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INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION/
INTERNATIONAL WATERFOWL AND WETLANDS RESEARCH BUREAU/
INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

SPECIALIST GROUP ON STORKS, IBISES AND SPOONBILLS

NEWSLETTER

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LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

This last year has been very productive for for the Specialist Group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills. We have made a concerted effort to contact as many people involved with storks, ibises and spoonbills or their wetland and grassland habitats as possible. We are now communicating with over 600 people throughout the world. This large network will be extremely important in the long term. We encourage you use this network. We also encourage you to communicate with us and with your fellow researchers and conservationists through this network. We must share our information and concerns in order to work effectively as a group.

We had hoped to produce a newsletter twice a year in 1990 but that must begin in 1991. Our timing was off and we hope to start with two publications in 1991.

A number of important initiatives have begun during the last year:

1. A conservation poster for the Oriental White Stork *Ciconia boyciana* was distributed in Soviet Siberia and the Soviet Far East. This was similar to a poster that was distributed in China in 1987. Both posters were funded by the Brehm Fund of Germany.

2. The Moroccan population of Waldrapp ibises *Geronticus eremita* survives while the wild Turkish population has dwindled and is now

probably extinct. There are many birds in captivity and initiatives are being developed for a possible re-introduction of captive birds into the wild.

3. The Greater Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos dubius* is in extreme difficulty. The large breeding colonies in Burma have been decimated and the last stronghold seems to be adjacent Assam, India. Drs. Bhattacharjee and Saikia have discovered 75 nests in Assam. Although this seems a small number of nests, there are no other large nesting areas known. There is considerable concern for these birds. We have the greatest concern for this species. We must protect these birds.

4. Although less critical than the Greater Adjutant Storks, the Blacknecked Stork, *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* have critically declined throughout southern Asia. This may be in part due to the requirements of the species, but may also be largely due to general degradation of wetland habitats. The loss of wetland habitats in southern Asia is critical. We encourage you to provide us with your information so that we can help you to preserve your wetland areas. Please let us know your problems so that we can help you.

5. SREL recently held a three-day workshop for African researchers and conservationists. This was part of a much larger workshop sponsored by the International Crane Foundation. We discussed research methods and major conservation initiatives for Africa.

We identified three species of concern: European White Stork *Ciconra ciconra*, Saddlebilled Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*, and the Shoebill Stork *Belaniceps rex*. While we are concerned about the status of these birds, we need additional details. Please send us any information you have on the status of these species.

Koen Brouwer, Malcolm C. Coulter

NESTING RECORDS OF GREATER ADJUTANT STORKS IN ASSAM, INDIA

The Greater Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos dubius* is one of the world's rarest storks. The species has traditionally been abundant throughout its range in Southeast Asia. The increasing destruction of the feeding, breeding and roosting habitat and loss of productivity of the wetlands, especially those nearby nesting areas, has led to a severe decline in the total population. The most important breeding areas have historically been in the large forests of south Burma and the area around Pegu, Burma. The recent wholesale destruction of these forests have left a remnant of the former breeding population. The species is now extremely rare throughout its range and there are few current records of breeding.

An important population of Greater Adjutant Storks still exists in Assam, India. The species is resident in the province where individuals may be seen in the garbage centers of almost all townships and in the most productive wetlands. The species has not been known to breed regularly in Assam. Prior to 1987, the only known nest was reported by M. P. Kahl in 1967. The possibility has existed that the species may breed in Assam but there have been no thorough surveys of nesting adjutant storks. Because the conservation status of the Greater Adjutant Stork is critical, we carried out a survey of nesting adjutant storks in the province from 1987 through 1990. The survey was conducted in two steps. Initially, we conducted a general census of the presence of Greater Adjutants in the province. This was followed by a more detailed survey of the location of nesting colonies from October 1989 through January 1990. This survey was concentrated in areas where birds in breeding plumage and/or young had been observed in the earlier census.

Observation of Nesting Colonies

We counted 75 active nests in Assam. This is the first record of Greater Adjutant Storks nesting in Assam, and even within India, outside

all forms of protected areas. All the nests were outside the protected areas. The nests were concentrated in six colonies in Borpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Nowgang and Sibsagar districts within the province. The majority of nests were located in rural areas, within the vicinity of human habitations and close to residential areas. The greatest number of nests in a single colony was 31; and some single nests were also found.

