

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

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The 12th Conference of the Parties to CITES

The 12th conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) took place in Santiago, Chile, from Nov. 3 to 15, 2002. A total of more than 1,400 people attended the conference, including representatives from 135 parties to the convention (out of a total of 160), international organizations and NGOs. Representatives of SWAN International also attended the meeting.

The conference adopted decisions that promote wildlife conservation through various strategies involving strict protection, trade regulation and sustainable use. Among the high-profile decisions taken was the listing of Latin American mahogany on CITES Appendix II. This listing requires each of the mahogany range states to ensure that all exports are sustainable and covered by CITES export permits.

Another critical decision was to list the whale shark and the basking shark on Appendix

II. This was widely considered a landmark agreement as CITES has not traditionally played an important role in global fisheries. The listing proposal cited the species' declining numbers and the role of continued international trade in whale shark meat, fins, and liver oil. The basking shark is highly migratory and is hunted for its meat and fins. Large numbers are also caught and killed accidentally as by-catch.

SWAN International's representatives made a statement at the conference to support the decision to list the whale shark on Appendix II. Furthermore, SWAN's leaflet on shark issues explained that through cooperation between fishermen, officials and academics, Taiwan has already established a network for monitoring whale shark catches, including a system for reporting catches and managing the number of whale sharks caught to be no more than 80 sharks per year. The leaflet also reported that research on whale sharks using satellite GPS telemetry was now entering its third year. As for basking sharks, because basking shark resources in the sea around Taiwan were very limited, only a reporting system was in place for this species.

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The conference also added 26 species of Asian turtles to Appendix II. Trade in seahorses will also now be regulated for the first time. All 32 seahorse species will now be listed in Appendix II.

Three rare birds from Central and South America—the yellow-naped parrot, the yellow-headed parrot and the blue-headed macaw—have been transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I. A number of threatened species in Madagascar will also receive stronger protection. They are the flat-tailed tortoise, various chameleons, a burrowing frog, and the Madagascan orchid. The meeting agreed to set a zero quota for commercial trade in the Black Sea population of bottlenose dolphins, which was already listed on Appendix II. Building on an earlier consensus among most African elephant range states, CITES also agreed on a

rigorous regime for controlling any eventual trade in ivory stockpiles. It conditionally accepted proposals from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa that they be allowed to make one-off sales of 20, 10 and 30 tons, respectively, of ivory.

Other decisions sought to strengthen domestic conservation of threatened or endangered species already controlled by CITES, including bears, tiger, sturgeon, and Tibetan antelope.

The decision to list turtle and seahorse species on Appendix II is expected to have considerable impact on Taiwan's traditional Chinese medicine industry. At present, 496 of the licenses issued by the Department of Health (DOH) for the manufacture of TCM products for sale in Taiwan contain tortoise shell. In light of this, the Traditional Chinese Medicine Committee of the DOH has obtained a list of protected tortoise species from the COA and will compare this with the types of tortoise shell used by domestic TCM manufacturers in order to establish the extent of impact from COP 12's decision. As for whether or not the use of tortoise shell, seahorse and *Cistanche deserticola* will be prohibited in the future, a decision will be made on this issue following discussion by Chinese medicine practitioners and other related groups. For its part, the COA said that, while Taiwan must respect CITES' resolutions, any decisions made in Taiwan must reflect domestic requirements; therefore, detailed regulations would only be announced following further discussion at an inter-departmental government meeting.

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The 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP 13) will be held in Thailand at the end of 2004 or in the first half of 2005.



2002 Black-faced Spoonbill News

International Conference on Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation

The International Conference on Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation took place in Tainan County on Oct. 12 and 13, 2002. Attended by 160 people, the conference was organized by the Tainan County Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation Society and supported by the Council of Agriculture and Tainan County Government. The conference brought together local academics undertaking long-term research into the ecology of the Chiku area and conservation educators, as well as American waterfowl expert Dr. Douglas Slack and German eco-tourism researchers. Discussion focused on the status of Taiwan's research and conservation of the black-faced spoonbill (*Platalea minor*), including 1998-2001 GIS analysis of black-faced spoonbill habitat utilization in the Tainan area, coastal environment changes and the preservation of black-faced spoonbill habitat, wildlife refuge management issues, and *in-situ* nature study of black-faced spoonbill winter migration by elementary and middle school students in Taiwan.

