

Annex I

Concept Note

Revising the Black-faced Spoonbill International Species Action Plan: Addressing New Conservation Priorities and Challenges

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group



Summary

The Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* was listed as Endangered in the IUCN Red List, and one of the NEASPEC's flagship species. Despite its recent population growth due to collaborative conservation efforts, new threats like coastal development and avian disease outbreaks threaten its recovery. The EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group proposed a revision of the bird's International Single Species Action Plan. It aims to sustain progress by uniting stakeholders from all range countries, assessing emerging threats, and building resilience through coordinated actions. With a 10-year timeline (2026-2036), the plan will address knowledge gaps, evaluate conservation effectiveness, and align efforts with international frameworks. Expected outcomes include

sustainable population growth, strengthened regional collaboration, and alignment with regional and global conservation goals.

Background

The Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*) is a threatened waterbird in Asia that first drew attention in the late 1980s. Its distribution is restricted to coastal and estuarine areas in East Asia, with breeding grounds in the Russian Federation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Republic of Korea (ROK), and northeastern China. Its wintering range spans Japan, southeastern and southern China, Hong Kong S.A.R., Macao S.A.R., Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines. With fewer than 300 individuals recorded in the late 1980s, the species was classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN in 1994.

The Black-faced Spoonbill was placed as a top conservation priority at the 1994 BirdLife International World Conference, leading to the publication of the first International Action Plan in 1995 by BirdLife International. This initiated a robust international cooperation network, mobilizing top-priority conservation activities to save the species. Successful action plan initiatives—such as satellite tracking to study migratory routes, coordinated international winter censuses, and awareness-raising across its range—resulted in the species being downlisted to Endangered on the IUCN Red List in 2000.

In 2002, the Black-faced Spoonbill was added to Appendix I of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Later, in 2007, UNESCAP NEASPEC adopted the species as one of six flagship species in its Nature Conservation Strategy at SOM-12. CMS and BirdLife International published an updated [International Single Species Action Plan](#) in 2010 to expand stakeholder engagement and enhance legal protections for the species and its habitats. In 2013, the [Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group](#) was established under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) to coordinate conservation efforts. The government of China and the Republic of Korea (ROK) included the species in China's "List of State Key Protected Wild Animals" and "Endangered Wildlife Conservation Master Plan (2018-2027)" respectively; the Hong Kong S.A.R. government had recently published the [Black-faced Spoonbill Action Plan](#).

The population has gradually increased due to effective collaborative conservation efforts, reaching 6,988 individuals in the 2024 census¹, sparking discussions about further downlisting on the IUCN Red List. However, significant threats persist, with new challenges such as offshore and coastal wind farm development and potential Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreaks. The species' recovery remains heavily dependent on sustained conservation efforts. An updated International

Species Action Plan, supported by stakeholders from all range countries, particularly government agencies, is urgently needed.

- ¹ Yu, Y.T., Kong, P. Y., Li, C.H., Chung, C.T., Tse, Y.L., Moulin, A.L. 2024. [International Black-faced Spoonbill Census 2024. The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.](#)

Outline of the proposed third Black-faced Spoonbill International Single Species Action Plan

The proposed Action Plan aims to be inclusive by involving all range countries of the Black-faced Spoonbill, stretched from the Russian Federation, DPRK, ROK, China, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, and members of the EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group and relevant researchers and stakeholders.

Objectives of the revision of Black-faced Spoonbill International Single Species Action Plan

1. Assess Population Status and Habitat Conditions

- Update trends and status of the breeding and non-breeding population.
- Review the status of all breeding, staging, and wintering sites across range countries.

2. Evaluate Existing Conservation Measures

- Assess achievements under the Second Species Action Plan.
- Analyze the effectiveness of conservation efforts, including those not covered in the Second Species Action Plan.

3. Identify Emerging Threats and Knowledge Gaps for conservation measures

- Conduct a gap analysis to determine priority areas for conservation.
- Identify new threats and conduct a risk assessment for impacts on the Black-faced Spoonbill.

4. Develop the Third Black-faced Spoonbill International Single Species Action Plan

- Formulate a comprehensive list of actions for a sustainable conservation strategy.
- Develop a CEPA (Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation, and Awareness) strategy to enhance international collaboration and local community and stakeholder engagement.
- Strengthen mainstreaming of conservation actions at the site, national and international levels.
- Align conservation actions with international conservation frameworks

Timeframe:

- 10-years timeframe (2026-2036)

Outputs

- Revised International Single Species Action Plan for Black-faced Spoonbill

Expected Outcomes

- Key breeding, staging, and wintering sites are effectively protected or sustainably managed to support the species' life cycle.
- Enhanced knowledge and adaptive strategies are developed to mitigate emerging threats, ensuring the species' resilience.
- Strengthened regional collaboration and networks among range countries through CEPA initiatives, fostering cooperation at site, national, and regional levels both within and beyond the Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group.
- Coordinated conservation efforts across the range countries, with actions implemented in a harmonized manner and supported by international frameworks such as CMS, UNESCAP NEASPEC, and EAAFP.
- Conservation actions are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, maximizing synergies with global biodiversity commitments.

Work Plan for revising Black-faced Spoonbill International Single Species

Action Plan

Tentative timeline of action plan development

Actions	Targets
Inception meeting for Action Plan revision	February 2025
Leads and co-leads work on their relevant chapters	March – August, 2025
Progress meetings	August 2025
Review by range countries	September - October 2025
Finalize and design	November 2025
Submission to CMS for COP15 (120 days before COP)	November 2025
Final Action Plan to be endorsed at CMS COP15, Brazil	March 2026

Tentative outline of the Action Plan

Suggested Chapters
Introduction
Situation analysis of populations and sites in range countries
Evaluation of the previous action according to the second Action Plan (policy and legislation, conservation activities, research and monitoring, CEPA)

Threats and Drivers
Action items (international, regional, national, site-based)

Overall Coordination

Lead: EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group

Budget

(TBC)