

ASIA-PACIFIC MIGRATORY WATERBIRD CONSERVATION STRATEGY: 2001-2005



Prepared by

Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee

Supported by



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Foreword

A close relationship has always existed between people and birds. The beauty of these feathered creatures inspires us, their sheer variety and abundance dazzles us, their ability to navigate long distances migrating across continents and arriving and departing in tune with the seasons sparks our imagination and enriches our appreciation of the natural world. Wetlands are treasure troves for waterbirds, especially for migratory species which use these habitats as nesting areas and critical stopover sites along their flyways where they stop to rest and feed. The migratory routes of these birds cover wetlands in many countries transcending national borders on a regular basis from the arctic to the southern hemisphere. People and birds depend on wetlands for their survival.

The annual flights of these birds symbolise the continuing importance of these rich ecosystems. Yet estuaries, lakes, rivers, marshes, ponds and other types of natural wetlands are diminishing at an alarming rate around the world. Wetlands are being reclaimed, drained, polluted, or simply turned into sites for development. The loss of nesting and feeding grounds and resting places, coupled with hunting of birds, along the length and breadth of the Asia-Pacific region has proved to be a disaster for migratory waterbirds and has resulted in the decline of many species.

All countries need to become more aware of the importance of conserving wetlands and migratory waterbirds. Long-term commitment and a sense of stewardship is vital for the protection of wetlands and the migratory waterbirds that depend on them if we are to make a difference. Governments and communities must act together as guardians of the wetlands and the myriad species that depend on them.

We need a multi-faceted approach to conservation that covers awareness raising, capacity building and training, research and management, and takes into consideration the needs and aspirations of local people. Over the last five years, under the framework of the *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 1996-2000*, the Governments of Australia and Japan have worked with other governments of the Asia-Pacific region, NGOs including Wetlands International, BirdLife International, World Wide Fund for Nature, the Convention on Wetlands and the Convention of Migratory Species, technical experts and local communities to promote the conservation of waterbirds and wetlands. The initiative is coordinated by Wetlands International. Significant progress has been made across a wide range of actions. Three international networks of sites (for Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds) have been established. These Networks have been built by people for people and sites. Training courses, dissemination of wetland awareness and technical material in many languages, have been undertaken. Regional and national meetings have been organised to share experiences and expertise in such areas as conducting research and managing wetlands. All this has been possible through the active participation and cooperation of the peoples of the region.

The *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005* offers a sound framework for governments, local people, NGOs, the corporate sector, donor agencies and international conventions to continue to work together in a common cause to save wetlands and migratory waterbirds. It offers the opportunity for greater participation to build on a successful programme and to achieve conservation on the ground, and at a national and international level.

The Governments of Australia and Japan strongly support continuation of the *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005*. We commend it to you and encourage the promotion of the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats through the active implementation of this Strategy.

Environment Australia

Ministry of the Environment, Japan

March 2001

Preface

Waterbirds represent an important component of our natural wetland ecosystems. There is growing concern of the need to conserve waterbirds and wetlands and recognition that birds can serve as indicators of the health of our surroundings. Conservation efforts for migratory waterbirds can serve as an important mechanism to promote the conservation of our wetlands and other habitats.

To promote the conservation of migratory waterbirds at a regional level, the *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 1996-2000* was developed as a cooperative initiative involving governments, NGOs, conventions, and local people. In 1995, the Council of Wetlands International - Asia Pacific established the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee (MWCC), three Technical Working Groups to coordinate development, promotion and implementation of the Strategy: 1996-2000, and to establish three international site networks and undertake a whole range of conservation activities. The MWCC and Working Groups constituted of representatives of government agencies, multilateral conservation conventions, a development assistance agency, international NGOs, technical working groups and Wetlands International Specialist Groups. To provide secretariat support to the MWCC and Working Groups and coordinate implementation of the Strategy and Action Plans, four staff have been engaged by Wetlands International: a Strategy Coordination Officer (Taej Mundkur), an Anatidae Flyway Officer (Yoshihiko Miyabayashi), a Crane Flyway Officer (Simba Chan) and a Shorebird Flyway Officer (Doug Watkins). The coordination work has greatly benefited from the collective wisdom, expertise and influence of all the members who are closely involved with the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats.

