

2014 Black-faced Spoonbill

Results of International Census

Press Release of The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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March 3rd has been proclaimed as the **World Wildlife Day** by the United Nations to commemorate the adoption of **CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and to promote conservation of animals and plants worldwide. The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has taken the opportunity of this special occasion to announce the 2014 census results of our wetland celebrity, the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*).

In the last ten years, the number of Black-faced Spoonbill has been increasing and this year we even recorded a record high of 2,726 individuals. Even though this is only one more than last year, it is still considered as a record high. However, Research Manager of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Yat-tung Yu, is not excited about this figure, "in the last three years, the increase of Black-faced Spoonbill has been slow and for a species whose total population is only about 2,000 and still trying to recover the situation is still very serious so we must remain alert."

The situation at South China coast, which includes Mainland China, Hong Kong and Shenzhen in Deep Bay and Macao, is worrying, especially when compared to this year's increase at Taiwan and Japan. The number at South China coast has dropped 14.6% compared to last year (from 762 individuals to 651 individuals). Even though Macao and Haifeng has experienced a slight increase this year, it doesn't make up for the overall decline of the South China coastal area. As Black-faced Spoonbills take two different migration paths to the wintering sites in Japan and the South China coastline, the decrease in records along the South China coastline is an indicator there are issues with these roosting habitats. This has impacted the entire group's rate of growth and we must investigate the situation as soon as possible.

In Deep Bay 252 individuals were recorded during this survey, a decrease of



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99 individuals (28%) when compared to last year and a decrease of 141 individuals (36%) compared to the year before. The real reason behind this is unclear. At Fuqing, located in Fujian Province, the number of Black-faced Spoonbill dropped from 184 to 71 (61% decrease), this is suspected to be caused by the development of industrial areas nearby.

Cotai Ecological Zone of Macao is a small protected area of 55 hectares where we recorded 60 Black-faced Spoonbills. This is a historic high for Macao and recognition should be given to the relevant departments for their habitat management work of this small yet important area. But since the protection zone is surrounded by development projects the outlook is uncertain. As for Japan, the numbers are ideal, this year an increase of 26% was noted.

Every winter a number of juvenile Black-faced Spoonbills visit Hong Kong. Just last summer, Dr. Lee Ki-sup and his team from South Korea installed GPS tracking devices on a few new borne. From GPS signals, we were able to track S21's arrival in Hong Kong in November. The satellite tracking also revealed S21's habitat use in Hong Kong. It spent most of its night at the *Gei Wai* of Mai Po Nature Reserve and during the day it frequented the mudflats of Deep Bay and Wetland Park. The Nam Sang Wai and Fung Lok Wai wetlands, which have been coveted by developers, also fall within its foraging range.

Back in the 1980s, the Black-faced Spoonbill population was close to 300 and in order to conserve this precious species, many conservation groups and governments of East Asia began to take action. Starting in the 1990s, these concerned groups launched different types of research and project to protect the habitats of Black-faced Spoonbills.

Since 2003, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society began to coordinate the annual International Black-faced Spoonbill Census. This year's international census took place from January 17th to 19th of 2014. More than 250 volunteers participated worldwide covering locations including South Korea, Japan, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian, Taiwan, Guangdong, Shenzhen and Hong Kong, Macao, Hainan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia.

During this year's survey, Southern Taiwan, where 1,621 individuals were recorded, was still where the majority of Black-faced Spoonbills wintered. Detailed survey results are as follows:

- A total of 2,726 individuals were recorded in the 2014 census, this is one more than the 2,725 recorded in 2013, an increase of 0.04%. When compared to 2012, there is an increase of 1.2% during which 2,693 individuals were recorded.
- The largest groups of wintering Black-faced Spoonbills, 1,659 individuals, are still in Taiwan, this is about 60.9% of the entire population. When compared to last year's record of 1,624 individuals, there is an increase of 4%. Referring back to 2012 when 1,562 individuals were recorded, there is an increase of 6.2% this year.
- Hong Kong and Shenzhen recorded 252 Black-faced Spoonbills, compared to last year's 351, there is a decrease of 28.2%. Compared to 2012 when 393 were recorded, there is a decrease of 141 individuals, a 35.9% drop.
- At the coastal areas of Mainland China, 339 individuals were recorded, this is a decrease of 6.6%, compared to last year's 363 individuals. However, when compared to 2012, it is still an increase of 3.4%.