In a paper presented at the conference, Dr. Terry Brown of Australia said that international tourists numbered around 700 million each year at present and this figure was growing at a rate of 5%; therefore, he estimated that nature-based tourism would account for approximately 10% to 15% of the world tourism market. Consequently, conflict and contradiction would be inevitable in the struggle to balance large influxes of tourists with conservation of the environment. He said that eco-tourism, which combined the two, could help to limit the conflict. He pointed out that the black-faced spoonbill's annual winter migration to the mouth of Tsengwen Creek in Tainan had made Chiku one of the most popular spots for birdwatchers and this meant that the development of eco-tourism was possible for Chiku in the future. Brown explained how Australia had successfully developed Fraser Island and Couran Cove Island Resort. He believed that if the correct management techniques were used appropriately, eco-tourism could be used to achieve the goal of preserving the environment while also bringing important economic benefits.

The organizers invited officials, academics and local entrepreneurs who cared about black-faced spoonbill issues continue putting forward their opinions on the future study of the spoonbill and its habitat and the management of a special spoonbill refuge. In addition, BirdLife International is currently undertaking an international satellite telemetry project to investigate new breeding areas used by

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black-faced spoonbill that will begin in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Taiwan Establishes Black-faced Spoonbill Refuge and Major Wildlife Habitat

During the International Conference on Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation, the Council of Agriculture announced the establishment of an Major Wildlife Habitat at the Estuary of Tsengwen Creek in Tainan County and the Tainan County Black-faced Spoonbill Refuge. The two areas will jointly occupy an area of 634 hectares, of which the refuge will measure 300 hectares. The habitat includes estuary-type and marsh-type ecosystems and is one of the most important winter habitats for the endangered black-faced spoonbill in the world. From September through to the end of December 2002, more than 670 sightings of the rare bird had been recorded and numbers are gradually increasing.

Black-faced Spoonbill Deaths

Beginning on Dec. 9, 2002, a number of black-faced spoonbill deaths were reported in Chiku Township, Tainan County. Since more than 600 of the rare species arrived in October, a total of 78 spoonbills contracted C-type botulism in a space of just two weeks, and as of Dec. 31, 66 of these had died. The remaining 12 were rescued and are now in stable condition. The Council of Agriculture, Tainan County Government, other relevant government agencies, and NGOs like the Tainan County Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation Society and the Taiwan Wild Bird Federation, as well as the veterinary colleges of various universities

and environmental analysis agencies have joined the fight to save the birds, clean up the environment and investigate the birds' deaths. So far, the investigation has not revealed any similar epidemic or large-scale deaths of other waterfowl or bird species. The spoonbills that were rescued will be released safely into the wild by the Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute of the COA. It is surmised that the reason for the spoonbill deaths may have been because unseasonably high temperatures in southern Taiwan caused algae in shallow fish ponds to breed in large numbers and this deoxygenated the water causing the rapid spread of botulism.

In order to prevent similar outbreaks of botulism and large-scale deaths of black-faced spoonbill, the COA, after discussion with the Environmental Protection Administration, the Tainan County Government and other agencies, has decided to ask the Tainan County Government to communicate with local fishermen and destroy illegal fixed nets and oyster traps within the main spoonbill habitat in order to ensure an ample supply of healthy fish. In addition, the COA will continue to clean up the spoonbills' habitat and surrounding area and keep it clean by ensuring that the fish ponds are managed properly and deterioration in water quality is not allowed. Furthermore, the release of aquarium pets into the wild will be monitored to prevent other epidemics from occurring.