Most nests were found in *Anthocephalus cadamba* Roxb. (Local Name (LN): Kadam) and *Bombax ceiba* L (LN: Simul). Nests were also found in *Albizia lebbek* (LN: Sirish), *Alstonia scholaris* Brown (LN: Sotina), *Garcinia cawa* Roxb. (LN: Kuji-thekeera), *Artocarpus lakoocha* Roxb. (LN: Bohot, Dewa-cham), *Streblus aspera* Lour (LN Khorua), *Ficus glomerata* (LN: Demoru), *Syzygium cuminii* (LN: Jamur), *Magnifera indica* (LN: Aam). The height of the nests ranged from 12 to 23 m.

Nesting Habitat

Most nests were found in patchy private forest areas within villages or in suburban localities. This habitat was comprised of altered forest with some natural trees and shrubs, and was always dominated by bamboo plantations. The immediate vegetation was dense with thick undergrowth and extensive bamboo. In almost all cases, the surrounding bamboo was fully grown, as high as the nesting trees and providing cover to the nesting habitat. Roosting trees were also available. The roosting trees were different species from those used for nesting. High foliage density of the middle and upper canopy layer was distinctively characteristic of the nesting habitat. The nesting colonies were 100 m to 3 km from large wetlands and rivers. The nests were constructed in the middle to the topmost part of the upper canopy.

Clutch Size and Nesting Success

Among 75 nests, the average clutch size was 2.9 eggs from which an average of 2.2 young fledged (75%).

Conservation Problems of the Nesting Colonies

Most people think that Greater Adjutant Storks are protected in Assam, particularly at Kaziranga National Park. Although legally protected, Greater Adjutants suffer serious threats. Nests outside *protected areas* suffer from disturbance and poaching. These nesting colonies are suffering serious threats.

We identified four primary conservation problems during the survey and after extensive discussions with villagers in areas where nesting had been reported over many years. They are presented according to severity and/or priority.

1. Killing of adults (mainly incubating birds) and nestlings. During the winter months, the *Santhal*, a nomadic tribe, visit Assam mainly from Bihar and spread in small groups throughout the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. Their main activity during the period is killing and catching of wild birds and mammals. They eat these animals and also provide them to markets outside Assam. They trap and kill Greater Adjutant Storks during the nesting period.

Adult Greater Adjutants are large birds and at least one parent is at the nest during incubation and shortly after hatching. They are also less shy than other species and can be approached easily. They are easy to detect and easy to catch. Moreover, the vegetation undergrowth near the nesting trees is dense, providing cover, and so the nests are easily approachable. The Santhal hunt with spears, and take both adults and nestlings. The local villagers are generally unaware of these activities.

2. Destruction of nesting trees and nests. Most nesting colonies are located in privately owned forests, usually near residential houses. The inhabitants occasionally cut down the nesting trees for their own use for building and furniture, or to eliminate the noise and unpleasant smell associated with the nests of Greater Adjutant Storks after hatching. In one colony, six active nests with 13 nestlings and three eggs were destroyed when a single tree was felled in one colony. The roosting trees are also cut down for local use.

3. Lack of awareness of the legal protection of Greater Adjutant Storks. The Greater Adjutant Storks is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 of the Government of India. Although villagers rarely kill the species, they are often unaware of the protected status of this species, or, in fact, of the protected status of most species. Nor are the villagers aware of the punishments for killing birds that are covered in the act. Hence, they do not take an active stand protecting the birds.

4. Loss of feeding habitat. During the breeding season, the adults forage only in wetlands to gather food for themselves and their young. The wetlands of Assam have declined in area and have suffered a loss of productivity through pollution from agricultural areas. There is less food for adults and young and the parents must travel farther to provide sufficient food than in previous years

Immediate Conservation Measures Taken

During the survey, the local people were alerted and encouraged to preserve the nesting trees. They have also been informed of the activity of bird traders and people who kill the birds, particularly the Santhals. The responses from local inhabitants, especially women and students, have been very encouraging. Deputies of the local Forestry Departments have been contacted and informed of the critical situation. A long-term project has been prepared for regular monitoring of known nests as well as future surveys by the Animal Ecology and Wildlife Biology Section, Department of Zoology, Gauhati University.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the DSTE, Government of Assam and CSIR Government of India, New Delhi for financial support during the field survey and monitoring of nesting sites.

-- Prasanta Saikia and P. C. Bhattacharjee

ORIENTAL CRESTED IBIS

An Oriental Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon* was artificially hatched at Beijing Zoo, China on June 10, 1990. The chick has been handreared and was reported to be in good health in a report we received in September of 1990.

