Chukotka to Yakutia and Moscow, to organise their participation in meetings and joint research projects.

Later Evgeny encouraged us all to jump through many hoops to engage the Arctic Council to take on a strategic role in promoting migratory bird conservation through the ongoing Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative. The enigmatic Spoon-billed Sandpiper served to rally us all together in the last decade. Local action has achieved a lot to promote the conservation and recovery of its population and its intertidal habitats from Russia, to the Yellow Sea, Thailand, Myanmar and the Sundarbans. Much has been possible through development of a strong and active international network across its flyway. Cer-

tainly a legacy of Evgeny's enthusiastic leadership!

We shared a special interest in conserving migratory waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway. We spent many moments over the last decades exploring ways to encourage development of an international framework that could build on a long history of research. Sadly Evgeny wasn't able to witness this.

I remember the gleam in his eye every time he handed me a new issue of Casarca – a journal he took great personal pride in nurturing all these years.

It wasn't just migratory birds that caught Evgeny's eye and I fondly recall one trip in a rain forest in Kuala Lumpur chasing after hornbills before we rushed him to the airport just in time for his flight. He was thrilled to finally see Black Hornbills, but perhaps the hot afternoon sun in a humid tropical forest replete with mosquitoes was something he told me that he didn't forget in a hurry.

Evgeny was a dear friend. Thinking Evgeny has left us is still so difficult to comprehend. He was a man larger than life and always so full of joy. Let us redouble our efforts to work together and achieve what Evgeny set out to do for conserving migratory waterbirds and their habitats. No small challenge in these uncertain times. But if there is something Evgeny taught us, was that where there is a will, there is a way!

*Taej Mundkur*  
*Special Advisor, Wetlands International*



*Evgeny at Anatidae Working Group 2003, Korea. Taej far right*

## Tom Noah

"My friend's friend is also my friend," says a Russian proverb. In this way, a lifelong dream came true when I was allowed to participate in an international expedition to Chukotka in the early summer of 2005.

It was in Anadyr that I met Zhenya for the first time. He was the leader, organizer and professional anchor of this unforgettable nine-week trip. From the very beginning, I was fascinated not only by his impressive figure, his remarkable appetite, his willingness to talk and his guitar play, but also by his charisma and his broad interest, which extended far beyond the ornithological exploration and conservation of this remote re-

gion. Together with his wife Lena, her 16-year-old daughter Anna and some other Russian, English, Swedish and New Zealand friends we roamed for weeks through wild landscapes. The means of transport we used differed significantly from those at home: in addition to large and small planes and helicopters, we used (illegally) supply ships and the boat of the whalers of Khatyrka.

Particularly exciting and associated with many surprises, however, were extended forays with a Vesdekhod: On June 25, we had a ride of 110 km ahead of us, but started late in the afternoon. Almost all the passengers sat on the roof of the monster. After a few hours of driving, the jacket of



*Evgeny with the 2005 international expedition team in Beringovski. From left: Maksim (from Khanty-Mansiysk), Tom Noah, Alexander Kuzmich, Nikolay Yakushev, Christoph Zöckler, Volodja Jakovlev, Evgeny, John O'Sullivan, Rob Schuckard, Pavel Tomkovich, Viktor Nilsson, Konstantin Klokov*

a famous wader researcher from Moscow caught fire, triggered by sparks from the exhaust pipes of the tank. After the small fire had been extinguished, everyone hid in the interior and lay on and between diesel barrels. Shortly before midnight, an axle of the tank broke. Everything went very quickly: While the repair brigade worked routinely, the rest of the team prepared a fire and fried bacon. Guess who took care of the food?!

After two more hours we stood in front of the Gytchmytkukuul River. Yes, Gytchmytkukuul. The tank actually did swim over the river, which is several hundred meters wide. On the other side, we clapped our hands, as some people do after landing on a plane. An hour and a half later,

well after midnight, there was a fire in the engine compartment. Then we dealt with some Bar-tailed Godwits, which here belong to a very isolated taxon, namely *anadyrensis*. Early in the morning, a large axle bearing of the Vesdekhod broke ...

