Spoonbills Speak

echoes across the Pacific

The Official Newsletter of SAVE (Spoonbill Action Voluntary Echo) International

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CAN REPLICATING MAI PO SAVE THE SPOONBILL?

In December 2016 Berkeley SAVE members Cristina Bejarano, Fiona Cundy, and Derek Schubert went to China with three destinations in mind: Mai Po Nature Reserve, the Pacific Rim Community Design conference, and Xinghua Bay. Despite its very urban context in Hong Kong, Mai Po Nature Reserve is flourishing, attracting over 400 species of birds. Forty-nine of them are of global concern including the Black-faced Spoonbill (BFS) which arrives at the reserve in late October and leaves to go north in late April. Approximately 10% of the world population of BFS winters in Deep Bay, where Mai Po is located.

The area has been managed by World Wildlife Fund since 1983 and is recognized by the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance. It is also open to the public (with a tour guide) and has an extensive educational component for local youth.

With SAVE member Tianxin Zhang (from Peking University) the Berkeley team was given a tour of Mai Po by Vivian Fu and Yu Yat-tung of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. We were enamored with the reserve's beauty, but it was a thrill to be greeted by dozens of BFS just a few steps beyond the park entrance. All in all it was great to finally visit this legendary site and to expand our network. But we need to learn from Mai Po—specifically how it has succeeded in conservation in the face of rapid coastal development in China and elsewhere along the BFS's flyway, as so much habitat critical to spoonbill survival is being lost.

-BY FIONA CUNDY

SAVE Members and Colleagues at Mai Po Nature Reserve
Photo Credit: Cristina Bejarano

SAVE President Derek Schubert speaking to attendees of the conference
Photo Credit: CUHK Urban Studies

EXTENDING THE FLYWAY IN HONG KONG

Black-faced Spoonbills fly north and south on their annual migration, but members of the SAVE flock have been making a brief westward migration across the Pacific every year or two. In December 2016, the SAVE Berkeley team attended the 10th conference of the Pacific Rim Community Design Network, hosted by the Urban Studies Programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The theme of the conference was "Agency and Resilience," and it included four keynote speakers and more than 60 papers organized around three concepts of "Resilient urban planning and design," "Designing for spatial justice," and "Human flourishing".

The SAVE trio presented a paper which featured LA 205's alternative plans that would mitigate rampant development in Xinghua Bay, a site that attracts enough spoonbills to qualify as a "Wetland of International Importance," though it has no formal protection (see next story). The team asked for advice from seasoned audience members, many of whom have changed the course of governmental development schemes and worked with communities to create more specific plans that sustain their livelihoods and manage their natural resources at a local level.

By attending the conference SAVE reconnected with old friends and colleagues from throughout the spoonbill's flyway, including the leaders of Team SPOON from Japan, and others from Korea, Taiwan, and mainland China. New contacts at the conference also provided valuable insights into how we can expand our work in China.

