

# SIS Conservation

*Publication of the IUCN SSC Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group*

**ISSUE 1, 2019**

**SPECIAL ISSUE: GLOSSY IBIS ECOLOGY & CONSERVATION**



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ISBN 978-2-491451-01-1

## Editorial: A New Publication Focussing on Storks, Ibis, Spoonbills and Shoebill

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Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills constitute 60 species, and have a pan-global distribution. The IUCN SSC's Storks, Ibis and Spoonbills Specialist Group (SIS-SG) therefore has a lot of ground to cover. In 2017, the charismatic Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* was also included under the aegis of the SIS-SG, increasing our collective responsibility.

Thanks to the charisma of SIS species, there are many champions of SIS species worldwide, many outside of the SIS-SG membership. Interested coalitions have come together to help conserve populations and habitats of several endangered species including the Greater Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos dubius*, Oriental White Stork *Ciconia boyciana*, Asian Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon*, Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, and Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*. The behaviour of other, more common, SIS species has led to collaborations focussing on research, and these include species such as the Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* and the European Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*. Long-term investigations on various aspects of ecology and behaviour have been ongoing thanks to efforts of smaller groups of people, even individuals, giving us deep insights into the requirements of species such as the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*.

Some SIS species like the Asian Woollyneck *Ciconia episcopus*, White Stork, Hageda Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*, Australian Ibis *Threskiornis moluccus* and Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* appear to have switched to less natural habitats. However, the long-term impacts of such a switch on

their populations, ability to breed successfully, and their health are still poorly understood. While scientists and conservationists have documented such behavioural dexterity, we are still a long way from knowing if these species can endure the risks that come with getting used to areas dominated by humans and human activity. If they can, that is good news since human modified areas will continue to dominate the planet.

However, a large number of SIS species remain poorly studied, with little effort expended to decipher their needs and develop cogent conservation plans for their conservation. This lacuna is not trivial and needs to be overcome urgently given the rapidity with which we are losing forests, wetlands, and grasslands that several SIS species likely rely on. SIS species remain particularly poorly studied in South America and Africa, and attention to Asian species is steadily increasing, with most of the research and conservation effort focussed on species in Europe and North America. The membership of the SIS-SG is very similar to existing coverage of SIS species ecology (see Figure below), and we clearly need to do more to gain expertise from the various countries where SIS species occur.

The SIS-SG has had strong and effective leadership in the past, and like many other SGs, has endured several challenges along the way. The last publication of the SIS-SG was a newsletter that was completed in September 2003. After this effort, information on SIS species, and work by SG members, have been available in a scattered manner. We are pleased to start a new peer-reviewed publication managed by the

SIS-SG, with a new name, and one that is accessible online for free. Without sacrificing rigour, we aim to present scientific work documented in the now-familiar academic format, and also invite contributions that are less science-y. Named simply “SIS Conservation”, or SISC for short, our intention with this publication is to showcase ongoing work and efforts, and to try and inspire new work, while making all of this easily available via our website for free. At the very least, we hope that having this publication will inspire people to write up information that they already have, and have not been able to publish anywhere else. We will attempt to focus equally on species that are globally threatened or endangered, and on species that are common. We hope to include in-depth investigations of questions relating to ecology and evolution, and also more popular-science writings and art that celebrate the quirks and beauty of these species. Another fond hope is that the SISC helps attract additional membership of people who are as fascinated as we are with SIS species everywhere. Anyone can submit manuscripts for publication in SISC and a membership in the SIS-SG is not a prerequisite.

Being part of the IUCN SSC family of Specialist Groups we are especially pleased to be starting this initiative during the IUCN quadrennium 2017-2020. The SSC has prioritized communication as a key priority area during this period. Towards this collective goal of improving communication, the SISC joins the SIS-SG’s “Special Publications” series that we initiated in 2018 to help collate and make available key literature (e.g. conference abstracts) that traditionally have short shelf times, becoming difficult to access over time. SIS-SG Special Publications are also available on our website for free download. The first two Special Publications collate extensive information brought together during regularly organized meetings focussing on the Black Stork and the Eurasian Spoonbill. Articles contributing to these Special Publications cover extensive geographical areas, include an incredible array of subjects that provide an in-depth understanding of what each species does and needs, provide thoughtful discussions on how to reduce threats to the species, and celebrate the collective

power of many individuals and institutions brought together by a shared passion for these species. In this regard, we are also pleased that the first issue of the SISC is a Special Issue, being a collection of papers by members of the newly formed International Glossy Ibis Network. For the first time, researchers from across the world provide updated information and knowledge of this species. The Glossy Ibis is one of the most common SIS species, and one of the very few today that is expanding its range worldwide. Thanks to the interest and leadership of SIS-SG member Dr. Simone Santoro, this new group was put together relatively rapidly and is already very active in sharing information related to the Glossy Ibis. For this first issue, Simone has worked with colleagues worldwide to collect and present fascinating work that enhances our understanding of this species enormously.

As with previous SIS-SG publications, this new avatar is also a shared one, and will be as successful as the members and SIS enthusiasts allow it to be. We invite anyone interested in SIS species to consider this publication as a forum for your work, for your thoughts, and to help highlight your successes and failures while working with SIS species. We are grateful to the members who have bravely volunteered to be Editors for this publication – enterprises such as this one requires time and patience, and we thank you for your interest. We are especially grateful to the many people who helped review the excellent submissions for the first issue of *Storks, Ibis and Spoonbill Conservation* and also the support from *Tour du Valat* which generously has provided the ISBN for this issue.