Punctually and in a good mood, but a little tired, we reached Anadyr in the afternoon. In the meantime, other participants had arrived in the capital of Chukotka. One of them excitedly asked Zhenya how the expedition had gone so far. "Excellent, important and interesting results; all has worked as expected."

*Tom Noah  
Spreewald, Germany*



*Evgeny writing log book!*

## Debbie Pain

We never know how the loss of people will affect us until it happens. It's usually accompanied by profound sadness, but the untimely death of Evgeny was like being hit with a baseball bat. This is probably because he was 'larger than life' and the space that he's left as a friend, colleague, and conservation hero is massive. Evgeny was a major figure in Russian conservation and as well as being an excellent scientist and field worker, he was a skilled tactician, diplomat and collaborator. He was a truly rounded conservationist who was equally at home on the Russian tundra and in governmental meetings. He was generous with his time and knowledge and working with him on Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation was enriching and humbling. One of the key things Evgeny taught me was just how powerful effective science communication can be and his wisdom has served me well.

One of the things that I will remember most about Evgeny was his amazing tenacity. If it ever looked as if we were hitting a brick wall with conservation plans the last thing he would do was give up. He'd think laterally, and work out what needed to be done to get around or scale that wall as quickly and effectively as possible. How could anyone not admire that? He really was the best kind of con-

servationist. On the few occasions when we didn't entirely agree on the path to take Evgeny would use his considerable powers of persuasion to try to change my mind. This was always done so well, with such charm and grace, that I never minded. In any case he was usually right!

Spending time with Evgeny on the Russian tundra while searching for Spoon-billed Sandpipers was incredible. Once, we'd taken a little zodiac to the shore and found the remains of an old hunter's camp fire with some bones, probably walrus. Evgeny told me that the fire remains could have been a few hundred years old and that it's possible that no people had set foot there since then – the nearest human habitation was hundreds of km in each direction. It was an amazing moment and I felt truly privileged to be there – what a sense of perspective in space and time.

Socialising with Evgeny, his wife Lena and close friend Christoph was always something I looked forward to and enjoyed immensely. I will never forget you Evgeny Syroechkovskiy – conservation giant, colleague, friend, inspiration.

*Debbie Pain*

*UK SBS Support Group, England*



*Evgeny at the SBS Task Force Meeting in Rudong 2014, Debbie 4<sup>th</sup> from left*



## Phil Palmer

I first met Evgeny as he asked me to join him kayaking 120 miles along a Chukotka river to look for Lesser Whitefronted Geese. At the time they were considered more threatened than SBS! My reward for helping him would be to see a nice red Spoonie when we reached the coast - we never saw one, and I nearly lost my job!

We were supposed to be picked up at a remote delta by Chukchi fishermen. They were eight days late and we had just eaten our last emergency onion. But I had so many stories to tell my friends; tales of bears, home-made hooch and Chukchi hospitality, as well as many new birds including the first Meadowlark outside of America. We even got a sled ride being pulled over some very dodgy sea-ice while sat on top of the hunters cache of dead King Eiders.

Normally not seeing something so awesome as a Spoon-billed Sandpiper, after all the hardship we had endured to get there would have been massively depressing. But Evgeny had become a great friend, and together we had experienced so much. That trip was the greatest adventure of my life. I felt so honoured when he invited me back on a second expedition this time looking for SBS in Kamchatka. This time we did see SBS, but it was only one. Hid behind an old sweet packet stuck in some grass, it couldn't see me as I crawled on my belly to get a good look before it walked out. It was in celebration of this find that I took this photo of Evgeny about to tuck into home-baked bread and tundra-berry vodka. For me each day spent with Evgeny was memorable and precious. He would greet me with the widest smile and almost break my ribs with a big bear hug.

I always hoped that I could go back to Chukotka with him one day, indeed I will keep that thought with me forever. I will miss him greatly.

*Phil Palmer  
England*



*Kamchatka 2009*

## Courtney Price

Evgeny was a force; a long-standing and essential fixture in Arctic science, Russian ornithology and flyway conservation. He was a world authority on bird conservation, and the world relied on him. It is hard to believe he is gone, because he was everywhere.

