

# SIS Conservation

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Issue 2, 2020



## *Special Section*

Woolly-necked Stork  
ecology and  
conservation



*The inaugural issue is a remarkable collection*

The initiation of this new journal is very impressive in its goals, constitution - in being completely Open Access – and editorial oversight and guidance. Its inaugural issue is a remarkable collection across many researchers on a single species. This greatly illustrates the potential for the collective contributions towards gaining knowledge on this group of birds; while also encouraging the later publication of research on the many other species within the journal's remit. Personally, I am a researcher on raptors and waders, and there are dedicated journals/publications accordingly, but this *SISC* journal initiative's concept and goals will hopefully also serve as a beacon for other researchers and publications involved with other groups of birds.

I hope but trust that the Aims and Scope of *SISC* will continue to be realised, with continued exemplary efforts as already illustrated and propounded. As I've noted, these birds are not those I study. I would urge, nevertheless, that those researchers involved in this group of birds will support this excellent dedicated publication initiative which clearly has laudable global aspirations with inherent provision of opportunities in spreading knowledge, and importantly, encouraging that prospect of knowledge to be based on a rigorous scientific basis.

*Philip WHITFIELD,*  
*Managing Director, Natural Research, UK.*

*Received 15 December 2019.*

*SISC fills a previously empty niche*

I was pleased to receive and review Issue 1 of *SIS Conservation*. I commend Editors-in-Chief Sundar and Alonso, Guest Editor Santoro, and the 75 article authors, for producing a wonderful inaugural issue on Glossy Ibis in numerous countries and geographic settings. *SIS Conservation* fills a needed, previously empty niche in the ornithological literature, for a peer-reviewed forum to promote the science and conservation of storks,

ibises, spoonbills, and shoebills. With continued IUCN support and rigorous peer review, I am confident that the publication will excel in providing high-quality scientific information at a global scale.

*Dr. Bruce G. MARCOT, Research Wildlife  
Biologist, United States of America.*

*Received 22 December 2019.*

*SIS Conservation promises to be a rich source of data*

The launch of a new scientific journal dedicated to the conservation and ecology of any group of threatened species is welcome. Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills include a number of highly threatened bird species, so the emergence of a new publication to share the latest knowledge and relevant information about them is timely. For those of us at BirdLife International responsible for applying the IUCN Red List criteria to bird species and evaluating their global extinction risk, *SIS Conservation* promises to be a rich source of data, which will help us to ensure that the information in the 'other' SIS (IUCN's Species Information Service – the global Red List database used by BirdLife and other Red List Authorities) is kept updated. The comprehensive nature of the first issue, reviewing the current status of Glossy Ibis around the world, bodes well. We congratulate all those involved in this endeavour, particularly Gopi and Luis, and look forward to future issues, and especially to more papers on hitherto poorly studied species, which will help to improve knowledge and inform conservation.

*Dr. Ian BURFIELD,*  
*Global Science Coordinator (Species),  
BirdLife International, UK.*

*Received 05 Aug. 2020.*

*SISC provides one forum for this group of species*

I was delighted to see the new publication, *Storks*,

*Ibises and Spoonbills Conservation (SISC)*, which was launched in 2019. As the last publication from the SIS Specialist Group was 16 years before, *SISC* obviously fills a major gap. It is excellent news that *SISC* is online and available for free download making it widely accessible amongst researchers of these charismatic species.

After reading the first issue, with its many contributions on Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, I was most impressed by the quality and scope of the contributions, which are peer-reviewed.

The SIS Specialist Group covers the large number of 81 species, many of which remain poorly understood and for which conservation plans are lacking, especially those species from Africa and South America. This publication should stimulate further work on poorly known species, as well as more work on species that have been already studied, but for which more information is needed to ensure their long-term conservation. It is also hoped the *SISC* will encourage researchers of storks, ibises and spoonbills to write up work in their notebooks that they have been unable to get published previously. Importantly, *SISC* provides one forum for this group of species where researchers can publish their findings.

I congratulate Gopi Sundar, Luis Cano Alonso and their colleagues on the Editorial Board of *Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills Conservation* on this excellent new publication.

