



# News Bulletin No. 13

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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, co-editor of this issue - Dr. Elena Lappo (BirdsRussia), Layout made by Lyubov Ezerova (BirdsRussia)*

**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:**

6 birds flagged in Kamchatka

226 SBS in Septmeber in Rudong, China

180 SBS in October in Rudong, China

16 flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper resighted in Rudong, China

2 anniversaries for Sveta &amp; Roman from Chukotka

## Foreword from the Editor

*Dr Christoph Zöckler, Coordinator SBS TF, August 2014*

It is just incredible, and so very encouraging to see all the many activities that are happening for the benefit of the Spoon-billed sandpiper all over the world. But it is also becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with all the many projects, events and sightings! Our little wader has become very famous, not only along the flyway, but also in Europe, North America and Australia, where our team was able to host a stand at the first Australian Birdfair with support from Heritage Expeditions. But most importantly, we all met again in Rudong, where we had our 12th SBS TF meeting with participants from almost all flyway countries. It is very encouraging to see the level of commitment among our team but also the support we continue to receive from outside! This is exactly what we need to address the biggest challenge yet in the conservation of the sandpiper. We previously reported about the importance of the Rudong–Dongtai mudflats. Now we know that the northern part of this huge mudflat area, the Tiaozini sandbanks are the most critical for the species. A new record of over 220 birds were recorded there in September. However, immanent threats of reclamation are posed to this important site. Currently we are working with all international and our Chinese partners to halt this project. This is a very crucial moment; a turning point in the conservation of the species. Signals from high levels within the Chinese administration indicate that the project might be suspended. We cannot verify this news at the moment, but it raises our hopes in a desperate, almost impossible situation. Likewise, the latest news from Sonadia in Bangladesh is promising, although the Deep Sea port project idea has not been totally abandoned yet. The efforts to designate the Gulf of Mottama in Myanmar as a Ramsar site have progressed with areas belonging to the Mon State about to be designated first. It seems as though the tide is turning for the benefit of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and many other waders. Let's make the best use of this positive trend, build on our successes and strengthen our efforts to save all breeding, stop over and wintering sites.



We would like to thank all our long standing supporters, but specifically, BirdLife-Asia, the RSPB, the MacArthur Foundation, the US FWS and the Manfred Hermsen Foundation, who all supported our recent work in China and our coordinated mid-winter counts.



# Russkaya Koshka expedition June 2014 – first positive trends in the breeding grounds

*Max Nitschke, Martin Lund and Lionel Maumary*

From June 9th -18, 2014 a team of two Danish and four Swiss ornithologists assisted by a member of BirdsRussia, followed in old tradition and had surveyed again several locations around Russkaya Koshka in the central part of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SBS) breeding range less than hundred km from Anadyr – capital of Chukotka. This was the sixth visit to the area in last 15 years since the breeding area was first time discovered by first SBS expedition to Chukotka (of what became later SBS Task Force) in the year 2000. This has not been surveyed since a Danish team under the lead of Jens Gregersen in 2011 recorded a sharp decline in breeding pairs. Expeditions to the SBS breeding grounds are a regular contribution of the Danish SBS support group. Organisationally it was run as BirdsRussia Chukotka Expedition group.

Interestingly and most importantly, the expedition had noted an increase to five active SBS territories. This is the first ever record of a positive trend in any small population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper anywhere on the breeding grounds and is bringing hope that 15 years of conservation efforts of the SBS TF and its numerous supporters start seeing some results. Details are below. No description of location of pairs is given to protect the nest locations.

13-6: Male and female together in two different places i.e. minimum 4 birds here. (4 birds seen simultaneously). Pair 1 holds a territory and both birds photographed well. No rings on either. Female for long time feeding on ice close to us completely unaffected. Obviously not yet incubating.



Photo Lionel Maumary

Russiaya Koshka Lighthouse



Photo Lionel Maumary

Expedition team and its transport– Russian «Vezdekhod»,

Pair 2 standing close to pair 1. Only 30 centimeters between the two birds i.e. probably a pair. Expected female hiding a little behind a piece of wood. Expected male standing on another piece of wood. Low quality photo of male. No 'nest' behavior i.e. incubation not yet initiated. No rings seen on the two birds, but cannot be completely excluded.

14-6 and 15-6: Very soon it was possible to identify three different males. They are referred to as male 3, 4 and 5. Even though there was not for sure females in all the territories, the terms pair 3, 4 and 5 will also be used about the presumed territories.

Male 3 was ringed with a green ring on the right leg and a metal ring on the left leg. Both rings sat on the tibia. There are photos where at least some digits in the number on the metal ring can be identified, suggesting it is likely a bird that has been ringed as chick in 2006 nearby by Nikolay Yakushev from BirdsRussia. Male 3 was seen in display a few times but not often, which could indicate that he already had a female in the territory, but no female was seen for sure. Male 3 was seen flying high while at the same a possible female was seen shortly in the territory. Male 3 was seen displaying simultaneously with male 4 in the neighbouring territory. There are high quality photos of male 4 (see below). No females have been observed with certainty in the territory of male 4, but it is likely that there was a female in the territory.

Male 4 was also seen displaying simultaneously with male 5 in another territory. There are numerous high quality photos of male 5, which was also not ringed. Male 5 was very active displaying and chasing other waders and very aggressive. He was seen in fight with

another SBS male (maybe male 4) and a third SBS that was probably a female. The exact role of this presumed female SBS was unsure. It could be the female of both male 4 and male 5, but could also be a feeding guest from somewhere completely else as the larger part of the territory of male 5 was a very popular foraging site for a lot of different wader species. At three occasions a female looking SBS was seen feeding in the territory of male 5 without any reaction of the male, but it is possible that male 5 had not seen this other SBS. Male 5 gave the impression of being single, chasing every other stint that came inside his range (see picture).

**Summary:** Inside a fairly confined area at Russky Koshka, five territories of SBS had been identified close to each other. There were surely five different males, and at least two of these had females in the territory, but two of the males were most likely single.

**Weather:** During the flight from Moskwa to Anadyr, we were surprised to see so much ice and snow over all the north of Siberia at this time of the year. When we started from Anadyr, most of the lakes were still frozen or partly frozen. The edges of the rivers were still partly frozen and covered with a thick layer of snow, which made it difficult for the driver to find the right place to cross. When we took cooking water from the river at the first camp it was frozen before we had time to light the portable stove and the night was very cold (probably around -7 °C). Few waders had already laid eggs, most of them being still in stopover migration: Curlew Sandpiper, Red Knot, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Western Sandpiper, Little Stint, Lesser Sand Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, Bar-tailed Godwit,

dozens of Grey Phalaropes with Red-necked Phalaropes etc. Most waders seemed to be blocked on the sea shore by the long-lasting ice and snow that covered the higher elevations.

**Predators:** We didn't see many ground predators, only some Brown

Bear and a few Red Foxes. There were no Red Fox tracks around the SBS site but several Brown Bear tracks. Most important predators at SBS site must be Arctic Skua, and Sandhill Crane and also large gulls. The two first were visibly less numerous than in 2011 but some pairs of Arctic Skua were still breeding close by.

The area is not protected and the Chukotka government needs to be requested to declare a protected area for this unique area. This is needed to ensure all breeding territories as well as all the areas where SBS were recorded breeding over the past 15 years are protected. Regular monitoring and the presence of conservationists is needed for the future to make sure the area is well protected by guardians.

The authors would like to thank the other team members, Jacques Cloutier, Anne Devries and Claudia Hischenhuber, BirdsRussia for the logistics arrangements, Mikhail Shkurko for transport arrangements, Aleksandr Vladimirovich for professional caterpillar driving and for his friendly company in the tundra, Andrey and other staff of the Lighthouse for their hospitality, Liza Tambovtseva from BirdsRussia for assistance in organization of work and for pleasant company in the tundra and Pavel Tomkovich for the help with ring reading.



Photo Lionel Maumary

SBS male displaying on drift wood at sea coast



Photo Lionel Maumary

Single SBS male chasing Western sandpiper (hopefully female)

# Ringing SBS at stopover sites in Kamchatka

*Yuri Gerasimov, Ivan Tiunov, Alexander Matsyna, Rimma Bukhalova.*

The project on southward migration studies of waders has been executed at the western coast of Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia by BirdsRussia team with financial support of Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund (WWF Hong-Kong), RSPB and MBZ.

The works was carried out in the southern part of Vorovskaya River Lagoon on July 18–27, August 6–30 and September 7–30. Field camp was located on sand spit width of 0.3–0.4 km near southern end of the lagoon and 2 km from Ustyevoe Village in 54°11' N; 155°49' E. The sea water lagoon has 40 km length and 0.5–1.5 km width. The maximum tidal range is about 5 m. At low tide, large sandy beaches and mudflats are exposed which are important feeding areas for a large numbers of the shore-birds during migration. We can investigate southern part of lagoon only which has length 5–6 km as we could not cross the river mouth.