Over the last five years, the Strategy: 1996-2000 has been recognised as an important framework for cooperative action and it has proven to be an excellent tool to promote the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats. The activities implemented under the Strategy have been reported at several international and national meetings and in various publications. In 1999, David Stroud of the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee undertook an independent review of the implementation of the Strategy and provided useful suggestions for its future development.

Based on the success of the Strategy: 1996-2000, an updated Strategy and Action Plans have been developed. The Strategy: 2001-2005 provides the overall international framework and identifies priorities for the conservation of all migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific region. The Action Plans form an integral part of the Strategy, building on activities undertaken during 1996-2000, and outlining specific priority actions for the conservation of three species-groups (Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds) in the East Asian-Australasian region.

This Strategy (Section A) has been drafted by a working group composed of Alison Russell-French, Naoko Nakajima, Trixi Madon, Brendan Edgar and Taej Mundkur, with input from the other MWCC members and the flyway officers. The Anatidae Action Plan (Section B) has been drafted by Yoshihiko Miyabayashi and Masayuki Kurechi with input from the Anatidae Working Group. The Crane Action Plan (Section C) has been drafted by Simba Chan and Noritaka Ichida with input from the Crane Working Group. The Shorebird Action Plan (Section D) has been drafted by Doug Watkins and Mark Barter (past Chair) with input from the Shorebird Working Group. To ensure that these plans reflect the regional priorities and needs of all participating groups, the documents were refined through an extensive review and consultation involving government agencies, technical experts, NGOs, convention staff and other interested persons. The documents were finalised through intensive discussion at an international workshop organised in Okinawa, Japan, in October 2000. The 141 participants of the workshop endorsed the Strategy and Action Plans and the role of the MWCC in co-ordinating its further development and implementation (see *Okinawa Statement*, page viii). This publication is the culmination of efforts of many people and we acknowledge their support.

Meetings of the Contracting Parties of both the conventions on Wetlands and Migratory Species have passed various resolutions and recommendations that call on Contracting Parties to support implementation of the Strategy. In implementing the Strategy: 2001-2005 Contracting Parties will be meeting their obligations.

The successful conservation of migratory waterbirds will depend on increased awareness, active cooperation and committed participation at local, national and international levels. The Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee welcomes your active participation in this unique initiative. We invite government agencies, multilateral conventions, regional agreements, international and bilateral development, donor and assistance agencies, the corporate sector, local, national and international NGOs to endorse this Strategy and to promote, support and implement actions.

To provide access to a wider audience, the Strategy: 2001-2005 will be made available online on <http://www.wetlands.org>. The three species-group Action Plans may also be published as separately. For more information, please contact Wetlands International and the Flyway Officers (see Annex 6 for contact details).

Interim Chair - Alison Russell-French (Chair, Wetlands International - Asia Pacific Council)

Environment Australia - Trixi Madon

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Ministry of Environment and Forests, India - S. C. Sharma

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Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee (MWCC)

Wetlands International – Asia Pacific

March 2001

Okinawa Statement

Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005, International Workshop, Okinawa 19 October 2000

The “Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005, International Workshop”, held in Naha-city and Tomigusuku-village, Okinawa, from 16-19 October, 2000, was attended by 141 participants from the following states and territories: Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Korea (Republic of), Russia, Thailand, USA, Viet Nam and representatives of Wetlands International, Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). The meeting was organised by the Environment Agency of Japan, Environment Australia and Wetlands International - Asia Pacific, co-organised by the Okinawa Manko Steering Committee, with assistance from the Okinawa NGO Steering Committee.

The workshop expressed its sincere gratitude to the Okinawa Manko Steering Committee and the Okinawa NGO Steering Committee for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality.

