



Spoonbills Speak

echoes across the Pacific



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A Project of Earth Island Institute

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STUDIO TACKLES CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN SOUTHWEST TAIWAN

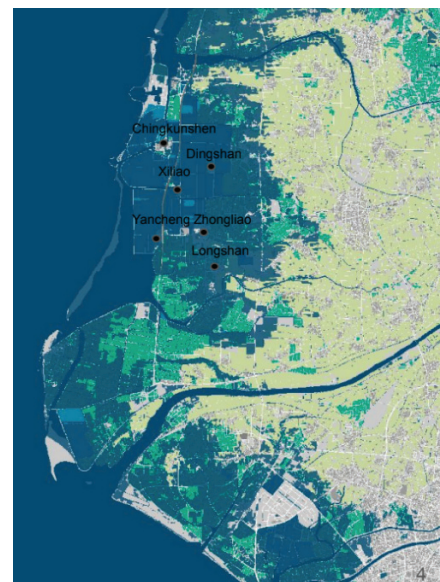
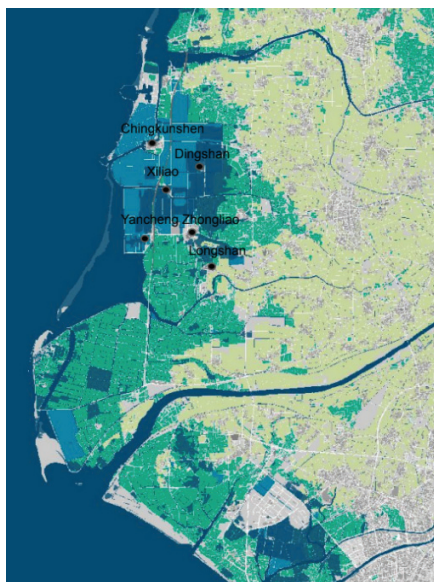
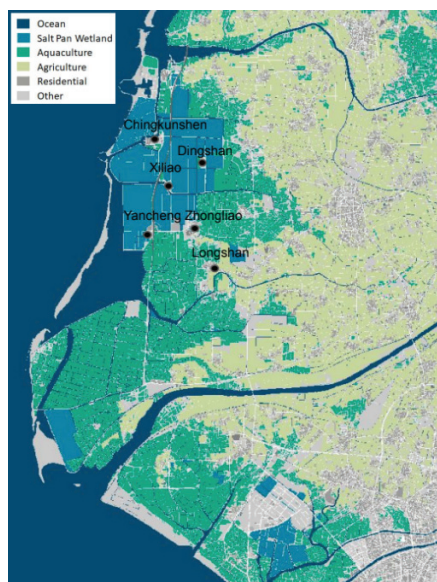
In Spring 2021, SAVE International partnered with professor Matt Kondolf in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning (LAEP) at the University of California, Berkeley, to run a studio focused on environmental planning for climate adaptation in Black-faced Spoonbill habitat of southwestern Taiwan. Sea-level rise and land subsidence are threatening critical wetlands and coastal communities in this region. SAVE helped to connect students in the Berkeley LA205 studio with their counterparts at National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in Taiwan to conduct a month-long collaborative research and design project. Dr. Hsiao-Wen Wang, professor and hydrologist in charge of the Water Sustainability Lab at NCKU, led the team of researchers and students to interview residents, Taijiang National Park leaders, and NGO leaders from the Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation Association (BFSA), as well as incorporate past research on wetland restoration and flood mitigation into the studio's plans. This collaboration yielded vital insights into the risks associated with climate change and sea-level rise, and to the creation of landscape solutions. *[cont. on page 2]*

WETLANDS PROTECTION IN HWASEONG

On July 20, 2021, just over 1,000 ha of the Maehyangri Tidal Flats was designated as a nationally protected Wetlands Conservation Area by the South Korean central government. The tidal flats are a core part of the Hwaseong Wetlands flyway network site (FNS). Hwaseong is among the roughly 1,600 FNS that have been identified as being internationally important for migratory waterbirds along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway. Dr. Nial Moores of Birds Korea *[cont. on page 3]*



Black-faced Spoonbills (left) among other birds in Hwaseong, Korea
Photo credit: Marcia McNally

