



Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund

Annual Report 2017



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1. Background

The Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund (AWCF / the 'Fund') was established in July 2005 to provide financial support for projects at sites of importance for migratory waterbirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF).



© EAAF Partnership

The objective of the Fund is to support projects on the ground in Asia that will lead to the conservation or protection of migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats in the EAAF, particularly through partnership with the local community at the site.

Cathay Pacific made an initial donation of HK\$500,000 into the Fund in 2005 and additional funding was received through proceeds of WWF's Big Bird Race fundraising event from 2006 to 2008. The Fund was further boosted with a donation of HK\$500,000 by Mr Trevor Yang, former WWF-Hong Kong Chairman (2008-2014), from 2012 to 2016.

WWF-Hong Kong is responsible for the administration of the Fund. At present, the maximum amount that can be applied for each project is US\$5,000 (HK\$38,500). There is a single call for applications to the Fund each year (deadline 31 October).



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Baer's Pochard, a critically endangered species with a global population of fewer than 1,000 individuals

2. Progress and results of the projects

A summary of the projects approved since 2005 is provided below (Table 1):

Table 1: Summary on the projects approved

Year	Organization	Project Location	Status
2005-06	Wetland International – Thailand Office	Thailand	Completed
2005-06	Wilderness Conservation	Bangladesh	Completed
2005-06	Har Us Nuur (HUN) Club	Mongolia	Completed
2006-07	Bird Conservation Society of Thailand	Thailand	Completed
2007-08	Sumatra Rainforest Institute	Sumatra, Indonesia	Completed
2007-08	Shanghai Oasis Wildlife Conservation and Communication Centre	Shanghai, China	Completed
2007-08	MarineLife Alliance (with Wilderness Conservation)	Bangladesh	Completed
2008-09	Administration Bureau of Tumuji National Nature Reserve	Inner Mongolia, China	Completed
2008-09	Sumatra Rainforest Institute	Sumatra, Indonesia	Completed
2009-10	Asian Coastal Resource Institute Foundation (CORIN-Asia)	Vietnam	Completed
2009-10	Anhui Bird Watching Society	Anhui, China	Completed
2010-11	Administration Bureau of Tumuji National Nature Reserve	Inner Mongolia, China	Completed
2010-11	Sumatra Rainforest Institute	Sumatra, Indonesia	Completed
2010-11	The Bird Conservation Association of Northeast Forestry University	Inner Mongolia, China	Completed
2011-12	Wuhan Bird Watching Society	Hubei, China	Completed
2011-12	The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society	China	Completed
2011-12	Bird Conservation Society of Thailand	Thailand	Completed
2012-13	Mongolian Ornithological Society	Mongolia	Completed
2012-13	Philippines Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, Inc.	Philippines	Completed
2012-13	Daursky State Nature Biosphere Reserve	Russia	Completed

Table 1: Summary on the projects approved (cont'd)

Year	Organization	Project Location	Status
2013-14	Russian Society for Bird Conservation and Study (BirdsRussia), Kamchatka Branch	Russia	Completed
2013-14	Bangladesh Bird Club	Bangladesh	Completed
2013-14	Mongolian Ornithological Society	Mongolia	Completed
2014-15	Spoon-billed Sandpiper in China	Jiangsu, China	Completed
2015-16	Qufu Normal University Bird Watching Society	Shandong, China	Completed
2015-16	Malaysian Nature Society	Malaysia	Completed
2015-16	Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association	Myanmar	Completed
2015-16	Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia	Mongolia	Ongoing
2016-17	Environmental Protection Society of Nianbaoyuze	Qinghai, China	Ongoing
2016-17	Mongolian Bird Conservation Center	Mongolia	Ongoing
2016-17	Ministry of Land and Environment Protection	DPR Korea	Ongoing
2016-17	Qingdao Bird Watching Society	Shandong, China	Ongoing

2.1 Projects completed from July 2016 to June 2017

2.1.1 The environmental monitoring and distribution of informative materials on Baer's Pochard in Taibai Lake, Jining City, Shandong Province <Qufu Normal University Bird Watching Society>

Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*) is currently classified as critically endangered (CR) as it has undergone a rapid population decline over the last three generations to fewer than 1,000 individuals.



Baer's Pochard in breeding plumage taken in May 2017.

(Photo credit: Fengfei Sun)

The project concluded successfully with the following outcomes:

- Weekly surveys were conducted from April 2016 to April 2017. The greatest number of Baer's Pochard recorded in Taibai Lake during the survey period was 23;
- Baer's Pochard was found in Taibai Lake nearly year round. In non-breeding season, they were found swimming with other waterbirds, such as Common Coot, Gadwall, Common Teal, Ferruginous Pochard, Common Pochard and Red-crested Pochard;
- In breeding season, although no nests were discovered, female Baer's Pochards were difficult to locate, which may reflect their breeding behaviour;
- In August 2016, a female Baer's Pochard with 9 chicks was discovered in a wetland 20 kilometres away from Taibai Lake;
- 5,000 leaflets and 1,700 mouse pads were distributed to the management authority of Taibai Lake, schools near to Taibai Lake and tourists through different activities.



