

Meeting Report: Training Workshop on Migratory Bird Conservation and Wetland Management in North-East Asia

18-20 May 2026

Land of Leopard National Park (Barabash), Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation

Executive Summary

The Training Workshop on Migratory Bird Conservation and Wetland Management in North-East Asia was held on 18-20 May 2026 at the Land of Leopard National Park (LLNP), Primorsky Krai, the Russian Federation. The workshop was co-organized with LLNP and attended by 16 participants as well as 1 virtual participant.

The workshop was organized under the project '*Connectivity conservation for habitats of flagship migratory birds in North-East Asia (Black-faced Spoonbills, Hooded Cranes, and White-naped Cranes)*' which aims to improve the awareness of NEASPEC member States and stakeholders with the latest scientific information and capacity to conserve the three migratory bird flagship species and their habitats. Following the Training Workshop for Young Crane Researchers held in 2025, this workshop was the second of a series of capacity-building activities under the project's output on strengthening the capacity of emerging researchers. It aimed to further facilitate knowledge sharing and enhance skills amongst researchers and conservation practitioners to strengthen collaboration and coordinated conservation efforts across North-East Asia.

The workshop gathered experienced professionals from across the East-Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) and covered research techniques and conservation practices applied for all three avian flagship species identified under the Nature Conservation Strategy in 2007, namely Black-faced Spoonbill, White-naped Crane, and Hooded Crane. These discussions led to enhanced understanding of locally contextualized research and management practices for various types of habitats and migratory birds. In addition, specific reflections and recommendations were identified, providing a basis for potential partnerships in the future on migratory bird conservation across the subregion.

Key Outcomes

Overview

The training sessions highlighted both successes and areas for improvement in conservation for the three flagship avian species. Over the course of three days, participants discussed the status of endangered and vulnerable bird populations, monitoring methodologies, long-term ringing data, habitat assessment, and wetland management practices. One presentation also focused on the breeding colony of the Black-faced Spoonbill breeding on Furugelm Island, the southernmost island of the Russian Federation, which is part of the Far Eastern Marine Biosphere Reserve.

By sharing the latest research findings and conservation practices among professionals, the workshop contributed to strengthening the scientific basis for the long-term conservation of migratory birds and the ecosystems they are an integral part of, while addressing emerging challenges and changing climatic contexts. It also helped lay the foundation for future leadership and science-based conservation efforts across North-East Asia.

Looking ahead, NEASPEC will continue to help build the capacity of emerging professionals in migratory bird conservation, facilitate knowledge exchange, and foster potential collaboration among stakeholders. The connectivity along EAAF habitats as well as the role of conservationists remains crucial for member States and experts for achieving the ambitious biodiversity goals set by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and ensuring that conservation efforts in North-East Asia under NEASPEC contribute meaningfully to global biodiversity frameworks.

Below are the key takeaways from the sessions.

1. Strengthen Monitoring and Data Collection:

- Use of Technology: Leverage AI, drones, satellite imagery, and other telemetry tracking methods for monitoring and to collect more precise data on migratory routes and population trends. This will help improve the understanding of habitat connectivity across borders.
- Data Sharing Platform: A public-access ringing data platform was introduced during the workshop to facilitate the sharing of tracking and sighting data among the conservationists across the flyway. This will help consistent monitoring and facilitate the exchange of scientific data across borders.

2. Mitigate Impacts from Agriculture, Energy Infrastructure, and Climate Change:

- Energy Infrastructure: It has been observed that solar and wind energy infrastructure has impact on migratory birds in terms of migration route disturbance, habitat loss and fragmentation, and risks like bird collisions with wind turbines and grid lines.
- Agriculture: Agricultural activities can have a mixed impact on migratory birds. While cranes and BFS rely on crop and ponds as food sources, agricultural activities can also lead to human-wildlife conflict and fragmented habitats via land reclamation. Promoting eco-friendly farming practices, such as lure farming, through local community engagement to minimize human-wildlife conflict and ensure sustainable land use were shared and discussed for further application in conservation management.
- Climate Change: The climatic cycle affects the hydrological nature of the lagoon habitats, which could produce long-lasting impact on the distribution and nesting behavior of cranes when coupled with climate change.

3. Promote Transboundary Cooperation:

- International Partnerships: Strengthen transboundary cooperation among the NEASPEC member states (China, DPR Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and the Russian

Federation). This involves coordinated efforts for research, fieldwork, and policy harmonization to ensure habitat connectivity across borders.

- Alignment with Global Frameworks: Ensure the conservation cooperation in the subregion aligns with international conventions such as the Ramsar Convention, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) to strengthen global and regional conservation efforts.

Proceedings of the workshop

Opening Session

Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav, Head of the ESCAP East and North-East Asia (ENEA) Office, opened the Training Workshop on Migratory Bird Conservation and Wetland Management in North-East Asia, which brought together diverse stakeholders including previous and future NEASPEC project experts. In his remarks, Mr. Ganbold emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in enhancing the ecological connectivity of the subregion, signified by the migratory bird species, and highlighted NEASPEC's role in fostering cross-border collaboration to protect key species.

Mr. Philipp Goverdovsky, Deputy Head of the Intergovernmental Commissions Division of the Department of International Cooperation in the Field of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, delivered a congratulatory remark highlighting the efforts and progress of conserving these iconic species in the Russian Federation, linking the workshop's efforts to the ongoing NEASPEC project 'Connectivity conservation for habitats of flagship migratory birds in North-East Asia.' He also emphasized the importance of habitat connectivity as well as international conservation cooperation, especially exemplified by the successful population recovery of Black-faced Spoonbill.