The Society would like to thank all the participating groups and volunteers, for all their hard work so that this year's survey could be carried out so smoothly and so that Black-faced Spoonbills at different places can be conserved.

Appendix 1: Statistical Diagrams

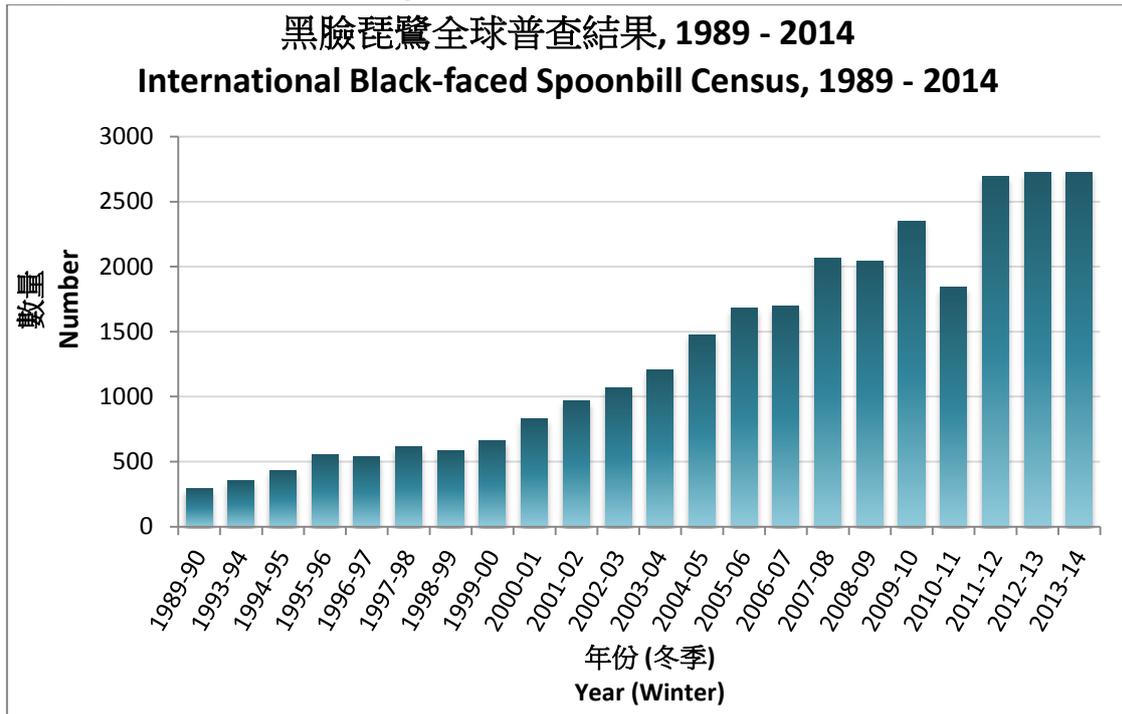


Diagram 1 : Numbers of wintering Black-faced Spoonbill in the world from 1989-90 to 2013-14