Talking and distributing leaflets to visitors in Taibai Lake.

(Photo credit: Xu Wang)

Significant conservation impacts:

- Taibai Lake has become a relatively famous birdwatching site in mainland China, drawing increasing attention and conservation concern on Baer’s Pochard;
- Person in charge of the project was invited to attend the “Baer’s Pochard Protection Network Meeting” organized by the Baer’s Pochard Task Force under the EAAF Partnership and a national monitoring group was established;
- The project inspired several participants from the Qufu Normal University Bird Watching Society to continue further study in bird ecology.

2.1.2 Waterbird training, survey, monitoring, and awareness programmes focused on EAAF in Malaysia <Malaysian Nature Society>

To identify important sites for migratory waterbirds, regular survey work in different areas is essential. The project was successfully completed with the following outcomes:

- A two-day practical Asian Waterbird Census training workshop with 25 participants;
- Two waterbird surveys were conducted to explore potential high-tide roosting sites for migratory waterbirds along the North Central Selangor coast;
- Waterbird surveys were conducted in Kapar Power Station Ash Pond along the North Central Selangor coast monthly from March 2016 to February 2017;
- The future development of the ash ponds was discussed with key stakeholders in a seminar organized to share the survey results collected in Kapar Power Station Ash Pond;
- Awareness activities such as birdwatching, nursery planting of 1,000 mangrove seedlings and nature talks for youths and schools were organized during the



Asian Waterbird Census training workshop (Photo credit: Sonny Wong)



Outdoor practical exercise (Photo credit: Tan Choo Eng)

Festival of Wings. A total of 291 school children from 11 schools, 47 youths and another 400 invited guests joined the festival;

- Four public awareness programmes were organized nationally and locally, promoting wetland and waterbird conservation to over 3,000 students and members of the local community;
- Two community patrol guards were trained and engaged in guarding shorebird habitats; identifying and recording some threatened shorebird species and increasing awareness of local community groups on wetland and waterbird conservation;
- Numerous news stories and articles were published locally and internationally to communicate the successes of the project.

Significant conservation impacts:

- **More members of Malaysian Nature Society are interested in joining the waterbird monitoring work;**
- **Four new high-tide roosting sites with significant numbers of waterbirds (more than 1,000 per site) were discovered in the North Central Selangor coast. Future monitoring and conservation work will be carried out there;**
- **“The Kapar Declaration – The Future of Kapar Ash Ponds” was finalized in the seminar which guides stakeholders on required and urgent next steps to further and ultimately realize the long-term goal of protection and active management of the Kapa Ash Ponds site. The declaration will be distributed to relevant stakeholders and active steps will be taken to follow-up on the eight recommendations provided by the declaration;**
- **Awareness has been raised for students and local communities.**

2.2.3 Protecting the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other shorebirds on Nan Thar Island, Myanmar <Biodiversity And Nature Conservation Association>

The critically endangered (CR) Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) is a small wader with a global breeding population of 120-220 pairs and in Nan Thar, a set of small islands in the mouth of Kaladan River in the Arakan region of Myanmar, about 10 per cent of the breeding population can be found wintering. Although local villagers there mainly rely on fishing, some also collect sea turtle eggs and occasionally hunt birds. In view of the situation, a seven-month monitoring and awareness project was launched with the following outcomes:

- 15-18 Spoon-billed Sandpipers, including two with leg flags, other shorebirds and sea turtles were recorded during regular monitoring from October 2016 to April 2017;
- Environmental awareness activities were conducted in five villages surrounding Nan Thar Island. In total, 565 villagers joined the activities. About 2,000 posters and pamphlets on the status of Spoon-billed Sandpiper were distributed.



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the Nan Thar Island
(Photo credit: Phahti@BANCA)*



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the Nan Thar Island
(Photo credit: Phahti@BANCA)*

Significant conservation impacts:

- **No bird hunting cases were received during the project period;**
- **Awareness of local shorebirds and their global status was raised among the local community;**
- **The Forest Department proposed to Rakhine State Government to designate Nan Thar Island as a protected area but a consultation process is needed at the community and authority levels.**

2.2 Project approved in 2017 annual application

The twelfth round of applications to the Fund concluded in October 2016. Seventeen applications were received and four were selected by the AWCF Committee.

2.2.1 Training surveyors and protectors for Black-necked Crane in Nianbaoyuze, Qinghai <Environmental Protection Society of Nianbaoyuze>

Black-necked Crane is an internationally vulnerable species (VU) with a population size of less than 7,000 individuals. Nianbaoyuze is an important breeding site for them with 14 breeding locations currently known. However, due to climate change, the wetland area is shrinking and both eggs and chicks face problems such as predation by domestic animals and wild dogs. Human disturbance and rubbish left by tourists also degrade the quality of breeding sites.