Mr. Victor Bardyuk, Director of Land of Leopard National Park, delivered a welcome remark with on the importance of the Far Eastern Marine Biosphere Reserve for conserving endangered migratory birds as key breeding sites. He highlighted the transboundary nature of migratory birds, the survival and migration of which depends on the connectivity of wetlands across the NEASPEC member States as well as coordinated actions and harmonized research methodologies across the flyway.

Session 1. Conservation and study of Daurian cranes

Mr. Oleg Goroshko, Managing Director, Daurian Nature Reserve, provided insights on the conservation progress of cranes in Daurian State Nature Reserve, highlighting the influence of climatic cycle on the habitability of the wetlands for White-naped Cranes. He shared the recent population recovery of cranes in the Nature Reserve while addressing anthropogenic threats and conservation challenges, including the lack of protection during dry climatic period, wildfire, disturbances from livestock and hunting. His presentation also stressed the importance of transboundary monitoring collaboration for effective conservation, including previous NEASPEC projects, as well as promoting bird-friendly agricultural practices such as lure farming in the local communities.

Session 2. Data on the population and distribution of Hooded and White-naped Cranes in the Amur Region

Mr. Anton Sasin, Head of Office, The Amur Branch of the Russian Bird Conservation Union, provided a review of population and distribution of Hooded and White-naped Cranes in the Amur region, also sharing their behavioral characteristics during nesting and migration periods that makes census challenging to conduct. He also explained the hydro-climatic dynamics that likely drives the nesting behavior of the cranes, which also exposes them to threats including wildfire, spring floods, agricultural reclamation of wetlands, and pollution from pesticides.

Session 3. Modern methods in cranes and Black-faced Spoonbill research

Mr. Anton Sasin, shared a comprehensive review of modern methods used in crane monitoring, covering the objectives, methodology, and technical equipment, and data analysis in the entire process. While mentioning the use of neural networks in counting cranes in photos/videos, he also stressed the manual verification is often required in nest survey and crane counting for accuracy. He also highlighted the lack of a unified ringing database when sharing the use of color-ringing in crane monitoring and counting. **Mr. Yuri Gluschenko, Researcher, Pacific Institute of Geography, Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences** shared the latest census findings of Red-crowned Cranes observed in the transboundary areas around Lake Xingkai/Lake Khanka. **Mr. Chi-Yeung Choi, Assistant Professor of Environmental Science, Duke Kunshan University**, added on to the session by sharing methods used in cranes and Black-faced Spoonbill research. He stressed that the objectives and the understanding of the target species' behavior and preferences are key to selecting the most suitable monitoring methods and sites. He also compared the strengths and weaknesses of each common technique under different monitoring contexts, while emphasizing that consistent international collaboration is crucial for migratory species.

Session 4. Using long-term ringing and movement data to monitor and conserve migratory waterbirds in East Asia, with an emphasis on Blackfaced Spoonbill

Mr. Chi-Yeung Choi started the session with an overview of the major threats faced by migratory waterbirds in East Asia, including land reclamation, invasive species, degradation, poaching, and pollutant contamination. the application of technical devices and methods in monitoring. By positioning monitoring in the bigger design of conservation planning, he showed various conservation and ornithological questions that long-term ringing and movement data can help answer, particularly in the recovery evaluation for Black-faced Spoonbills, from key site identification, winter survival, to the population spatial structuring. Building on the data-evidenced answers, he also addressed how these data and methods could help understand the impact of emerging issues such as renewable energy infrastructure. Additionally, he shared a public ringing data platform with the participants for better data accessibility and sharing across the flyway, highlighting the international cooperation in successful conservation recovery for species like Black-faced Spoonbills.

Session 5. Current Status of the Black-faced Spoonbill on Furugelm Island

Mr. Dmitry Belyaev, Senior researcher, Land of Leopards National Park, shared the breeding population trends of Black-faced Spoonbills on Furugelm Island over the years, which has been steadily increasing due to collective conservation across the flyway as well as LLNP's protection of the breeding site. He pointed out that the nesting colonies have shifted several times in the past two decades, possibly because of competition with the cormorants and avoidance of predation from gulls. The session emphasized the importance of minimal disturbance on the breeding success of Black-faced Spoonbill, and the continuous and consistent monitoring methodologies in effective monitoring and understanding of the Black-faced Spoonbill's population status.

Session 6. Roundtable Discussion and Closing: Reflections and Way Forward

Mr. Riccardo Mesiano, Deputy Head of the ESCAP East and North-East Asia (ENEA) Office, led the roundtable discussion, which centered on reflecting the practices and technical applications shared in the preceding sessions under the context of each participants' conservation range as well as the future cooperation for the broader flyway.

Participants further exchanged their respective reflections on the training sessions and site visit, including the most suitable method of juvenile ringing and nest counting for Black-faced Spoonbill, the similarities in bird-friendly agricultural practices and compensation schemes from sites across the flyway, and the importance of information exchange and cooperation for enhanced conservation of the species.

The roundtable concluded with participants agreeing on the importance of international cooperation and knowledge exchange through workshops such as this. These activities would enhance collaboration among emerging and established scientists, policymakers, and local stakeholders, enabling the exchange of data and best practices. The discussion also highlighted the need to address emerging conservation challenges such as climate change, habitat loss, and other anthropogenic disturbances.

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