Field works included per day mudflats counting of waders, observation of visible migration with counting of flying past waders, banding and flagging, searching of flagged waders. In total we have made 55 mudflat counts of waders during low tide. The maximum count was 12,000 individuals, and the average count for all days was 5600 individuals. Also 3060 waders were banded and flagged, 21 registrations of flagged and banded waders has been collected.

Getting new information on Spoon-Billed Sandpiper southward migration was prime goal of our investigation. We could observe birds of this species feeding on

mudflats from August, 11th till September, 21st. During first and second decades of August registrations of feeding birds were made almost every day. Between August 20th and 28th we usually counted 2 feeding Spoon-Billed Sandpipers, and August 24th 3 birds were registered. During September (observation period was September 9–30) we registered Spoon-Billed Sandpipers 3 times only – September 12th, 17th and 21st (fig.).

Undoubtedly, that the real number of Spoon-billed Sandpipers could be much more specified. We had no possibility to look through all territory during mudflat counting in detail enough. Even distinction of Dunlins and Red-necked Stints was problematic from the big distance sometimes.

Also 7 Spoon-Billed Sandpipers were caught during our mist netting period from August, 6 till September, 29th (one birds on August, 20th, two birds on August 21st, one birds on August, 24th, two birds on August, 29th, and one bird on September, 21st). All birds were juvenile, 6 birds received yellow and black flags (combination is consolidated for Kamchatka). One more bird caught on August, 24th has white flag with “M9” code and red ring. This Spoon-billed Sandpiper was a head-started bird from the first early August release by Roland and his team. The bird was in good shape (weight 30 gram). “M9” had left Meinypilgyno before August 8 so it takes it at least around 17 days to cover the distance of about 1300 km straight line from Meinypilgyno to Bolshaya Vorovskaya River Lagoon.

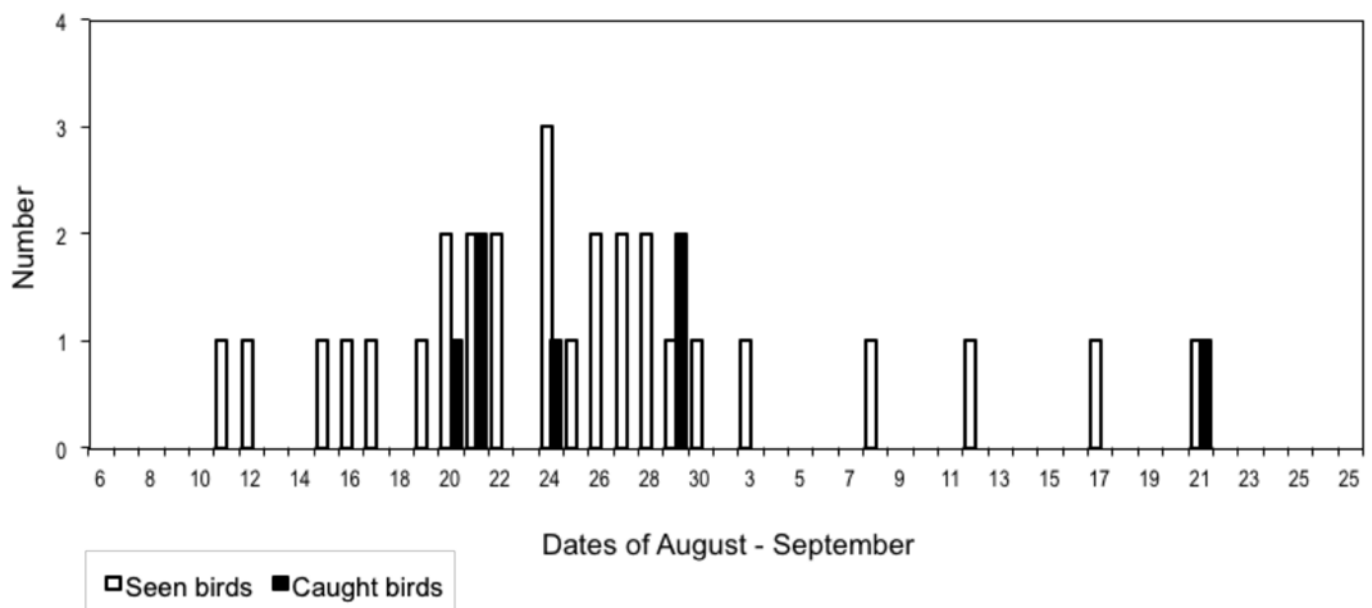


Fig. Results of counting and mist netting of Spoon-billed Sandpipers



“M9” was measured, released and seen later behaving all right in the flock with Red-necked Stints and Dunlins.

Other wild young Spoon-billed Sandpipers has weight 33.3 gram (August, 20), 25.0 & 27.7 gram (August, 21) and 27.3 gram (September, 21). Two more birds caught on August, 29th have not been weighed because of breakage of scales.

There are big groups of both young Red-necked Stints and Dunlins going from this area direction to North Sakhalin Island. Sometimes we observed start of such migration from southern part of lagoon (just near our camp) to the west (sea side). All times it was just before sunset or soon after it. Especially active migration we registered before sunset on August 19, 24, and 26. It looks like the

Spoon-billed Sandpiper are joining those birds but more observations are needed to clarify this.

As the hunting season opened mid August lots of shooting of waders is going on around this place, which is rather well populated compared to Kamchatka scale. Also some poachers started “hunting season” about one week early. Hunters so far are much more focused on big waders – Whimbrels and Godwits, which are so far numerous around the lagoon. During all time we saw only one man which was shooting small waders deliberately. At present time hunting rules of Russia do not allow shooting of *Calidris* species and other species close to them. Our small team doesn’t have the time and capacity to focus on wider hunting surveys so only some occasional observations of hunters are available.



Photo Yuri Gerasimov

First mist-netted SBS, August, 20th



Photo Yuri Gerasimov

First SPB flagged on Kamchatka, August, 20th



Photo Alexander Matsyna

Finally flagged SPS, September 21st.



Photo Yuri Gerasimov

Head-started SBS, August, 24th.

Brief addendum: Out of the six flagged birds from this project there have been already an astonishing four re-sightings, twice in China, once in Korea as well as re-

cently in februaryat a new site in Bangladesh (see these articles for more details)

# The 'Monument' Spoon-billed Sandpiper '01' returns to Rudong at Worldshorebirdsday

*Christoph Zöckler on behalf of the task Force*



Photo Chen Dong Ming

**Male Spoon-billed sandpiper '01' arrived in Rudong 4 September 2014**

The male Spoon-billed Sandpiper '01' has bred not far from the village Meinypilgyno in Chukotka, Russia since at least 2010, but possibly for much longer. It is named 'monument' SBS as it always breeds near an old monument set up by the villagers, but as it happens, the bird's achievements are actually monumental.

It was only marked with '01' engraved lime green flag in summer 2013 in Chukotka and subsequently observed in late August in the coastal Rudong wetlands of China. It stayed there for more than a month, moulting and fattening up for the onward journey into the wintering grounds. This bird is remarkable, as it has produced with its partner '02' (recorded wintering in Khok Kam, Thailand!) a total of 17 chicks since 2011. From eggs taken in 2013 three chicks were reared for head-starting and from a replacement clutch the pair managed to raise a further three chicks, of which one (EA) was observed in the Gulf of Mottama in Myanmar. The pair produced another two chicks for head-starting and raised another three from the replacement clutch in 2014. One of this couple's chicks (M9) from the head-starting Programme has already been trapped on the West coast of Kamchatka this August!

This amazing 'saviour' of its threatened population of only 300-400 remaining in the wild has now safely returned to Rudong on 4 September 2014, joining '09' a newly marked bird that was spotted in Rudong already

on 17 August. The famous '01' arrived in Rudong just in time for World Shorebird Day <https://worldshorebirds-day.wordpress.com/> joining 13 more SBS including '09' and a juvenile bird (Jing Li, Luke Tang and others). A further two adults and one juvenile were on Yubu Island in South Korea, according to Yu Yong Ki and B. Cooper. The Task Force very much supports the World Shorebird Day initiative and we are delighted to see that the Spoon-billed Sandpiper has been voted as Shorebird of the Year 2014 and would like to make the best use of its prime celebrity '01' to highlight the urgent need to conserve the Rudong mudflats.

Throughout September and October '01' has been regularly recorded and last been seen on October 13 at the same place as in 2013!

