



## Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force News Bulletin No. 11, January 2014

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22 or 23 Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Rudong, China

Gavin Thomas

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

**Mission:**

The East Asian and 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. The key 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, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Union of Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh and India, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT), Wetlands International, a representative of the EAAFP Shorebird Working Group and experts and conservation organisations from principal range states and other partners.

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**In figures:**

143 SBS in Rudong, China

Some 6,000 ha mudflats protected in Rudong, China

3 out of 8 flagged breeding adults resighted in China and Thailand

2 head –started birds resighted in China and Thailand

4 Conservation Community Groups established in the Gulf of Mottama

1 SBS saved from fishing nets in Myanmar

26 SBS at Sonadia Bangladesh in November 2013

7 SBS in the Mekong Delta, South Vietnam in January 2014

## 1) Foreword from the Editor

Dear friends and colleagues,

The SBS News Bulletin has increased in volume over the years and each issue is becoming slightly longer. This issue is already double the size of the August 2012 one. It is a reflection of the many activities along the flyway, but also outside, and it is almost impossible to capture all of these so I apologise that some news stories have to be postponed to the next bulletin.

Among all the many reports the most exciting have been the numerous re-sightings of both adult breeding birds and also adult birds that hatched three years ago and are now part of the breeding population. Clearly the most important and hugely promising observations came from Thailand and South China where two of our head started birds have been observed. This is important in many ways: it shows the head starting programme is working, birds are surviving along the flyway and, if necessary, we can re-introduce birds from the conservation breeding programme. Pavel Tomkovich and Zhang Lin report in more detail in this issue. Very encouraging is the news from Rudong in China. Not only has the highest count of 141 birds confirmed the rich mudflats near Shanghai as a key stop-over site, but our efforts also made a breakthrough in conserving key stop-over sites in China. Jing Li and colleagues report on this, along with a personal report from Gavin Thomas. There are still huge challenges to overcome, but it looks like we have made a good start and I hope we can continue to report on the progress in conservation work in China. Our Task Force members in Myanmar and Bangladesh continue their great efforts to secure our conservation successes on the wintering grounds. Pyae Phyo Aung, Sayam Chowdhury and Mohammad Foysal provide the details. Dr. Elena Lappo introduces the new bulletin series 'SBS in Arts', featuring, in this issue, the Danish artist and Task Force member Jens Gregersen. Others will follow in upcoming bulletins.

We continue to receive support from many parts of the world and many more partners are joining our Task Force which is indeed very encouraging. We have received continuous support from our old friends from BirdLife International and its Species Champions, Wildsounds, Heritage Expeditions and the Dutch Birding Association, as well as continued support by Keidanren from Tokyo, the Lighthouse and Manfred-Hermesen Foundations in Germany, the RSPB in the UK and the US FWS in the US, and many more private donors and small companies. Tragically we have lost Tony Htin Hla at the end of last year. Tony was a key member of our Task Force and his death is not only a major loss for conservation in Myanmar, but for many of us as a friend and our thoughts are with his family.

*Dr Christoph Zöckler, Coordinator SBS TF, August 2013*

## 2) Foreword from Dr Norbert Schäffer, RSPB

Dear Friends and Colleagues!

I can still remember my first Spoon-billed Sandpiper: January 2012, Gulf of Mottama, Myanmar. There I was, together with Nigel Clarke from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), in the middle of this endless mudflat. Together with a group of scientists and nature conservationists from a range of countries, we were taken "out there" by fishermen. We said goodbye to the village in the evening during high tide, moved across the pitch dark sea during the night, waited for the tide to go out and fall dry, and left the boat. Jumping over

board into a mudflat, which was covered in several meters of water only hours before, was an experience - I can still feel the mud squeezing through my toes. After a one hour walk, we came across the first flock of small waders and in between them there was what we were looking for: a Spoon-billed Sandpiper. I don't know what I was expecting, a big bang perhaps, or fanfares, but there was nothing of this kind. We had talked about Spoon-billed Sandpipers for so long and so often, the build up to this moment was enormous. And all Nigel said, looking through his telescope, was: "Do you want to see a Spoonie?" Despite its unmistakable spoon-shaped bill, the bird was rather difficult to spot in this group of small waders. Still, it was a Spoon-billed Sandpiper. During this trip, we saw a total of more than 100 Spoon-billed Sandpipers, or perhaps I should say, we saw a Spoon-billed Sandpiper 100 times - some of the birds might well have been one and the same individual. Seeing a Spoon-billed Sandpiper is undoubtedly a highlight for any birder by any standard, but the most memorable impression for me was this astonishing bird in this breathtaking environment! Nothing has changed here for perhaps thousands of years: the flood going out every few hours, leaving large mudflats behind only for the tide to come back in an impressive tidal bore, building and removing mud islands, creating and redirecting channels, but ultimately, leaving the area as it is - a mudflat, the wintering site of our Spoon-billed Sandpipers!

It is unbelievable to think that some of the tiny birds we watched in the Gulf of Mottama had been seen several months previously by Evgeny and his team in their breeding grounds in Chukotka or by others during their migration along the coast of China, Korea, Vietnam or Thailand. The same individuals! It is fascinating to see how many nature conservationists are inspired by this little bird with its funny bill, conservationists working so hard to protect the habitats important for our bird. I am endlessly impressed by all these initiatives to protect this bird and how it all comes together. A large number of people and organisations are involved in this programme of work today. From time to time I think we should remember the ones who started it, long before the Spoon-billed Sandpiper was on the front page of so many publications, turning into a celebrity of the bird world. One of them was our dear friend Dr Htin Hla, or Tony, as we called him, who died far too early last November. Tony was undoubtedly the leading birdwatcher and nature conservationist in Myanmar, a country which is changing with incredible, breathtaking speed and is the main wintering country of our Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Tony was the first contact, the first foothold for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper community in Myanmar. It was a great privilege to know Tony, and without him we would not be where we now are. Thank you, Tony.

*Dr. Norbert Schäffer*  
*Head of International Policy and Species Recovery*  
*The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)*

### **3) First results from the ringing of Spoon-billed Sandpipers in southern Chukotka, Far Eastern Russia, in 2013**

It is well known now that the breeding range of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SbS, *Eurynorhynchus pugmeus*) is patchy on the Chukchi and Bering sea coasts stretching from northern Chukotka southward to the isthmus of Kamchatka Peninsula in the extreme north-eastern Russia (Lappo et al. 2012). Early studies of breeding biology of SbS were undertaken exclusively in the northern population, predominantly at Belyaka Spit (67°N, 174°W), northern Chukotka, and only in the year 2000 were the main activities switched to the population in southern Chukotka, mostly to the vicinity of Meinypilgyno (62.5°N, 177°E). This switch took place because the northern population declined to extinction by 2009 (e.g., <http://www.arcticbirds.net>, Lappo et al. 2012, Arkhipov et al. 2013) while the southern

population continued to exist, although declining (e.g., Zöckler et al. 2010). Accordingly, ringing of breeding SbS in most cases accompanied with flagging took place in the northern and southern populations at different times – in the former 447 birds were ringed from 1972-2005 and in the latter 440 birds were ringed in total from 2000-2013.

Because of the sharp decline of the populations in the early 2000s, it was decided in 2007 not to catch adult SbS anymore to prevent any harm, whatever small, to a population on the brink of extinction; however, ringing and flagging (with small-size flags) of unfledged chicks that were found occasionally still continued in 2007-2012 (55 chicks were ringed during this period). Starting in the year 2000, SbS were marked with light blue flags in the northern population and with light green (lime) flags in the southern population as regional codes of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. With a few exceptions, adult birds typically got a standard metal numbered ring of the Moscow Bird Ringing Center on its right tibia and a flag on its left tibia, while the combination was opposite in chicks (metal ring on left tibia and flag on right tibia). This allowed knowing the age at ringing of a recorded flagged bird.

A new period in conservation and study of SbS started in 2012 when the 'Head Starting' project (see previous newsletters) was initiated in Meinypilgyno. It became necessary to distinguish wild birds from those raised in captivity in order to learn about the success/failure of this project, and about the difference in survival of birds raised by parents and by aviculturists. Through the increasing attention towards the plight of the SbS, the Task Force has created a growing network of devoted observers equipped with telescopes and digital cameras throughout the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and that now significantly increases the chances of colour-marked SbS to be seen outside of the breeding grounds. These changes were the reasons that individual flagging of both chicks and adult SbS was resumed.

