Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force

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The Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) News Bulletin is a regular, half-yearly update of activities of the SBS Task Force of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP). The News Bulletin is edited by Dr Christoph Zöckler, Chair of the EAAFP SBS Task Force with assistance from Elena Lappo and Coordinator Sayam U. Chowdhury.

Mission:
The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) aims to coordinate the conservation activities identified in the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Single Species Action Plan for the species, which was commissioned by BirdLife International. The activities in the Action Plan are regularly reviewed and updated by all Flyway Members and a growing network of active supporters and groups in the Flyway countries, and beyond.

The Task Force originates from the establishment of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Team (SBS RT) in 2004, when several partners active in the conservation of this globally threatened wader met in Edinburgh. With the growing level of activity, the finalization of the Action Plan in 2008 and a growing network of partners, organisations and supporters the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) was formed at the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) meeting in Korea in February 2010. In December 2010, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) was officially endorsed as one of the first species Task Forces by the Partnership under the EAAFP Shorebird Working Group. Implementing organisation for the SBS TF is BirdLife International through its partner Birds Russia. It is chaired by the Government Partner of Russia. Task Force members consist of the EAAFP Government Partners of key range states for the species and international conservation organisations. These are: the Russian Federation, Japan, People's Republic of China, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Union of Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh and India, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT), Wetlands International, a representative of the EAAFP Shorebird Working Group, Fauna Flora International (FFI) and experts and conservation organisations from principal range states and other partners. We are grateful to the RSPB, NABU and the Manfred-Hermsen-Stiftung for their continued support of the SBS Task Force and Spoon-billed Sandpiper projects across the range states.

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Foreword by the Editor

Dr Christoph Zöckler · Manfred Hermsen Foundation

It was twenty years ago, when our fledgling Taskforce met in Thailand to draft the first Action Plan. Twenty years later we are meeting in Thailand again. The Taskforce has grown to a powerful advocacy and campaign group with dedicated members from almost all flyway countries and experts from all over the globe.

Nobody would have imagined the changes that the Taskforce went through, the range and level of participation, the new technologies and scientific knowledge acquired. The species has attracted and still is attracting many very dedicated and energetic people.

It is almost inconceivable how Elena Lappo travelled twice to remote places in Chukotka and Kamchatka to work on the protection of our species. Both sites are relatively close to each other but required travelling back to Moscow and returning to the other side of Russia. After both excursions she went to Svalbard in August for a different project and in September to Spain for the Wader Study Group conference.

Equally energetic is the feat of Katherine Leung. In March and April she tried to catch the Spoonies in Thailand. In spring and autumn she was surveying the Jiangsu Coast and in September organising an international expedition to Korea.

Then there is Jodie with Ollie. Her dedication to restart head-starting meant a lot of sacrifices on her behalf, but her story is amazing and she successfully restarted the project in Chukotka again.

There are many more examples, and we are very lucky to have so many dedicated people in our Taskforce. You'll find some of their stories and findings in this newsletter.

Our sandpiper is still declining. We need to urgently implement all the actions identified in the new Action Plan. Making progress on this is the prime objective of our meeting in Thailand. It is fantastic to have so many dedicated sponsors that continue to support our Taskforce. MCF, MHS, NABU, WCS, RSPB and ICF are some of the key organisations. The new web site by ICF is very impressive. With such a level of global dedication and support there seems to be little doubt that we will safe Spoonie.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* Survey and Monitoring in Southern Chukotka in 2026

Elena G. Lappo[1,3], Anton P. Ivanov[2], Dmitry S. Nizovtsev[3], Natalia V. Karlionova[4], Dmitry Shamovich[3]

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The oldest male, "Lime 24", marked as a chick in 2010, incubating *E. Lappo*

In 2026, a joint expedition by BirdsRussia, the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences and FGBU VNII Ecology had several objectives. The main objective was to conduct a comprehensive survey of monitoring sites near Meinypil'gyno (Anadyrsky District, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug), determine the number of breeding pairs and individual Spoon-billed Sandpipers, and assess breeding productivity. Other wader species (including Red-necked Stint and Dunlin) were also studied, and predator abundance and predation pressure were assessed.