The EAAFP Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force is a joint conservation effort of many national and international organisations and individuals. The colour-flagging project has been implemented by Birds Russia with support of the RSPB and WWT and flags were observed by Task Force members from SBS in China, Birds Korea, BCST in Thailand and BANCA in Myanmar.



Photo B. Scampion

'01' on 13 October 2014 after moulting into winter plumage, striding confidently forward in Yankiau, Rudong



# Report on Intertidal Mudflat Waterbird Survey in the Yellow Sea, Autumn 2014

*Christoph Zöckler, Jing Li and Nigel Clark*



International survey team at the model Spoon-billed sandpiper at Links Hotel, who sponsored 'SBS in China'

An international Survey Team of 16 members from six flyway countries, the UK and Germany surveyed the Rudong mudflats in Jiangsu Province between Dongtai (Tiaozini Sandbanks) and Dong Lin in the south following a survey of a British/Chinese team in September. The survey was for all shorebirds, especially Spoon-billed sandpiper, other globally threatened water birds and with specific attention to North American migrants. In addition to Rudong six other sites in the Yellow Sea have been surveyed and results from these sites are available and a selection presented in this report.

## **SBS in the Rudong mudflats**

A total of 177 and maybe up to 190 Spoon-billed Sandpiper have been recorded at three (four) sites along the 150 km long coastal stretch with intertidal mudflats, slightly lower than the minimum of 226 recorded in September. The Tiaozini mudflats in Dongtai County appeared to be

the most important with a max of almost 100 birds only here, similar to the September Survey. Fig 1 shows the overall distribution of Spoon-billed sandpiper across the entire Rudong-Dongtai mudflats in September (blue) and October (red). In total 16 different individually flagged birds were recorded in the autumn, often multiple times, allowing analyses on sight faithfulness and possibly another global population estimate, currently not exceeding 350-500 birds. Among the flagged birds were at least two juveniles from the head-starting programme on the breeding grounds in Chukotka (white marked birds in Table) and another wild bred juvenile from this year (E2) as well as a bird marked on migration in Kamchatka (black/yellow)! The overall number of juvenile birds was higher compared to last year, suggesting that the site is equally important for adult birds as well as for juveniles. 09 spend more than 2 months in the region. More details can be found on Table



**Fig:** Overall distribution of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in September (blue) and October 2014 (red) between Tiaozini in the North and Yangkiau (center) and Donglin in the south.

**Table:** Sighting of colour-marked Spoon-billed sandpipers in the Rudong –Dongtai mudflats

Flag	Site	August	September	October
Lime green flaged (LGF) left 01	Yǎngkou	x	x	x
LGF left 04	Dongtai		x	
LGF left 08	Dongtai		x	x
LGF left 09	Fengli	x		x
LGF left 10	Dongtai		x	x
LGF left 14	Dongtai		x	
LGF left 15	Dong Lin		x	
LGF left 16	Dong Lin			x (?)
LGF left 18	Dongtai		x	
LGF left 22	Dongtai N			x
LGF left E2	Yǎngkou			x
LGF no number	Dongtai			x
LGF right 8	Dongtai		x	
White right M 8	Dongtai		x	
White right??	Dongtai			x
Black /yellow right	Fengli		x	x



The Rudong mudflats host up to 100,000s of shorebirds and gulls. Dunlin with 30,000 individuals is the second most common. Bar tailed Godwits and Red Knots are low in numbers in October but reach over 10,000 birds and 1,500 respectively in spring. Among other globally threatened birds Nordmann's Greenshank was present in good numbers of over 800 birds and Saunders Gull numbered over 3000 in total. Other birds of note were 24 Dalmatian Pelicans and over 100 Black-faced Spoon-bills. There were six more sites counted twice in October (early and towards the end) simultaneously to understand the situation of mostly American migrants and globally threatened species. But all waterbirds were counted. Table 2 provides an overview of the most important species. It is interesting that Bar-tailed Godwits are not as com-

mon in the Yellow Sea at this time. Also the Red Knot is not present at the time or concentrated at few areas that were not monitored. With a total of at least 38,000 Dunlin the Yellow Sea is important for this species. The total figure might be much higher as many areas have not been monitored. With little more than 3000 individuals the Great Knot is not very numerous on its wintering or migration sites outside its traditional Korean staging areas and the total number of the global population might indeed have gone down and not just shifted. Remarkable are the numbers of Relict Gulls in Luan Nan. With 3100 birds at the end of October this site hosts 25% of the global population, like Rudong and Dongtai do for Saunders Gull!



Nordmann's Greenshank together with Grey Plover in Dafeng NNR 12 October 2014



One of two dead birds found in the Tiaozini sandbanks

## 1000s of dead birds

Right in the middle of the High Tide Roost of the most important stop over site for the species in the Tiaozini Sandbanks more than a thousand dead birds were encountered. Some were already several weeks old, other still alive but moribund and dying. Incidents of dead birds were first noticed in August involving a few sandpiper and mostly wagtails. Poisoned bait was found nearby. In September at the same site more than 130 birds, mostly Red necked Stints, but also six Dunlins and other shorebirds were found dead or dying. In October a total stretch of more than 12 km was searched at high tide with more than 1000 dead birds involving over 30 taxa, including Japanese Quails herons and even passerines. Unfortunately, there were also two dead Spoon-billed sandpiper found, one freshly dead and the other one a fortnight old. Both birds were taken for analyses, as were other birds, but no results have yet come through and it is very concerning that we still don't know the reason for so many dying birds among the most important High Tide Roost of the Spoon-billed sandpiper

Authorities were alerted but did not seem to be committed and interested in pursuing the case. Although there is little evidence in September and October, still bait poisoning might play a major role, as found in August. No real tissue sample were taken to inquire the real reasons for the mass dying of birds. This is very worrying as the majority of the roosting birds at High Tide use this area. At a meeting with the Jiangsu Forest Bureau and Nantong Government we raised the issue and the urgency. Immediate action was promised by the authorities. Follow up is initiated and any report will be immediately forwarded.

Fortunately no signs of hunting or any other immediate threat was noticed at any of the other sites monitored in the Yellow Sea.

Protection of most important stop over site in Dongtai and Rudong in China remains a big challenge. The Spoon-billed sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) held its 10th anniversary meeting on 14 October in Rudong, China. Sixteen members from six flyway countries, the



UK and Germany discussed progress on the flyway conservation and shared experiences. Prior to the meeting the task force members also took part in a survey organised by SBS in China in the near-by Rudong mudflats in Jiangsu Province between Dongtai (Tiaozini Sandbanks) and Dong Lin in the south following a survey of a British/Chinese team in September.

The Rudong mudflats host up to 100,000s of shorebirds and gulls. Dunlin with 30,000 individuals is the second most common after the Kentish Plover. Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots are low in numbers in October but reach over 10,000 birds and 1,500 respectively in spring. Among other globally threatened birds Nordmann's Greenshank was present in good numbers of over 800 birds and Saunders Gull numbered over 3000 in total. Other birds of note were 24 Dalmatian Pelicans and over 100 Black-faced Spoon-bills.

*The surveys have been supported by Zhang Lin, James Phillips, Guy Anderson and Andy Schofield Rich Hearn in September and Debbie Pain, Duncan McNiven, Tom Noah, Foyisal Mohammad, Richard Winspear, Jacquie Wear, Pyae Phyoe Aung, Ren Nou Soe, Baz Scampion, Helena Jefferson, Elena Lappo, Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, Nial Moores, Paul Insua-Cao, Kiwi and Thattaya Bidayabha in October. Gillian Bunting helped with creating the map.*

### Conservation challenge

During a meeting with the Jiangsu Forest Bureau, the Rudong and Nantong Government on 13th October, the three previously announced protected areas were reiterated. The exact boundaries are still pending and collaboration with SBS in China and Nanjing Normal University is anticipated. However, the most important Tiaozini mudflats are difficult to protect as they are currently included in a huge 5-year reclamation plan with the development of Deep Sea port facilities converting ca. 60,000 ha mudflats for industrial and agricultural development. Regardless of this development prospect SBS in China

along with international support of the SBS TF and other global organisations such as WWT and WWF is launching a campaign aiming to halt or delay the reclamation plans. Other areas are also threatened by reclamation though not immediately. Those areas defined for protection could serve a home for many shorebirds by the invasive Spartina grass is encroaching suitable habitats fast.

### Ten Year anniversary Task Force meeting

While meeting in Rudong and surveying the Spoon-billed sandpipers at the most important stop over site we arranged for a Task Force meeting, also to celebrate our ten year anniversary. Our meeting was kindly supported by Links Hotel. Many members from almost all flyway countries were represented and gave an update from their region/ The main agenda was a reflection of the things we have achieved over the past ten years and the many things that remain a challenge. More details and the minutes will be put on the Task Force web site in due course.