Dr. Nigel Clark from the British Trust for Ornithology created and registered a colour-marking scheme with engraved leg flags (ELFs) for SbS on the flyway, and later he supplied the Chukotka team with ELFs. According to this scheme, wild SbS in southern Chukotka still had to get a light green (lime) ELF with individually unique alphabetic combination engraved for chicks and numerical combination engraved for adults. 'Head Started' birds (raised in captivity) were to be marked with white ELFs with alphabetic engravings. This scheme was applied for the first time in Meinypilgyno in 2013. In total, 35 SbS were flagged in southern Chukotka in 2013. Eight adults (4 males and 4 females) were caught on 4 nests, and 11 wild and 16 'Head Started' chicks were ringed this year. Not everything went smoothly. Some adults and fledged 'Head Started' birds were obviously disturbed by an ELF on their leg because these flags were significantly larger than the small plain light green flags used before. Moreover, these ELFs were too large for small SbS chicks to feel comfortable, preventing their free movement. As a result one of the flags in the 'Head Started' birds had to be removed and only 3 wild half-grown SbS chicks were fit with ELFs in 2013. We hope that it will be possible to manufacture ELFs of smaller size for future use in SbS.

Despite some discomfort for birds and a relatively small number of marked birds (26 of them were given ELFs), this first experience with using ELFs for SbS proved to be extremely successful in terms of observations on the flyway. By the end of 2013, information was obtained about records of three adult SbS with ELFs supported by photographs (37.5% of flagged adults) and two 'Head Started' birds (13.3%). An adult bird with ELF engraved '01' after being observed last time in its area on 4 August was then recorded several times in Rudong area, Jiangsu, southern China, from 30 August to the 9th October when it was moulting primaries (originally information came from Mr. Zhang Lin, see article below). This bird was the first one flagged in 2013 as a brooding male on its nest on 14 June when eggs were taken for artificial incubation. Surprisingly his mate, ringed on the same nest several hours later, obtained ELF '02'; it was also observed then on her wintering grounds at Lam Pak Bia, Phetburi, Thailand on 18 December 2013 (observer: Mr. Daeng). These two birds

turned out to be extremely successful breeders in 2013 because their 'Head Started' eggs produced three juveniles that migrated southward, while the same parents produced a replacement clutch and raised three more young in the wild to fledging age.

One more adult SbS, a female with ELF '05' was found by Mr. Suchart Daengphayon (Tii) and photographed by Smith Sutibut at Khok Kham, Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand on 30 November 2013 and again photographed by Hans Bister in the same area on 5 December 2013. The bird was still present on 12 January and is believed to winter there (Phil Round in litt.).

A 'Head Started' young SbS was observed in the Thai Inner Gulf, Thailand, by Tii on 7 November 2013 and another bird in a fishpond area near Leizhou City, southern China, by Jonathan Martinez on 10 November 2013. The birds were seen from a large distance which did not allow reading the inscriptions on their ELFs, although a letter 'A' was read on the flag of the Thai bird.

One more SbS originating from Meinypilgyno was recorded in Rudong area, Jiangsu, southern China, on 5 October 2013 (information from Mr.Zhang Lin). It was carrying a plain light green flag on the right tibia which indicated that this bird was flagged as an unfledged chick. Luckily, the bird was photographed by several observers quite closely from different sides enabling them to read the digits on its metal ring: MOSKVA KS18181. This ring was placed on an SbS chick on 13 July 2010, thus, confirming the origin of this flagged bird.



SbS male '01' warning near chicks from a replacement clutch



A fledged and released SbS from 'Head Starting Project' in Meinypilgyno, Chukotka on 28 July 2013

Photos: Nastya Syestnova

These results of re-sightings in 2013 are very promising. We assume that if adults with ELFs successfully return to their breeding grounds next year, the colour-flagging will be continued in Meinypilgyno, and hopefully with this approach we will get much new valuable information on migration parameters, natural history traits and some demography characteristics of the SbS that are important for our understanding and for conservation of this critically endangered shorebird species. It is interesting to note that all observations of SbS from southern Chukotka, of this and former years, came from wintering grounds in southern China and Thailand, while records in winter months of birds tagged with light blue flags in northern Chukotka originated from Bangladesh, Myanmar and only once from Thailand (on 1 March 2006). This means that birds from the two breeding populations spend winter possibly in different regions. This difference in distribution may explain the difference in the current

status of the populations with more of a tragic situation in the population of northern Chukotka.

Cited literature:

Arkhipov V.Yu., Noah T., Koschkar S., Kondrashov F.A. 2013. Birds of Mys Shmidta, North Chukotka, Russia. Forktail 29: 25–30.

Lappo E.G., Tomkovich P.S., Syroechkovskiy E.E., Jr. 2012. Atlas of breeding waders in the Russian Arctic. Moscow: Publishing House “UF Ofsetnaya Pechat”.

Zöckler C., Syroechkovskiy E.E. & Atkinson P.W. 2010. Rapid and continued population decline in the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* indicates imminent extinction unless conservation action is taken. Bird Conser. Internat. 20: 95–111.

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#### 4) Sighting of flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Rudong

*Zhang Lin*

At the end of August, an adult Spoon-billed Sandpiper with a lime green flag engraved 01 was seen for the first time after it left its breeding ground (see Pavel Tomkovich above). Then it was seen several times in the same area until 9 October, completing its moult into winter plumage



'01' was first seen at the end of August still in breeding plumage

In the same area, at least three other individuals with lime green flags were observed during the autumn. One of them was photographed with a metal ring on which some of the characters could be read. Thus its identity could be referred to a chick ringed in July 2013 (see Pavel Tomkovich above)



A lime green flagged bird without engraved figures was found in Rudong in October. Photos taken enabled reading the ring combination that indicates it was ringed as chick in 2009 or 2010 in Meinipygino. Photo Gu Yunfang



'01' stayed until 9. October and by end of September it had completely changed into winter plumage Photo Wu Rongping



When the international team later did a large-scale survey in the whole Rudong area, one (or even two) birds with a lime green flag were seen in Jianggang, Dongtai area. The flag might have been engraved but it couldn't be clearly read.

Besides Spoon-billed Sandpiper, two Nordmann's Greenshank with coloured flags were also observed in Jianggang, where the team had the largest count of Nordmann's Greenshank in their survey period/area. One was banded in Thailand Peninsula, and the other originated from Sumatra, Indonesia. Up to then, there had only been two Nordmann's Greenshank banded by the team in Thailand Peninsular. Thus we concluded that Rudong area is not just a critical stopover site for Spoon-billed Sandpiper but also for Nordmann's Greenshank.

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## 5) The autumn Rudong SBS Survey 2013

*Tong Menxiu, Nigel Clark, Zhang Lin, Jing Li, Christoph Zöckler*

For the second time, a comprehensive autumn survey was carried out in the Rudong mudflats. The SBS Task Force supported by an international team of members from Russia, Korea, Myanmar, the US and Europe, together with the local conservation network 'SBS in China', conducted the 2nd coordinated survey of Spoon-billed Sandpiper stopping over in Rudong from 15-19 October 2013. The team surveyed the coast of Rudong and Dongtai in the Jiangsu Province, a stretch of roughly 120 km of mudflat (see map) and found a sensational record total of 143 Spoon-billed Sandpiper and 1200 Nordmann's Greenshank, two of the rarest and most threatened birds of the world. The SBS Task Force believes the entire world adult population of both Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Nordmann's Greenshank are staging at the highly productive intertidal flats on the coast of Rudong

*Rudong mudflats survey sites*



### Preliminary results for the survey sections along the Rudong mudflats

The survey confirmed the outstanding international conservation importance of intertidal wetlands along the 120km of coastline between Dongtai and Rudong, Jiangsu Province. Many of the most important intertidal wetlands along the Jiangsu coast are threatened by continuing reclamation for agricultural and industrial development. However, local and provincial authorities now recognise the international importance of the area as shown by their announcement of the creation of a new protected area for spoon-billed sandpiper. This, together with two shellfish reserves which overlap with most of the wader feeding areas give the first protection to this vital link in the chain of wetlands that these two species depend on to get from their breeding areas in the arctic to the wintering sites in tropical SE Asia. It is hoped that these fledgling reserves will eventually achieve protection at provincial and national level.