The expedition continued the long-running monitoring programme, which in 2026 was supported again by NABU, the President's Nature Fund, "Study and conservation of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* in the south-east of Chukotka" and the Russian Science Foundation.

The BirdsRussia expedition began on 24 May, when the main team flew to Anadyr on 25 May and travelled to Meinypil'gyno on a scheduled helicopter flight on 26 May. The return helicopter flight from Meinypil'gyno took place on 21 July, and the flight from Anadyr to Moscow departed as scheduled on 24 July. The expedition therefore lasted approximately two months.

The 2026 monitoring team included specialists from Russia and Belarus: Elena Lappo, senior researcher at the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Candidate of Geographical Sciences, scientific consultant to BirdsRussia and field team leader; Anton Ivanov, senior researcher at VNII Ecology and Candidate of Biological Sciences; Dmitry Nizovtsev, ornithologist and BirdsRussia volunteer; and Natalia Karlionova and Dmitry Shamovich, ornithologists from Belarus. Natalia Karlionova is a leading researcher



View near Meinypil'gyno *E. Lappo*

at the Laboratory of Ornithology of the Scientific and Practical Center for Bioresources of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

As in previous years, the expedition took place in the tundra around the village of Meinypil'gyno in south-eastern Chukotka (62.53°N, 177.05°E). Spoon-billed Sandpipers breed on coastal spits, including those along the southern shore of the large brackish Lake Pekulneyskoye, as well as in mosaics of wetland habitats and on moraine hills. Breeding sites are rarely more than 1.5 km from the edge of the coastal plain or large waterbodies.

In June and July 2026, 25 Spoon-billed Sandpipers (14 males and 11 females) were recorded at the main monitoring site near Meinypil'gyno and in the surrounding area. Of these, 22 had been marked in previous years (nine as adults and 13 as chicks), including two males (White "1H" and White "2L") reared through the Headstarting programme. Two birds (one male and one female) were unmarked; the male was subsequently marked during the field season. For one additional female, we could not determine whether she had been marked. Two females (Lime "LH" and Lime "KH"), marked as chicks in 2024, returned to their natal area for the first time. Spoon-billed Sandpipers usually start breeding at two years of age.

Individual colour marks allow the ages of Spoon-

Table 1. Spoon-billed Sandpipers recorded in three sections of the main monitoring area around Meinypil'gyno and at the more distant Western Oil Drill Station in 2026

Sex	**Main monitoring area**			**Western Oil Drill Station**	**Total**
	Western section	Central section	Eastern section		
Males	-	Lime 24, Lime 27, Lime 69, Lime 79, Lime 94, Lime 8V, Lime M4, Lime L0, White 1H, White 2L	Lime OJ, Lime H0	Lime 84, Lime 7L	14
Females	-	Lime 36, Lime 88, Lime LH, Lime KH, Lime 8M, 1 unknown, Lime Y7	Lime 47, Lime L7	Lime 52, 1 unmarked	11
Total	**0**	**17**	**4**	**4**	**25**



Male "Lime 27", marked as a chick in 2013 *Anton Ivanov*



Female "Lime 8M", marked as a chick in 2019 *Dmitry Nizovtsev*



Male "White 1H", marked as a chick and reared under semi-captive conditions in 2016 *Anton Ivanov*



Spoon-billed Sandpiper chick marked with an individually coded flag "Lime JJ" *Natalia Karlionova*

billed Sandpipers to be determined. For example, male "Lime 24" and female "Lime 36", both recorded again at their previous breeding sites in 2026, were ringed as chicks in 2010 and were therefore 16 years old. Male "Lime 27" was ringed as a wild chick in 2013 and was 13 years old in 2026. Male "White 1H" hatched under semi-captive conditions as part of the Headstarting Programme in 2016 and was 10 years old in 2026. See also article about Korea on page 30.