-BY DEREK SCHUBERT

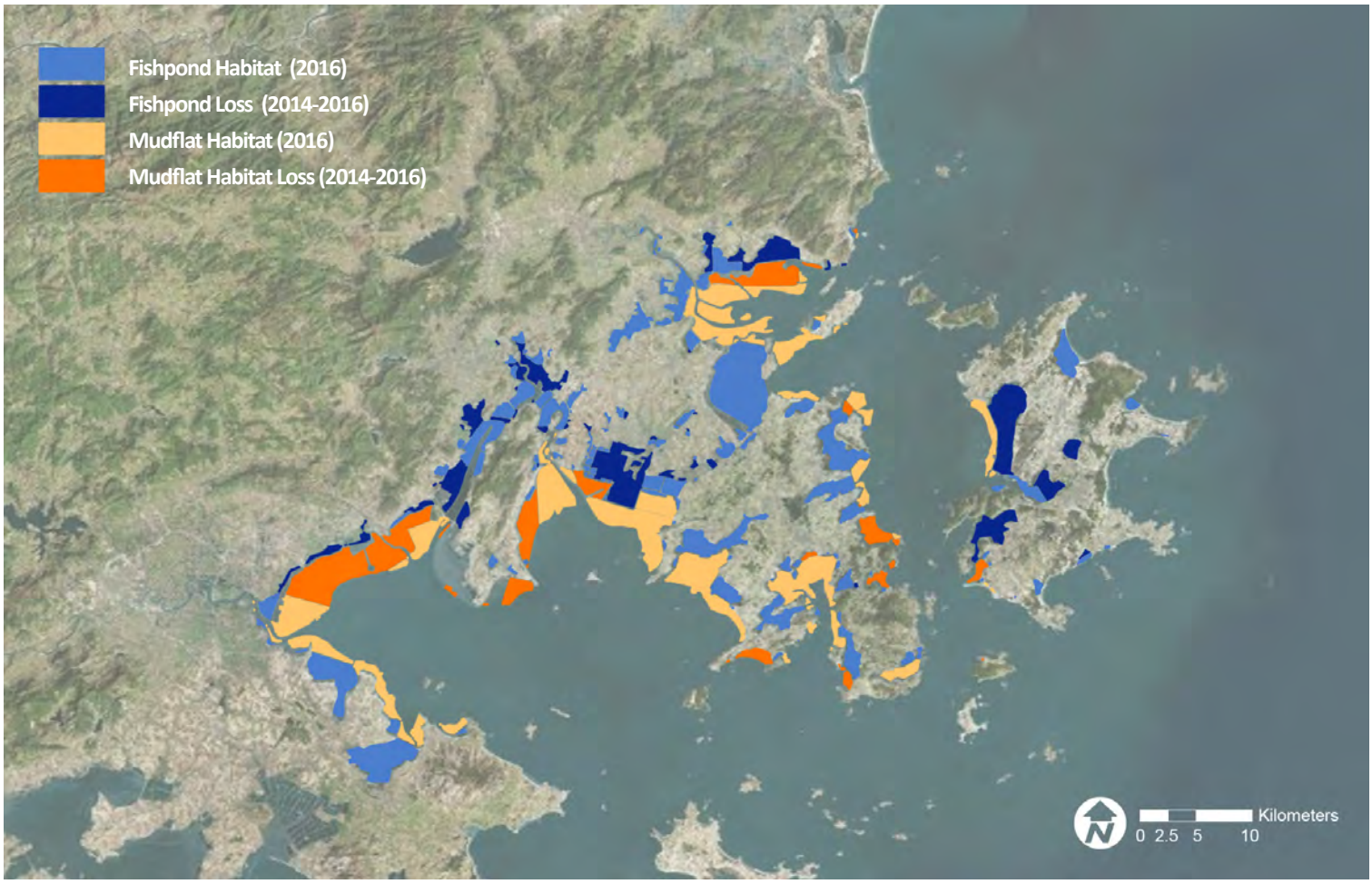
VISITING XINGHUA BAY: THE SITE OF THE SPRING 2016 LA205 STUDIO WORK

From Hong Kong the SAVE team traveled to Xinghua Bay in mainland China to ground truth plans that include a spoonbill habitat area under threat of development. Here we met fellow SAVE member Wan Yin and a member of the Fuzhou Birdwatching Society.

The north end of the bay was the focus of the U.C. Berkeley LA 205 studio in the spring of 2016. The traditional villages in the area have been primarily focused on fishpond and agricultural production in the past, and the arrangement of ponds and mudflats along the bay edge have been an ideal migrating and overwintering site for spoonbills for at least the past 10 years, with as many as 141 counted there in 2013.

Our main fear was confirmed at the bay's edge. Early phases of the plan have been completed: a cluster of identical, unoccupied, high-rise residential towers in the village surrounded by fields. Like so many other speculative coastal development strategies, much already appears to be a ghost town. The largest spoonbill roosting site, previously a large government-run fishpond, had already been drained and filled for future industrial use. Our guide led us to smaller ponds nearby, and we spotted two small groups of about 10 spoonbills roosting in the west, and on the east side of the property we spotted more than 60 spoonbills. Most of the birds were roosting along the edge of the berm to gain some protection from the high winds in this area, while others were feeding. The birds are finding leftover spots and undeveloped niches to roost and feed. But it is alarming to see spoonbills in such large numbers in an area with nearby disturbances; especially knowing that much more is planned in the future.