	SBS	Nordmann's Greenshank
Dong Tai North	2	70
Dong Tai South	42	870
Lao Ba Gang	3	
Yankou West of Temple	5	10
Yankou East of Temple	12	143
Feng Li	39	
Port area	2	5
Dong Ling North	3	
Dong Ling centre	27	19
Dong Ling south	8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>1117</b>



*SBS and fishermen share the same kind of habitat and promote its protection*  
C. Zöckler

As part of this work, Prof. Chang Qing, of Nanjing Normal University, who advises the Forest Department of the Jiangsu Province on environmental issues, hopes to create a working group of local government and NGOs that involves all stakeholders in the future planning of wetland reserves and their management.

A more detailed report of the results will follow soon. We are grateful for Baz Scampion, Brad Anders, Elena Lappo, Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, Fang Yang, Gavin Thomas, Nial Moores, Ren Nou Soe, Saw Moses, Xiang Le, Xiong Wei and Yang Yang for their support and observations. The survey was financially supported by US FWS and the German Manfred-Hermsen Foundation.

## 6) SBS Conservation workshop Rudong 20-21 Oct 2013

SBS in China organized an extremely successful two day workshop for all interested stake holders who are willing to move Rudong's conservation status to the next level. Participants included provincial and local government officials, national and international NGOs, Universities and the EAAFP secretariat among many others. There were a series of presentations and four workshop sessions (Hunting, Research and monitoring, Spartina control and Site protection/advocacy). There was wide agreement about the actions that were needed in all the workshops but the most important outcome was from the sight protection/advocacy workshop where the need for protection of the core areas was received well by the government officials who were present.

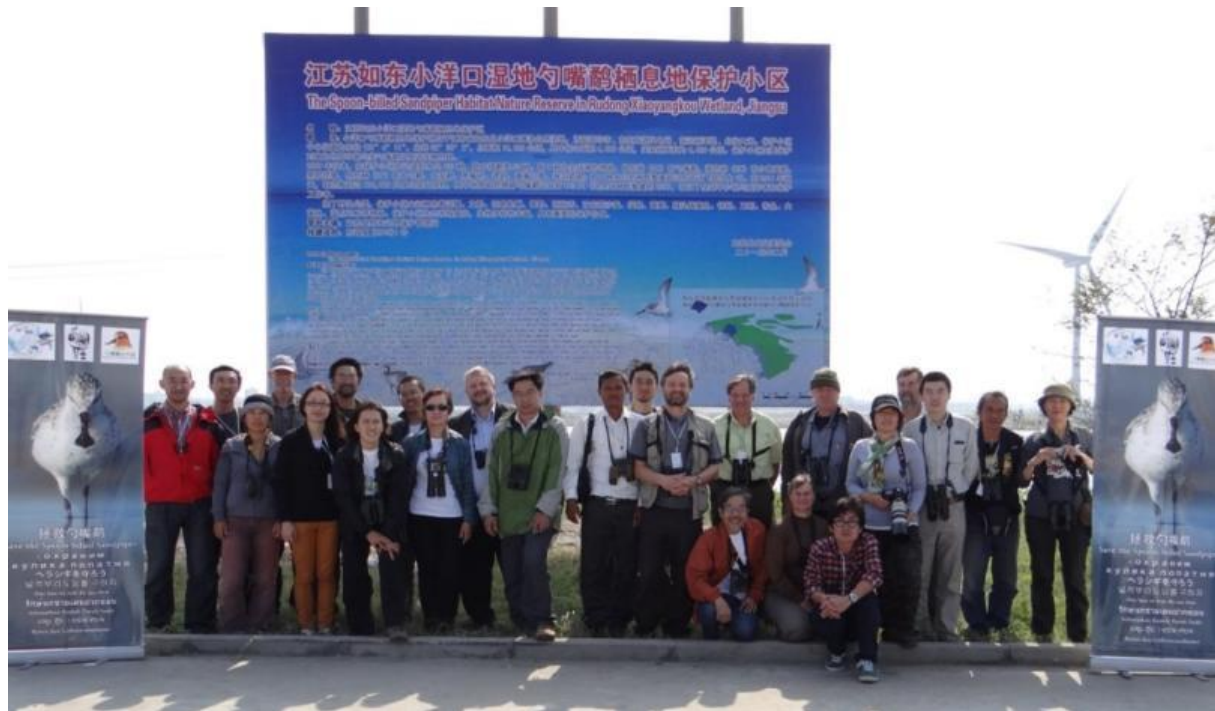


*Workshop participants in Rudong 20 Oct 2013*

Since last year, 4 large new reclamations had been completed and there were posters up about two further projects. The rate of reclamation shows no sign of slowing at present. Spartina encroachment is still a major problem and needs to be addressed rapidly.

In anticipation of our workshop, the Rudong Forestry Bureau sent positive signals, setting up two double-wall size billboards, stating to conserve the breeding sites of Saunders' Gull, protect endangered species, including SBS and Nordmann's Greenshank, and enjoy the natural beauty of Rudong mudflat. The protected area for SBS Rudong is the first step on the road to becoming a real nature reserve. Government responded to the NGOs' requests and have now triggered their own decision making system, also announcing a further two shellfish reserves in the Rudong area.

Cases of illegal netting of waders and bait poisoning were still found. In one long discarded net set at Dong Tai, 30 dead birds were found- the only live bird was a peregrine which was released! In another instance nets were being put out above neap high tide in an area where SBS regularly forage and was within the newly created SBS protected area. After intervention from 'SBS in China' the nets were confiscated by the local law enforcement. (see also report by G. Thomas).



Billboard erected by Rudong government announcing a Spoon-billed sandpiper wetland reserve

The workshop compiled a set of recommendations which, when followed through, will clearly enhance the protection of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. The participants, The Wildlife Conservation Society of the Jiangsu Province, Nantong and Rudong Government and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) jointly convened a workshop in Rudong on 20-21 October 2013 and

- Stated that the Spoon-billed Sandpiper is a unique charismatic bird of the Chinese Fauna and ten key Asian countries on its flyway but is at risk of extinction and agreed to increase efforts to secure the survival of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other migratory birds.
- Considered the Spoon-billed Sandpiper as an indicator for the ecosystem health of inter-tidal mudflats on the flyway between Russia and USA in the North and Australia and Bangladesh in the south. These highly productive mudflats are also important for local shellfisheries and as a nursery for many fish species which provide a livelihood for large numbers of people in Jiangsu province. Their conservation will have multiple ecosystem service benefits to the whole community.
- Recognized the important initiatives of the Jiangsu Province, Rudong and Nantong government to create reserves and protect migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the region
- Recognised the importance of the inter-tidal areas of Rudong and Yancheng region for the globally threatened wader species SBS and NG alongside many other waders. Possibly the entire adult population of both species is refuelling and moulting here and crucially dependent on the Rudong mudflats.
- Proposed the creation of three core wetland reserves totaling 60000 ha at the coast from Dong Tai, Yancheng in the north to Dong Lin, Rudong in the south and manage these sites to secure vital resources for both threatened species and many other waders as well as benefits for the local fishing communities

- Promoted the conservation status locally, nationally and internationally as Wetland Reserves, Ramsar site and proposed it to become an EAAFP network site;
- Highlighted the importance of the Rudong tidal flats for the conservation of migratory birds shared by China and Russia and recommended the area be listed as a priority for cooperation under the bilateral intergovernmental agreement signed by the Peoples Republic of China and the Russian Federation in June 2013 and those bilateral agreements with other countries, such as for the Saunders Gull with Japan;
- Highlighted the Rudong mudflats as a priority area for the international Arctic Bird Conservation Initiative of the Arctic Council, where China became an observer in May 2013;
- Promoted sustainable ecological tourism in the Rudong area, which will be based on the spectacle of migratory birds, support the local economy and benefit the local communities
- Strengthened awareness of the importance of intertidal flats among local communities
- Strengthened the law enforcement to stop illegal bird hunting in the Rudong area
- Recommended to increase research and monitoring of the waterbird populations of the Rudong area, with particular focus on SBS and NG.
- Recognised that *Spartina* grass is a major problem for wader populations feeding on the site and requires urgent action to control
- Recommended to establish an ad hoc Working Group or Rudong Conservation Committee that combines the perspectives and interests of all coastal stakeholders to jointly develop a conservation plan and management strategy for the region that balances the interests of sustainable development and nature. Membership and ToR need to be agreed, but should include a wide range of local, national and international expertise.
- Acknowledged the Forest Departments of Jiangsu province, Nantong and Rudong for hosting and supporting the Rudong SBS conservation workshop and US FWS and the Manfred Hermsen Foundation for financially supporting the survey and workshop;
- Acknowledged “SBS in China” conservation group and EAAFP SBS TF for organization of the survey and workshop

