
Conservation of waterbirds and wetlands in the East Asia Flyway and objectives of a flyway network

Reprinted, with acknowledgement, from *Asian Wetland News* 4(1).

Wetlands and migratory waterbirds in the East Asia Flyway are under considerable threat and rapid action is required to prevent the loss of key sites and species. Some conservation and research activities relating to the migratory waterbirds in the Flyway have so far been carried out in most of the countries, including Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and the former Soviet Union. There has been some interaction between the various individuals and countries, e.g. through INTERWADER. With a rapid increase in the number of studies underway in the different countries, there is an urgent need for improved coordination of the activities of individuals working on waterbirds in the Flyway.

During the last eight years, the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) has, through its various cooperative programmes, supported numerous studies and conservation activities on migratory waterbirds in the Flyway. As a logical continuation of this work, an attempt is now being made to improve links between those working in the Flyway and to collate recent information to get a clear picture of the situation and priorities. It is therefore proposed that AWB assist in the establishment of a network of individuals and organizations active in the study and protection of waterbirds and their habitats in the Flyway. Initially, there will be an emphasis on migratory shorebirds.

Funding for the establishment of the network has been allocated by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, with some additional support from the MacArthur Foundation and World Wide Fund for Nature.

The primary objectives for the formation of a network of individuals working on waterbirds in the Flyway are: to promote the effective protection of important waterbird sites in the Flyway; to use existing information to identify future research needs; and to obtain the additional data required by co-ordinating waterbird research and protection activities in the Flyway.

Activities that will be taken up include the following:

1. Collate and analyse existing ground and aerial count

data on shorebird usage of wetlands of the Flyway, in order to revise listings of sites of importance.

2. Encourage wader coverage of the region during the mid-winter waterfowl counts (Asian Waterfowl Census).

3. Assist in communications and collaboration between individuals and organizations involved in shorebird research and protection in the Flyway. Production of a newsletter is being considered: it will be devoted to waterbird conservation and migration studies, colour marking and banding reports, important site counts, survey reports and so on.

4. Promote, organise and arrange support for teams to survey and conduct research at important or potentially important sites on the Flyway.

5. Support the development of local agencies and units in key countries with expertise in waterbird research and conservation.

6. Promote the establishment of waterbird reserves in each country.

7. Promote international agreements and conventions relevant to waterbirds.

8. Prepare an overview document, with sections for each Flyway country, listing the important shorebird sites, and identifying the conservation issues and recommended action to improve site protection.

9. Collect or revise population estimates of different species using the Flyway.

10. Advice on research priorities in countries in the Flyway.

11. Produce information and educational material about shorebird migration in the Flyway.

12. Support work on endangered migratory species of waterbirds, e.g. Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*.