### Awareness raising in Rudong

SBS in China hold 8 talks in Nantong, Nanjing and Links Hotel in autumn with the fully support of task force. We invited kids and their parents to the talks and help the local school setup the SBS room, supporting their after school waterbird theme activities. Zhang Lin took teachers for birding in Yangkou. Nanting Nature Museum will be local partner in 2015 for more public awareness programs in Nantong or Jiangsu Province.

Together with Links Hotel in Yangkiau SBS in China started a successful campaign to raise awareness of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and its habitats. A huge banner and t-shirts highlighted the SBS events in October, accompanied by several public lectures. A brochure in collaboration with the Links Hotel to promote eco-tourism is planned among many other things.

# SBS winter counts in Wenzhou and habitat destruction

*Tong Menxiu*



On 21 Jan. 2015 only 1 SBS was found in the mudflats of Wenzhou, the most northern known wintering site. Compared to last year when 8 birds were wintering there, this is a drastic decline. Considering the massive changes observed this is no surprise.



# Summary report of mid-winter Spoon-billed Sandpiper census in southern China

*Vivian Fu*

Survey for Spoon-billed Sandpiper was carried out between 19th and 25th January, 2015 at five sites in Southern China including Minjiang Estuary (Fujian Province), Xitou and Fucheng at Leizhou (Guangdong Province) and Beihai and Beilun (Guangxi Province). A total of at least 7 Spoon-billed Sandpiper was sighted in southern China during the census period, two of them were flagged (one with lime flag and one with white flag engraved "MA")

marking). Special thanks to all participants from Fujian Bird Watching Society, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Zhanjiang Bird Watching Society, Guangdong Zhanjiang Mangrove National Nature Reserve, South China Institute of Endangered Animals, Guangxi Mangrove Research Center, Guangxi Beilun Estuary National Nature Reserve.

Date	Location	Coordination	Number of SBS seen	Observers	Notes
25, January, 2015	Minjiang Estuary, Fujian	26° 1'47.72"N, 119°38'31.14"E	1	Ni Guang-hui, Wang Jian-hua	on mudflat
21, January, 2015	Xitou, Yangxi, Guangdong	21°37'8.53"N, 111°46'50.62"E	1	Jonathan Martinez	on mudflat
17, January, 2015	Fucheng, Leizhou, Guangdong	20°53'49.52"N, 110°10'43.33"E	2	Vivian Fu, Pluto Zhang, Tian Li, Tang Xuen	on mudflat
18, January, 2015	Fucheng, Leizhou, Guangdong	20°53'49.52"N, 110°10'43.34"E	at least 4	Pluto Zhang, Yang Weiming, Zhang Wei, Chen Guangxuen	Team of Zhang Wei and Chen Guangxuen found 2 SBS (one with white flag "MA") at around 1pm on mudflat, while team of Pluto Zhang and Yang Weiming found three SBS (one with lime flag) at around 4pm at the same place
21, January, 2015	Beihai, Guangxi	21°24'57.66"N, 109° 9'55.68"E	1	Vivian Fu, Suen Renjie, Da Yu	in fish pond
6 January, 2015	Guangxi Beilun Estuary National Nature Reserve	21°31'30.75"N, 108° 9'47.89"E	1	Tang Shengbo	The bird was seen from November, December till 6th January, but was not found during the SBS census

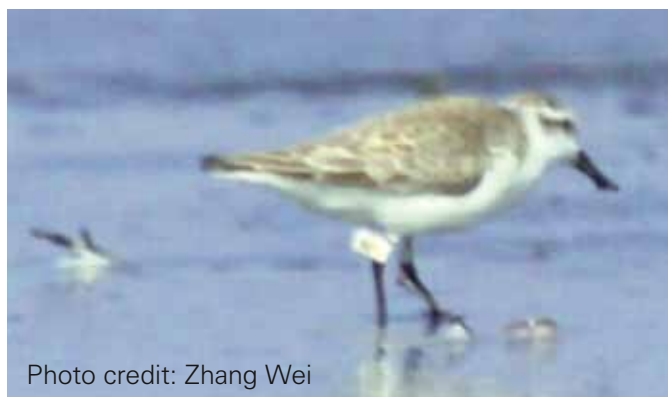




1a

**Fig. 1a & 1b.** Three SBS (the middle one with a lime flag on the leg) sighted in Fucheng, Leizhou, Guangdong.

1b



**Fig. 2.** SBS with White leg flag engraved "MA" sighted in Fucheng, Leizhou, Guangdong.



**Fig. 3.** SBS sighted in Beihai, Guangxi.

**Fig. 4.** SBS sighted in Beilun, Guangxi.



# SBS Conservation activities in Vietnam

*Trai Le Long, Viet Nature*

Viet Nature has been developing a programme for conservation of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper during 2014, with support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Viet Nature was established in 2013 as an off-shoot of the BirdLife International programme in Indochina and is developing its conservation programme with the Spoon-billed Sandpiper as one of its flagship species. Viet Nature continues BirdLife's engagement at Xuan Thuy National Park, a globally important wintering site for Black-faced Spoonbill, and also for Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

Surveys for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper were carried out in December 2013 in the Red River and Mekong Delta coastal areas as part of the winter 2013/14 coordinated census across wintering range states. They were conducted by Viet Nature in the Red River Delta and WildTours in the Mekong Delta in northern and southern Vietnam respectively. In the Red River Delta, Thai Thuy, Xuan Thuy National Park, the Day River mouth and Quan Lan Island were visited, with only two records of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper at Day River and Xuan Thuy on 3/12/2011 and 18/12/2013 respectively. In the Mekong Delta, Can Gio National Park, Tan Thanh and Con Ngang (Tien Giang Province), Ba Tri and Binh Dai (Ben Tre Province) were surveyed; all sites with previous records. At Tan Thanh, three to five Spoon-billed Sandpipers were recorded on 17 December, then on 5 January, Jonathan Eames (BirdLife International) recorded seven Spoon-billed Sandpipers and one Nordmann's Greenshank. In May a follow-up visit was conducted to the southern sites by Viet Nature and the RSPB with WildTours to formulate options to address threats to the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Hunting with nets is the main direct threat; a low but threatening level in the south, and a higher and more extensive level in the north. Clam fisheries overlap with Spoon-billed Sandpiper habitat at some of the sites in the south and if well managed could offer opportunities for sustainable use of the mudflats

which supports shorebirds. Pollution from plastic waste is extensive at Go Cong. Urbanisation and other land-use change, particularly to aquaculture, is eroding available roosting habitats in the north and the south. An action plan is now being developed by Viet Nature for conservation of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and will include the following priority actions:

1. Raising the profile of Target Tan Thanh and Con Ngang Island in Tien Giang Province as a priority site for conservation of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Vietnam.
2. Establishing conservation measures at Tan Thanh and Con Ngang through local conservation groups
3. Filling information gaps and knowledge of distribution of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper at other sites in Vietnam.
4. Monitoring Spoon-billed Sandpiper at confirmed areas in the Red River and Mekong Deltas
5. Raising awareness nationally of the status of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and advocating protection measures for important sites.

In October at the National Level Training Workshop for Wetland Managers in Vietnam organised by EAAFP and Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia in Hanoi, the status and conservation of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Vietnam was presented and Tan Thanh – Con Ngang proposed as a future EAAFP Flyway site. An Flyway site Information Sheet was prepared for Xuan Thuy at the same workshop.

Recent surveys have been conducted in Vietnam in the northern and southern sites in January 2015. Results of the field survey of SBS in Mekong Delta by Nguyen Hoai Bao team as follows:

Two SBS seen in Go Cong (Tan Thanh) on 18/1/2015;

Five birds seen in Go Cong (Tan Thanh) on 22/1/2015, surely the same group as seen on 18/1;

No bird was seen in three sites in Red River Delta for this survey in period of 18 to 22 January.



**Please do enjoy seeing photos and video in YouTube below!**

**Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4D9z12gtzp4&feature=share>

Spoon-billed Sandpiper on 18.01.2015 at Go Cong, Mekong Delta, Vietnam

# The Incredible Journey of the Famous Female '05'

*Guy Anderson, Phil Round, Pavel Tomkovich, & Christoph Zöckler*



Photo Egor Loktionov

Female 05 ringed at nesting site in Chukotka



Photo Guy Anderson

05 in spring 2014 in Rudong



SmithSutibut@KhokKham

'05' in Khok Kham, Thailand in January

For the second successive year female '05' returned to her wintering grounds in Thailand. Just as in the preceding winter, 2013/14, she roosted at Khok Kham, on the shores of the Thai Inner Gulf, a few km west of Bangkok. She returned to precisely the same area of salt-pans as during the winter before, being first observed on 6 November 2014, and was still present on 20 February 2015. Further west in the Thai Gulf, near Laem Phak Bia, Phetchaburi, another famous female, '02', likewise frequented the same general area of ponds at high tide for the second successive winter, being first noted on 16 December 2014. This indicates very high site fidelity on the wintering grounds in both marked females.

