

EASCC Committee Annual Report

Report of 2024

East Asia Seabird Conservation Committee

Chair: Simba Chan

(Japan Bird Research Association)

Chairing of the committee

Jean-Baptiste Thiebot and Yasuko Suzuki expressed their wish of stepping down as co-chairs of the committee after the 2022 PSG NEASCC virtual meeting. Simba Chan has expressed willingness to take over the post in mid-2022 but the status was not confirmed until the NEASCC meeting at La Jolla in February 2023.

Mailing list to seabird conservationists and researchers in Asia

From mid-2022, Simba Chan has started sending information on seabirds to a group of people who participated the 2021 and 2022 virtual PSG NEASCC meetings. The list was inherited from the previous co-chairs and it includes non-PSG members in many eastern Asian countries. The aim of the mailing list is to promote communication of seabird researchers and conservationists in eastern Asia and hope more people would join the PSG. So far about 100 mails were sent, about half were related to HPAI in seabirds.

Report from Japan

Japanese Ornithological Society shows its point of view on the development of offshore wind farm and tentative guidelines for its environmental assessment (in Japanese)

https://ornithology.jp/materials/Windfarm/windfarm_policy.pdf

https://ornithology.jp/materials/Windfarm/gudeline_v1.pdf

In Japan, commercial operation of offshore wind power generation has been starting from the end of 2023 to the beginning of 2024. Some areas, where large-scale offshore wind power generation has been introduced, overlap with important foraging areas for seabirds during their breeding or wintering seasons. So careful and successive impact assessment is required. Unfortunately, some constructed areas could not be avoided through preliminary surveys. There are also some areas where it is possible to compare pre- and post-construction seabird distribution data (using a data logger). By publishing these, we will be able to publicize the impact of the introduction of offshore wind power on seabirds in Japan.

Safeguarding Marine IBAs (Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas): The Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ) have selected 27 Marine IBAs and 44 colonies with BirdLife International Tokyo, using breeding colonies and foraging distances in 2016. And, WBSJ obtained data about concerning of sensitive area of seabirds in eastern and western region of Hokkaido, to reduce impact on seabirds by offshore wind farm construction. WBSJ designed a Species Sensitivity Index (SSI) and Wind farm Sensitivity Index (WSI) for seabirds, which serves as the basis for spatial planning and sensitivity mapping in 2017, and provided useful information for Ministry of the Environment.

Japan Seabird Group is now updating seabird colony database for Biodiversity Center of Japan, Ministry of Environment

<https://www.sizenken.biodic.go.jp/seabirds/topics.php>

The National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries has conducted tracking of black-footed albatross on Torishima Island, and confirmed sex-specific trends via spatio-temporal overlap analysis with fishery activity. The study will be presented in the poster session at PSG 2024.

WBSJ is researching of migration of Tristram's storm petrel using geolocator.

Conservation of the Japanese Murrelet: Japanese Murrelet is endemic species of Japan and Korea:

WBSJ is now surveying feeding area in the breeding season and migration route of non-breeding season using geolocator and GPS logger device.

The map suggests that the breeding site and migration route as an example of one bird during the non-breeding season.

And WBSJ established the method of artificial nest boxes. Breeding success was confirmed from 2016.

Gillnet bycatch research (Japan): Yasuko Suzuki (BirdLife International), Motohiro Ito (Toyo University) and his students, and Nobuhiko Sato (in advisory role, Fisheries Research and Education Agency) continued an experimental study on gillnet bycatch mitigation techniques in collaboration with Tokyo Sea Life Park in 2023. At a Common Murre and Tufted Puffin aviary with a dive pool at the aquarium, the experiment was carried out to compare their behavior to different colors of gillnet mimic. The mimic was created in such way that bird safety was ensured. The net color comparison study was a shift from testing three mitigation ideas (LED light, common murre alarm call, and above-water device with "looming eyes" pattern) in 2000/2021, based on advice from a gillnet fisher.

Further experiment on net colors is currently underway.

In 2023, we also continued a systematic data collection project with local fishers in NW Hokkaido, including Teuri Island, a breeding site of four alcids and two cormorant species (four of them are listed in Japan's Red Data Book). Data collection is currently ongoing.

Campaign on ocean plastic waste:

WBSJ is working on reduce activity of plastic pollution.

WBSJ thinks that public awareness activity for reducing single use plastic is very important first step. So we hold Seminar and Workshop to reduce single use plastic as CEPA. And published some educational tools.

In addition, as reducing discarded plastic, WBSJ hold the beach clean up event at waterfront of Tokyo bay.

And WBSJ makes a policy recommendation to governor with NGO network.

In addition to CEPA and lobbying activity, we are now researching the effect of plastic pollution for seabirds with researcher. We are now taking samples of preen gland oli from three seabirds on Tadanae Island, in Izu Islands. Many samples are now under analysis.

(information contributed by Prof Yutaka Watanuki, Dr Daisuke Ochi, Dr Kentaro Kazama, Dr Yasuko Suzuki and the Wild Bird Society of Japan)

Report from other countries

Requests were sent to PSG members (attendants to PSG meetings in the last ten years) but no replies received as of February 4 2024.

From the Chair's knowledge, the breeding of Chinese Crested Terns failed at Matsu Islands (Taiwan) due to disturbance from peregrine falcons and night fishing fleets from China.

The breeding in Chinese colonies of Jiushan and Wuzhishan Islands were going on well in the last two years. New sites were recently established by social attraction at Simu-yu Island of Fujian and Nanji Islands of Zhejiang.

At Jiaozhou Bay, Shandong, a record high of 128 Chinese Crested Terns was observed on September 5, 2023.

Seabird Working Group meeting at the MOP 11 of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership

The meeting of the Seabird Working Group of the EAAFP (Chair: Robb Kaler, Coordinator: Yat-tung Yu) was convened on March 12, 2023 in Brisbane, Australia with about 20 participants. The meeting covered issues on the 'Year of the Terns' of 2022 (a very successful event at the EAAF), and reports on

- the Asian Seabird Colony Registry
- satellite tracking of Greater Crested Terns in eastern Indonesia
- training webinar for seabird researchers in South East Asia
- national seabird forum and action planning workshop in the Philippines
- international single species action plan for the Christmas Island Frigatebird

At the MOP 11 we also raised the issue of green energy infrastructure to birds and the coming threats of HPAI (a reconstructed Avian Disease Working Group is thus formed)

Recommendation of changes of the name of the committee

In February 2020 (Portland) there were participants from the Philippines joined the PSG meeting, and the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society/BirdLife Tokyo Office had also worked with seabird conservationists in Indonesia. We feel it is time to enlarge the geographic scope of the committee to include countries in eastern Asia. We would like to suggest the name of the committee be changed to 'East Asia Seabird Conservation Committee' (EASCC)