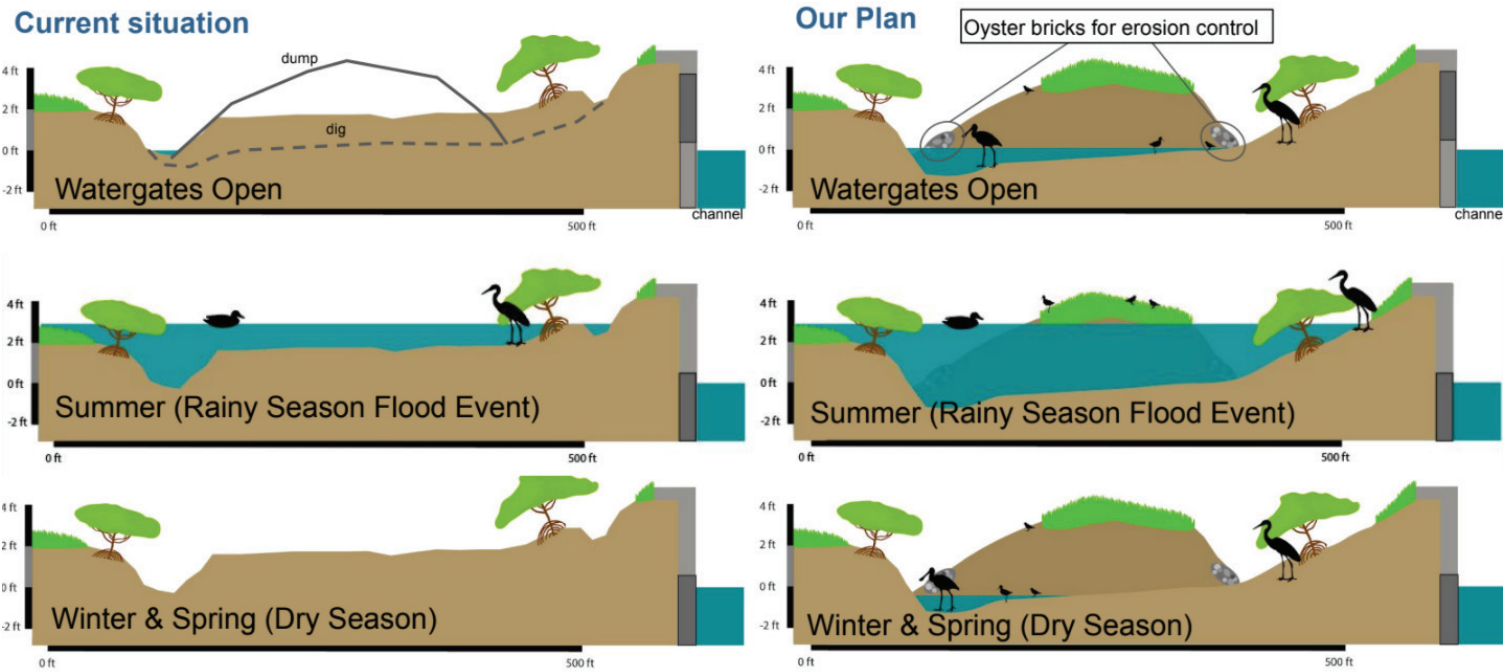


Levee Analysis in southwest Taiwan: intact (left), failure with current sea level (middle), failure with sea-level rise of 1 meter (right)
Image credit: LA205

