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EDITORIAL

Do the ibis have it?

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In conceiving *SIS Conservation*, we imagined being able to give somewhat equal attention to Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills (SIS). We were, nonetheless, aware that some species have had enormous research and conservation attention. The vast majority of literature on storks, for example, focus on White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* (Gula *et al*. 2023). One of our goals was therefore to try and get attention on the habits and conservation status of poorly studied SIS species. We therefore actively invited submissions to Special Issues or Special Sections that focussed on poorly studied SIS species. With only four issues published (including this one), we have some indications of where our efforts have reached.

Issue 1 focussed on the Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* and was the first monograph-like compilation of information on the species (Santoro 2019). Despite having a pan-global distribution, and being a species whose distribution range is expanding, research attention on Glossy Ibises has been relatively sparse. Out of the 24 papers published in SIS Conservation, 13 have been cited at least once for a total of 38 citations (as on 24 March 2024; scholar.google.com).

Contrast these metrics with Issue 2 that featured a Special Section on the ecology and conservation of the Woolly-necked Stork *C. episcopus* (which was not split into two separate species at the time; Sundar 2020). This was the first time that this species received so much research attention. The new information helped disprove several assumptions regarding the species' habitat use and status resulting in the eventual downlisting of the species from an incorrect "Threatened" status to a more realistic "Near-threatened" (Sundar 2020; Gula *et al*. 2023). The Special Section featured 10 papers that have since been cited 86 times.

The Special Section of Issue 3 focused on another well-studied species, the Black Stork *C. nigra* and featured six papers (Cano-Alonso 2021). These papers have been cited twice so far, perhaps an indication of the availability of more detailed papers published in more conventional journals.

This new Issue 4 features a Special Section on the ecology of the poorly studied Red-naped Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*. Accepted papers were uploaded immediately as online-first contributions. Publication of the full issue was delayed due to several reasons, but was completed and uploaded in March 2024 (Tiwary and Sundar 2022). Eight of the nine papers in the Special Section had been uploaded by then and have been cited 12 times. The Red-naped Ibis is a very common and widespread species across south Asia, and the publication of Issue 4 will hopefully spur new research attention. Prior to the publication of this issue, the Red-naped Ibis was one the least studied waterbirds in the world – an unenviable status that now stands a little altered.

SIS Conservation is helping draw some attention to poorly studied ibis species, while also inviting new work on other SIS species. Apart from the Special Issues and Special Sections focused on ibis species, the four issues of the publication feature additional papers on ibises included in the general

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section. Overall, though, there is still a lot to be done and many species poorly studied and understood ibis species remain. The ibis, it appears, may not have it yet.

This issue also features two important articles. The Opinion article provides a timeline and important learnings from the project in Japan to restore the Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon* (Okahisa 2022). The project is an excellent example of scientists carefully studying local conditions and the focal species to develop understanding pertinent to the area where the restoration was carried out. The project also stands out for the deliberate use of robust science to guide the restoration efforts with intermittent analyses used to make necessary changes. In the second article, Gula and Mungole (2022) provide the first estimates of foraging success of the poorly studied Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* using 255 minutes of field observations in western Zambia. The storks preyed on fish and invertebrates with a prey capture rate of 0.3 per minute. The study adds to the natural history of the Saddle-billed Stork from an area where studies on SIS species are rare but urgently needed.

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