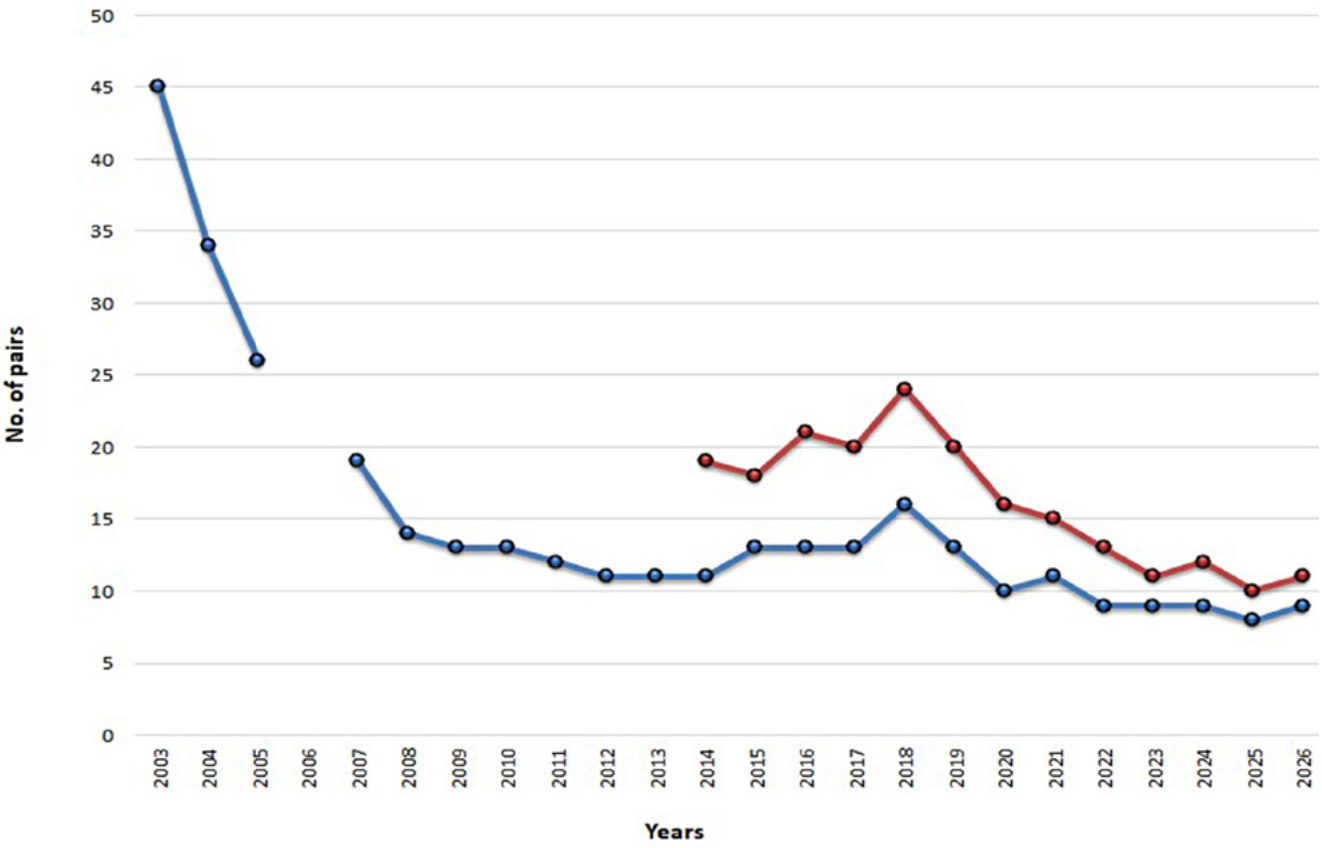
All 11 females formed pairs. Ten nests were found for nine pairs, including one replacement clutch. Only a nest scrape was found for one pair at a remote site (male "Lime 84" and female "Lime 52"), while a brood was found for another pair (male "Lime H0" and female "Lime L7"). Three males remained unpaired, compared with six in the previous year.

Compared with the previous year, the number of breeding pairs increased by one, following the recruitment of new females that formed two new pairs. However, we did not relocate one pair recorded in the previous year (male "Lime 51" and female "Lime 50"). We also surveyed remote areas (Chaivaam and Myngyskon) where Spoon-billed Sandpipers had bred as recently as 2022, but found no additional birds.