A SUMMARY OF THE STATUS OF THE BLACK-FACED SPOONBILL

Of the world's six species of spoonbill the Black-faced Spoonbill, *Platalea minor*, is the most restricted in its distribution. It is confined to the eastern coast of Asia, occurring regularly between its only known breeding grounds in North Korea and migrating to spend the winter in Hong Kong, southern China, Taiwan and Vietnam, and occasionally Japan and South Korea.

It had until recently been considered that the the Black-faced Spoonbill was a common winter visitor to the coast of southeastern China. However, this assumption was largely based on historical data obtained around the turn of this century which indicated the species to be locally fairly numerous. Since that period, the Black-faced Spoonbill has, almost unnoticed, undergone a dramatic decline in population to a level where its continued viability is in serious doubt.

Counts made on the wintering grounds indicate an estimated 285 Black-faced Spoonbills still exist. At present, there are only three sites which are known to hold significant numbers, these being @ 145 on the Tsen-Wen River near Tainan, Taiwan, @ 62 on the Red River Estuary, Vietnam, and @ up to 47 at the Mai Po marshes and adjacent inner Deep Bay in Hong Kong. Other sites in Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan occasionally hold small numbers in winter and are probably also important as staging posts during migration.

During the last ten years, surveys within China during the winter months have failed to locate a single site, with the exception of the population in the inner Deep Bay marshes on the border between Hong Kong and China, where the species can be regularly found. Furthermore, surveys of inland wetlands such as Poyang Lake, Jiangxi Province, where large numbers of the more numerous Eurasian White Spoonbill *P. leucorodia* spend the winter have failed to produce anything other than a handful of individuals.

Undiscovered wintering areas may of course exist as witnessed by the recent discovery of the populations in southern Taiwan and Vietnam. However, if other populations are not located within China or elsewhere, the currently known population may be assumed to be the maximum world population.

The continued existence of the Black-faced Spoonbill is now dependent upon the species being given complete protection throughout its range. The reliance of the bulk of the population on just three sites in the winter months makes these of crucial importance and efforts must be made to ensure reclamation and

pollution at these locations is minimized. In the breeding season, total protection and freedom from disturbance on the offshore breeding islands are also essential for successful breeding.

-- Peter Kennerely

FIRST NESTING OF SPOONBILLS IN ITALY

Two nests of Eurasian White Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* were found in the "Valli di Comacchio" in the province of Ferrara in northeast Italy during the spring of 1989. This is the first breeding record of this species in Italy.

-- Canova & Fasola (1989. Riv. Ital. Orn., Milano 59:265-267)

SPOONBILLS IN YUGOSLAVIA

The Eurasian White Spoonbill colony at Krapje Djol in Yugoslavia was unsuccessful this year, probably due to a severe drought. According to SIS Specialist Group member Martin Schneider-Jacoby there was no spring flood this year, which is extremely unusual. However 50 spoonbills did breed in Jelas Polje near S. Brod and another three pairs bred at Kopacki Rit.

Krapje Djol is located in the Save-Auen region, a major wetland area in the north of Yugoslavia. The "Stiftung Europaisches Naturererbe" (European Nature Heritage Fund) has been very active in promoting conservation of this area. A major success was achieved in 1990 with the development of the 54.000 "Lonjsko Polje" nature reserve.

MILKY STORK DISCOVERY

An interesting discovery was made by researchers of the Malaysian Department of Wildlife and National Parks in November 1989. A small colony of Milky Storks *Mycteria cinerea* with some 20 active nests was discovered in the vicinity of Kuala Gula. The nests were built on live and dead trees at heights of 8-10 m. Another nest site might exist, according to information received from local fishermen; this will be investigated by the authorities.

The Milky Stork is very rare in Malaysia; the last breeding record in this country dates back to 1935, according to Siti Hawa Yatim of the Malaysian Wildlife Department.

MILKY STORK (MYCTERIA CINEREA) BREEDING SUCCESS IN CAPTIVITY

The Milky Stork Project at Zoo Negara (Kuala Lumpur) has been quite successful this year. Tunku Mohd. Nazim Yaacob, curator of exhibits at the zoo, reported that four pairs have nested and that 12 chicks have hatched so far.

Zoo Negara, in cooperation with the Malaysian Wildlife Society, is planning to reintroduce Milky Storks in a mangrove reserve near Kula Selangor in the near future, as was reported in the previous newsletter.