*Black-necked Crane in Nianbaoyuze
(Photo credit: Environmental Protection
Society of Nianbaoyuze)*

In 2011, the Environmental Protection Society of Nianbaoyuze recruited a woman living in each of the 14 breeding locations to become “Black-necked Crane Protectors”. The project aims at building the capabilities of the protectors, better equipping them for monitoring work.

2.2.2 Waterbird conservation through improving public awareness and pasture management in the Mongol Daguur Special Protected Area, Mongolia <Mongolian Bird Conservation Center>

Mongol Daguur holds a significant proportion of the global breeding population of White-naped Crane (VU), Swan Goose (VU) and many other waterbird species. In recent years, however, the number of breeding White-naped Cranes and other endangered wetland bird species has declined due to habitat loss caused by steppe fires.



*Horses in Mongol Daguur Special
Protected Area (Photo credit: MBCC)*

Marshy areas where shorebirds breed have also been destroyed by livestock. It is hoped that through the project, the importance of the wetlands to these birds can be better understood by the local community and stakeholders, and the number of steppe fires cases can be reduced through measures such as rebuilding old wells and water points in the buffer zone of the protected area, promoting fire-prevention methods and improvement in pasture management. Waterbird identification and census training will also be provided to rangers, environmental officers and volunteers of the Protected Area Administration Department.

2.2.3 Advocacy and awareness promotion on wetland and migratory waterbirds in Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve Area, DPR Korea <Ministry of Land and Environment Protection>

The intertidal wetlands along the western coast of the Korean peninsula play an important role for providing stopover, feeding and wintering sites for migratory waterbirds including threatened species such as the endangered Red-crowned Crane (EN), White-naped Crane (VU) and Hooded Crane (VU). Recognizing its ecological importance, the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea designated 3,000 hectares of tidal mudflats and rice fields in the Chongchon River estuary as the Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve Area in 1995. The project aims to improve the awareness and capacity of managing officials, the public and local communities to ensure a long-term sustainable management of the wetlands and conservation of migratory waterbirds.

2.2.4 Waterbird surveys and protection work in the coastal wetland of Jiaozhou Bay National Marine Park, Qingdao, Shandong Province <Qingdao Bird Watching Society>

Jiaozhou Bay National Marine Park is situated at the north-western part of Jiaozhou Bay, Qingdao, Shandong Province. It is the largest national park in a bay area in mainland China with habitats that include tidal mudflats, estuaries and artificial wetlands, such as aquaculture ponds and salt ponds.



*A flock of Dunlin
(Photo credit: Qingdao Bird Watching Society)*

The area is important to breeding, wintering and stop-over birds. The project will improve the data collection work by organizing waterbird identification training and carrying out regular waterbird monitoring work. Results will be reported to the local government, allowing them to make relevant decisions based on scientific data. Public awareness will also be raised by holding a photo exhibition, activities in Love Bird Week, nature lectures and birdwatching activities in local primary and secondary schools.

3. Income and expenditure

No additional funding has been received in 2017.

A total of US\$14,455 (approximately HK\$113,000) was given out to projects in instalments.

Table 2: Summary on the Income and Expenditure

Income (year)	HK\$	
Cathay Pacific (2005)	500,000.00	
WWF HK Big Bird Race (2006)	121,841.00	
WWF HK Big Bird Race (2007)	100,000.00	
WWF HK Big Bird Race (2008)	183,537.00	
Proceeds from DVD sales (2007-10)	39,462.00	
Mr. Trevor Yang (2012)	100,000.00	
Mr. Trevor Yang (2013)	100,000.00	
Mr. Trevor Yang (2014)	100,000.00	
Mr. Trevor Yang (2015)	100,000.00	
Mr. Trevor Yang (2016)	100,000.00	
Sub-total	1,444,840.00	
Expenditure (year)		US\$
Project instalments (2006-07)	75,251.45	9,495.00
Project instalments (2007-08)	46,255.13	5,830.25
Project instalments (2008-09)	76,116.89	9,797.00
Project instalments (2009-10)	71,195.01	9,399.50
Project instalments (2010-11)	61,906.87	7,959.50
Project instalments (2011-12)	87,490.00	11,265.00
Project instalments (2012-13)	71,287.04	7,658.00
Project instalments (2013-14)	132,806.22	17,116.00
Project instalments (2014-15)	100,609.21	12,974.00
Project instalments (2015-16)	96,337.22	12,407.00
Project instalments (2016-17)	112,033.15	14,455.66
Administration and technical advice (2005-present)	299,033.59	
Sub-total	1,230,321.78	
Net Balance	214,518.22	

4. Acknowledgements

The Fund would like to thank Mr Simba Chan, Prof. Guangchun Lei, Mr Spike Millington, Dr Philip Round and Dr Lew Young for serving as the AWCF committee members and providing valuable advice.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony and nature.

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