I worked with Evgeny for over 10 years at the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) and I joined the organization early in Evgeny's chairmanship for Russia. During this time CAFF completed its seminal Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, to which Evgeny also contributed his great knowledge. This report flagged for Arctic policy makers what he knew all too well; that many Arctic breeding migratory bird populations were in decline and that the Arctic Council had a responsibility and was in a unique position to do something about it. Never missing an opportunity

to advance conservation, Evgeny spearheaded the development of CAFF's Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI), which joins Arctic states and observer countries and organizations to address Arctic species in decline (including his most beloved Spoonie). It is through AMBI that I worked most closely with Evgeny, especially in the last few years.

He was unique, I think, because he could see things a lot of other people can't. He saw details in nature, observed and read the environment. He could also conceptualize the political big picture, and strategically, he could connect the two. He was as comfortable knee-deep in mud as he was in a plenary hall. He was skilled at working across cultures, languages, and settings, always finding meaningful connections and understanding how things worked in different contexts.



*In a mud flat in Gujarat, 2020*

Evgeny had boundless energy, a big personality, and a wonderful sense of humour. I will remember him: singing with Elena around the table; delivering heartfelt speeches; sending me pictures of Chinchillas; pouring bottles of vodka; wearing that wolverine hat; encouraging me to eat my raw frozen horse liver; sending me much anticipated updates from the field; and gifting me a Spoonie cookie so beautiful I didn't want to eat it. I learned that empty bottles of vodka had no place on the table, and that I probably never wanted to try reindeer chyme (even if it is a delicacy).

On our first trip to India we were taken bird-watching. We were out for about an hour, having seen about two dozen species when the others had to leave. Evgeny and I stayed because there was rumour of an endemic sunbird nearby. It was just us, loitering outside someone's house with binoculars as the sun rose and delivered overwhelming heat. We were late for the meeting. Evgeny gently insisted we stay put. Some time passed when a red flash appeared by the flowering bush and I forgot how uncomfortable I was from the heat and the tardiness to the meeting. It was the beautifully tiny and delicate Vigors's Sunbird, a species of which I will likely never see again. He gestured to the scene, "see what a little patience can give you?" he said. He was like that; he could help you see what was really important.



His passing is an immense loss, personally and professionally. He was larger than life, and so full of life; so it makes no sense that he is now absent from it. My thoughts are with Evgeny's very large network of family and friends.

I know I will look back fondly, and with gratitude, at time I was lucky enough to spend with Evgeny. To my dear friend and colleague, thank you. You will be missed.

*Courtney Price  
Iceland*

## Chairunas Adha Putra

Personally, I have never met a Russian person before I met Evgeny. At the end of 2018, I received a surprise message from the Task Force, to search for Spoon-billed Sandpiper with a satellite tag which just arrived in Sumatra. As far as we know this was the first record of SBS in the east coast of Sumatra and Indonesia. All of the team whom I have never met were very enthusiastic and really wanted to know if the tagged bird was safe and well at the coast of Sumatra. Furthermore, our communication was so intense with deep expectations from them, I could feel the tremendous pressure at that time.

I firmly believe that there are no coincidences in this world. We found SBS Lime 07 with satellite tag stuck out from its feathers (see Newsletter No. 19), tagged by Evgeny and the team in Meiny-pil'gyno in July 2018. That moment took me personally on a journey to explore the participation of a group of people dedicated their lives to reveal the riddles of nature to mankind. Evgeny was the chairman and key spirit within this group, I felt his enthusiasm and dedication were very inspiring for young people especially for me, when I had the opportunity to meet Evgeny personally, and his warm, humble manor, who I thought as a Russian had a wintry expression.



*Nchay during the Mottama SBS survey 2019*

And what he's done in the past was “no coincidence”, connecting the elements of birdlife in the north to the south, while encourage young people like me to keep moving for bird conservation. Thank you very much Evgeny.