International Conference on Ecotourism at the First Annual General Meeting of the BirdLife Wildlife Tourism Alliance

BirdLife International is leading conservation organizations around the world in an initiative to promote international wildlife tourism through strategic alliances between nations. Having been listed as one of 12 strategic partner nations, Taiwan is forming alliances with other regions to become a destination on the international wildlife tourism map. At present, the other strategic partners are the Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Japan. Taiwan was also named as the organizer of the alliance's first Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The First AGM of the BirdLife Wildlife Tourism Alliance and the Conference on International Ecotourism took place at National Chungshan University in Kaohsiung in south Taiwan on Nov. 19 and 20, 2002. The meeting was organized by BirdLife International, National Chungshan University, Kaohsiung City Government, the Taiwan Ecotourism Association, the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan, and the Wild Bird Federation Kaohsiung. Members of Taiwan's tourism industry, local tour operators, community organizations, central and local government officials concerned with tourism and conservation, and

the students and faculty of various academic institutes were invited to attend. More than 100 people attended the meeting, including representatives of ecotourism and NGOs from 11 nations—Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Africa, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, Thailand, among others.

The main objectives of the conference were to analyze the status of ecotourism in several nations and to exchange opinions on how to expand wildlife and birdwatching tourism between nations. In particular, the discussion focussed on ways to strengthen cooperation between non-government conservation organizations and the tourism industry so that wildlife tourism that benefits conservation is promoted. Discussion also focussed on how to promote ecotourism in Taiwan at a national and international level and finding ways to enable the tourism industry in Taiwan to support nature conservation and protect endangered species. After the conference, a birdwatching tour of Taiwan was arranged for foreign participants to put forward valuable opinions on how to improve future wildlife tours.

During a post-conference press conference, the director of programs at BirdLife International, Dr. Marco Lambertini, said that the AGM and concurrent conference had been successful in the goal of forming an alliance. He said this would mean a better outlook for conserving bird habitats around the world. He said that participating nations had agreed to learn from each other, to promote and maintain

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friendships, and to develop mutual interaction so that international contact might promote the development of eco-friendly tourism. Participants also agreed to take part in wildlife tourism and birdwatching activities in each others' regions and to introduce the beautiful natural resources of each nation with the aim of benefiting nature conservation and local economies through wildlife tourism.

The co-ordinator of the NABU Africa working group of BirdLife Germany, Mr. Werner Schroeder, invited members of Taiwan's Tourism Bureau and the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan to take part in an ecotourism exhibition that is being organized for next year. In addition, the supervisor of South Africa's Tropical Birding, Mr. Keith Barnes, recommended that Taiwan put more effort into establishing training programs for professional guides and developing foreign language information.

The Wild Bird Federation Taiwan and the Taiwan Ecotourism Association are currently working with the Tourism Bureau, the Ministry of Education and other relevant agencies to plan contests for multilingual nature guides in foreign languages and other work to promote international ecotourism in Taiwan.



Dr. Jane Goodall's Seventh Visit to Taiwan

On Nov. 6, 2002, Dr. Jane Goodall began a week-long visit to Taiwan. This was the seventh

time she had visited the island. During her stay, she gave lectures at the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology in Taipei and Hualien Girls High in Hualien County on the east coast. She also visited the National Museum of Prehistory in Taitung, where she talked to local people about conservation.

While she was in Taiwan, Dr. Goodall shared her thoughts on the international tours she had taken over the past year to view various conservation projects. She used the example of receiving a bald eagle feather in California, this year, to explain how the species had been pulled from the brink of extinction through the hard work of conservationists there. She said she hoped that success stories like this would encourage people in Taiwan to make conservation a part of their own lives. In addition, Dr. Goodall accepted an invitation to participate in the closing ceremony of the "Roots and Shoots—Seeds of Nature Teachers" Workshop organized by the Jane Goodall Foundation Taiwan and the Society for Wildlife and Nature (SWAN International). This workshop was one in a series of nature conservation workshops organized for educators by the Jane Goodall Foundation Taiwan over the years. Every year, numerous workshops are held for teachers from all over Taiwan and Dr. Goodall's annual visits to Taiwan are seen as a huge encouragement by participants.