A total of 98 Black-faced Spoonbills were observed in Xinghua Bay, China
Photo Credit: Derek Schubert



Habitat Analysis: Extent of fishpond and mudflat habitat in the Xinghua Bay region, including areas at risk of development
Image Credit: UC Berkeley, LA205 Studio

Derek Schubert and Cristina Bejarano confirming a large spoonbill population at Xinghua Bay in the Fujian Province of China
Photo Credit: Fiona Cundy

Our field research suggests few habitat options remain. The eastern edge of the plan area was identified in the 205 studio report as a vital spoonbill habitat location to be preserved, and our visit confirms that the existing development plans need to be amended to protect it. The political challenge is vastly different from other parts of the spoonbill's migration area, and the hope is that the Spring 2017 studio will continue to evaluate the best possible next steps.

-BY CRISTINA BEJARANO

EXCLUDING THE PUBLIC, APPROVING ROAD 1-4: DISPATCH FROM JIADING WETLANDS

In 2016, in the absence of public participation, Kaohsiung City Government (KCG) conducted a re-assessment of Jiading Wetland. KCG proposed to designate Jiading Wetland to a wetland of "local importance" in an attempt to retain opportunities to build Road 1-4 through the wetland. And in even more unfortunate news, the KCG approved the REVISED Road 1-4 Environmental Impact Assessment on August 31, 2016, at meeting that was well attended by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of Taiwan.

Despite this, SAVE has been continuously collaborating with allies in Taiwan to campaign against Road 1-4 and the Jiading Wetland re-assessment proposal by KCG. SAVE, Team SPOON, and Professor John Radke from U.C. Berkeley have sent letters to the central government of Taiwan in opposition of the road, asking the authorities to reverse the local government's determination that Jiading Wetland remain a local-level wetland, and to ensure that the wetland be reclassified as a wetland of at least national if not international importance.

In September SAVE Advisory Committee member Dr. Hsiao-Wen WANG and Jiading Wetland Youth (JWY) conveyed the Jiading conservation issues to the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) during an international conference in Tainan and got the society's support. SWS has sent a letter to Mayor Chu Chen reminding KCG of its responsibility in protecting wetlands.

Taiwan NGO groups attended the Road 1-4 EIA meeting on Aug. 31, 2016
Photo Credit: Citizens of the Earth

Jiading Ecological & Cultural Association hosted annual Migratory Birds & Ecological Festival on Nov. 20, 2016
Photo Credit: Wei-Long Huang

JWY at the bi-weekly Say Hello Market in late 2016 where they introduced locals to Jiading issues & received support against Road 1-4
Photo Credit: Say Hello Market

Meanwhile, Jiading locals and NGOs who are against Road 1-4 and take a pro-wetland stance have been committed to holding events, promoting the value of wetland and local culture to the public. In late July, JWY launched the bi-weekly "Say Hello Market" as a means for envisioning an alternative economy with local participation.

While the decisions have yet to be altered, we are committed to continued efforts and actions against the road which has yet to be built. In May of 2017, SAVE members traveling in Taiwan will again meet and collaborate with JWY to hold the second Jiading Activism Workshop.

-BY PO-HSIU KUO

BUDAI SALT PANS PARTICIPATORY ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

The abandoned salt pans in Taiwan's southwest coast provide vital refuge for the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill and other migratory and resident birds. During a bird count on November 26, 2016, as many as 605 BFS were recorded in Budai Salt Pan Wetland and adjacent salt pans, more than 18% of the total world population.

While not officially part of Budai Salt Pan Wetland, due to their ecological value and the important ecosystem services they provide, Taiwan's Wetland Conservation Act allows for the abandoned pans to be included in the "Conservation and Utilization Plans of Budai Salt Pan Wetland" being prepared by Dr. Hsiao-Wen Wang and her research team at National Cheng Kung University (NCKU). In order to develop sustainable wise-use plans for this area, Dr. Wang and her team knew they must work with local people and consider the environmental, social, and local economic impacts of the plans. Participatory land-use planning and people-centered disaster mitigation approaches have been praised for their effectiveness in creating better management plans. To develop the plans the team has used theory and practice from both of these fields, and has followed the 12-step participatory process created by Professors Randy Hester and Marcia McNally.