*Chairunas (Nchay) Adha Putra  
Sumatera Shorebirds Research and Conservation  
Project, North Sumatra, Indonesia*



Evgeny Syroechkovskiy <ees\_jr@yahoo.co.uk>  
To: christoph.zoeckler, chairunasadha  
Cc: 'Baz Hughes'

Thu, Apr 11, 2019 at 5:10 AM

Dear Nchay, it is all good - please go ahead with article - thanks for your work and dedication to bird conservation! Good luck to find more SBS in Sumatra and help stop bird hunting. cheers - Evgeny

## Rodney Russ

Evgeny was sceptical and a little reluctant when I first approached him about helping out on a citizen science project to do with the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. He probably had reason to be, he didn't know me and what I was suggesting hadn't been tried before; I was offering logistical support to his project with my tourist expedition ship working in the Russian Far East. I think if that had been the total package he might have been more enthusiastic, but I also wanted my passengers to help him search new areas in the Russian Far East for Spoon-billed Sandpiper colonies.

It speaks volumes about the man that he put aside any misgivings he might have had and embraced the concept with an enthusiasm that was uniquely Evgeny. That first citizen science expedition was a huge success, with a previously unknown breeding population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper being discovered and a lot of un-surveyed country checked out.

We went on to do more work together and developed the project into what was arguably one of the most successful citizen science projects in the world. The credit for the success of this project is Evgeny's, and Evgeny's alone. He embraced it, developed it, and nurtured it, and it soon outgrew its original goals as we found ourselves developing the concept

for other species in other areas of this vast region.

Evgeny and Elena became regular participants on many of our Russian Far East expeditions, the knowledge and enthusiasm they both brought to these expeditions was without measure. The knowledge and information gained through participating in these expeditions was fed back into publications and used to negotiate further conservation of these areas. It was a truly unique and inspiring relationship.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper are charismatic, their looks and life history are unique and endearing. Evgeny had charisma, and he had encyclopaedic knowledge and a passion for high arctic ecosystems. He was selfless in his dedication to the region and to its conservation and his life was as unique as the species he devoted his life to. His legacy will live on in his family and those of us privileged to call him a friend and colleague.

Теперь он в покое и дома, в тундре  
*"Now he is at rest and at home, in the tundra"*

*Rodney Russ*

*New Zealand*

*Founder Heritage Expeditions Ltd.*

*Founder Strannik Ocean Voyages Ltd.*



*Evgeny with Rodney and Lena on Kolyuchinski Island, Chukchi Sea 2013*

## Beatrix Schwehm

When I heard on the late evening of the 25th of January 2022 that Evgeny died, I was in shock. Just a short while after Christoph's bad bike accident, another email from Christoph arrived: *"Sadly, Evgeny did not make it and succumbed last night. One bad news after the other, but it cannot get much worse"*.

Since 2015 I was involved in the film project "The last of its kind" as author, producer and director. I was impressed by the power and ingenuity how all members of the various flyway countries and nations looked for solutions to push the Spoon-billed Sandpiper project forward and supported international nature conservation. The long-standing German-Russian friendship between Evgeny and Christoph was an important basis of this work, in which next to scientific knowledge also diplomacy, communication and friendship played a big role.

And when we finally acquired all the necessary funds for the film, booked the flights and helicopter for Chukotka the world began to change. The pandemic put everything on hold and changed everything and impacted everybody. A year later I had to step off the film project in the end also for personal reasons.

Evgeny replied and wrote:

*Dear Beatrix,*

*I was very sorry to hear that you have to step off from the project. I understand it was very frustrating and I had asked Christoph why could we not just wait for another year or two and get back to the implementation of the project when corona will go away... you are right. to stay healthy is most important. For me over 3 months had passed since I got corona and I am still having this "long covid" and not feeling very well ....! I hope you and family could avoid all this and stay healthy, get your vaccinations in time etc.*

*with my very best wishes, Evgeny*

When I reread the last lines recently, I heard Evgeny's voice again. For me Evgeny was a very charismatic and powerful person. I liked his laughing. The fact that his voice, his nature, his knowledge, his thoughts and ideas will no longer be in this world is a big loss. In my thoughts and with my heart I am with all of you, who were close to Evgeny, but mostly with his wife Lena, his daughter Anna and his mother, Christoph, Sayam, Jing Li and Phyolay. Stay strong for him!!!!