The workshop also received a lot of media attention. Some examples are shown below:

[http://www.zgnt.net/content/2013-10/22/content\\_2251741\\_2.htm](http://www.zgnt.net/content/2013-10/22/content_2251741_2.htm)

Date: 2013-10-22 14:55:30

Media: Nantong Local/Newspaper/Online News

Title: Over half SBS visited Rudong this year, experts from many countries to follow the “small bird” migration

全球一半勺嘴鹬今年曾造访如东 多国专家来看“小小鸟

Length: 3 pages

<http://www.ntjoy.com/vod/xwsph/nttv1/csrl/2013/10/2013-10-21270750.html>

Date 2013-10-21

Media: Nantong local/TV report

Title: 10000 ha for Rudong mudflat ecology red line, SBS conservation need the highest attention

如东滩涂划定一万公顷生态红线 勺嘴鹬保护迫在眉睫

Length: 1 page

[http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2013-10/21/content\\_1312558.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2013-10/21/content_1312558.htm)

Date:2013年10月21日 第04版

Media: People Daily Oversea /National

Title: Spoon-billed Sandpiper Workshop kickoff

勺嘴鹬保育研讨会召开

Length: 1/4 page

<http://rudong.gov.cn/zwxw/content/52E2941E75FB4F13B1D0DDA607EDB024.html>

Date : 2013-10-22

Media : Rudong government News Center

Title: the first Spoon-billed sandpiper conservation workshop in Rudong

国内首场勺嘴鹬国际保育研讨会在我县举行

Length: half page

<http://www.chinanews.com/sh/2013/10-25/5424015.shtml>

Date: 2013年10月25日

Media: Xinhua Daily/National

Title: Expert says, China should list spoon-billed sandpiper into National endangered species list

专家：勺嘴鹬应列入中国濒危动物保护

Length: half page

<http://epaper.ntnb.com.cn/newshows.aspx?id=406980>

Date:2013-10-22

Media: Nantong Local/Newspaper/

Title: experts from multi countries to watch Spoon-billed Sandpiper

多国专家来瞧小小勺嘴鹬

Length: one page

<http://www.s1979.com/news/world/201310/27104640127.shtml>

Date: 2013年10月27日

Media: National/CCTV 13

Title: Jiangsu: over 100 critical endangered Spoon-billed sandpiper discovered

江苏：发现百余世界极危鸟类勺嘴鹬

Length: 1 minutes 36 seconds

<http://news.cntv.cn/2013/09/11/VIDE1378898165228226.shtml>

Date: 2013年09月11日

Media: Provincial/Jiangsu TV

Title: 01 Spoon-billed sandpiper show up at Rudong mudflat

如东沿海首次发现带有“环志”的迁徙勺嘴鹬 20130911

Length: 1 minutes 19 seconds

<http://www.v1.cn/2013-10-23/839104.shtml>

Date: 2013年10月27日

Media: National/CCTV 4

Title: Jiangsu: over 100 critical endangered Spoon-billed sandpiper discovered

江苏：发现百余世界极危鸟类勺嘴鹬

Length: 23 seconds

*Jing Li and Christoph Zöckler*

## 7) Surveying Spoon-billed Sandpipers in Rudong, October 2013.

The plight of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper has been big news in the conservation world for a number of years now and I've followed it with interest. Bitten by the Spoony bug after seeing six individuals in Thailand in January 2012, I was keen to support any conservation efforts for this special little bird. With my first choice of winter surveys on their Burmese wintering grounds falling through, another opportunity was soon in my sights – helping the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force to survey Spoonies on the Rudong coastline in eastern China.

I arrived in Rudong on 14 October and met with members of the Task Force. Our hotel was on the main drag along the edge of the harbour in Yangkou, very atmospheric especially early in the morning with fishing boats moored up as far as the eye could see, armies of fishermen tending their nets whilst street food vendors prepared a selection of deep fried breakfast items across the road. The surrounding landscape was hardly picture postcard however with factories and industry dominating the surrounding area. A nasty, gaseous discharge from one of the factories behind the hotel each evening wasn't kind on the senses either!



*Typical early morning harbour-side scene in Yangkou*

*All photos Gavin Thomas*

Our first morning dawned somewhat unsettled. The wind had swung northerly and picked up to a strong breeze with a little rain. We had been split into groups and allocated sections of the Rudong coastline to survey. Our group was despatched to the northern area of Yangkou, one of many stretches of the Jiangsu Province coastline undergoing great change, in particular

reclamation of the inter-tidal flats, one of the major threats to Spoonies and the wealth of other species which rely on this part of the globally important East Asian – Australasian Flyway. Vast areas of coastal marsh and inter-tidal flats have already been lost and reclamation is ongoing. Indeed, our survey area resembled a building site, the new seawall and impounded areas behind it blanketed in dust, sand and grit, much of which was finding its way into our eyes and optics! Despite the streaming eyes, we managed to find our first two distant Spoon-billed Sandpipers roosting amongst several thousand Kentish Plovers and Dunlins on one of the recently reclaimed areas. It was really special to get reacquainted with the species!

The weather the following day was kinder; dry, overcast and far less windy. With a later tide, there was time to watch waders on the flow tide just south of Haiyin Temple. Concentrating on counting waders required serious self-discipline as large numbers of birds were on the move, from ducks over the sea to hirundines and passerines streaming overhead. Pipits, larks, wagtails and buntings were a constant distraction and as if this wasn't enough, a few Saunders's Gulls and then a Relict Gull (a bird I'd missed on a previous trip to China) arrived as tide peaked and the waders began to flock together. It was clear that after the strong northerlies and passing cold front yesterday there was some serious re-orientation and migration going on! Heading back to yesterday's high tide roost with our driver, tired migrants were very much in evidence along the seawall. Clearly in no state to look for more suitable habitat, a stunning male Siberian Rubythroat blew us all away sat out in the open atop the new concrete seawall. A little further along, a riot of black, white, gold and bronze, a stunning White's Thrush did likewise! Then most bizarrely of all, a Shrenck's Bittern was found hunched alongside a pile of gravel and bamboo canes!



*Tired migrants along the seawall at Yangkou: Siberian Rubythroat, White's Thrush & Shrenck's Bittern.*

After the tide, we had a couple of hours to truly appreciate the magnitude of the migrant fall. On arrival at Haiyin Temple, it was literally dripping with birds! Rufous-tailed Robins formed the majority with several hundred present, multiples in literally any patch of suitable habitat. Other chats, many warblers, flycatchers and thrushes were also present in good numbers. Some estimates from just a couple of frantic hours of truly unforgettable birding were 300 Rufous-tailed Robins, 20 Siberian Rubythroats, 25 Daurian Redstarts, 6 Red-flanked Bluetails, 30 Olive-backed Pipits as well as 12 species of Warbler, Grey-streaked, Brown and Mugimaki Flycatchers and White-throated Rock Thrush! Yangkou had already made quite an impression and despite the migration spectacle the survey team collectively had actually managed to find a fair few Spoonies and a few beers were sunk in the hotel bar as we collated our sightings from the day.

The third day of the survey saw us at the southern end of our survey area at Dongling. Thousands of waders were present on the incoming tide and also a staggering 2300 Saunders's Gulls, 10% of the world population according to current figures! Many of these birds moved onto a large lagoon just behind the new seawall over high tide. Only a small proportion of the waders touched down here but nonetheless within just 600 small waders on its south shore there were four Spoon-billed Sandpipers! Three of these were watched feeding over most of the high tide period, not ideal as hunters who use poisoned fishmeal baits reportedly work this pool. Evidence of this was found in the form of several dead waders and a rather sickly looking Red-necked Stint. As I sat watching the Spoonies, a hunter was setting nets and decoy ducks on the far side of the lagoon, behind him was a reclaimed landscape devoid of natural habitat, dominated by



intensive aquaculture ponds and set amongst a forest of huge wind turbines and electricity pylons. The threats to the birdlife here were clear to see.....