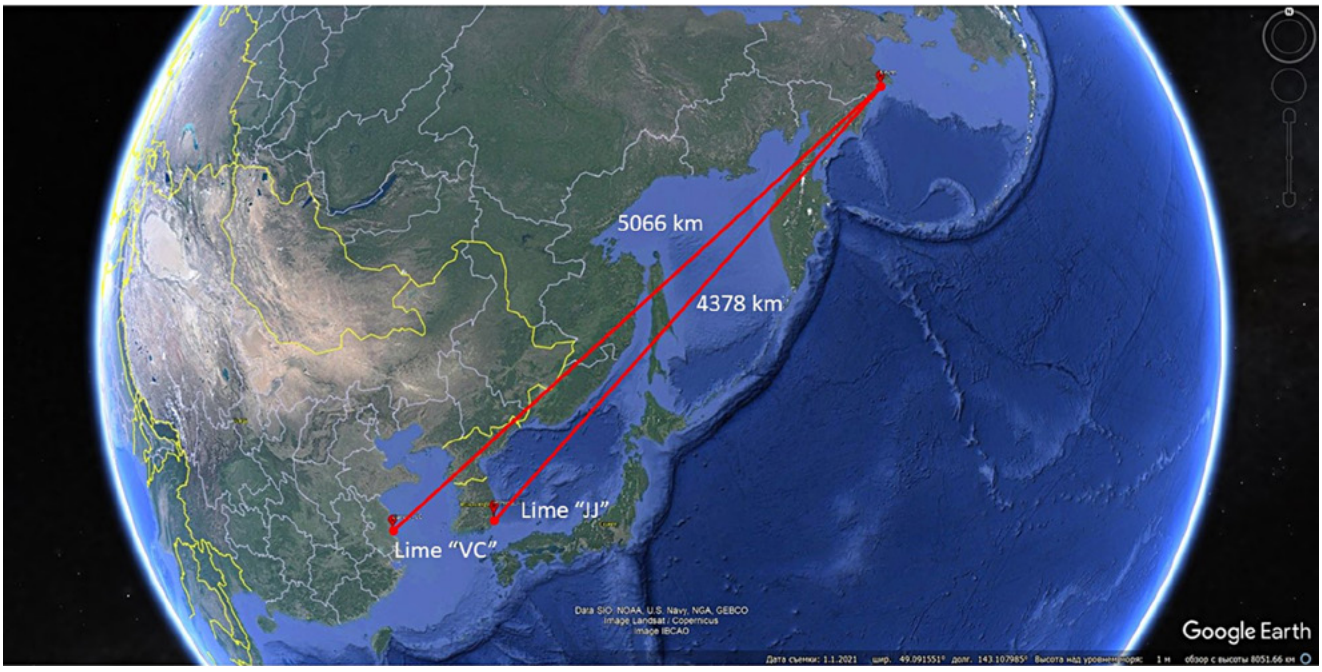
Of the ten nests, five were successful, with broods recorded. A sixth nest was considered probably successful: the chicks appeared to have left the nest, leaving one egg behind, whereas predators generally destroy the entire clutch. On this basis, apparent nest success was 60%, slightly lower than in the previous year (63.4%) but higher than in 2024 (50.0%). Nine of the ten nests were found before 20 June, early enough for eggs to be collected for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Headstarting Programme, which resumed in 2026, but using different sandpiper species.

During the 2026 field season, 18 Spoon-billed Sandpipers (one adult and 17 chicks) were ringed and fitted with individually coded light-green

(lime) flags near Meinypil'gyno. These included one adult male (Lime "69") and 17 flightless chicks. Two of the chicks (Lime "JJ" and Lime "VC") were subsequently resighted at migratory stopover sites in September: one at Pohang, North Gyeongsang Province, South Korea, and the other at Donglin, Jiangsu Province, China. These sites are 4,378 km and 5,066 km, respectively, from the ringing site.