In April 2016 Hester, McNally, and Wang led a three-day workshop on Participatory Environmental Planning in Coastal Area One in the Budai abandoned salt pans. The workshop kicked off the participatory process and introduced the team to the community, allowing for valuable information sharing. To start the researchers walked throughout the nearby communities—from fishponds to temples, neighborhoods, and markets--carrying large maps and a stack of 24 "topic" cards and looking for local people to interview. Residents were encouraged to draw what they knew on the map as they responded to questions. They were also asked to pick the five topic cards that represented the issues most important to them.

This interactive process aimed to understand the everyday experience of people living near the abandoned salt pans and

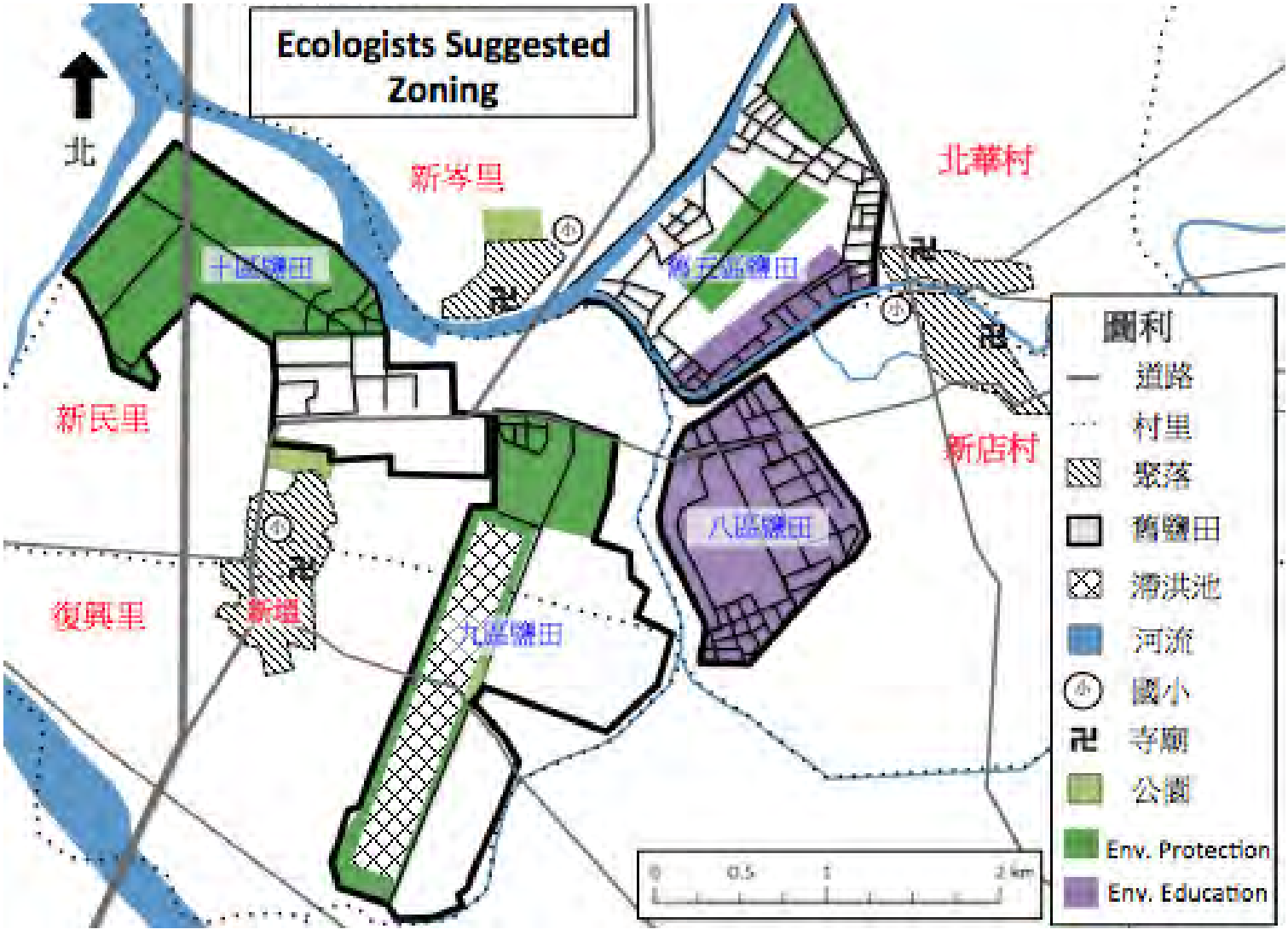
Members of National Cheng Kung University research team taking notes during a brainstorming workshop
Photo Credit: Adrienne Dodd & Pin-Han Kuo