*A poisoned Dunlin and counting the Saunders's Gulls at Dongling.*

The following day I was at the far north end of the survey area at Dongtai. We approached the sand flats along a new road, through many square miles of recently reclaimed land. On reaching the new seawall a huge billboard depicting the full scale of this massive reclamation project greeted us. This project alone dwarfed anything I've ever seen before and made comparatively small areas of habitat I've seen lost back home seem almost insignificant. Looking out to sea, huge areas of intertidal flats remained but for how long? Dongtai was to prove the most productive area so far. I'd also counted no fewer than 140 Nordmann's Greenshank and at least 12 Spoon billed Sandpipers! The waders wasted no time in returning to the sand flats as soon as the tide had started to drop again and included a couple of Spoonies busily feeding on small pools left behind by the ebbing tide.

Saturday 19th was the final day of the survey period and my patch today was the Yangkou Port area. The inter-tidal area held many waders but most had already left for their high tide roost nearby so we followed. 15,000+ waders were found roosting at close range on the main lagoon here. A single Spoony and 133 Nordmann's Greenshank accompanied the 200+ Great Knot and numerous other waders totalling nineteen species. Wanting to spend more time here would have to wait as the Task Force had to return to the hotel to prepare for an important workshop with various stakeholders and local Government officials in Rudong. The team were heading to this workshop having recorded a minimum of 141 Spoon-billed Sandpipers and 1200 Nordmann's Greenshanks in just five days along a 120 km stretch of coastline without a single statutory designated site along it! Clearly that has to change if these wader spectacles are to continue to grace this remarkable coastline.....



*Nordmann's Greenshank at a high tide roost near Yangkou Port. Up to 166 were found roosting here and always in the company of hundreds of Grey Plovers.*

With the rest of the survey team gone, Baz

Scampion and I continued to survey the area. Early morning of 23rd saw us on the inter-tidal flats southeast of Yangkou. Five Spoonies were present, including two birds feeding close to seawall. We both filled our boots and memory cards as the birds fed at close range in what by now we'd come to realise was prime Spoony foraging habitat - the shallow flashes on the sandier flats often quite high up the inter-tidal zone. It was fascinating watching them feed at such close range, picking from the surface of the water but also probing and sifting through wet mud and sand. And despite seeing them feeding in fresh or brackish water within the newly reclaimed areas behind the seawalls, they would also forage amongst algal and plant material on pool edges as well as belly deep in water, picking food items from the surface. One of the most animated birds I encountered almost appeared to be listening for prey in the sand, running around in circles, almost on tip-toe at times to gain extra height, and peering so intently at the surface on one occasion that a Mongolian Plover ran towards it to see what all the fuss was about and flushed it before it could locate its quarry! On another occasion I watched and videoed a Spoony catch a small crab, wrestle with it in its bill for a good minute before swallowing it whole!

Another site which proved to be really attractive to waders, including Spoonies, was a set of fishponds and lagoons to the southeast of Haiyin Temple. Here we were treated to incredibly close views as we lay on our bellies on the windward edge of one particular pool where the breeze was clearly depositing ample food items on the shore. One particularly aggressive bird defended a fifteen metre stretch of shore, constantly running from one end of its chosen patch to the other, feeding along the way, but finding plenty of time to attack Red-necked Stints and Dunlins that attempted to feed in the same area, all whilst we lay beside them only ten feet away at times!



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper feeding on pool edge at a high tide roost site near Yangkou.*

October 24th saw us back for more. Hundreds of small waders were again feeding on the pools and around lunchtime I positioned myself on a bank where I could see four pools at once. I did a quick sweep through all the flocks and was staggered to count 38 Spoonies! Most were feeding on the pool edges with others within the main wader flocks loafing and preening. Later in the afternoon all the waders had again flown to just one of the pools after being flushed by a

Peregrine. One group of Spoonies was particularly vocal with lots of trilling and interaction going on. Then suddenly part of the flock took flight with other waders, flew overhead doing a couple of circuits of the area, gained height and headed off towards the coast calling frequently. I'd taken a few photos of the flock as they flew overhead but it wasn't until I was back in the hotel that evening that I'd realised I had a few shots of a flock of 23 Spoon-billed Sandpipers flying overhead! The next day, there were far fewer waders at the fishponds and only three Spoonies remained. Had I witnessed a pre-migration gathering? Difficult to be sure but their behaviour and vocalisations were certainly striking.



*23 Spoon-billed Sandpipers leaving a high tide roost site near Yangkou.*

Our last morning was a little depressing. East of Yangkou we encountered a hunter working several kilometres of nets on the upper foreshore. He erected a couple more sections then walked the length of the nets already erected, which contained about a dozen waders including Dunlin, Kentish and Mongolian Plovers. People in this part of China rely on trapping and hunting as well as fishing and cockling to make a living. So what would you do, ignore it, release the waders or destroy this guy's nets? I decided it was my place solely to observe. The hunter took two live Dunlin from the nets and threw them both to the ground. One bird was unharmed and flew away but the other couldn't fly and was left lying on its back moving its legs back and forth trying to stand up. I was shocked. Were Dunlin too small for the pot and simply unwanted by-catch? This seemed a senseless waste and they could easily have been Spoon-billed Sandpipers, and likely have been in the past. This was just one line of nets on one area of coastline in one vast country. With this practise going on all along the flyway, it's clearly a major issue especially where critically endangered species are involved. What if that flock of 23 Spoonies I'd seen heading towards the coast had flown into these nets? It doesn't bear thinking about. I subsequently found out that this area of the coastline was a locally 'protected' reserve and that wader trapping was illegal. Local Task Force representatives visited the site the next day and confiscated the nets but they can't do this everywhere.

Surveying Spoon-billed Sandpipers along the Rudong coastline was a valuable and memorable experience. There were many highs and a fair few lows. If you're looking for beautiful landscapes, fine cuisine and a safe standard of driving then it's probably not going to be your first choice destination. But if you're looking for warm, friendly people, spectacular birding and want to contribute to an inspiring international conservation effort then book yourself on a flight to Shanghai. It's rewarding knowing that our survey efforts will help raise the profile of the area and ideally, ultimately lead to site designations and effective, enforced protection of these staggeringly ecologically rich inter-tidal zones. The Task Force needs all the help it can get in

surveying Spoonies and the endangered and vulnerable species that use the East Asian – Australasian Flyway so please support the partnership in any way you can.

*Gavin Thomas, Lancashire, England, UK.*

## 8) Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper actions in Mottama Gulf

In total four local Conservation groups were formed in four major villages in the Gulf of Mottama where important birds are wintered. The participants discussed among themselves and afterwards formed the Local Conservation Groups and selected their group leaders. These LCGs include previous bird hunters who are interested in conservation activities.

After forming the local conservation groups in the Mottama Gulf, BANCA gave capacity building and bird-watching training which included natural resources and biodiversity, facts about the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, the use of digital cameras for proper recordings and bird-watching itself within the framework of Ramsar Convention (CEPA).



*Patrolling and Capacity Building training in Mottama Gulf*

After that BANCA provided boats and motorbikes for LCGs team to more effective works for patrolling programme.



From 7th to 8th October 2013, BANCA was involved in the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Monitoring Workshop in Thailand. At this workshop, the audiences from international flyways countries suggested and decided to count the population census of spoon-billed sandpiper along their flyways wintering region at the same time between 16th to 22th October. BANCA

conducted the first wintering Spoon-billed Sandpiper survey with RSPB in the Mottama Gulf on 17th to 21st October. During this survey we didn't not record Spoon-billed Sandpiper but we have recorded some little stint. Two Spoon-billed Sandpiper were recorded for the first time on 31st October and 1st November in Ahlat village during the bird-watching training programme.

### Local Conservation Group bird-watching Training

During the capacity building and bird-watching training I met with Aye ko and Nyunt Swe and got wader information on their regular checks on the mudflat at the pre-wintering season between September to November. According to their records, on 5th October some winter visitors landed near the Shwe-thar- hlaung pagoda in Ahlat village. Between September and December the bird flocks were seen at regular places in the morning (7-9 am) and in the evening (3-6 pm) at mid tide. During spring tide, flocks were seen at the same places in the morning (2-3 am) and in the evening (5-6 pm). Some mudflats were not flooded during neap tide and the birds then did not land on their regular places but stayed near the tide. During high tide flocks were seen in the regular places in the afternoon.



*Waders regularly landed near the village*

In the patrolling season, Aye Ko who is the leader of LCG, organized with members and patrolled near the village in every month. At that time the team met with new bird hunters who were from other villages and had set up mist nets and snares at the creek near the mudflat. After that they explained to the bird hunters about the importance of Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation and the patrolling programme the new hunters agreed not to catch waders again.



