



2012 International Black-faced Spoonbill Census – Results
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Launching of the HKBWS's Black-faced Spoonbill Recording System
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香港觀鳥會
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國際鳥盟準成員
BirdLife Partner Designate

The endangered Black-faced Spoonbill is endemic to East Asia. In the past decade, Black-faced Spoonbill's number has shown a steady increase from below 1,000 to more than 2,000 individuals. However there was an unpleasant surprise with the result of last year's census; - a drop in number from 2,347 individuals in 2010 to 1,839 individuals in 2011. The result of the 2012 census has resolved some of our worries because this census has resulted in a new high of 2,693 individuals, an increase of 15% from the previous peak figure in 2010.

Mr. Yu Yat-tung, Research Manager of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, pointed out that "More than 800 individual Black-faced Spoonbills "went missing" last year, which made us worried. However, this year's total exceeded 2,500 for the first time. This count has eased our worries and the higher counts mainly come from Taiwan and Mainland China. However, we still can not figure out exactly why the numbers fluctuated in the past two years."

Yu added: "Although the known population of Black-faced Spoonbills has increased, in Hong Kong the numbers of this species at Deep Bay has dropped in two consecutive years from 462 birds in 2010 to 411 birds in 2011, and further to 393 individuals in 2012. This is a 15% decrease in the past two years. The Deep Bay area is the second largest wintering congregation site in the world and so the decrease of the Black-faced Spoonbill's number is of significance internationally and locally. Higher numbers have been recorded at several coastal sites in China, and we speculate that some spoonbills may have chosen to stay in northern areas due to a warmer winter in 2011-12. Counts in other northern areas such as Japan and South Korea also revealed higher numbers than the previous year, but the Deep Bay area and Red River Delta of Vietnam saw some decreases in the BFS wintering total. "

Last winter, one satellite-tracked Black-faced Spoonbill was found to be wintering in Cambodia, a country with relatively few keen bird watchers and ornithologists. A survey may be needed to discover if there is a wintering BFS population in Cambodia.

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has been organising the International Black-faced Spoonbill Census since 2003. The census has improved our understanding of the distribution of this globally endangered species. The 2012 census took place from 13 to 15 January and the full results are as follows:

- The census recorded a total of 2,693 spoonbills in 2012, which was 854 more spoonbills than that of the census in 2011. This is also a 46% and 15% increment, compared with 2011 and 2010 respectively.
- The largest wintering flock was again recorded in Taiwan, where there were a total of 1,562 individuals, representing 58% of the known wintering Black-faced Spoonbill population. This was an increase of 728 birds, or 22% more than the previous peak figure from 2010.
- The Deep Bay area - including both sides of Hong Kong and Shenzhen - produced a total of 393 individuals, which was a decrease of 18 (4%) and 69 (15%) from 2011 and 2010 respectively.
- Along the eastern coast of mainland China the total count of wintering Black-faced Spoonbill has increased by 66% to a figure of 328 birds, which also had an increase of 35% from the figure of 2010.

The HKBWS is grateful to all participating organisations and volunteers who helped in the census. We are also grateful to **Schmidt Marketing Asia Limited** for their financial support.

HKBWS's Black-faced Spoonbill Recording System

In order to collect and promote information of home range and migration of the Black-faced Spoonbill, the HKBWS has established a web-based record system to keep tracking sightings of colour-ringed Black-faced Spoonbills. This should lead us to have a better understanding of the life cycle of the Black-faced Spoonbill. We also aim to encourage more members of the general public to take part in some of these observations and to submit sightings of ringed individuals. **HK Traveler.com Limited** has generously supported the establishment of this record system.

Mr Yu said: "We hope that, with the establishment of this system, there is a platform for not only the general public and amateur birdwatchers, but also professional researchers to join this scientific research. Through the interactive function of the system, users of the system can have a better understanding of the home range, movement and lifespan of the Black-faced Spoonbill. We also aim to promote the use of this system in other countries because the Black-faced Spoonbill is a long-distance migrant. To protect this globally endangered species international cooperation is essential."

After carefully recording colour and position of different rings on the Black-faced Spoonbill's legs, observers submit this information into the system and then many people in the world can track the movements of individual Black-faced Spoonbills on the internet. This also helps arouse the interest of the general public to the conservation of the Black-faced Spoonbill. This updated information is very important for studying migration routes, home range and longevity and will help us to plan a better conservation strategy to safeguard this species.

Website of Black-faced Spoonbills Recording System: <http://bfs.hkbws.org.hk/>