Number of breeding pairs of Spoon-billed Sandpipers at the main monitoring site near Meinypil'gyno, southern Chukotka (blue line), and across the main site and adjacent remote areas combined (red line), 2003–2026



Resightings of two Spoon-billed Sandpiper chicks marked with individually coded flags in 2026

Restarting Headstarting: My Story

Jodie Clements



This story begins several years ago, eight to be precise, in the summer of 2018. I didn't know it at the time, but this trip would ultimately steer the rest of my life and arguably make restarting headstarting possible in 2026. Any way… headstarting of Spoonies was in full swing in Meinypilgyno, Chukotka. Now officially lead by Birds-Russia and a spirited Russian team trained in methods developed by seasoned conservation aviculturists; the young-as-you-feel legends who built 'Conservation Action' at WWT, Slimbridge. All that was required now was an assistant. That's where I come in.

I'd barely been employed a year and was on a temporary contract to boot. Though I was sure in my abilities having handled eggs and incubators since I could see over the kitchen counter, I can't say I always executed that confidence around my peers. Anyone that knows me will tell you the same. Nevertheless, when I was asked if I wanted to join the headstarting team in the arse end of nowhere with no one I knew I couldn't refuse.

I knew the moment I stepped into the aviary of Spoonies housed at Slimbridge at the time that this was the bird I would do anything to spend my career on. I like to think my employees, those legends, 'saw something thing in me'. It was a pretty big gamble to send me to Russia, but I later learned that a subordinate woman was an essential quality for this job position. I was raring to go. Whilst there, I did what I was told to, I gave advice where it was invited and started to learn Russian (mostly profanities). But I wanted to do more, I knew I could do more to help in Meino. I remember one of the first times we all sat down for dinner, everyone was conversing, in Russian of course, and all seemingly disgruntled and aggravated at one another. They suddenly burst into laughter but almost immediately went back to irked conversation. I soon realised it was me that

just wasn't used to or savvy in Russian culture; hence my hesitance to push to be more involved. I understood too that this was the first opportunity the Russian headstarting team had had without foreign leadership; a timid girl was a sensible choice in that regard. I again joined the team in Meino in the summer of 2019. In both years Spoonie eggs were successfully collected and incubated, then chicks reared and released. Results were good, though not as good as years prior, but they weren't bad by any stretch. Summer of 2020 came around fast, as did Covid-19; and lockdown. Fortunately, BirdsRussia were still able to send a Russian team to conduct monitoring and headstarting with remote support from WWT, and in 2021 as well. Again, eggs were collected and chicks were released. Be that as it may, slowly but surely, the wild population in Meino, and the world over, was dwindling.

2022 rolled in. As did the troops and drones into Ukraine. Although monitoring efforts in Meinypilgyno were able to continue the same was not possible for Spoonie headstarting. Nothing was predictable, little could be planned, and even less could be implemented. Animals don't see borders or sanctions but humans for animal conservation have to abide, nonetheless.



Ollie and her Spoonie

There was one little Calidris miracle of 2022 though. Ollie, my daughter (of hybrid vigour according to my father) half British, half Russian, was born. Again, children don't see or understand borders until they are told to, but we did what we could to stay connected regardless of the distance and global turmoil. From the moment I held her I knew I wanted to take her to the place it all started, at least for her. It was in Meino in 2018 where I first met her father, and let's just say I remained curious of him and Russia ever since. As she grew, the unpredictability of global circumstances grew too. It was clear any attempts to restart Spoonie headstarting had to be internal, within Russia, and self-supporting going forwards. Half the problem was finding someone to lead the headstarting aspects in Meino. Any (rational) Russian would know better than to take on a seasonal position for minimal wage. And once again, that's where I come in …

I'd been umming and ahing every year since 2020 about whether to join the headstarting team by my own means (because I was not going to be condoned to travel through any reasonable employer). With the arrival of my daughter that decision became even harder. I was completely torn. My parents were naturally against it, all travel to Russia in fact. Her father was naturally encouraging it, living and breathing there, ensuring me it was safe for us to come. Since Spoonies entered my life that's all I've ever wanted to dedicate my career to. Since my daughter entered my life I would do anything to protect her and see her thrive. Russia is in active war. The United Kingdom is an enemy. She was already three and had never known her father's homeland, the other half of her. No one else was even contemplating leading headstarting in Meino, practically no one else could. Time went on and considerable internal funding was looking more promising by the week. I had to make a choice. We applied for visas in advance just in case. Funding was finally approved. Then the visas came through. We took the leap. In May 2026 I left my job of nine years at WWT with more love and support than I could carry. Two weeks later Ollie and I were at the airport and headed to Moscow via Antalya, where her father was waiting for her. Saying goodbye to my mum and dad was hard, for Ollie especially (I'm still not sure they've forgiven me for putting them through this, especially considering the extremely poor connection in Meino) but this was our best chance to restart headstarting, and as a family.