San Diego Zoo has also achieved good results in their Milky Stork breeding program. This year they successfully reared four chicks.

THE STATUS OF STORKS, IBISES AND SPOONBILLS IN ARGENTINA

In Argentina, there are three stork, six ibis and one spoonbill species. Many species are protected in national parks and reserves. Yet populations are declining due to destruction of habitat, drainage of wetlands, pesticide pollution, hunting, cutting of nesting and roosting trees, etc.

The Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* is found in marshes and other wetlands of the northeast. It is usually found singly or in small groups with other wading birds. The Maguari Stork *Ciconia maguari* inhabits the north and center of the country and in the Rio Negro and Chubut provinces in the south. The Jabiru *Jabiru mycteria* is found locally from the northern provinces to Santa Fe Province in the south. It may be seen in groups of one to many birds.

The most common of the ibises is the White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*. This breeds in single-species colonies as well as multi-species-colonies with storks, herons or ducks. It is found throughout the country except the extreme south. The Plumbeous Ibis *Harpiprion caerulescens* is common in the central, northern and eastern provinces. The Buff-necked Ibis *Theristicus caudatus* is found in both the northeastern and southern provinces. In the north it commonly associates with the

Plumbeous Ibis. Other species are less common. The Puna Ibis *Plegadis ridgwayi* is uncommon, found in small, isolated areas of the Jujuy altiplano about 3600 m above sea level. The Bare-faced Ibis *Phimosus infuscatus* is rare in north and central Argentina, while the Green Ibis *Mesembrinibis cayennensis* is found in small, scattered areas of Misiones Province.

The Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja* occurs in small groups in the mesopotamic provinces: Jujuy, Salta, Chao, Formosa, Santa Fe and Buenos Aires.

Conservation Recommendations

Although many birds are protected within national parks and reserves, poor conditions outside these areas have led to decrease in some of the populations. Above all, wetlands must be protected and preserved. In addition, pesticide pollution and hunting must be controlled. Finally, the cutting of the nesting trees should be stopped.

-- Carlos A. Perigo

MARKING BIRDS

In the last issue of the SIS Newsletter, we mentioned concern over the use of leg rings for European White Storks *Ciconia c. ciconia*, but perhaps for most species of storks. These birds defecate on their legs for thermoregulation. When the guano becomes encrusted on the legs underneath the bands, leg damage and even death may result. As an alternative, we suggested patagial wing tags that have been successfully used for herons and egrets in France. We have since received a letter with concern over the use of patagial tags. We have not received the details of the unfavorable report. We will include details in a future SIS newsletter.

LONGEVITY OF STORKS

Dr. Herbert Schifter (Naturhistorisches Museum Wien), Marvin Jones (San Diego Zoological Society) and the undersigned are currently preparing a manuscript on longevity in birds. We would be interested in receiving any data available on this subject from our readers. Information on longevity of both captive and wild storks, ibises, and spoonbills is welcome.

Please include exact dates of arrival, birth and death if these are available. Post mortem reports would also be appreciated. At the

moment we have compiled the following records on longevity in stocks:

<i>Mycteria americana</i>	27 + years
<i>Mycteria ibia</i>	19 + years
<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	28 + years
<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	7 + years
<i>Ciconia maguari</i>	20 + years
<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	31 + years
<i>Ciconia abdimii</i>	21 + years
<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	30 + years
<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	35 + years
<i>Ciconia boyciana</i>	48 + years
<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	34 + years
<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	36 + years
<i>Jabiru myctoria</i>	36 + years
<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>	30 + years
<i>Leptoptilos dubius</i>	43 + years
<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>	41 + years
<i>Balaeniceps rex</i>	36 + years

-- Koen Brouwer

MEETINGS

MANAGING MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS AND THEIR BIRDS FOR THE YEAR 2000 AND BEYOND

The conference, to be held in Grado, Italy from 3 to 10 February 1991, will provide an assessment of the consequences of wetland loss and degradation in the Mediterranean region, with the aim of producing detailed strategies for the future management of Mediterranean wetlands. The meeting is aimed at the following groups of people: fisheries and managers and researchers, government and environmental management agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, wetland managers and researchers, and waterfowl managers and researchers. The program will consist of invited and contributed papers and posters, addressing the following topics: How many wetlands and waterbirds will there be by the year 2000, the effects of wetland loss and degradation on wintering waterbirds, the effects of wetland loss and degradation on wintering waterfowl, water quality problems associated with wetland loss and degradation, the relationship of fisheries and aquaculture management to wetland loss and degradation, the reasons for wetland loss and degradation, and arresting wetland loss and degradation. The meeting will be conducted simultaneously in Italian, English and French. If you are interested, you should contact: Simon Nash, IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BX, UK.