*New bird hunters in Mottama*



On the night of 1st December, the Aung Kan Thar LCG team leader, Aung Min rang me, "Now here the weather is cold and rainy and one fishermen who name is ( Anyarthar) in my village bring live spoon-billed sandpiper in his fishing net by accidental cause during the blowing in the evening about 5 PM". On the 2nd, the team leader took some photos and released the spoon-billed sandpiper in the morning 7 AM. According to this result we can guess the LCG team members are very interested and actively work on their duties.



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper released by daughter of LCG team leader*

This is the benefit of forming Local Conservation Groups in Mottama Gulf. The formation of Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) and training for capacity building is the main requirement for the conservation of Spoon-billed Sandpiper. If additional equipment is supported and capacity building organized for LCGs, the goal for effective conservation of natural resources in the Gulf of Mottama will be achieved and will be able to properly handover to the future generations.

Thanks to Darwin Initiative, RSPB and BBC Wildlife Fund who gave funds for capacity building and bird watching training in the Gulf of Mottama

*Pyae Phyo Aung@Phyolay (BANCA)*

## 9) Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project

*Sayam U. Chowdhury and Md. Foyzal*

Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project (BSCP hereafter) has been working in Bangladesh in an organized manner since 2009. The goal of the project is to conserve and conduct research on the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpipers wintering along the coast of Bangladesh especially on Sonadia Island. Since 2009 regular surveys were conducted throughout the winter season in all historical and possible sites of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper with support from different international organizations and Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force. In March 2010 the team counted a minimum of 25 SBS on Sonadia Island of Cox's Bazar and 23 on Domar Char in central south coast, both of these are height counts since 1997 from Bangladesh! A series of surveys proved that Bangladesh is still an extremely important wintering ground for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, the project identified Sonadia Island as the key wintering and Domar Char as passaging sites in Bangladesh. The project discovered local hunters have been hunting SBS along with other shorebirds on Sonadia Island. The BSCP in affiliation with Bangladesh bird club and Forest Department signed conservation agreements with 25 active shorebird hunters on the island in October-December 2011. Resources were provided for alternative livelihood options including fishing boats, nets, livestock, and equipment for watermelon cultivation, and grocery and tailor shops. Village Conservation Groups (VCGs) have been established at five villages in and around Sonadia Island. They monitor the new livelihood activities and the former hunters repay a small percentage of the income generated to their VCG. The VCGs use this money for further hunting mitigation and shorebird conservation awareness activities within their villages. The entire process is being monitored and guided by BSCP and has been proven very successful.

Since October 2013 BSCP carried out a number of activities, these can be divided into two parts: a) shorebird hunting mitigation and b) shorebird surveys and monitoring in different sites in Cox's Bazar district including four sites on Sonadia Island, Domar Char and Sundarbans. Moreover, BSCP provided training to four university students on shorebird identification and survey methods.

### Shorebird hunting mitigation:

All of the ex-hunters are now guarding the SBS sites on Sonadia Island by rotation, usually a SBS site close to their village once a week for an individual. These visits will be more frequent in winter.

Hunting mitigation by the BSCP includes a monthly visit to each of these villages and arrange meetings with ex-hunters and VCG members to collect their monthly repay, discuss and organize SBS/shorebird awareness campaign.

In December 2012, BSCP launched a yearlong awareness campaign on Sonadia Island. The event included shorebird photo exhibition, film shows on SBS work in Bangladesh and Russia, folk songs and drama on bird conservation highlighting SBS. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (Sub-district Executive Officer of Government of Bangladesh), Assistant Conservator of Forest of the Forest Department and other government and non-government officials were also present. The Forest Department further committed that there will be no mangrove plantation on shorebird sites of Sonadia Island. More than 1,000 people of Sonadia Island and adjacent areas attended in the event.

World Migratory Bird Day was celebrated on Sonadia Island in May 2013, which included local school visits by ex-hunters to share their SBS conservation activities with BSCP, school teachers also spoke about the importance of coastal wetlands and on the global status of the SBS. School kids also participated in making SBS animation by painting 50 SBS sliders. More than 300 students were reached out through this campaign. In addition, more than 2,500 posters and calendars were distributed throughout Sonadia and Moheshkhali Islands. Most of these are attached in the village shops, markets, restaurants and also presented to ex-hunters, local representative, NGO workers and government officials.

Moreover, advocacy work of BSCP and RSPB promoted Sonadia Island as an Important Bird Area of Bangladesh. Several international and national media and conservation NGOs helped to spread this positive news on Sonadia Island, which will strengthen BSCP's ongoing campaign against the proposed deep sea port on Sonadia Island.

(<http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/sonadia-island-vital-for-endangered-birds/>)

#### Shorebird survey:

Shorebird surveys were carried out in seven sites (five on Sonadia Island and one is Chittagong) every month between October 2012 and April 2013. The first Spoon-billed Sandpipers of the season was recorded on 13 October 2012 at Kaladia of Sonadia Island. A minimum of 26 SBS were recorded from two different sites of Sonadia Island in November 2012 (See Table 1), which further indicates that the number of SBS increases during the migration. A total of 29 species were recorded including one globally endangered species (Nordmann's Greenshank), two near threatened species (Eurasian Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit) and one vulnerable species (Great Knot). The maximum number of shorebirds was recorded in October 2012 (3,901) and March 2013 (3,081) during the winter and spring migrations.

The new site Khorir Char (21°35'39.48"N 91°51'21.84"E) of Sonadia Island regularly held minimum 2-3 SBS throughout the winter. Kaladia remains the most important site for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper which supported 23 individuals in November 2013. Tajiakata previously supported less than 500 shorebirds including SBS, this year however it crossed more than 1,000 individuals (Chowdhury et. al 2011) and regularly supported more than 500 individuals including two SBS in December 2012. Last year a maximum of shorebirds (5,392) was recorded on Sonadia Island and the maximum count at a single site (Tajiakata) was 2,383 individuals in March 2012. This site used to be a regular hunting ground for ex shorebird hunters. The sharp increase in shorebird number in 2012 and 2013 seem to reflect that shorebird hunting has ceased and human disturbance is generally reduced.

In addition to regular monitoring at Sonadia Island, the BSCP team also surveyed Sundarbans (four SBS were recorded from Egg Island on the edge of the Sundarbans on 24 February 1992) in January 2013; 1,542 shorebirds were counted with no SBA (Table 3). Patenga beach of Chittagong and Domar Char (Nijhum Dweep) of Noakhali were also surveyed for SBS but none were found

*Figure 1. Spoon-billed Sandpiper awareness campaign on Sonadia Island December*





Table 1. Number of shorebirds counted at seven sites between October 2012 and December 2012.

Date	12-15 October 12				16-17 November 12					13-18 December 12				
Sites	Tajjakata	Kaladia	Potenga, Ctg	Total	Tajjakata	Belekardia	Kaladia	Baradia Salt field	Total	Tajjakata	Belekardia	Kaladia	Khorir Char	Total
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	2	0	0	2	0	0	20	60	80	70	0	40	0	110
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	0	0	1100	1100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	10	0	900	910	450	700	100	40	1290	150	500	300	100	1050
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	0	0		0	0	200	0	0	200	0	200		0	200
Unidentified Sandplover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> NT	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	0	8	0	8	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	2
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	0	12	0	12	0	0	5	10	15	0	0	2	0	2
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> NT	0	3	0	3	2	0	55	0	57	20	0	50	0	70
Common Redshank <i>Tringa tetanus</i>	2	20	0	22	0	0	80	0	80	50	0	20	0	70
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	4	80	2	86	0	0	20	0	20	20	0	5	0	25
Spotted Greenshank <i>Tringa guttifer</i> EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	1	0	0	1	5	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	0	0	5	5	0	50	30	0	80	0	50	10	0	60
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	3	0	5	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	0	30	0	0	30
Great Knot <i>Calidris tenuirostris</i> VU	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	60	0	3	0	63
Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	200	0	0	200
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	25		0	25	141	0	0	0	141	10	20	0	0	30
Little Stint & Red-necked Stint	50	1500	0	1550	45	0	3	0	48	60	250	100	15	425
Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	0	20	10	30	0	60	4	0	64	0	200	20	6	226
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	0	50	3	53	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	1	51
Spoon-billed Sandpiper <i>Eurynorhynchus pygmeus</i> CR	0	1	0	1	0	3	23	0	26	2	1	10	3	16
Broad-billed Sandpiper <i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	0	80	0	80	0	15	0	0	15	0	80	40	0	120
Oriental Pratincole <i>Glareola maldivarum</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Small Pratincole <i>Glareola lactea</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>1777</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>3901</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>2144</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>1581</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>2751</b>

Table 2. Number of shorebirds counted at four sites of Sonadia Island between January 2013 and April 2013.