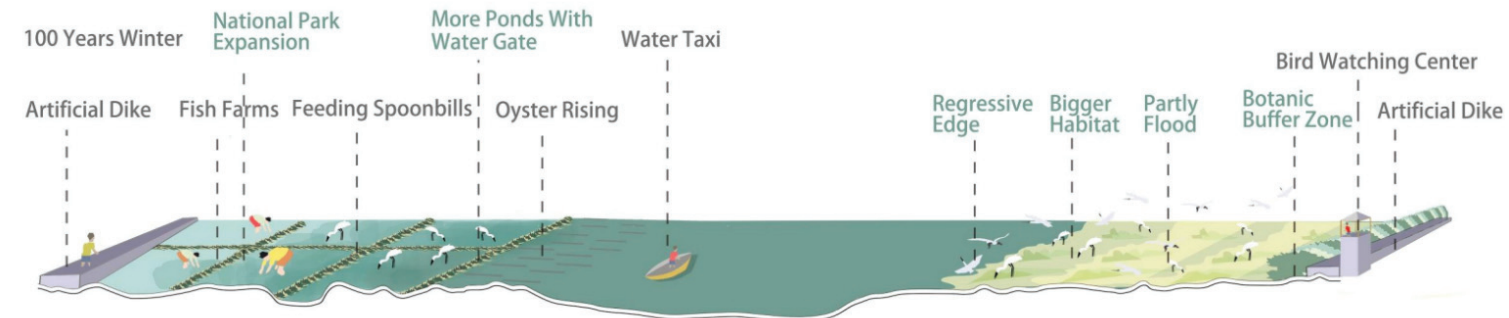
Southwest Taiwan Planning Studio

[cont. from page 1] The landscape design solutions considered environmental conditions, as well as the needs of spoonbills, local communities and culture, and economics. The studio focused on the Zengwen (Tsengwen) River and the Chigu (Chiku) Lagoon and Wetlands. Design interventions included long-term plans to migrate landscapes inland and replace the current steep levees with horizontal levees and living levees, which would restore coastal wetlands while keeping people safe from flooding. In addition, a plan was proposed to unite the Chigu Salt Pan Wetlands under the management of Taijiang National Park, in order to conserve habitat for endangered species and coordinate economically viable ecotourism in partnership with BfSA, the Water Resource Agency, local communities, and fish farmers. The studio also proposed creating a new climate-change adaptation policy, to provide options for aging coastal villages and households to affordably relocate to safer areas if they so chose. This latest collaboration among SAVE International, UC Berkeley LAEP, and the NCKU Water Sustainability Lab has shined a new light on the need for further research on climate impacts and provided a number of adaptation techniques for conserving habitat and reducing the risks of future disasters.

-BY ADRIENNE DODD



Conceptual Cross-Section through Chigu Wetlands, current (left) and proposed (right)
Image credit: LA205



Conceptual Cross-Section through Zengwen River, 100 years from now
Image credit: LA205

BFS POPULATION TOPS 5,000

The worldwide population of Black-faced Spoonbills was 5,222 in January 2021, according to the International Black-faced Spoonbill Census. It had grown 7% in the past year and exceeded 5,000 for the first time in at least 40 years. The yearly census involves a simultaneous count by hundreds of volunteer observers throughout the spoonbill's flyway, ensuring that every bird gets counted once and only once. Tainan County, Taiwan, continued to attract the most BFS of any region in the census, at 2,114 or roughly 40%. Other sites in Taiwan [including the Zhuoshui River Estuary - see article at right] accounted for 947 more. The counts went up at most sites, including Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam, but decreased in Deep Bay (Hong Kong and Shenzhen), mainland China overall, and South Korea. The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, with Yat-tung "Tung" Yu in the lead, organizes this event every January. In 1989-90, the first census tallied fewer than 300 birds, and the worldwide population was roughly 500 when SAVE was founded in 1997. SAVE's scientist friends, such as the late Dr. Malcolm Coulter, estimated there were 5,000 to 10,000 spoonbills as a self-sustaining historical population before a crash in the 20th century. Protecting habitat in Asia's coastal wetlands has been key to the recovery of the species so far, but BFS is still rated "Endangered" on the IUCN Red List, so we must continue to protect the places where the birds live and give them room to expand further. We have seen outbreaks of botulism or other hazards when too many birds congregated at one site in prior years.

The 2022 census has already taken place on January 8-9. Tung and his HKBWS colleagues will compile the results in the months ahead.

You can download the past Census reports from 2018 to 2021 at <https://tinyurl.com/BFSCensusHKBWS>.

For a first-hand story of helping with the 2021 counts, read the February 5, 2021, SAVE blog post by Mayu Komori of Team SPOON: <https://saveinternational.org/blog/>.

-BY DEREK SCHUBERT

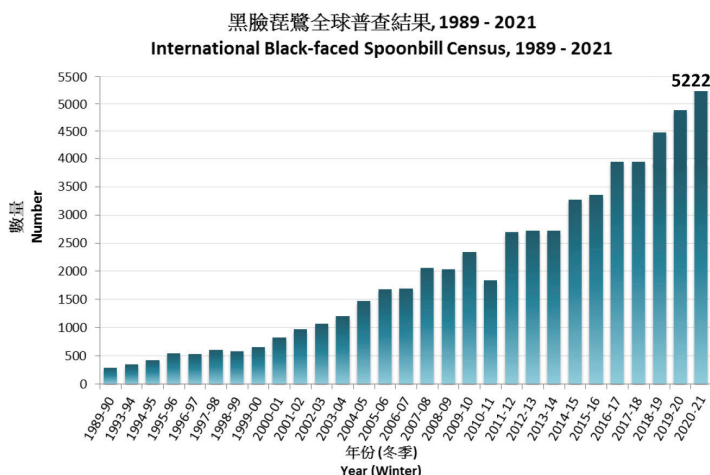


Image credit: SAVE adaptation of HKBWS original

ZHUOSHUI RIVER HOSTING MORE BFS, BUT NOT WITHOUT CONFLICT

In a hopeful sign for SAVE's members and allies in Taiwan, the BFS has been extending its wintering habitats in western Taiwan in recent years. The estuary of Zhuoshui River in middle Taiwan has become a new wintering hot spot for BFS, with more than 300 spoonbills observed there in spring 2021. However, wind-power development in the estuary of Zhuoshui River poses an urgent threat to the bird habitat, so a local partnership including the Wild Bird Society of Yunlin County and other volunteers has been monitoring the ecology and creating water ponds alongside the river as habitats. These partners have been adjusting the water levels in the ponds, trying to make them more suitable for migratory birds. A three-minute video showing the vivid scene of that habitat is available on BFS's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=569759617608855>