INFORMATION REQUESTED ON PLEGADIS IBISES

Peter Boesman is currently studying identification features of *Plegadis* ibises, both in the field and in the hand, for a forthcoming publication. He would be most grateful for details of any existing measurement data of *Plegadis* ibises, and any characters that could be useful for identification purposes. Detailed descriptions or photographs of individuals, especially *P. ridgwayi* and *P. chihi* in juvenile or winter plumage, are needed as well. All contributors will be acknowledged. Please send information to Peter Boesman, Flamingostr. 13, 8-9000 Gent, Belgium.

SIS BIBLIOGRAPHY

As mentioned in previous newsletters, we are working on a bibliography for storks, ibises and spoonbills. We hope to have a version available later this year. This will always be kept up to date on computer. The new additions will be printed in the SIS Newsletters. **WE URGE YOU TO SEND COPIES OF YOUR ARTICLES AS THEY ARE PUBLISHED (EARLIER ARTICLES WILL ALSO BE VERY IMPORTANT TO RECEIVE) SO THAT WE CAN MAKE THE NEW LISTINGS AS COMPLETE AS POSSIBLE** Please send your articles to: Malcolm Coulter, SREL, Drawer E., Aiken, South Carolina 29802, U.S.A. Your cooperation is very much appreciated by everyone in the group

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SCARLET IBIS WORKSHOP

The ICBP/IWRB Specialist Group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills held the First International Scarlet Ibis Conservation Workshop in Caracas, Venezuela, during March 1988. This Workshop, attended by representatives of the seven countries where Scarlet Ibis *Eudocimus ruber* occur, as well as scientists from Europe and North America, summarized the results of censuses and other research over the last ten years. Participants presented national reports on the status and threats to the Scarlet Ibis and developed regional conservation strategies for the species and its coastal and interior wetland habitats. The event was co-coordinated by the Venezuelan Audubon Society (SCAV) and the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), with technical and financial assistance from Wildlife Conservation International (WCI) of the New York Zoological Society. Additional support came from a variety of Dutch

organizations, namely Stichting J. C. van der Hucht Fonds, World Wildlife Fund (Holland), Dutch Bird Protection Society, Het Vogeljaar Foundation and the Dutch Research Institute for Nature Management (RIN). The proceedings of the Workshop were published in January 1990, with financial assistance from WWF-France, and are now available from IWRB (Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BX, UK), price £ 10.00 plus £ 1.50 postage and packing.

SHARING OF LITERATURE

There is a need to share literature between ecologists and conservationists in 'developed' and 'developing' countries. There are several programs attempting this. We present here those concentrating on ecological material. Those wishing to participate should contact each program directly.

Books for Nature -- This is a grass roots organization which sends field guides, technical literature, and basic field research equipment to libraries, teachers and field biologists in developing countries. Their goal is to encourage the growth of conservation biology as a science and an ethic by increasing knowledge of the natural world. Contact: Bernie Tershy, Seeley G. Mudd Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, U.S.A.

British Ecological Society -- Books and journals from Britain to a Nicaraguan university. The B.E.S. subsidizes shipping. Contact: Dr. J. Silvertown, Biology Department, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, U.K.

Green Library -- This non-profit group not only donates material, but establishes libraries in 'developing' countries and in eastern Europe, "in order to build public commitment to reverse serious ecological problems such as air pollution, deforestation, and the greenhouse effect". The group's current emphasis is on Nepal, Poland, Cuba and Peru. Green Library is supported by local groups and foundations ranging from the City Poznan to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Contact: Green Library, 1918 Bonita Street, Berkeley, CA 94704, U.S.A.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of International Affairs -- The Western Hemisphere section has begun supporting a series of libraries or Centros de Documentacion Biologica (BIODC) in Costa Rica, Venezuela and Brazil. The libraries provide access to ecological literature for wildlife biology programs

supported by the Office. An important feature is the preservation and dissemination of unpublished or limited-circulation material, known to librarians as 'grey literature'. The Office can also provide free postage for donations from within the U.S.A. Contact: Dr. Herb Raffaele, Office of International Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, U.S.A.

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