'05' was first ringed on her nest in Ankavie, on the eastern part of the Meinopylgino spit, Chukotka, Russia, on 20 June 2013. Her eggs were taken for artificial incubation under the Head-Starting Project, and the pair was selected to be shown to tourists of the Heritage Expeditions cruise in early July, when about 50 tourists were able to see their only Spoon-billed sandpipers of the trip

Four chicks hatched from the eggs of this female in 2013 but unfortunately only two survived till their release for the departure southward.

Before arriving back on the breeding grounds in 2014, 05 was first spotted on 2 May, during spring migration on the Tiaozini Sandbanks, Dongtai, China (in an area of mudflats destined for reclamation in the near future). In summer 2014, she moved to a new breeding site on the moraine hills. This is about 13 km distant, and the move was probably triggered by spring flooding of the

traditional breeding site. It is so far the furthest known between-year movement of an individual adult SBS on the breeding grounds. This shows there is some flexibility to adjust to changing conditions, in what are otherwise thought to be breeding-site-faithful birds. 05's first clutch was again taken for head-starting in 2014. She went on to lay a replacement clutch which, unfortunately, was depredated not long before hatching. Three head-started chicks were hatched, reared and released from the clutch taken in 2014, but only two of them were marked with white flags because the flag on the third chick was removed after it developed an infection under the flag.

Neither 05 nor 02 have been seen at any regular Spoon-billed sandpiper stop over sites in either of the last two autumn migration seasons, in China or elsewhere. Do both these females also stop in the Rudong and Dongtai mudflats as all the others seem to do? It seems likely, but if so how have we missed them?

Let's hope the next 12 months produce more sightings of 05, and of the other individually marked birds in the population. They have much to teach us about the movements, behaviour and ecology of Spoon-billed Sandpipers.

We like to thank all observers along the flyway and especially Egor Loktionov, Nikolay and Nastya Yakushev for their assistance, the Thai bird watchers Mr Suchart Daengphayon at Khok Kham and Mr Seri Manich at Laem Phak Bia for their observations and Jing Li and Zhang Lin for organising the spring surveys in Rudong and Dongtai.



# Fly back to home safety! Update from Mottama, Myanmar

*Pyae Phyo Aung @ Phyolay (BANCA)*

In 2014 in the monsoon season, BANCA conducted the advocacy for Ramsar site designation process for the priority areas in two townships which area Kyeikhto and Bilin townships of the Mon State. During the mission period, BANCA team members were actively involved and conducted public awareness talks and consultation meeting at village and township level. Finally, the township administrative heads and development committee

signed an agreement letter and official endorsement for the Ramsar designation to the Mon Government.

In July 2014, BANCA conducted the multi-stakeholders workshop in Kyeikhto Township. The aim of the workshop is to identify the key stakeholders who would be involved in the Ramsar site management committee and to mitigate the threats for Gulf of Mottama's natural resources.



Public awareness activities in Gulf of Mottama about Ramsar



Difficulties in awareness activities during the travelling



Participants and focus group discussion

This year Sittwe Nature Conservation Association (SNCA) became one of the local partner of BANCA for safeguarding the wintering ground in Nanthar Island in Rakhine State (Arakan). And setup the information of Spoon-billed Sandpiper and benefits of Ramsar signboards in Gulf of Mottama and Nanthar Island.



In 22-19 August 2014, focal person of Spoon-billed Sandpiper (Myanmar-BANCA) presented about the Conservation status of Spoon-billed Sandpiper Program in Myanmar at the 3rd Regional Conference of the Society for the Conservation Biology-Asia Section at the Melaka, Malaysia.



Information of Ramsar signboard in GoM and Nanthar Island

Last year, BANCA formed four Local Conservation Groups in GoM. In 2014, increased three Local Conservation Groups in GoM and total members are more than hundred. BANCA provided the capacity building training to LCGs and uniforms for LCGs donation by Bird Holiday Tour. In winter season, BANCA conducted the joint patrolling activities in the Gulf of Mottama area

collaborate with Township Forest Department, Administrative Department, Police Department, Local Conservation Groups and village head. At that time do not received any bird hunting issues in GoM but recorded the illegal fishing issues. The team members are organized the local fishers to conserve the migratory birds and contribute the information of Spoon-billed Sandpiper leaflets.



Patrolling activities in Gulf of Mottama

In winter season for more effective to do the conservation activities in GoM, BANCA selected eight persons from Local Conservation Group members who will trained the shore bird watching training and provided spotting scopes, field guide books and binoculars funded by CEPF. Last year BANCA provided five freshwater ponds which will renovate and provide the new freshwater ponds with WASH training in GoM funded by Sweden government. This year BANCA was expressed in many media channels about more than 40 times. For the income generation for Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation activities, BANCA written the article "Spoon-billed Sandpiper a rare but much valued visitor to Myanmar" in flight magazine of the Air KBZ airline in Myanmar. And also producing the "Spoon-billed Sandpiper Tour Trip information" leaflets contribute to Embassy and related eco-tour companies. Some profit will be used in Community development and provide to LCGs for conservation activities received from Spoon-billed Sandpiper Tour program.

On October 18, BANCA's Spoon-billed Sandpiper Team spotted three Spoon-billed Sandpiper in GoM. The team

spotted another Spoon-billed Sandpiper with light green flag in GoM on the 24 November but unfortunately they cannot read the number because the flock is quick far.

In January 2015, BANCA launched the Documentary of Spoon-billed Sandpiper activities of GoM in Myanmar TV Channels and other media.

In December, BANCA prepared the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) which help of Christoph. On the 4 December BANCA Chairperson, Program Manager and Christoph Zöckler (Coordinator of SBS TF) met with Director General and Director of Forest Department (MOECF) and presented the new update RIS and discussed further plans for the conservation activities.

All of our efforts are really effective for Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation program and for secured when Spoon-billed Sandpiper fly back to their home.

### Acknowledgment

Thanks to Darwin Initiative, RSPB, WWT, Bird Holiday Tour, CEPF and SWEDEN Government who for gave the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Program in Myanmar.



## Winter surveys of water birds in the Gulf of Mottama:

*Nigel Clark on behalf of the survey team*

In January 2010 a team from BANCA and the task force undertook extensive surveys of the east shore of the Gulf of Mottama. These found very few Spoon-billed Sandpipers, or other shorebirds, until the last two days of the survey when a very large flock of small shorebirds was located in the upper Gulf of Mottama. The flock was estimated separately by three experienced shorebird counters at about 35,000. Over those two days we counted all the birds of each species in each flock we came across on the mudflats as the tide fell and found 191 SBS in 33,000 birds checked (Zockler et al. 2010b). Subsequent analysis revealed that there were an estimated 200 SBS

(95% confidence limits of 150-270) present in the upper part of the Gulf of Mottama. Hunting pressure was considered to be extremely high in the gulf with an estimated 20-30% of the shorebirds being taken annually for food by local people.

Between 2000 and 2009 the Spoon-billed Sandpiper population was estimated to have declined by 26% per year which would have led to extinction by around 2020 (Zockler et al. 2010a). As a result of the realisation of the urgency of the situation Task force members worked with BANCA to obtain grants from BBC Wildlife fund, Save our Species and The Darwin initiative to address the livelihoods of the villagers whose only means of income was through bird hunting. This has proved very successful and it is believed that there is now no shorebird hunting in the Gulf of Mottama.



Photo Guy Anderson

In January 2015 we (Nigel Clark from BTO, Rhys Green, Graeme Buchanan and Guy Anderson from RSPB, Geoff Hilton from WWT and Pyae Phyo Aung, Tin Aung Tien, Min Thein Htet, Aung Myin Htien and Thet Win from BANCA) endeavoured to repeat the 2010 survey to see if we could see any changes in the shorebird numbers as a result of the cessation of hunting.

The team had a total of 7 days surveying the shorebirds in the upper gulf of Mottama. The first day was on foot from the village where our boats were based. After a long day in the field we had found rather few shorebirds but we felt that we had not got to the core area for shorebirds. That

night as we slept on the boats the tide came high enough for the boat men to take us out into the estuary.

Graeme had been able to obtain some very recent satellite images for the area we wanted to survey so we were able to pick potentially suitable areas to survey. As dawn broke we knew that we had hit the jackpot first time with a flock of several thousand small shorebirds within telescope range of the boat. It was not long until the first SBS was found – that got those still sleeping up very rapidly! Before long we had located 4 SBS feeding round the boat! We split up into 4 teams and surveyed in different directions from the boat counting all the birds of each species in each flock we came across.