Date	22-23 January 13				20-23 February 13			27-28 March 2013				13-14 April 2013			
	Tajjakata	Belekardia	Kaladia	Total	Khorir Char	Kaladia	Total	Tajjakata	Kaladia	Khorir Char	Total	Tajjakata	Kaladia	Khorir Char	Total
Pacific Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	48	5	15	68	0	0	0	200	100	10	400	1	35	25	61
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	22	32
Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	20	10	30	600	200	400	600	800	150	15	1100	600	15	230	980
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	20	7	70	277		100	100	100		30	130	100	53	40	193
Unidentified Sandplover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	500	0	500	0	0	0	0
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> NT	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	0	0	20	20	0	20	20	0	50	50	100	0	3	3	6
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	30	0	5	35	0	0	0	0	6	20	26	14	10	0	24
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> NT	0	5	20	25	0	40	40	17	10	50	77	1	4	7	12
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	10	20	70	190	0	80	80	0	20	0	20	0	42	0	42
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	20	4	30	54	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	40	1	20	61	0	60	60	0	0	6	6	70	8	0	78
Spotted Greenshank <i>Tringa guttifer</i> EN	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	15	3	20	38	0	60	60	20	0	8	28	12	15	0	27
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	3	2	1	6	0	30	30	0	12	13	25	7	12	1	20
Great Knot <i>Calidris tenuirostris</i> VU	15	0	0	15	0	70	70	0	40	12	160	0	49	0	49
Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	1	7		8	0	30	30	3	8	1	12	0	2	0	2
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	40	10	0	0	10
Little Stint & Red-necked Stint	20	20	10	320	60	200	260	10	130	50	190	15	65	6	86
Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	70	0	20	90	50	150	200	0	50	20	70	11	22	10	43
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	0	3	30	33	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Spoon-billed Sandpiper <i>Eurynorhynchus pygmeus</i> CR	0	0	15	15	2	11	13	0	2	0	2 (11 on 19 Mar)	0	0	0	0
Broad-billed Sandpiper <i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	20	0	70	90	10	150	160	60	80	50	190	0	0	24	24
Oriental Pratincole <i>Glareola maldivarum</i>	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Small Pratincole <i>Glareola lactea</i>	50	5	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>1739</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>3081</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>			<b>2</b>		<b>96</b>

Figure 2. Spoon-billed Sandpiper surveys and hunting mitigation work.



Shorebirds survey in the Sundarbans, Jan 2013



Shorebirds survey in the Sundarbans, Jan 2013



Shorebird survey at Soandia Island with trainees, Mar 13



Shorebird survey at Sonadia with RSPB, Apr 13



RSPB's visit on Sonadia Island and meeting with ex-hunters, November 2012



Meeting with ex-hunters, BSCP and RSPB, Nov 2012



Meeting with ex-hunters and RSPB, April 2013

Figure 3. World Migratory Bird Day, Sonadia Island May 2013.



SBS poster in a local restaurant



An ex-hunter talking about SBS conservation and his commitment to save it, WMBD May 2013



Ghotbhanga primary school, WMBD May 2013)



School children participating in SBS painting



School teachers looking at bird, World Migratory Bird Day, May 2013



School children reading SBS pamphlet to participate in SBS quiz competition, WMBD May 2013



## 10) New feature

### “SBS IN ART”



*Elena Lappo*

#### Introduction

Working on Spoon-Billed Sandpiper as scientists we love this small and charismatic bird a lot. It is enjoyable to watch the birds and their chicks with an unbelievable bill in the breeding and wintering plumage, and listen to the beautiful display songs in its fantastic tundra habitat. We know how much we will miss it when it disappears from the planet – so we want to do everything what we can to protect it. And we know that many people feel the same way.

During the last Birdfair (UK, 2012) we realized that quite a few artists have been drawing SBS in nature, and a lot more artists want to have the opportunity. We then decided to make a ‘chart’ of existing paintings and ask the artists about their stories, because each painting of the very special creatures has its own story! The series will be published in the SBS Newsletters, starting with this issue, and maybe later be collected all in one place. We believe that the art surrounding the bird is a strong conservation tool.

The first interviewee in this project is Jens Gregersen – a dedicated SBS conservationist, an artist and ornithologist from Denmark, who has been working in the Russian Arctic for many seasons since 2000 inspiring many other volunteers to join SBS conservation work. Two of his paintings have been sold at the Birdfair in the UK in previous years.



*Jens Gregersen, drawing in tundra, 2009*

EL: Jens, how did you start painting birds?

JG: Over 20 years of my life I have been working in Cormorant research at the nature reserve Vorsoe (where I live). Gradually Cormorant work stopped after year 2000. The drawings of birds ruled all things in my life very early on. In 1975 I released my first book. From then I could live from drawing and painting only. Beside this I worked as ornithologist in ringing birds, counting of resting and breeding birds, reading rings.



*Pair from Russkaya Koshka spit, 2011*

EL: When did you start working in the Arctic?

JG: Every year since 2000 I have been in the Arctic: 2 times in Northeast Greenland (2000, 2001), 3 times in Swedish Lapland, then in Russia - 1 time in Pechora (2003), 1 time in Franz Josef land (2012), 1 time in Taimyr (2005) and 5 times in Chukotka (2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011): Alaska and Canada 2 times. My impressions from the Arctic will be published in a book, planned to be released in September 2014.



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper at nest, Rus. Koshka spit, 2011*

EL: How did you first “meet” SBS?

JG: In about 1975. It was during an exam of a young Biologist in Copenhagen. The censor was Professor Dr. Jon Fjeldsaa (Zool. Museum in Copenhagen). He showed a skin of Spoon-billed Sandpiper to the student. Jon asked: “Tell me about this bird”. The student said: “Dr. Fjeldsaa, you are joking me. You added an artificial bill to a Little Stint”. The student did not believe that such a creature existed. And he knew that Fjeldsaa was a man with a highly developed humor. That’s why he did not believe that a wader with such spooned bill did exist. In the end the student passed the exam anyway.



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper at breeding conditions, Rus. Koshka spit, 2009 (acryl)*

EL: When did you draw SBS for the first time?

JG: On the 2006 expedition to Uelkal. Near the small lake close to Uelkal I found the bird myself. I was very proud.



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Beringovskiy, 2006*

EL: What is your brightest memory of observing SBS in the wild?

JG: It was in Meinypilgyno in 2010, seeing the newly hatched chicks. I have seen breeding SBS in different locations in Chukotka: north of Uelkal, Russkay Koshka Spit, Beringkovskiy and in Meinypilgyno.



*Chicks from Meinypilgyno, 2010*

EL: Why do you think SBS is important for people and the planet?

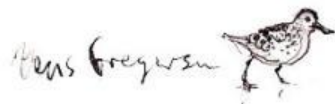
JG: Because we need every species in our world.

*Spoon-billed Sandpiper in flight, Rus. Koshka spit, June 2008*



EL: What contribution can artists make to save SBS?

JG: Understanding and admiring the beauty of that bird. Artwork makes people appreciate..



[www.jens-gregersen.dk](http://www.jens-gregersen.dk)

## News in brief

### **Seven SBS in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam**

*From Vietnam Bird News*

On Sunday 5 January Richard Craik and I visited Tan Tanh beach in Co Cong District, Tien Giang Province to look for Spoon-billed Sandpiper. We arrived at low tide after a three hour journey from D2, Saigon. We parked by the noodle shop next to the casuarina grove at the south end of the beach. We had walked only 100 m out onto the mud flats when we found a Nordmann's Greenshank. Within 30 minutes we had found our first two Spoon-billed Sandpipers associating with Red-necked Stints. As the tide came in we eventually saw four Spoon-billed Sandpipers feeding together although I was only able to photograph two together. By 14h00 the tide was rising swiftly and as we scoped a flock of 2,000 Great Knot at a pre-roost roost, we saw three more distant Spoon-billed sandpipers. These three were observed at the same time as the four nearer birds which means the total seen was seven. This was our first visit to the site and next time we plan to visit the main roost on an offshore island. However, it is clear that Spoon-billed Sandpiper is easily found on Tan Tanh beach at low tide. Although the distance from Saigon is not great, the road is small and busy and with a 20 minute ferry crossing on route 50, it makes for up to a six hour round trip plus birding time. Many thanks to Nguyen Hoai Bao who provided instructions to us on how to find the site.