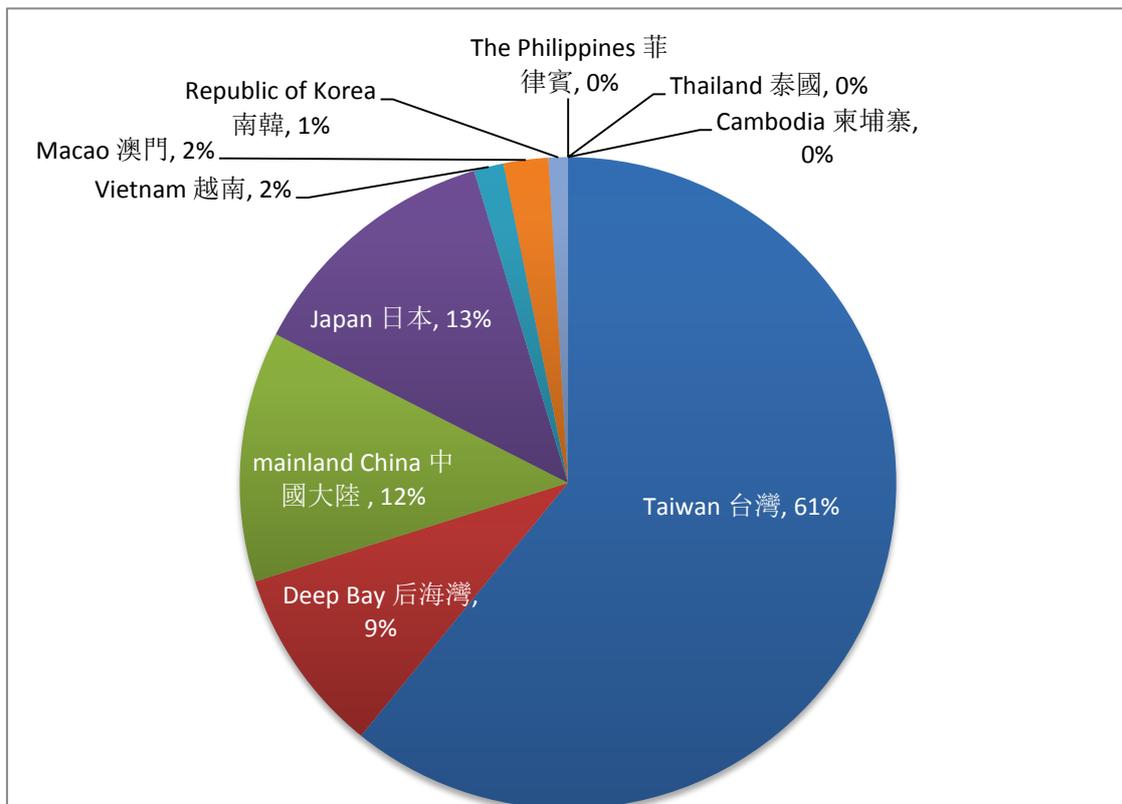


Diagram 2 : Proportion of wintering Black-faced Spoonbill at different locations to the global total in 2014 International Census