When we returned to the boat after many hours of surveying all teams had found multiple flocks containing SBS. We estimated that we had had a minimum of



20,000 small shorebirds that day but all felt that it was an underestimate.

The next day we moved the boat to the South East about 5km and repeated the survey. Again lots of SBS but we also had two peregrines disturb most of the birds in the area. By chance we were in a good position to make an estimate of the number of small shorebirds as each of the flocks flew past to roost on open flats until the danger had past. This came to a total of 36,000 but we realised that there were some birds that has crouched rather than taken flight so this was an underestimate.

The Satellite images suggested that there was another area which should hold a large number of Shorebirds some 15 KM to the North West When we arrived there we were not disappointed finding another 23,000 small shorebirds!

By the time we returned ashore after a week on the estuary we had found an estimated 64,000 small shorebirds and had 184 sightings of SBS! Initial analysis of the flock counts give an estimate of 156 SBS present in the area we surveyed.

Those of us that had been on previous surveys were in no doubt that there were many more small shorebirds than before hunting stopped. We also found more large shorebirds than we had seen before.

If SBS were still declining at 26 % a year we would have expected to find 45 (33-60) SBS in the surveys. We have more analysis to do but the mean number of SBS is within the 95% confidence limits of the previous surveys and well outside that predicted if the population was still declining at the rate in the 2000's!

The one surprising thing was that we only found one flagged SBS and that was marked with a plain lime flag so was probably marked a while ago. This seems to be too few to be just chance but a flagged wild juvenile was seen further out in the gulf in December and one the previous winter.

Further work will be needed to better understand what is happening with the SBS in the Gulf of Mottama but this survey gives some hope that the population may be beginning to stabilise – the next challenge will be to get it to increase!



Photo Guy Anderson

# First SBS record for Tanintharyi Region, Myanmar

*Christoph Zöckler & Saw Moses*

On 30 November 2014 we found one Spoon-billed Sandpiper among a flock of about 800 small waders in the mudflats of Kan Bjin Beach. This is the first record of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the Tanintharyi Region and about 700 km south from the Gulf of Mottama but only 200 km from Pak Thale in Thailand where regularly winter 6-9 SBS. The bird was seen by both observers at rising tide briefly before taking off with the flock.

The beach is part of a larger mudflat complex stretching from approx. 100 km south to 50 km north of the Capitol Myeik. Most of the mudflats are not suitable, surrounded by extensive mangroves and shallow waters with deep mud, but the area north of Myeik has larger sandy com-

ponents and hosts a total of 4000-5000 small waders and could easily harbour one or two more SBS.

We also observed at least four Nordmann's Greenshank at the beach and a total of 95 Great Knot at a site nearby. The mudflats north of Myeik are a very important wintering site for these globally threatened waders as well as for the globally threatened (VU) Lesser Adjutant Stork. At present the site is not protected. Considering the economic expansion of the booming region, urgent action to protect the sensitive coast is needed.

We would like to thank FFI Myanmar programme, who kindly supported the survey financially and with logistics.



Photo C. Zöckler

Mixed wader flock at rising tide at Kan Bjin Beach, Tanintharyi, Myanmar



# First Sighting of a Flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper on Sonadia Island of Bangladesh

*Dr. Tapan Kumar Dey, Md. Golam Rabbi and Faysal Ahmad*

On 15 December 2014 an adult Spoon-billed Sandpiper with a lime-green flag engraved 09 has been spotted for the first time in South East coast (Sonadia Island) of Bangladesh.. Sonadia Island was declared an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) by the Government of Bangladesh in 1999. It is also enlisted as EAAFP Flyway Network site.

‘Engraved 09’ has been flagged in June 2014 in Meinopylgino, Chukotka Russia, where it breed successfully. It has been seen subsequently in Yangkiau Rudong near Shanghai, China in August, September and October over a period of six weeks.



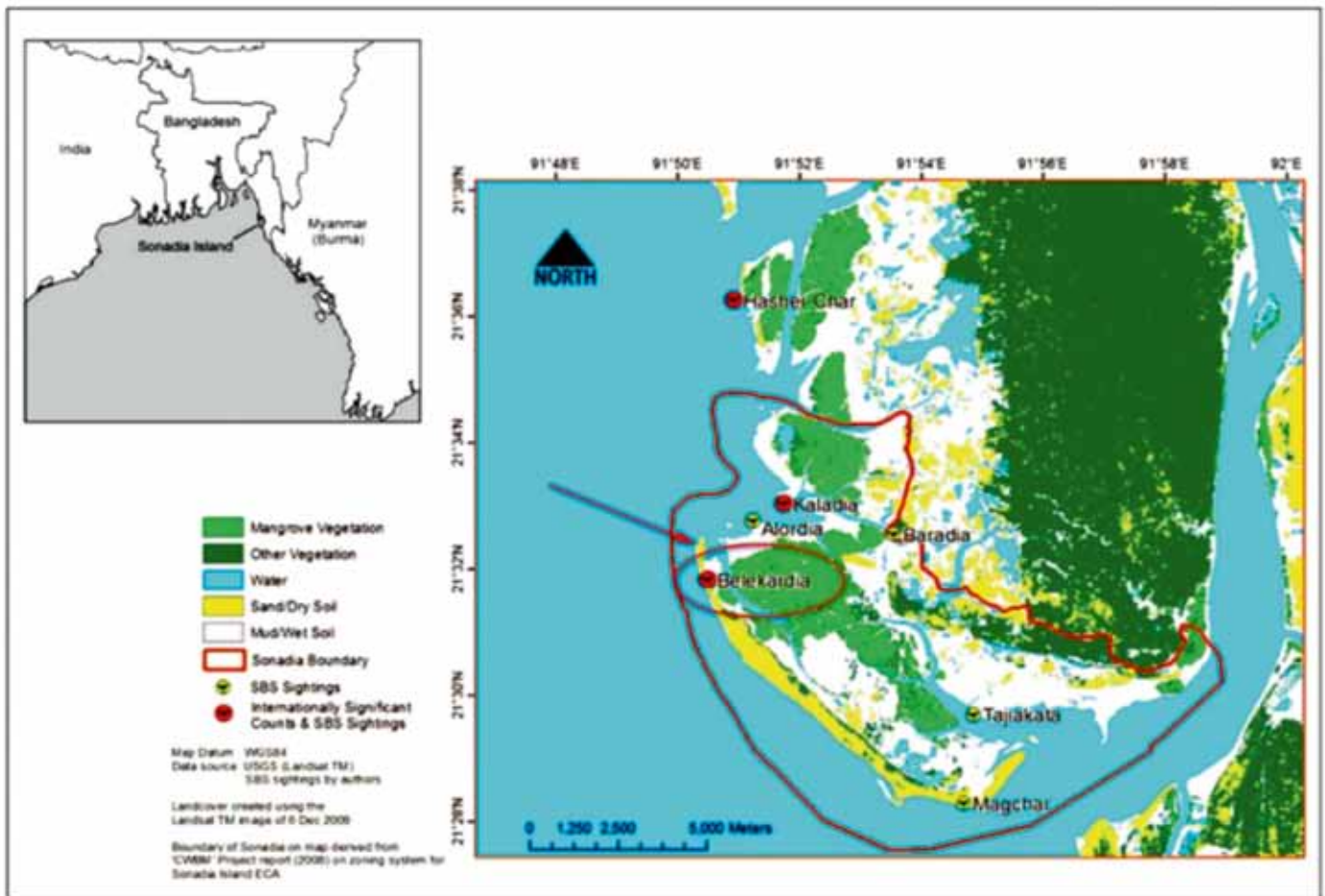
**Fig.1.** A Spoon-billed Sandpiper with a lime-green flag engraved 09 in a flock of shorebirds

We observed this flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper at Belekardia (21.5311°N, 91.8425°E) during high tide roost by using 20-60x60 mm Spotting-scope. The place Belekardia is comparative high land. During high tide thousands of shorebirds roost here when other feeding ground go under water due to tidal action. The bird was re-sighted respectively on 25 & 26 January 2015 and 14 February 2015 at Kaladia. This season a total of 15 Spoon-billed Sandpipers were observed at Sonadia and its adjacent Islands.