*Carol INSKIPP, Patron, Himalayan Nature, UK.*

*Received 05 August 2020.*

#### *Updates to status of Glossy Ibis are welcome*

I would like to congratulate the SIS specialist group on producing a terrific inaugural volume of their journal *Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Conservation*. The group has thus achieved a long-standing goal and does so with a clear vision; the editors identify their objectives to showcase ongoing work, inspire new work, and document all of these in an easily and freely available format. By producing this first volume on Glossy Ibis Ecology and Conservation, they have made an admirable beginning. The geographical scope of the expertise gathered in this volume is impressive in its own right, and the updates to the current status of the Glossy Ibis are

extremely welcome. The changing distribution and abundance of the species, manifested in multiple regions of the globe, provides a rallying point for students and managers of waterbirds and wetland resources; we are reminded of the still enormous gaps in our knowledge (in Australia, for example, where the map of known breeding colonies remains almost entirely blank, even in areas where many thousands of Glossy Ibis may sometimes be seen in the wet season, as in the Gulf of Carpentaria), but also the potential for meaningful conservation action when we can access the required knowledge. By presenting the accumulated understanding of worldwide experts, the new journal will spur us on to address deficiencies in our data and refine management practices for the benefit of wetland species and ecosystems. To this end it would be wonderful to see some further input from the Glossy Ibis Network emphasizing the historical context to Glossy Ibis decline and subsequent resurgence, so that conservation priorities can be more sharply delineated.

Many thanks to all involved in coordinating and producing the journal, and especially their commitment to communicating the work and observations of field practitioners.

*Dr. John D. GRANT, Independent Ornithologist/  
Researcher, Queensland, Australia.*

*Received 08 Aug. 2020.*

#### *Threatened Storks, Ibis and Spoonbills are not yet safe*

There are 56 species of storks, spoonbills, and ibises — give or take a few for the inevitable taxonomic disagreements. At 0.5% of all bird species, they are a small sample, but they are disproportionately interesting for those who care are conserving biodiversity. Extinction threatens a quarter of them — twice the fraction for birds as a whole. There's more than that to justify their interest.

First, they are large and conspicuous in the open wetlands and grasslands that most of them frequent. I've seen three-quarters of the species, compared to under half of all bird species. Their being so obvious means we have a good idea of their status and threat even when they are rare. I've



watched nesting greater adjutant storks on their nesting trees in Assam with Aparajita Datta. And I've counted oriental storks on their wintering grounds at Poyang Lake in China with Lei Cao. In both cases, I saw significant fractions of the global populations. Accurate counts of the black-faced spoonbill now aid in its management <https://storkibisspoonbill.org/general/international-black-faced-spoonbill-platalea-minor-census-2019/>.

Second, what threatens them is a good representation of what we do to species and ecosystems globally. We destroy their habitats. We clear forests and overgraze grasslands, but especially drain wetlands that are often very poorly protected worldwide. Species that migrate suffer triple threats — on the breeding grounds, where they winter, and migratory stop-overs — with the loss of any one fatal to the species' chance of survival. A migration from Syria, via Yemen, to winter in Ethiopia surely gives the northern bald ibis one of the riskiest routes of any species. (The story of a different population whose migration is human-led is a fantastic adventure <https://storkibisspoonbill.org/news/25-northern-bald-ibis-start-a-new-life/>).

Finally, but most importantly, their all-so-obvious presence and simple avian charisma mean they afford many examples of species that conservation practitioners have snatched from the jaws of extinction. Great adjutants may not win a beauty contest, but the pride the villagers have where they nest is inspiring. So, too, is the recovery of the Asian crested ibis. White storks nested in England this year after an absence of centuries, part of a Europe-wide trend in the expansion of waterbirds following increasingly aggressive habitat restoration <https://storkibisspoonbill.org/projects/the-white-stork-project-britain/>.

The threatened storks, spoonbills, and ibises are not yet safe, but let's celebrate the success of those who have stemmed their declines and prevented their extinction. The new publication on this group <https://storkibisspoonbill.org/sis-conservation-publications/> now makes that a message to share and energise conservation beyond this small group of species.

*Dr. Stuart PIMM, Doris Duke Chair of Conservation, Duke University and President, Saving Nature, United States of America.*  
Received 10 Aug. 2020.