*Jonathan C Eames*



*Photos Jonathan C Eames*

### **New Wintering site of SBS in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Myanmar**

The eastern part of Gayet Kyi: Ng Man Thaug Island is the most important area for the over 3000 migratory waterbirds, mostly shorebirds, gulls and terns that use the mudflats and the remote part of the islands as wintering areas. Several globally threatened species were recorded here. Among them one Spoon-billed Sandpiper, which was observed twice on 28th November [150 41.562'N 950 21.330'E; see map], but observations probably referred to just one individual. On 27th November at High Tide, a roost of a total of 26 of the globally endangered Nordmann's Greenshank was counted [150 41.417'N 950 21.026' E]. This is more than 2% of the global population and reflects the high importance of the outer islands for this species. This is the highest count of Nordmann's Greenshank in Myanmar since Thet Zaw Naing counted a maximum of 14 at neighbouring islands in the delta. The presence of these Globally Threatened species means that the area reaches Ramsar status. Over 140 of the Vulnerable Great Knot were also observed. Additional Near Threatened species included 120 Eurasian Curlews, 16 Black-tailed Godwits and 2 Black-headed Ibises.





Two of a total of 26 Nordmann's Greenshank Photo C. Zöckler

According to Morozov and Archipov (2010) , Black tailed Godwit, Great Knot and also Broad-billed Sandpiper were recorded in slightly higher numbers in January 2010 (almost four years earlier), whereas Nordmann's Greenshank and Eurasian Curlew appeared to be more numerous in 2013.

During interviews of local people and also staff of the forest department it transpired that hunting of migratory waterbirds does regularly occur on Gayet Kyi and Ng Man Thaung Islands by trapping birds with nets. At least one or more hunters come from the village on the island regularly to target birds indiscriminately of any species. The Nordmann's Greenshank is especially threatened by this activity. Any kind of hunting or trapping in the presence of Spoon-billed Sandpiper is dangerous for the species' survival and unacceptable.

Saw Moses & Christoph Zöckler



ArcCona Consulting

### **Five years SBS Task Force at the Birdfair 2013**

In 2013 it was the 25th anniversary of the British Birdfair, and also our 5th anniversary, which we celebrated with international presence from Russia, Myanmar and Bangladesh! This year's stand was directly sponsored by BirdLife Species Champion Wildsounds. We would like to thank Wildsounds for their generous support.



Participants from Myanmar, Russia, Bangladesh together with sponsor Duncan McDonald from Wildsounds

### **Congratulations to Nikolay and Nastya**

Nikolay Yakushev and Nastya Syestnova, both looking after the breeding and head started birds in Meinypilgyno are getting married. Nikolay has been in Meinypilgyno since 2005 for almost every summer season and Nastya followed him the last two seasons.

We wish them both the best of luck and much happiness in their life together.



Nikolay and Nastya on the quad bike in Meino Photo C. Zöckler

### **Latest news: First ever SBS in Cambodia**

On 24th Jan, 1 SBS and 7 Nordmann's Greenshank were found in Koh Kapik in Cambodia. RSPB, with a great deal of help from Sayam Chowdhury, are supporting WCS in Cambodia to undertake 10 days of survey work for SBS

### **Stakeholders meet in Hong Kong to develop a flyway-wide shorebird conservation plan**

A three-day Workshop hosted by WWF-Hong Kong brought together regional stakeholders to develop a Conservation Plan for the flyway's migratory shorebirds. The Workshop, held in Hong Kong in early December 2013 and attended by 23 key stakeholders including Government agencies, non-government organizations with international conservation programs for migratory waterbirds, waterbird conservation networks and shorebird research organizations, focused on the conservation needs of a group of 20 priority shorebird populations. The priority group, headed by Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Spotted Greenshank, was derived from an assessment of population trends and threats to the all 63 migratory shorebird populations in the flyway. Aided by presentations and breakout sessions, participants

analyzed the ongoing ecological crisis facing EAAF shorebirds and discussed how to make the most strategic contribution to the problem. The importance of tidal flats in North Asia to the migration cycle of the 20 shorebirds and the continued loss of those flats due to land claim and conversion to unfavourable aquaculture e.g. Sea cucumber farms, led to the identification of the Yellow Sea as the priority geographic region within the Flyway for conservation action. The need for further research on the migration routes of shorebirds that spend their non-breeding periods in Southeast Asian countries was also highlighted as an urgent issue.

A major outcome from the Workshop is an approach supported by the stakeholders to develop 'collaboration' sites/regions with a view to their replication by other local governments and coastal Provincial/Prefectural Governments around the Yellow Sea. Four sites were identified in the initial phase; Jiangsu, Luannan Coast and Yalu Jiang in China, and Geum Estuary in the Republic of Korea.

A draft report on the Stakeholder Workshop including presentations and outcomes can be downloaded from the links provided at this webpage:

[http://www.wwf.org.hk/en/whatwedo/conservation/wetlands/flyway/#Migratory\\_Shorebird\\_Conservation](http://www.wwf.org.hk/en/whatwedo/conservation/wetlands/flyway/#Migratory_Shorebird_Conservation)

A consultation document is expected to be available in early 2014, and the final plan launched at the MoP 10 of the EAAF Partnership. Persons keen to be involved in the consultation process please contact Mr. Bena Smith < bsmith@wwf.org.hk >, Conservation Manager – Regional Wetland Projects at WWF-Hong Kong.



Bena Smith, WWF Hong Kong

## In memoriam: Dr. Tony Htin Hla



In 2008 several of our Task Force met with Tony for the first time. That year we finally managed to get permissions and funding from Kendeiran, BirdLife-Asia and the Manfred Hermsen Foundation to explore the promising mudflats along the vast coastline of Myanmar. Tony, who ran or 'was in charge of' the NGO and BirdLife partner BANCA, organised two teams and I was lucky enough to join his group to Nan Thar Island. It should be said that Tony was very sceptical about our mission. 'Spoon-billed Sandpiper has not been seen in this country for over 100 years.' The same afternoon we passed 27 Indian Skimmers by boat and he jumped up and down with excitement, but when we saw our first Spoon-billed Sandpiper on Nan Thar Island the same day in the last light, Tony's excitement reached even higher levels. His enthusiasm was infectious. The next day we managed to count a total of 35. The other team secured a total of at least 48 Spoon-billed sandpiper. This was a huge breakthrough and Tony was instrumental in this success. He became a very important member of our Task Force, who helped to organise many more surveys and important conservation actions, mainly the hunting mitigation work and the preparation of the Ramsar site designation of the Gulf of Mottama.

Tony was born in Yangon in 1954 and studied medicine there, where he also met his wife Ohnmar. But it was through his work as doctor that he met some top world bird listers like Hugh Bucks from the UK, who were selling pharmaceuticals and in business with Tony. They mentioned their desire to see the few endemics, namely the White-browed Nuthatch, and asked if Tony would be able to guide them to Mt Victoria. Fascinated by bird watching Tony soon decided to switch his job and started Myanmar's first eco-tour company. This not only enabled him to get to know the top birders, but also many remote places in his own country. He soon developed a sense for conservation and became engaged in BANCA, where he was pioneering many conservation projects, such as the Guerney's Pitta project. In 2010 he became chairman of BANCA and advanced the organisation to become a strong player within Myanmar's society.

Tony was a very good observer. Especially in the forest hardly any bird escaped his attention and with his fine hearing he managed to get close to all forest birds. He was not used to birding in the open mudflats on Nan Thar Island. Amazed by this new world he learned about Curlew and Broad-billed Sandpiper among many other waders which were all new to him. The telescope was a new tool but he quickly became acquainted with it.

Tony's enthusiasm was important and his vision for conservation instrumental in pioneering bird and wildlife conservation in Myanmar. He knew how his hierarchically structured country works and he could organise the seemingly impossible for bird conservation. Tony's health had already deteriorated in 2011 and he was less and less able to implement the many projects and ideas he was planning. On November 27th Tony finally succumbed to the liver cancer he was suffering from, aged 59, leaving his wife two children and one grandchild.

Tony's legacy will be picked up by his able daughter Thiri, who will continue with his tour company, by BANCA who will continue his visionary conservation work, and of course by the SBS Task Force which will build on his success in Myanmar.

*Christoph Zöckler*

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Save the Spoon-billed Sandpiper