It came as a big surprise to Ollie when we landed in Russia 'where is all the snow!?'. We got through border control easier than in the dozen times I'd passed through before. Ollie was the only reason



Expedition Team 2026

Monitoring team:
Dr. Elena Lappo
Dr. Anton Ivanov
Dmitriy Nizovtsev

Headstarting Team:
Alexander Savin
Andrey Golub
Dr. Dmitriy Shamovich
Ekaterina Parafenyuk
Dr. Egor Y Loktionov
Jodie Clements
Maria Godyaeva
Dr. Natalia V Karlionova
Olga Loktionova-Clements
Victoria Ergunova

I was admitted into Chukotka at all. We couldn't have resumed the project without her! To Ollies excitement we found plenty of snow in Chukotka. Travel generally was relatively smooth, with all 12 people and 5 tonnes of luggage between us. The final leg of the journey was a helicopter ride on the 28th May from Anadyr. The helicopter being the highlight of the week in Meino, carrying goods, post and loved ones, the only way in or out of the village for a good portion of the year. We disembarked and headed to 'Spoonie Manor'. It had everything the project required and was more or less ready for use. There are several buildings on the property, so we were able to separate headstarting and monitoring activities for the most part; maintaining biosecurity was a key feature in restarting headstarting. The house for the use of headstarting couldn't have been much better. Though built some time ago it had never been lived in. The ground floor was large, open-planned with tall ceilings, and almost all surfaces in the house were wipe-clean. The kitchen had plenty of work surfaces and storage, and there was ample room for incubators and many brooders for chick rearing. The first floor had a large landing and two large bedrooms for all aviculturists (avics). There was also a bathroom on each floor meaning we could have one dedicated for headstarting and the other for staff.

We immediately began preparations in the house, cleaning and disinfecting everything before bringing all the headstarting equipment from storage, also cleaned and disinfected upon entering the house. I was incredibly grateful for the careful inventory and packing the prior year from fellow avics, Nicolay Yakushev and Ivan Shepelev. This also ensured we could procure replacement parts and perishables efficiently for this year. Considering most of the equipment was over a decade old now it was in very good condition, also a testament to avics of years gone by. Ollie quickly began settling into her new routine too, as junior avic she had all the equipment she needed to join in the headstarting activities.

The monitoring team began surveys, looking for Spoonies, but also paying attention to the Red-necked Stint and Dunlin. 2026 would ulti-



The entirety of Spoonie Manor

mately be a trial and training year, testing new and updated methods on a closely related species and training a completely new team of avics in all methods without putting Spoonies at risk. It was hoped the licence for collecting Spoonie eggs would be granted to collect eggs in addition to RNS and Dunlin, but given this was not stated in the project proposal for the first year it was sadly denied. This year we also had a much larger headstarting team with five people dedicated to headstarting activities alone. This reduced time spent setting up and cleaning considerably and allowed maintenance of a high level of hygiene and biosecurity throughout the project, not to mention adequate sleep. This also allowed ample time for training in egg and incubator handling tech-





Vika demonstrating egg handling and marking. Ollie demonstrating (dummy) egg candling

niques, as well as the practices and theory around headstarting methods before eggs were collected.