what they care about the most in terms of development and the environment. Interviews were conducted from April to October, the results showing that the 10 most important issues for the 107 residents interviewed were: Flood Mitigation, Fish Ponds, Land Subsidence, Temple Culture, Water Quality, Specialty Products, Encouraging Young People to Return, Environmental Education, Senior Activity Center, and Environmental Protection. A brainstorming workshop was held on October 16th to update the participating communities on the results of the interviews, and to invite participants to create their own wise-use plans. To make sure participants had the information necessary for the event to be effective, an education session was held showing flooding and inundation maps of the abandoned salt pans as well as maps of the bird species found in each salt pan.

Priorities emerging from the interviews and workshops include hiking and biking trails, bird watching stations, ecological detention ponds, an environmental education center, and ecological fish farms. The process of combining the wide ranging needs and ideas of all stakeholders with hydrologic and other ecological data, and editing rough outlines into fully integrated plans is currently underway. The next steps include meetings with representatives of the Scenic Area Administration/National Property Administration (owners of the land), the Water Bureau, the local fish association, and local school principals to test the proposed plans. The goal is that through collaboration these wise-use plans which support social wellbeing, economic sustainability, and ecological preservation can be implemented.

-BY ADRIENNE DODD & PIN-HAN KUO

Students interview a shop owner about his goals for community improvement
Photo Credit: Pin-Han Kuo



Analysis map summarizing the hydrologic, habitat, and educational issues allowed the team to discuss the potential of the area with a range of participants
Image Credit: Adrienne Dodd

TEAM SPOON IS "FLYING" TOWARD THE ASIA FUTURE

Team SPOON's founding concept was to raise the consciousness of urban residents and make them a part of the ecosystem by way of a heightened recognition for the Black-faced Spoonbill. Our group began by making custom rings, having the same colors as the BFS Foot-Ring (the standard bird banding system identification system used by bird researchers around the world). Further, we have been sending daily news updates about the BFS to our fast growing member network. Through this frequent communication, we are able to connect members with individual spoonbills, promoting a deeper connection between the two.

Since forming in September of 2015, our group has sent more than 300 daily news updates. Currently, Team SPOON has a membership network of over 240 people, most of whom are Japanese residents. However, we are in the process of expanding our action in the East Asia, BFS flyway region. Our hope is to create a wide-spread membership base and to better connect us with the BFS through our "rings." [Visit us at: http://spoonprd.wixsite.com/teamspoon]

-BY AKANE TOKORODANI

Members of TEAM Spoon show their support for Black-faced Spoonbills wearing custom "rings" which represent bird bands
Photo Credit: Akane Tokorodani

Artwork of Team SPOON sponsored Black-faced Spoonbills: K96, K94, T66, J15, J10. Can you find the one you are sponsoring?
Note: One "Spoonbill" is mingling with the Black-faced Spoonbills, see if you can find it!
Image Credit: Akane Tokorodani

SPOONBILLS IN COMPETITION WITH GREEN ENERGY, AGAIN

Due to new national energy policies, there is mounting pressure for local governments in Taiwan to provide land for green infrastructure. Unfortunately, wetlands in abandoned salt pans along the coast that provide habitat to the Black-faced Spoonbill and play a vital role in mitigating flooding in the region have been the first picked for development. Chiayi County, in the heart of spoonbill territory, was one of the two locales chosen for these projects. This was learned as Dr. Hsiao-Wen Wang and her team were putting the finishing touches on their wise-use proposals for the exact same wetlands identified by the County for solar panels. Fortunately, Dr. Wang was able to identify a different site. This "conflict of greens" is becoming more common around the world as pressure to create more renewable energy facilities that achieve greenhouse gas emission goals lead to the use of lands often critical for habitat. In the spring of 2017, U.C. Berkeley studio students will investigate how to reconcile these important goals in Chiayi and Tainan Counties.