The survey of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper was conducted

under the Sub-Project: “Habitat Management Plan & Conservation Action for Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper at its Wintering Ground at Sonadia Island, Bangladesh” funded by the World Bank through “Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Wildlife Protection Project” and implementing by Wildlife & Nature Conservation Circle, Bangladesh Forest Department. A Bird Protection Committee (BPC) has formed under the project to ensure regular protection of migratory birds at Sonadia and its adjacent islands. To promote advocacy activities and awareness among the local people six





**Fig.2.** . Red circular and arrow mark indicate the sighting location of the flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper at Belekerdia area of Sonadia Island, South east coast, Bangladesh (Map is adopted from Chowdhury et al. 2011)

conservation education & awareness programme were conducted within the last four months. The project is facilitating Village Conservation Group (VCG) towards migratory birds conservation, following the same model as other conservation projects. A total of 90 stakeholders, and ex bird hunter were trained for Alternative Income

Generation (AIG) e.g., eco-tour guides, souvenir and handicraft production, providing accommodation & eco-tourism infrastructure work etc. For long term protection of the species Habitat Management Plan and community based Species Conservation Strategy and Action Plan will be prepared under this project.



**Fig.3.** The lime-green flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper (left) with another one.



**Fig.4.** Three Spoon-billed Sandpipers



**Fig.5.** Consultation Workshop on Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation at Dhaka. Mr. Md. Yunus Ali, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh Forest Department was present as the Chief Guest of that workshop.



**Fig.6.** Stakeholder Workshop at Moheshkhali with multi-disciplinary stakeholders



**Fig.7.** Awareness programme in Sonadia Island



**Fig.8.** School campaign



**Fig.9.** VCG meeting



**Fig.10.** BPC meeting

*Photos by: Md. Golam Rabbi, Faysal Ahmad & Abdullah-As-Sadique*

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# New Spoon-billed Sandpiper site and monitoring at Sonadia Island in Bangladesh

*Md. Foysal & Sayam U. Chowdhury*

Since 2009 BSCP has been monitoring wintering population (Oct-Apr) of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Bangladesh with special focus on Sonadia Island and since 2011 the project conducted surveys every month to document over-summering shorebirds (May-Sept) on the island. The SBS is usually recorded in Bangladesh in late October and leaving in early April with no record of any



**Figure 1:** Several sites were found important for shorebirds within the yellow circle.

over-summering bird so far. The height number (23) of this season (Oct 14- Feb 15) was recorded in two key sites of Sonadia Island between 20 and 22 January during the SBS coordinated count including one flagged bird. The flagged female was captured and marked on 15 June 2014 on her nest just after her eggs were picked up for artificial incubation in Meinypilgyno, Chukotka, Russia. Her replacement clutch was found on 27 June and last seen with the hatchlings in the second nest on 18-19 July 2014. The bird was later seen on 17 August 2014 in Yangkou, Rudong, China. We believe it will stay in Bangladesh throughout the winter.

Along with monthly monitoring of shorebirds on Sonadia Island, Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project (BSCP) conducts surveys in previously unsurveyed areas such as the Sundarbans (2012). As part of the new area search BSCP carried out a detailed survey around Sandwip, Chittagong between 3 and 11 February 2015. A total of 35,000 shorebirds of 24 species were counted including 21 Spoon-billed Sandpipers with 2 color-flagged birds (Black-Yellow; Lime-Green). Survey participants: Md. Foysal, M. Abdullah Abu Diyan, Nazim Uddin Prince and team.

Sites	Total of shorebirds	No. of shorebird species	No. of SBS	No. of flagged SBS	Area Covered
Site 1	14,000	11	6	1	70%
Site 2	5,000	10	-	-	90%
Site 3	16,000	15	15	1	65%
Total	35,000	24	21	2	-



**Figure 2:** Black-Yellow SBS.

Photos: BSCP/Nazim Uddin Prince



**Figure 3:** Spoon-billed Sandpipers





**Figure 4:** Large number of shorebirds

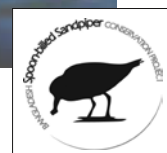
Survey Photos: BSCP/M. Abdullah Abu Diyan



Photo Sayam U. Chowdhury



Many thanks to RSBP for supporting our work in 2014-15.



# Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation activities in southern China

*Vivian Fu, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society / Bird Life International China Programme*

Owing to the results of surveys to study wintering distribution of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in southern China since 2012, which had identified several sites as wintering in the region and sadly discovered that these sites were also black spots of illegal hunting for birds. Regarding this serious threat to birds including Spoon-billed Sandpiper, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society started to work with local civil society organizations to tackle this problem. With the support of Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund in late 2014, we had initiated and help building capacity of local civil society organizations on environmental education, advocacy and monitoring, and they would become forces for long-term conservation work.

A two-day workshop on environmental education was organized between 13th and 14th September, 2014 in Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province, China. A total of 29 participants from local civil societies and nature reserve in Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces joined the training workshop. Environmental education experts from Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Beijing Brooks Education Center and Swarovski's Feather Voluntary Group were invited as trainers of the workshop. After the workshop, participants started to establish environmental education activities such as guided birding tour for general public and local schools to raise the awareness of protection for the birds and their habitat. The group had also developed linkage with government authorities to enforce law against illegal mist netting.



**Fig. 1.** Lecture about the importance of educating young people for nature conservation by Barrie Cooper from RSPB.



**Fig. 2.** Field practice on interpretation at an urban park lead by Mr. Kevin Guo from Swarovski's Feather Voluntary Group.

These civil societies under the CEPF project had also participated the mid-winter Spoon-billed Sandpiper Census which was organized between 19th and 25th January, 2015. Survey sites included Minjiang Estuary (Fujian Province), Xitou and Fucheng at Leizhou (Guangdong Province) and Beihai and Beilun (Guangxi Province). A total of at least 7 Spoon-billed Sandpiper was sighted in southern China during the census period, two of them

were flagged (one with lime flag and one with white flag engraved "MA" marking). Special thanks to all participants from Fujian Bird Watching Society, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Zhanjiang Bird Watching Society, Guangdong Zhanjiang Mangrove National Nature Reserve, South China Institute of Endangered Animals, Guangxi Mangrove Research Center, Guangxi Beilun Estuary National Nature Reserve.



# Poster of Spoon-billed Sandpiper to promote its conservation

A poster was produced by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society with the support of BirdLife International's "Welcome to the Birds" programme.

Answer to the count of SBS on the poster





# Japan SBS Support Group founded in Kushiro at EAAFP MoP8

*Minoru Kashiwagi*

In conjunction with the EAAFP MoP8 in Kushiro in January 2015 a side event was organised to launch the SBS Support Group of Japan on 19 January 2015 in the Kushiro Tourism and International exchange Centre. Using the MoP8 of the EAAFP we had a lot of international participants, including Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy (Task Force Chair, Russia), Mr. Masumur Rahman (Bangladesh), Ms. Thin Thin Yu (Myanmar), Dr. Debbie Pain (UK), Dr. Baz Hughes (UK), Ms. Nicola Crockford (UK), Mr. Wicha Narungsri(Thailand), Mr. Kazuhiro Oodate Japan), Mr. Takeyoshi Matsuo (Japan), Dr. Masaharu Morita (Japan), Minoru Kashiwagi (Japan)

Dr. Syroechkovskiy greeted the participants and reported on the success of the past 10 years and the challenges ahead. He highlighted the need of support from all coun-

tries and welcome the launch of SbS Support Group in Japan by Minoru Kashiwagi.

As a result of discussion and meetings with shorebird specialists and conservationists engaged in monitoring, research and conservations in Japan a support group for SbS and shorebirds was launched at this meeting. It will start after a meeting of core people in April 2015. Kashiwagi, SBS Task Force Member of Japan, asked for support of the Task Force for the future actions and activities of Japanese Support Group. It is to start activities for conservation of Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Shorebirds also as a co-ordinated group from Japan. There is a need to coordinate activities done by Japanese and in Japan and it is also important to raise more awareness in the importance of conservation in Japan.



Photo Naomi Goto

Minoru Kashiwagi chairing the first SBS Support Group meeting during EAAFP MoP8 in Kushiro

# Spoon-billed Sandpiper Stand at the First Australasian BirdFair

*Elena Lappo, BirdsRussia,  
Institute of Geography Rus.Acad.Sci*



The first Australasian Birdfair took place in Sydney, on 25-26 October, at Sydney Olympic Park, organized by Phil Straw (Director of Avifauna Research & Services) in cooperation with Pacific BirdLife and BirdLife Australia (including the Australasian Wader Studies Group).

SBS conservation stand was created by BirdsRussia and supported by Heritage expedition and Avifauna Research and Services. At least 200 people had visited the stand and many more attended two lectures about SBS conservation on the flyway and other waders in the Russian breeding grounds. Some people put their names on the list of potential volunteers and supporters of SBS Task Force and participants of expeditions to explore unknown breeding grounds and support monitoring work in China, lots of awareness materials were distributed and about 400 Australian dollars were raised for the support of SBS conservation projects. It was the first place where opportunity to use Links Hotel in Yangkou area (Rudong county of Jiangsu province, China) was first time advertised as potential area for most convenient

destination for birdwatchers who are interested to see the bird and support conservation of the species. First Australian birders interested in the subject we put on contact with "SBS in China" for further contacts.