The workshop also congratulated Okinawa Prefecture, Naha City and Tomigusuku Village for their continuing efforts in conservation of Manko as a site under the Convention on Wetlands and East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network.

The cyclical migration of waterbirds across the globe has been long recognised as a natural wonder. Annually, waterbirds fly many thousands of kilometres across a vast range of climates and habitats in response to the urge to nest, to replenish their reserves of strength, and to avoid adverse weather conditions. This constant pattern has been repeated many times and predates the evolution of humankind.

In meeting the demands of their life cycles, waterbirds depend on high quality wetland habitats in many countries. However, this pattern of existence of migratory waterbirds has come under increasing threat. Rapid human development across the globe has dramatically increased pressure on intertidal and freshwater wetlands and other habitats which has resulted in their degradation and loss, their pollution and increased harvest of waterbirds. Efforts to conserve migratory species in one country can only be effective if they are complemented by actions in all countries through which the species moves during its annual cycle. Complementary actions in all areas of their range are therefore essential for the conservation of migratory waterbird species.

In recognition of the threats to migratory waterbirds and their habitats and the need for action across the region to conserve them and their habitats, the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 1996-2000 was developed. The Strategy has been highly successful in promoting international activity related to flyway co-operation for waterbirds.

Significant achievements of the Strategy 1996-2000 include:

1. the establishment of international site networks for three species-groups (Shorebirds, Cranes, and Anatidae) that focus on promoting conservation of important wetlands in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway from the breeding grounds (northern hemisphere) through staging areas to the non-breeding areas (in the northern and southern hemispheres); and
2. the increased awareness, co-ordination, involvement and support by governments, conservation conventions, NGOs, and local people in the implementation of the Strategy.

The workshop reviewed and exchanged information on the implementation of the “Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 1996-2000”. Recognising the achievement of this Strategy and building on its strength, efficiency of the flyway approach methodology and the multilateral cooperation of this Strategy, and also effective implementation of the related activities in collaboration between governments and NGOs, the workshop approved the “Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005”. The Strategy 2001-2005 aims to

further enhance the long-term conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific region through a number of elements including;

1. Action plans for species-groups and globally threatened species.
2. Effectively managed networks of sites that are internationally important for migratory waterbirds.

Endorsing the Strategy as a framework for the development of actions for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats, the workshop:

1. **Recognised** the need for coordination of action between countries in the flyway for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific region,
2. **Is aware** of similar initiatives being undertaken in other flyways that contribute to conservation of migratory waterbirds globally,
3. **Recommended** that countries in the region actively support and implement the “Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005”,
4. **Urged** countries in the region to nominate additional sites to the Networks and to participate fully in the three species-group Action Plans established and developed under the Strategy,
5. **Recommended** that countries actively support the development and implementation of other Action Plans in the Strategy and site networks that will be developed under the Strategy,
6. **Urged** international organisations, non-governmental organisations, local governments or site management bodies, local communities and others to cooperatively participate in and support, particularly through funding the Strategy,
7. **Further urged** the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee established by Wetlands International - Asia Pacific to continue coordinating the development and implementation of the Strategy, and to convey and commend the finalised Strategy to the countries in the region and international organisations.

Acknowledgements

Conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands is a primary focus of Wetlands International. We consider promotion of efforts to conserve waterbirds as an important tool to foster and build international support and cooperation to generate awareness and build local and national capacity to undertake actions to conserve wetlands and their biodiversity. Wetlands International recognises the importance of the development of strategic conservation plans through consultation and of the building of partnerships with governments, conventions, other NGOs, technical experts, local people, the corporate sector and development/donor agencies to promote and implement these plans at a local and national level. Implementation of the Strategy: 1996-2000 and the development of the Strategy: 2001-2005 has been a cooperative initiative involving governments of the region, the Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Migratory Species, BirdLife International, World Wide Fund for Nature, International Crane Foundation, national and local NGOs, members of the public and Wetlands International.

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Executive Director
Wetlands International - Asia Pacific
March 2001