-BY MARCIA MCNALLY

STATESIDE MIGRATION MAKES A RETURN AFTER NEARLY A DECADE

For the first time in over 10 years, the Great Spoonbill Migration returned to the North American continent, shifting from Berkeley, California to Phoenix, Arizona. Under the direction of fine arts department chairman Nate Hester, students at Brophy College Preparatory created spoonbills, allaying fears of those all over the world that this migratory route was extinct.

-BY RANDY HESTER

Hand-made Spoonbill models made by students at Brophy College Preparatory
Photo Credit: Nate Hester

SAVE DEVELOPS NEW FIELD RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

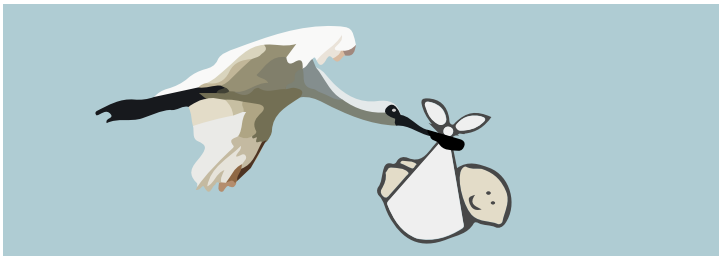
In fall 2015 we were awarded funding from the Beatrix Farrand Fund to purchase two sets of birding equipment including binoculars, rangefinders, Garmin GPS units, and compasses. Executive Committee members have been looking for ways to advance our field research and build our inventory of data to expand upon our knowledge of spoonbill "habitat geometries." These observations will help define new BFS spatial requirements associated with likely stressors, including predators, nearby development or construction, high population densities, or other nearby habitats being utilized. Executive Committee member Tami Church developed our research protocols and in December 2016, members tested the equipment and protocols in Xinghua Bay of China, helping to confirm the presence of over 1% of the world population (98 spoonbills) located at a threatened site. In collaboration with other spoonbill advocates throughout the flyway, we hope to share this equipment and these protocols and further our understanding of BFS needs.

-BY FIONA CUNDY

AT LAST, VICTORY IN KOREA!

Last August, SAVE wrote a letter to the City of Incheon objecting to the proposed plan for the construction of a sewage treatment plant on Namdong reservoir, a critical Black-faced Spoonbill breeding habitat. On February 9, 2017 the City officially announced that it will go underneath the existing sewage treatment plant and protect Namdong reservoir as it is. SAVE should be proud of to be part of this important action for Incheon, achieved with others from the international spoonbill alliance.

-BY YEKANG KO



STORK REPORT

We are excited to announce the arrival of five new additions to the SAVE family. Congratulations to Shan Yin (SAVE Executive Committee member) on the birth of his son Yunran almost a year ago; Tami Church (SAVE Executive Committee member) on the birth of her son Avery, born in April 2016; Yekang Ko (SAVE Executive Committee member) on the birth of her son Hayden, born September 2016; and former Executive Committee members Yoonju Chang Kametani and Shanna Atherton on the birth of Leika (Yoon) , born in November 2016; and Micah (Shanna), born in January 2017. Best wishes to you and your families!

-BY FIONA CUNDY

(tear here)

SAVE CELEBRATES 20 YEARS!

Dear Friends of Spoonbills:

We are very proud to celebrate our 20th anniversary in 2017. For two decades, our members have tirelessly advanced research while inspiring communities throughout the Pacific Rim to protect the Black-faced Spoonbill population. We hope you will renew your annual membership to SAVE, or join us if you don't already have a membership. Thank you for your support!

____ I would like to renew my membership for _____ ($25, 50, $100, $250, $500)

____ I would like to join SAVE as:

- ____ a sponsoring member of SAVE for $25
- ____ a contributor to the spoonbills' nest egg for $50
- ____ an adoptive grandparent of a spoonbill for $100
- ____ an adoptive parent of a spoonbill for $250
- ____ adopter of an entire spoonbill family for $500

Please make your check payable to SAVE/EII and return it to SAVE International, c/o Earth Island Institute, 2150 Allston Way Suite 460, Berkeley, CA, 94704. You can also donate through the SAVE website: earthisland.org/save/donate.

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