Spoon-billed Sandpipers are not wintering in Australia (though perhaps it would be much safer place than a number of current locations it is using on its flyway). However we promoted the species as the flagship for wader conservation of East Asian Australasian Flyway. Lots of conservation issues are in common for SBS and wide spread Australian waders such as Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits. The charisma of Spoon-billed Sandpiper and real threat of its extinction, attract attention to the problems of all migration routes, protect birds and their habitats. We want to use a chance to thank Phil Straw, and Rodney Russ from Heritage Expeditions for the opportunity to have the SBS stand at the bird Fair. We hope promotion of conservation of SBS and shorebirds on the flyway could be continued on the next Bird Fair in 2016 and further.



The author at the joint stand of SBS Task Force and HE at the Australian Birdfair



## New project — “SBS IN ART”

In this issue **Elena Lappo** interviews

**Chen Miao**, artist from China



主题: **Chen Miao**

Chen Miao is a Chinese artist from the Rudong area. She studied art at college and had drawing lessons already in primary school. I saw a T-shirt with her Spoon-billed Sandpiper painting and I was fascinated by her art. I later met her during our SBS conservation expedition to Jiangsu coasts in October 2014 and had a chance to ask her, how she became involved into the SBS story. She told me, that one day in 2011 she met Jing Li, the head of the “Spoon-billed Sandpiper in China”, who presented a lecture about the SBS at her school, and she saw a video and photos of this beautiful and unusual bird. Chen Miao was excited by this story and decided to draw the SBS. She found more pictures of SBS in the internet by herself and started her drawing.



Traditional red paper cutting was also based on Chen Miao picture





Magpies in the plum tree (made of traditional blue color cloth with white background and blue pattern)



Butterfly (new style blue color cloth with multi-color blue pattern)

SBS was the first bird she drew. It was her introduction to birdwatching as well. The drawing which she made has unusual colors. But it comes from a rural traditional way of painting, typical for the countryside clothing in Nantong (coast of South Jiangsu province in East China), so named "blue color cloths". The ornaments on these clothes are generally made of dots, lines and some decorative patterns. There are two kinds of it, one is a white pattern with blue background, the other is a blue pattern with white background.

The painting itself may be made mainly by dots, or – natural objects, for example – butterfly or dragonfly etc. People wear these clothes in this province both for every day and also for special occasions. In Chen Miao's artwork about SBS, she uses a traditional blue color as bird's body and red for bill and legs. The background is brown and green. This is also the traditional way of using colors.

She has drawn in this manner many SBS pictures and also other birds and even birders, who came to Rudong for SBS conservation survey.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Rudong





Back to Xiao Yang Kou

And in 2014 she came to the Rudong to meet with SBS Task Force people and also to see Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the wild. She and another artist, Mr. Taj came to the Yangkou mudflats with Jing Li and saw the SBS in the scope on a tidal flats. Chen Miao was very excited and impressed to see birds and particularly SBS in the wild.



On Photo: Chen Miao, Helena Jefferson, Jing Li, Mr. Taj, Christoph Zöckler in Rudong October 2014



Photo Jing Li

Now she also gives lessons to the students in a college, and contributes to the educational program on SBS and other bird species of the East Asian Flyway.

Pic 6, 7&8: made world's biggest SBS puzzle by shells at Links hotel ( not some lesson, applied Guinness World Records)



Photo Jing Li

Photo Elena Lappo





When I asked her, if she thinks the artist's input into the SBS conservation is important, her answer was clearly "yes", because the painting could visualize and enhance the knowledge about this very special bird to the people!



Picture 8: Movement "Protect SBS, let's do it", hold on Children's day 1st June 2014 at Juegang primary school

And only together with the people we will be able to save the species. We all hope that we will see more exciting SBS and bird drawings of Chen Miao and will meet her again and again in Jiangsu province where there is still so much work to be done for the conservation of intertidal habitats of birds. We hope one day the drawings of Chen Miao will be illustrating the office of the new high level protected area, which will be one day established in Rudong and Dongtai area to provide a safe home for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and many other birds.



陳 淼

<http://chenmiao1968.blog.163.com/>

## News in brief

### SBS in China won conservation award

SBS in China won the SEE Green innovation Foundation and received the full grant of RMB 200,000; one of three grant receivers of 27 teams. The Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology (SEE) has included SBS in China within their platform and media resource, SEE will continue to report about SBS in China in 2015; SEE got its public offering fund license in 2014 November and SBS in China will become a strong partner in future public activities, especially in the water resource and wetland conservation. More details in the next newsletter.

SEE: an environmental philanthropic organization, is the first non-profit organization initiated by Entrepreneurs. Advocating social responsibility among business leaders, SEE aims to protect the earth's Ecology and Environment. The organization now consists of two entities, the SEE Ecological Association (membership organization) and the SEE Foundation.

### The Second Great Wall of China

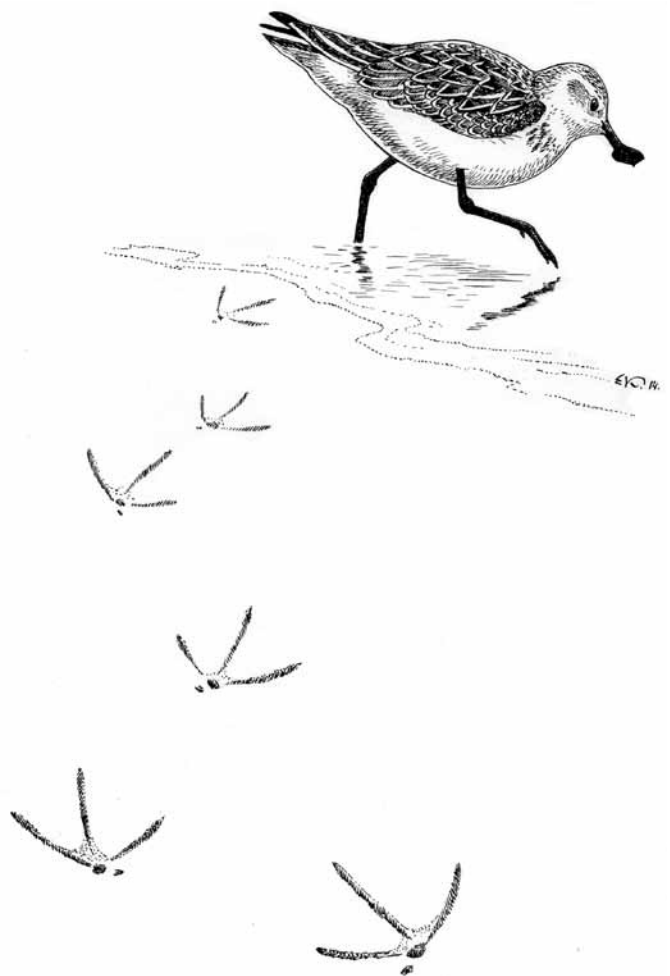
SBS in China translated "the Second Great Wall" by Dr. Ma Zhijun, the article was repost by two major public science media in China, Songshuhui- Association of Science Communicators and China Wild Life Protection Association; in the Wetland Day on Feb, 2nd 2015, the wetland crisis and this article has been discussed online again, more attention has been put to the neglected "useless" mudflat.



### Jubilee

This summer and autumn Belogorodtsev's family – a long standing supporter of our conservation work and who leads the local support group of Spoon-billed Sandpiper guardians in Meinypilgyno, South Chukotka, celebrated two anniversaries: the 30th wedding anniversary of Svetlana and Roman, and Svetlana's 50th birthday.

We are working with Svetlana and Roman from the year 2001 when "the capital of Spoon-billed Sandpiper" was first discovered. It is due to their constant support and participation conservation work in Chukotka is so successful. We wish them lots of health and happiness, good luck and success in all what they are doing and looking forward to work further together and save Spoon-billed sandpiper for further generations of people along the fly-way to enjoy this fantastic bird.



Сохраним кулика-лопатня  
Мыныгйипгъэн вылпатъек’

ヘラシギを守ろう

늪적부리도요를구하자  
拯救勺嘴鷸

HăybăovêloàiRẽmỏthìa

รักษนกชายเลนปากช้อน

ရေ ညောင်နွတ်ဝိုင်းငှက်များ တည်တံ့ဖို့ တို့များဝိုင်းဝန်းထိန်းထိမ်းဒို့

SelamatkanKedidiParuhSudu

মুচ-চুঁটো বাটান বাঁচান

சரண்டி முக்த உள்ளானை  
காப்பாற்றுவோம்

Rettet den Löffelstrandläufer

**Save the Spoon-billed Sandpiper**

