

China Coastal Wetlands Conservation

Quarterly News Bulletin

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National actions on wetland conservation

1. By the end of 2019, China has a wetland surface area of 53 million hectares, with a conservation rate of 52.19%. The national wetland conservation system has been established, with 57 Ramsar Sites, 602 Wetland Nature Reserves, 899 National Wetland Parks, 781 Wetlands of Provincial Importance, and an increasing number of small wetland protected areas.

The important next step is to move forward with the implementation of the Wetland Conservation and Restoration System Plan and develop legislation on wetland conservation.



2. On Feb. 2, 2020, China designated seven new Ramsar Sites, including Beidagang wetland in Tianjin. In March, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration released a draft list of 2020 Nationally Important Wetlands. 29 wetlands in China are listed, including ten coastal wetlands, which are important stopover and wintering sites for migratory waterbirds.

3. On Mar. 31, 2020, President Xi Jinping visited Xixi National Wetland Park in Hangzhou City of Zhejiang Province, and stressed the importance of ecological conservation-centered development of wetlands. Xixi National Wetland Park was named as the first national wetland park in China.

An Integrated Approach to Regional Rehabilitation

4. The Action Plan for the Uphill Battles for Integrated Bohai Sea Management was released at the end of 2018, and in the following year, a total of 18,886 sewage outlets along the 3,600km Bohai coastline were investigated. This number of outlets investigated is 25 times of the previous one recorded by the authorities.

5. The environment in Bohai Sea coastal area has improved. For example, in Liaoning Province the proportion of excellent water quality in offshore areas of Bohai sea increased to 85.17%, 10% higher than the national standard of 75%, and no reclamation project was approved in this area.



The local government has also completed the “Comprehensive Rectification Plan for estuaries in Liaoning”, planning to renovate 33 km of coastline and 2600 hectares of coastal wetlands. In 2020, 14 Integrated Bohai Sea Management projects will be launched and three “Blue Bay” rehabilitation projects will be implemented.

6. In Qinghuangdao, Hebei Province, the proportion of excellent water quality in offshore areas is 100%, the number of migratory birds in the coastal wetlands increased, and the Spotted Seal which has not seen for years was rediscovered recently.

7. Tianjin Ecology and Environment Bureau recently announced that Dagang Wetland and Hangu Wetland will be designated as new protected areas and several shoreline rehabilitation projects will be implemented to ensure that the natural shoreline preservation is no less than 18km and restoration of coastal wetlands is not less than 400 hectares.



Local Wetlands Restoration Efforts

8. Wetland Restoration in Haikou

The ecological wetland restoration of Dongzhaigang Mangrove National Nature Reserve resumed after the COVID-19 outbreak. The project has so far rehabilitated over 37 hectares of land and reforested four hectares. Upon completion, the project will effectively carry out ecological restoration along the coastline of Dongzhai Port and the mangrove ecosystem in Haikou, Hainan Province.

9. Wetland Conservation in Xiamen

Xiatanwei Wetland Park was established during the launch of the “Blue Bay Initiative” in 2016 and was a successful attempt of coastal wetland restoration in Xiamen, Fujian Province. Stage I of the conservation initiative has restored 44.8 hectares of tidal flat and 42.8 hectares of mangrove. Stage II is will bring back over 360,000 square meters of mangrove wetland. On top of wetland conservation, the Resource Management Bureau also states that more leisure

facilities will be added to the park to present the ecological and social benefits of urban wetlands and promote a sustainable use of wetland resources.

10. Improving the coastal shelter forest system in Dongguan.

Dongguan is improving the city’s coastal shelter forest system by restoring mangroves in areas like MaChung and Binhai Bay. The city is implementing “Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao Great Bay Area Waterbird Corridor Construction Plan” and is establishing many new wetland environmental education demonstration bases. The local government is also working on completing the “Dongguan Wetland Conservation Plan”, building wetland resource databases and an information management platform, exploring innovative conservation and restoration opportunities, and actively attracting social capital to invest in wetland conservation projects.