*Beatrix Schwehm  
Germany*



## Jonathan Slaght

In summer 2018, Yevgenii and Lena joined me and others on a wild Spoonie chase. The US National Park Service, looking at models that showed possible Spoon-billed Sandpiper habitat in Alaska, organized a seven-day expedition to investigate these sites. The team included representatives from two US agencies, two US-based NGOs, and BirdsRussia. Yevgenii and Lena were invited because if Spoonies were there, they would find them.

Our work was based out of Kotzebue, a village just north of the Arctic Circle and surrounded in equal part by tundra and water. Between surveys we lived in a US Fish and Wildlife Service bunkhouse. There, on the first day, the expedition cook announced that in addition to a no alcohol policy, we would be vegetarians for the week.

At first, Yevgenii seemed to register this news with quiet horror. He delighted in other cultures and this, he may have thought, would be like another regional eccentricity. But in Russia, the word “expedition” is almost synonymous with meat and alcohol, staples as much a part of one’s time in the field as rubber boots and binoculars. This was like going fishing without a pole.

The novelty soon became an inconvenience. “A gde myaco,” Yevgenii whispered to me over a fragrant dinner of grains and vegetables. “Where’s the meat?” Perhaps he confided his suffering in me as the only Russian-speaking American there, or maybe he shared similar whispers with others in English, I don’t know. Yevgenii was discrete.

By the end of the week we’d tallied nearly 5,000 birds at 175 point counts, but no Spoonies. The habitat was decent but perhaps too far from the core breeding grounds in Chukotka.



*At Kotzebue airstrip*

I happened to be on the same flight as Yevgenii and Lena back to Anchorage, where we decided to share a quick meal. I was thirsty as we sat down, eyeing the half-drained mugs of beer scattered across the tables of happy travelers around us. But Yevgenii’s focus was on a different prize. As the waiter approached, Yevgenii waved his menu away without even looking at it. “Bring me,” he said with urgency and a smile, “whatever dish has the most meat.”

Yevgenii was a powerhouse in so many senses of the word; a persuasive blend of diplomacy and conservation. An important part of his character, one that allowed him to make so many personal connections, was his ability to find humor and light wherever he might be.

*Jonathan Slaght  
Wildlife Biologist & Author*

## Pavel Tomkovich

I knew Evgeny (nickname Zhenya) from 1990, when he just graduated the Geography Faculty, Lomonosov Moscow State University and we got into the same arctic field camp in the northern Taimyr Peninsula, north-central Siberia. Not having locally breeding geese there, which were then of Evgeny's main interest, he had to learn the ways of catching and studying breeding waders (shorebirds), and this knowledge turned to be of importance for him in future. In subsequent years, Evgeny was participating in other expeditions and organizing his own ones in Siberia gaining an experience not only in field studies and publication of their results, but also in organizing colleagues for various communal bird-related activities.

Thus, in 1994 he organized the Goose, Swan and Duck Study Group in the countries of the former USSR. In 1999, Evgeny defended his PhD about the distribution, ecology and conservation of the Brent Goose.

Evgeny invited me in the year 2000 to join his bird surveys in Chukotka, the north-easternmost part of Russia, and we discovered then a sharp population decline of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SBS) on the species breeding grounds. Next year his team found the largest known up to now local breeding SBS population in Meinypil'gyno area where he organized monitoring of the population in the following years. Evgeny became dawned and inspired by the idea to save this charismatic species, and since then he devoted a lot of his efforts together with his friends and like-minded people to make this idea a reality that was possible only at an international level. They stimulated the IUCN to change the SBS status to Endangered and then Critically Endangered one, prepared the species Action Plan, and organized the SBS Recovery Team transformed later into the SBS Task Force. In parallel a large number of local, national and international meetings and conferences



devoted to SBS or with reports about SBS were organized along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway which SBS follow. A lot of resulting outreach and conservation activities on the flyway significantly reduced the global SBS population decline, but unfortunately it is not stopped yet.

As a Russian representative in CAFF, Evgeny suggested and insisted on a new international inter-governmental project, the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI), which promotes global studies of the long-distance migrations of arctic waterbirds. Evgeny also was an initiator of the current BirdsRussia, a Russian NGO, and of many other national and international activities.

Even with efforts of many followers it will be hard to continue all the activities that Evgeny has initiated, and development of new ones likely will be reduced. He is an irreplaceable loss. Nevertheless, he always will remain an excellent guide in our conservation efforts related to both SBS and wildlife in general.