-BY PO-HSIU KUO



SAVE's Randy Hester and Dr. Nial Moores of Birds Korea considering bird numbers in Hwaseong

Photo credit: Marcia McNally

Hwaseong Wetlands

[cont. from page 1] expressed hope that this step would facilitate designating the area as a site with full international protection under the Ramsar Convention.

This spring, UC Berkeley LAEP and SAVE will partner with Birds Korea again to work on the Hwaseong area. The challenge for the class is to figure out a science-based justification for adding Hwaseong to the "Getbol, Korea Tidal Flats", a project of UNESCO's World Heritage program. The research team will also propose ecologically-sound development guidelines for tourism development, an analysis of the appropriateness of a hotel currently proposed adjacent to Maehyangri, and a management plan for Hwaseong Wetlands.

-BY MARCIA McNALLY

TEAM S.P.O.O.N. LAUNCHES "CHILDREN'S WETLAND FUTURE"

People have been unable to travel as before because of the pandemic, and it has also been difficult for people to get together and work together in various places as before. Under this situation, we believe it is important to interact with people who are in the Black-faced Spoonbill Flyway, so in 2021, Team SPOON launched the "Children's Wetland Future Project". The aim of the program is to allow children living on the flyway to send messages and communicate with each other. Adults can also learn about the natural environment and peace in the flyway from the children's speaking and the way they communicate. Specifically, children from Taiwan, Korea, and Japan are asked to take videos of their wetlands and Black-faced Spoonbills, which will be edited into a single video. We also plan to hold an event to let the children who participate in the video shoot communicate with each other online. In addition, we plan to reach a broader audience by showing our videos at side events of the COP15 Biodiversity Summit (Kunming, China, May 2022) and Ramsar conferences. So far, we have received videos from children in Ganghwa, South Korea, and we are planning to collect videos from children in Japan and Taiwan. Please view our video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKz1nOaCeFc>, or the SPOON website at <https://spoonprd.wixsite.com/teamspoon>.

-BY TEAM SPOON

SPOONBILLS IN THE PHILIPPINES?

Last year, SAVE Executive Committee member Wan-chih Yin circulated an article from *The Guardian* about plastic pollution in Manila Bay. The article mentioned, "A number of endangered birds have been spotted feeding and resting in the wetlands, including the black-faced spoonbill, the far eastern curlew, and the great knot." (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/05/photos-show-manila-bay-mangroves-choking-in-plastic-pollution>) With the help of Tung at the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, we contacted Mike Lu, President of Wild Bird Club Philippines, to see if there was some way of working together on this issue. Mr. Lu told us that all of Manila Bay is an Important Bird Area but the central government has plans for massive reclamation. Like many other locations along the BFS's migratory route, wetland reclamation is a critical issue in the Philippines. A few Black-faced Spoonbills usually winter at Batanes, a northern island, and some have gone to Pampanga and Bulacan provinces around Manila Bay, including a sighting of 24 BFS in 2020 where an airport is being considered -- a situation SAVE has faced before. If anyone has ideas to help the efforts of the Wild Bird Club Philippines, please contact us at save.spoonbill@gmail.com. The presidential elections are in May, and if Leni Robredo wins, the national tone toward environmental issues could improve.

-BY MARCIA McNALLY

----- (tear here) -----

SUSTAINING AND RENEWING CONNECTIONS

Dear Friends of Spoonbills:

We made it through 2021 and kept pushing SAVE's mission forward. Despite physical separation from our friends, families, and colleagues, we collaborated across time zones and continents like we've done for 25 years. We stayed connected through our shared love of the natural world around us and a vision of healthy habitats for spoonbills, other wildlife, and humans alike. The spoonbill population grew again, confirming what we've done together has worked and telling us that we need to keep it up. Now that 2022 is here, we are looking forward to seeing old friends again and making new ones.

Please make a donation to renew your membership in SAVE or to become a member for the first time. Thanks 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 mail it to SAVE International, c/o Earth Island Institute, 2150 Allston Way Suite 460, Berkeley, CA 94704. Or give online: saveinternational.org/get-involved/donate/

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number (optional): _____

E-mail Address: _____