During her visit, Dr. Goodall visited Chihpen, Taitung, in the southeast of Taiwan for the first time. She visited the villages of some of Taiwan's indigenous people where she

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experienced the famously warm welcome of these people. She took part in the inauguration ceremony of the Youth Meeting Center of the Rukai indigenous people's Darumake clan in Tunghsing Village, Taitung. The center was established to prevent tribal customs from being lost. After five years exploring clan history and culture, the project was completed with help from the local community. Local conservationists from Taitung, indigenous people and Taitung City mayor also came to Chihpen to meet Dr. Goodall and exchange opinions on the achievements and difficulties of conservation work in the area. Dr. Goodall said she believed that, with good planning and communication, nature reserves could be established in Taitung without compromising the interests of the local indigenous people. She encouraged indigenous people not to reject nature reserves, but to proactively participate in the planning and self-management of such projects. Dr. Goodall's visit has brought new awareness of conservation issues to the people of Taitung and spread the seeds of hope for conservation efforts there.



Chu Yun Mountain Nature Reserve

Introduction to Taiwan's Nature Reserves

Located in Kaohsiung County in south Taiwan, the Chu Yun Mountain Nature Reserve forms part of Taiwan's Central Mountain Range. The elevation of the reserve ranges from 400 to 2,700 meters above sea level resulting in

wide variations in temperature according to altitude. The diversity of altitude and the complex topography of the region around Chu Yun Mountain mean that the area includes subtropical, warm temperate, temperate and cold temperate climactic zones. The area has a marked summer monsoon climate with the rainy season lasting from May to September each year. The dry period is from November through January. The level of humidity is greatest in medium to high altitudes. Annual precipitation measures around 3,000 mm. As for the geology of the area, the reserve is mainly composed of sediment clay like slate and phyllite with occasional intercalations of metamorphic sandstone. The rock strata date back mainly to the Eocene Pilushanian formation and the Miocene Lushanic formation. Along the riverbeds there are also sedimentary structure and alluvium. The soil is medium to weak and consists mainly of humus. The extent of rock to soil is low and outcrops of large rocks are frequently seen.

Regarding the plant resources of the area, other than a small portion of plantation, the area's original forest is relatively well preserved and includes broad-leaf forest, mixed deciduous forest and coniferous forest. The west and southwest faces of Chu Yun Mountain are *Fraxinus formosana Lagerstroemia subcostata* and *Zelkova serrata* forest type at elevations of between 500 and 800 meters, while the rest is post-fire grassland. The east and southeast face is composed of *Machilus zuihoensis*, *Machilus kusanoi* - *Phoebe formosana* or *Cyclobalanopsis glauca* forest types.

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Elevations of 800 to 2,000 meters are covered with camphor and the *Castanopsis* zone, while altitudes of 2,000 to 2,300 meters are covered with *Castanopsis* zone. East and north-east of the crest line at altitudes of 2,300 to 2,500 meters and above, the reserve is mixed *Chamaecyparis formosensis* and *Tsuga chinensis* forest. Above 2,500 meters there is pure *Tsuga chinensis* forest. Rare and valuable plant species found within the reserve include *Mitrastemon yamamotoi*, *Osmanthus enervius*, *Prunus transarisanensis*, *Cinnamomum micranthum*, *Cephalotaxus Wilsoniani* and *Taxus celebica* among others.

Regarding to the animal resources of the area, there are several threatened species, including the Asian black bear (*Selenarctos tibetanus*) and Chinese leopard cat (*Felis bengalensis chinensis*), as well as the Indian black eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*), Hodgson's hawk eagle (*Spizaetus nipalensis*), Swinhoe's pheasant (*Lophura swinhoii*), Tawny owl (*Strix aluco*), Maroon oriole (*Oriolus traillii*) and other rare and valuable birds and animals. A total of 83 species of bird have been recorded in the reserve, as well as 18 species of mammal. Reptiles are the most abundant in terms of number and species, of these the *Agkistrodon acutusacutus* already faces extinction. In addition, there are several fish species in the Malishan Creek, which flows within the reserve, including the rare *Varicorhinus alticorpus* (Oshima).

On account of its diverse animal resources, the reserve was previously used as a hunting ground by the Teng chi group of indigenous

people; however, nowadays hunting is strictly outlawed. Large notices and warnings to this effect have been erected in the reserve and members of the indigenous population have been hired as rangers to patrol the area and remove or destroy traps and poaching equipment. Furthermore, checkpoints have been set up on the forest roads into Chu Yun Mountain to inspect cars and personnel travelling into and out of the reserve. These inspection points are normally also engaged in promoting wildlife protection.



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