*Pavel Tomkovich*  
*Moscow, Russia*



## Nikolai Yakushev



*Lena, Nikolai, Zhenya and Joachim Schwahn in Myanmar*

**M**y grief of losing Evgeny is still very big. Words cannot convey all the pain caused by Evgeny's passing. Both, Evgeny and Christoph have always been my senior comrades, whom I look up to and try to follow along the path of bird conservation. I will do my best to continue the conservation work with the Spoon-billed Sandpiper

that Evgeny and Christoph started. I hope that together we will be able to rise our flag species and continue the work of Zhenya.

*Nikolai Yakushev  
Saratov, Russia*

## Christoph Zöckler

**M**y first expedition with Evgeny led me into the Yano-Indigirka floodplain in Northern Yakutia in 1996. He had invited foreigners to accompany him on his Arctic Expeditions to explore previously uncharted territories. And what an exciting expedition this was. He demonstrated a complete command of his huge country and impossible situations and awkward encounters were addressed calmly and with an experience that was astonishing for a 28 year old scientist. As the expedition progressed so the situations we faced became more impossible. He mastered all with bravura and intelligence. I joined his expeditions 17 times over the past 26 years and we became very good friends, working together on several joint conservation agendas in the Arctic and on waterbirds. I learned a lot from him and established my own expeditions, starting in 2005 to India and later to Bangladesh and Myanmar in search of our common conservation concern the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, which of course he and his wife Lena Lappo also joined. In total we visited 18 different countries together on expeditions and at conferences and started many conservation projects across the Arctic and its flyways.

Evgeny knew how his country Russia works, what can be achieved in conservation and what was not quite possible yet. He was founder and director of BirdsRussia and he also held a position at the Arctic Institute at the Ministry of Natural Resources. He represented Russia in the Arctic Council working group, CAFF, and chaired the group in 2011-13 and initiated the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative AMBI.

His heart was really beating for large waterfowl like geese, birds that you can also eat in certain circumstances! For many years he chaired the Geese Study Group of Eastern Europe and



Northern Asia and edited the journal *Kasarka*. However, he was instrumental in mitigating many hunting related issues, such as spring hunting in Russia and along the flyway. He only reluctantly started the Spoon-billed Sandpiper project as it's not a goose. But in 2004, we both established the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Group together, which merged to the EAAFP Task Force in 2010, and has been chaired by Evgeny ever since. His vision and enthusiasm for conservation of waterbirds was infectious and his diplomatic skills building bridges between institutions, cultures and nations made him many friends. In many ways he was a role model for me and I learned many important skills in international and flyway conservation.

In 2020 Evgeny contracted Covid and developed long Covid later on, and only relatively recently he was being treated for a rare systemic disease which progressed faster than anyone anticipated.

Let's pick up his baton and carry on our common vision of flyway conservation. I lost a very good friend far too early.





## News in brief

### Myanmar

Nan Thar Island and its sea around is included now in Myanmar's second Marine Protected Area. In total the new protected area covers 22,000 ha.



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper at Nan Thar Island*

### Malaysia

Sarawak's and Borneo's first Spoon-billed Sandpiper was observed in Bako-Buntal Bay IBA on 28 February 2022 by Batrisiya Teepol and Daniel Kong. More details will follow, meanwhile enjoy a video clip here:

<https://www.facebook.com/100000020817644/videos/1110692216418347/>

*Photo credits, as far as known:*

Pyae Phyoe Aung, Gerald Boere, Sayam Chowdhury, Jochen Dierschke, Matthias Fanck, Alexander Hellquist, Jia Yefei, Mikhail Ivanov, Nigel Jarrett, Jan van de Kam, Chris Kelly, Lars Lachmann, Elena Lappo, Vladimir Melnikov, Tom Noah, Phil Palmer, Ren Nou Soe, Pavel Tomkovich, Christoph Zöckler.

We looked through 1000 pictures for this newsletter and could not find out the photographers of many of them. We ask for your indulgence.

## The last Page



*After the last visit of the distillery Zhenya not standing (see also p. 22)*