Waterbird monitoring

11. Wintering census

◇ 4,864 Black-faced Spoonbills (BFSs) have been recorded during the International BFS Census 2020 in January. This is a new record high and the fourth time to hit a new high in the past five years, and indicates that the global population of BFS is steady recovering. However, the BFS population at Deep Bay which is between Hong Kong and



Shenzhen dropped, it could be due to the habitat deterioration and food shortage. Conservation of Deep Bay habitats is in urgent need.

- ✧ 48 Spoon-billed Sandpipers (7.3% of the global population) were recorded during the 2020 Spoon-billed Sandpiper Winter Census in China. Among them, 28 were recorded in the coastal mudflats of Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province.

12. Waterfowl Migration is Fully Under Way

Wetlands in China are essential stopover habitats for a variety of waterbird species.

These habitats provide migratory waterbirds with the perfect place to rest, refuel, and seek protection from predation before moving on the next leg of the journey.

- ✧ The critically endangered (IUCN) diving duck, Baer's Pochard, was spotted for the first time in Beidaihe Wetland, Hebei Province. The Beidaihe Wetland is known as one of the best bird-watching sites in China and is the habitat of vulnerable birds such as White-winged Scoter (EN), Oriental Stork

(EN), and Relict Gull (VU).

- ✧ In mid-March, 34 Spoon-billed sandpipers (CR) were spotted in Zhanjiang Mangrove National Nature Reserve. This significant count represents nearly 10% of the species' total population, indicating the successful conservation management of the reserve.

Conservation Battle of Shenzhen Bay

13. The "Regulations on the Management of the Use of Sea Areas in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone" was approved in February and has been effective since 1 May, 2020. The regulations cover aspects such as coastline conservation management, sea area use rights and natural resource management, and stress that coastal reclamation, exploitation of sea sand and other activities harmful to the coastal topography and ecological environment will be prohibited.

However, at the same time, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) report for a 110 million yuan dredging project in Shenzhen Bay was published online for public consultation in March.

The project, led by Shenzhen Navigation Route Affairs Center, intends to expand the existing waterway and create a shipping channel for cruise ships to go through the Shenzhen Bay bridge. The report attracted lots of public attention due to its unprofessional standard. Many local NGOs and newspapers created a series of media coverage and reports concerning the poor quality of the environmental impact report. The dredged waterway is reported to be less than 200 meters away from the mangroves, which will unavoidably destroy wetland habitats for a large number of migratory birds, and reduce water quality.



The EIA was suspected of plagiarism and was terminated. As a response, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment promptly ordered the relevant departments to investigate the report in a serious manner. The Shenzhen Municipal Transportation Bureau requires the South China Sea Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which is responsible for developing the EIA report, to re-conduct the EIA with a comprehensive assessment of the environmental impact of this project.



This example shows that the public's environmental awareness is rising and the government is starting to attach great importance to resource management, playing an important supervisory role for wetland conservation.

Miscellaneous Items

14. The 1st “Cloud Computing” Wetland Park

Co-operating with Tencent, China's leading Internet company, Haizhu National Wetland Park is launching a project to transform a wetland park into the first “cloud computing” National Wetland Park. This project combines technologies like the Internet, Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, and data analysis to establish an innovative wetland management system and to provide a better tourist experience.

15. Qi'ao Mangrove Wetland Named Popular Science Education Base. On 25 February 2020, Qi'ao Dangandao Provincial Nature Reserve was named as “Guangdong Province Popular Science Education Base”. In 2019, over 167,000 visitors made appointments to receive science education at the reserve.



The nature reserve fully utilizes its resources and location advantages to provide nature education for students and social groups from Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. Visitors have the chance to experience conservation work such as patrolling and monitoring, as well as observing the endemic species in a mangrove ecosystem.



PHOTO CREDITS

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1. View of Dongguan Wetland Park (Credit:
<http://www.gdwetland.org>)
2. View of Bohai Sea costal area
(Credit: Sohu News)
4. Beidaihe Wetland (Credit:
https://k.sina.cn/article_6433473584_17f77043000100gsjw.html?from=travel)
6. The Shenzhen Bay project and the surrounding environment sensitive areas (Credit: CECA)
7. View of Shenzhen Bay (Credit: Shanghai Observers News)
8. View of Qi'ao Conservation Park (Credit:
<https://xw.qq.com/cmsid/20190808A05U0000>)

SOURCES

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