*The SISC initiative is very timely*

Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills are magnificent birds and pride of our wetland ecosystems. They are widely distributed often in unprotected areas. Information on their status is scanty. They also are getting affected in India primarily owing to habitat loss and some of them have been enlisted in the threatened categories of IUCN red lists. Therefore, the IUCN species specialist group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills has a huge task and responsibility on its shoulders. Owing to the fact that fairly large share of the population of these birds occurs in unprotected areas often in human dominated landscapes, the specialist group must have involvement of people in conserving these species as a high priority in its list of activities. Status surveys of the species and a regular monitoring must also be an activity of priority in which citizen science must play an important contribution. Sharing of information and research findings is also an important step to draw the attention of all stakeholders including policy makers for which the latest initiative by the IUCN SSC Specialist group of the peer reviewed publication of 'SIS Conservation' is a very timely one. I would like to congratulate the members of the specialist group for this.

*Dr. Dhananjay MOHAN, Director,  
Wildlife Institute of India, India.*

*Received 10 Aug. 2020.*

*The first digital issue of SISC is a meaty one*

I am very pleased to receive the first digital issue on the Glossy Ibis Ecology & Conservation which I believe is the first e-publication solely devoted to storks, Ibises and spoonbills. It is a meaty issue with 25 research articles running into 150 pages.

This is a wonderful concept and I congratulate the editors for understanding the need for creating such a platform to bring together researchers from all over the world who can not only showcase their work but also share their findings with colleagues in different continents.

The editors have rightly pointed out that there is a pressing need to fully understand the ecology of these highly visible birds in an ever-changing landscape especially, in the context of pesticide overloads in wide swathes of our agricultural and

semi-agricultural landscapes.

We generally tend to ignore the larger birds in wetlands and agricultural landscapes and plumb for smaller and secretive birds so I was particularly glad to see your article on status of the Glossy Ibis in a couple of districts in Gujarat. Although researchers and birders are documenting these birds in India, very little scientific work has actually been published.

I hope this issue reaches out to researchers in wildlife institutions as well as to students in colleges and universities across India and provides motivation to work on this group of birds in their States as well. Good Luck!

*Kiran SRIVASTAVA,  
COO, Raptor Research and Conservation  
Foundation, Mumbai, India.*

*Received 11 Aug. 2020.*

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*The attempt to bring work on SIS species in one publication is commendable*

Thank you for sharing the link to the first issue of Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill (SIS) publication. My heartiest congratulations to the editorial team for envisaging such an interesting publication on SIS. A lot of work is being done on these magnificent birds all over the globe and your attempt to bring them under one publication is commendable. I look forward to reading the monograph on glossy ibis, a widely distributed species, to understand how it is surviving despite increasing challenges. I must also congratulate you on the attractive layout and logo of SIS! Looking forward to reading more from SIS. All the best.

*Dr. Prachi MEHTA,  
Senior Scientist and Executive Director,  
Wildlife Research and Conservation Society, India*

*Received 18 Aug. 2020.*

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*SISC is helpful for public awareness in Rajasthan*

Namaskar. Though I am not a regular reader of *SIS Conservation*, however I read it wherever I get the opportunity. *SIS Conservation* is an important scientific document which covers various aspects of

natural history of storks, ibises and spoonbills. All these birds are signs of a healthy ecosystem. Their long-term monitoring can help us to judge the health and functioning status of wetlands more precisely. *SIS Conservation* is also very helpful for public awareness en-mass and it is improving the status of citizen science in Rajasthan.

Gradually more and more youth, conservationists, scholars and wildlife photographers are reading, contributing and utilizing the scientific information available in *SIS Conservation*. Really *SIS Conservation* is worth reading. Hope, *SIS Conservation* would help to conserve all the aquatic ecosystems and their inmate birds of Rajasthan as well as Indian union.

Hats off to your dedicated efforts for conserving the aquatic life of our wetlands.

*Dr. Satish Kumar SHARMA,  
Rajasthan Forest Department (Retired).*

*Received 25 Aug. 2020.*

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*Storks, Ibis and Spoonbills are beautiful*

*SIS Conservation* is really nice. I was just wondering if articles have a DOI number. I noticed one in the recent issue. But the old one did not have any. For a reader and a contributor it will be good to give the number of issues in year, article turn around time. For each SISC issue, you can have an Editorial podcast that summarises what are the contents of that issue, and also raise some important conservation issues. Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills are beautiful. You can use more of their pictures or paintings to make the website interactive.

*Dr. Karthikeyan Vasudevan, Laboratory for the  
Conservation of Endangered Species, Centre ofr  
Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, India*

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