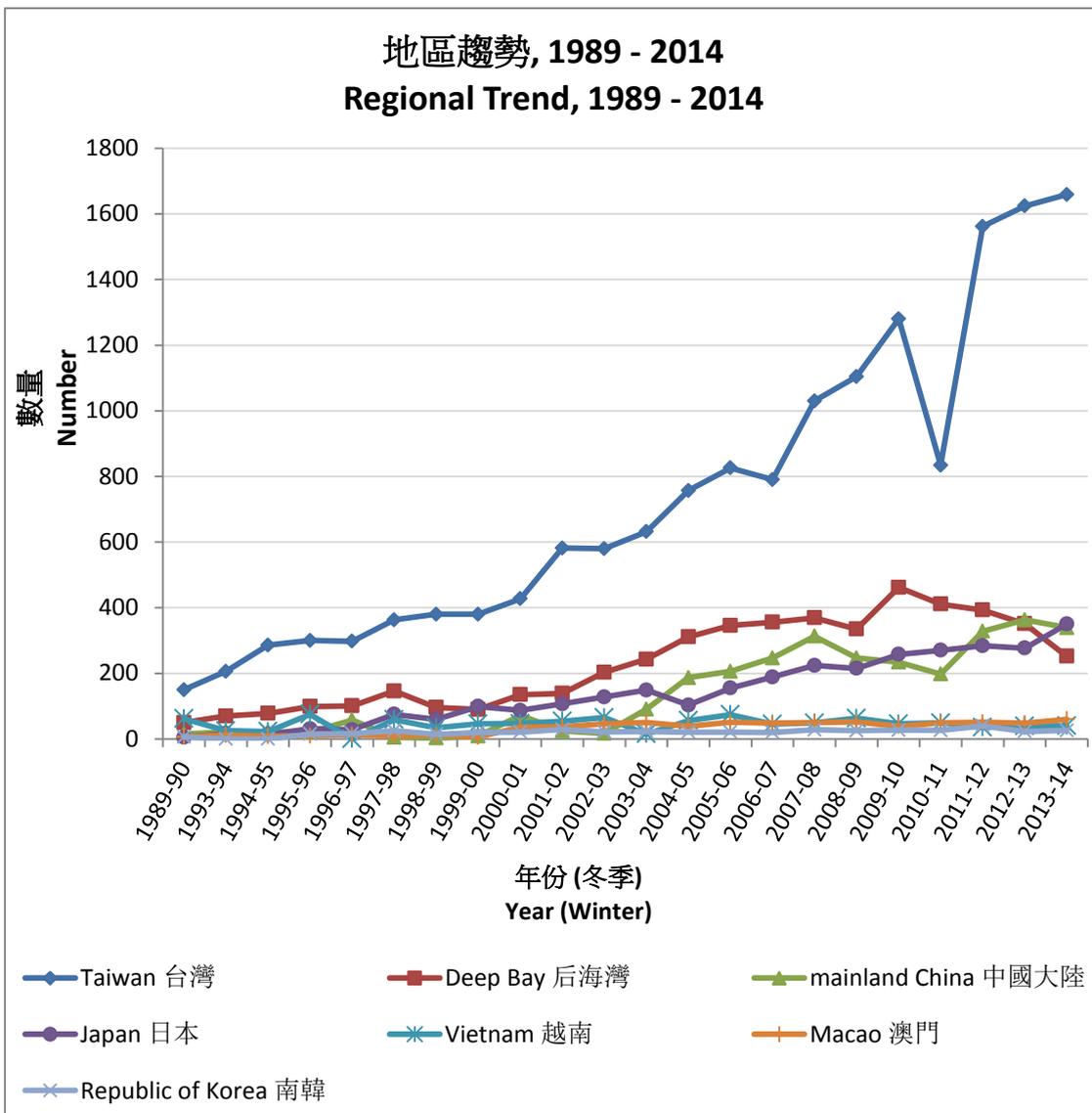


Diagram 3 : A comparison of the trends of the known global population of Black-faced Spoonbill at main wintering areas

Appendix 2 : Results of different locations in 2014 Census

地區 Place	No. in 2012 (% to total)	No. in 2013 (% to total)	No. in 2014 (% to total)	Trend (against 2013)
台灣 Taiwan	1,562 (58.0%)	1,624 (59.6%)	1,659 (60.9%)	35 birds more (+2.2%)
香港和深圳 (后海灣) Hong Kong & Shenzhen (Deep Bay)	393 (14.6%)	351 (12.9%)	252 (9.2%)	99 birds less (-28.2%)
中國大陸 Mainland China (浙江 Zhejiang、福建 Fujian、廣東 Guangdong、 海南 Hainan、上海 Shanghai、江蘇 Jiangsu)	328 (12.2%)	363 (13.3%)	339 (12.4%)	24 birds less (-6.6%)
日本 Japan	284 (10.5%)	277 (10.2%)	350 (12.8%)	73 birds more (+26.4%)
越南 Vietnam	35 (1.3%)	39 (1.4%)	40 (1.5%)	1 bird more (+2.6%)
澳門 Macao	51 (1.9%)	48 (1.8%)	60 (2.2%)	12 birds more (+25.0%)
南韓 South Korea	40 (1.5%)	23 (0.8%)	26 (1.0%)	3 birds more (+13.0%)
菲律賓 The Philippines	0 (0.0%)	1* (0.04%)	3* (0.0%)	No change
泰國 Thailand	2* (0.1%)	1* (0.04%)	0 (0.0%)	No change
柬埔寨 Cambodia	2* (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	No change
總數 Total	2,693	2,725	2,726	1 bird more (+0.04%)

Note: * Not included in the total as the toll was not taken on the survey date.

Appendix 3: Black-faced Spoonbill Fact Sheet

Black-faced Spoonbill belongs to the Threskiornithidae family in the Ciconiiformes order. There are only 28 species in the order and there are only 6 spoonbill species. African Spoonbill lives in Africa. The beautiful Roseate Spoonbill lives in the Americas. Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Royal Spoonbill are mainly found in the Australia, while Eurasian Spoonbill and Black-faced Spoonbill can be found in Asia. Among the six species, Black-faced Spoonbill is the only one listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Black-faced Spoonbills are named for their black facial skin and the spoon-shaped beak. Its Chinese name is named for their beaks which resembles the Chinese instrument *pipa*. The Spoonbill is an elegant bird with slender feet and snow white wings.

Body	Larger than the widespread Little Egret with a body length of 75-82cm
Face	Extensive black facial skin, sometimes with yellow patches on cheeks
Plumes	Golden plumes on chest, neck and nape during breeding season
Foraging Behaviour	Feed on shrimp and fish at shallow water habitat by swiping with their spoon-shaped beak