

A new *SIS Conservation* issue amid a pandemic

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2020 has been an unforgettable year. As the global pandemic spread across the planet, we have collectively and individually had to endure many changes. Some of these have been somewhat easier to address, such as working from home where possible. Others, like the inability to travel to fieldwork location, have been far more challenging.

Despite these circumstances, we continued working on the Specialist Group looking for support and partners. We received great news from the Species Survival Commission IUCN that the SIS specialist group was selected for the IUCN-SSC internal small grant in 2020. Part of this support will be used towards *SIS Conservation* as a recognised open access publication. This has been an enormous acknowledgment of the value of *SIS Conservation* by the SIS IUCN and its partner Global Wildlife Conservation, and we are very grateful for this support.

The SIS world has seen its share of hardships with many conferences cancelled, annual meetings held online, and journal issues delayed. It is therefore with some apology but great excitement that we complete Issue 2 of *SIS Conservation*. The apology is for the delay in completing this issue, and the excitement is for the contents, and what it took to get these completed.

In Issue 2, we have been able to achieve nearly all of the things we envisioned for this new journal. In the first collection of "*Letters to SIS Conservation*", we gratefully compile the messages and letters we received from friends, colleagues and supporters around the world. All of them speak kindly of the inaugural issue that was put together

Article history

thanks to the epic effort of SIS-SG member Simone Santoro. We introduce the "*Opinion*" section with an important essay on the status of Saddle-bill Storks *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* in Africa, and the need to replace early natural history observations with more robust tools and information (Gula 2020). We should add that Jonah's seminal paper on factors affecting this species across Africa in the prestigious journal *Ostrich* secured him the Best Student Paper published in the journal in 2019 (Lee 2020). This is the first time a paper focusing on a SIS species has secured this accolade.

In the general section of articles, we host important papers from China, Australia and Indonesia covering a range of SIS species found in these areas. The complexity of fluctuations of water levels and how it affects behaviour and habitat use of wintering Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* is explored in detail in the globally important site Lake Poyang (Sullender *et al.* 2020). This is cutting-edge work that underscores the value of field observations and hydrological measurements. To further highlight the importance of retaining waterlevels to benefit SIS species, Brandis *et al.* (2020) analyze a multi-year data set of colonially nesting waterbirds in one of the most important agricultural landscapes in Australia for SIS species. This paper tells an elegant tale of breeding waterbirds, water levels, and the value that artificial irrigation can provide to SIS species. Finally, field observations from Indonesia confirms the very exciting news of Milky Storks *Mycteria cinerea* returning to Banten to breed after a gap of 45 years (Noor *et al.* 2020).

We are also excited to introduce the "*Special Section*" where a number of short notes and papers provide the first ever detailed description of natural

history, ecology and conservation status of the Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* from several locations in south and south-east Asia. Significantly, the information provided for this Special Section was used to evaluate the conservation status of the species, and succeeded in convincing the Red List authorities that the Woolly-necked Stork requires to be downlisted from "Vulnerable" to "Near-threatened" (Sundar 2020).

The papers for Issue 2 were written, reviewed and revised as the world experienced the most recent pandemic in the form of Covid-19. Great uncertainty gripped the globe as we experienced unprecedented lockdowns that governments imposed to reduce the chances of transmission. The world endured great human tragedy in many countries as issues of equity and access to resources were laid bare, and we count ourselves as very fortunate to be among those few that could continue working from the comfort of our homes. Our hearts go out to the people who could not, and suffered a great deal.

The world also saw short-term benefits to nature as populations of some birds seemed to proliferate, but some SIS species in some locations experienced increased hunting pressures as humans struggled to find food (e.g. WCS 2020). As the pandemic continues to drive new human behaviours, and challenge scientists and governments, the full import of this novel disease on the natural world and on SIS species will reveal itself in the future. We gratefully acknowledge the reviewers and authors who, through all of this ensuing pandemonium, continued to support SIS species with their work that they provided for publication in *SIS Conservation*.

As we start developing Issue 3, we continue to depend on your interest in SIS species, and ask that you consider SIS Conservation to publish your work. We will continue to strive to improve the publication. Articles are now put on our website as Online First accepted publications that are ready for citation and use. The new artwork of SIS species at the bottom of the pages, the updated formatting (made possible by the time that the lockdown provided to learn a new freeware!), the increased network of colleagues, and the spanking new ISSN number for the publication are all small steps towards our goal of improvement. We will

work to ensure the inclusion of SIS Conservation into the directory of open access publications, set up better documentation of each paper by adding doi identities, and are certain that all of these features will help us improve both searchability and the altimetric scores of individual paper. While we are not obsessed by metrics such as impact factors, we are interested in ensuring that the work of our colleagues are indexed widely and be freely available. We will continue also to assist colleagues who wish to submit their information in ways that are possible for us. Language editing, making improved maps, statistical assistance, and providing background literature where possible are on our list of things-to-do.

We wish all of you the best of health and hope that you are putting safety and care before all else as we collectively emerge into what will be a new world. We hope that this new world will continue to have SIS species proliferating, more species being brought out of endangered and vulnerable categories, and certainly many more with their ecology and habits becoming better known to all of us. We certainly cannot imagine any future where SIS species are not being obsessed about, and given what we have experienced so far, it is clear that many of you cannot either.

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