Egg collection began on the 9th June and by the 23rd June 38 RNS and Dunlin eggs filled the incubators. With daily weighing and candling of the eggs, avics grew in confidence quickly. Candling involves shining a light through the egg to observe its contents. This way we can ascertain presence of life and estimate how far into incubation the egg may be. It was clear early on that two eggs had not developed whilst in the nest (the other two of the same clutch were well developed). Another three eggs also had complications in incubation. When found, these three eggs were scattered around the nest with the parent bird still attempting to incubate. They were collected regardless and provided a good training opportunity in difficult eggs. Unfortunately, despite extensive intervention these eggs did not hatch. Of the 33 viable eggs, all hatched. A mega achievement felt by us all. Next, came the hard part …



Egg collection trip by boat

At one point during the project we had eggs in incubators, hatchers, chicks being reared indoors, AND at the release aviary, simultaneously. Again, a good training opportunity in case of large hatch windows with Spoonies in future. This situation didn't last long as the chicks grow incredibly quickly. The point of headstarting is to get the eggs/chicks through the most vulnerable parts of early life. However, this comes with consequences. Artificial environments have the potential to compromise long term health and welfare, so there is a balance to strike. Human contact is limited to a minimum (another focus for this year's updated methods), and chicks are weaned off the factors that increased their chances of survival (artificial diet, heat, shelter) as soon as possible, ready for life in the wild. By the 9th July all chicks were outdoors, placed in an aviary on suitable habitat outside the village. As soon as the first chicks were placed in the aviary, avics remained close by to keep an eye on them. Trapped prey attracts predators, not to mention curious bears, so staff were always on hand to deter them. We also needed to ensure the chicks within the aviary didn't become desensitised to predators in proximity.

Due to the large gap between the first and last chicks to hatch the birds needed releasing at multiple intervals in batches when they reached approx. 17 days old. To reduce disturbance to the birds and risk to those that remained in the aviary those for release were taken some distance away to another suitable release site and released from a small corral. Of the 33 that hatched, one hatched



Supervising the release

sickly and oddly proportioned and died soon after. The remaining 32 were released with the last leaving the aviary on the 21st July.

Throughout the project Ollie was, to the best of her three/four-year-old ability, respectful of the birds and their needs, got involved wherever she was able, and befriended everyone she met there. Her Russian is genuinely better than mine. To involve her with what is undoubtably my passion has been a privilege. She was very happy to help release the birds. I am sure her favourite part

though was getting to spend 12 weeks play-fighting with Papa. That, or the banya …!

I am immensely grateful to the headstarting and monitoring teams, past and present, enabling us to achieve some of the best results of the project so far. We are excited to replicate and improve on these results and methods next year for Spoonies. It is an honour to be able to play a small part in the massive effort to conserve this species. As well as resuming headstarting, we had the opportunity to resume as a family. On a personal level, I am forever grateful to all those that made this possible, and Ollies experience a truly memorable one.

Restarting Headstarting: the serious bit

The benefits of headstarting Spoon-billed Sandpiper have long been known, from the direct impact it has on the population to the engagement and funding opportunities it brings. After 2021, headstarting activities in Meinypilgyno ceased due to the varying global circumstances and conflicts effecting funding and staffing of the project. It became clear that to resume headstarting the project had to be organised internally within Russia, including funding and staffing long term.

In September 2025 project proposals were submitted by BirdsRussia for resuming of headstarting (and continued monitoring) in Chukotka beginning summer 2026. The Presidential Foundation for Nature granted funding for three years along with co-funding from NABU with the following outcomes to be achieved:

- Purchase of property in Meinypilgyno dedicated to headstarting and monitoring activities of Spoon-billed Sandpiper
- Purchase of new headstarting equipment including transport, power supply, incubators, brooders, and aviary
- Training of a new full Russian team (over a three year period) including reserve aviculturists and technicians
- First year (2026) to be a trial year using closely related species, Red-necked Stint and Dunlin, to trial new methods and begin training staff
- From 2027 release at least 20 Spoon-billed Sandpiper chicks annually
- Genetic sampling for sexing and biosecurity control annually

Once funding was granted preparations began; organising staff and logistics, and procuring property and equipment. Essentials required for 2026 were brought in luggage and the remainder loaded into a shipping container to be taken by land and sea arriving to the village in late summer.

Setup

In May 2026 the headstarting and monitoring teams headed to Meinypilgyno, arriving shortly before the birds were expected. Monitoring began immediately as did preparations for the property. One house was selected for all headstarting activities, whilst the other was used for accommodation and meal preparation. There is also a large garage on the property to store and maintain all required vehicles, as well as various shipping containers for



Training in egg handling *Egor Loktionov*



Indoor rearing set up *Jodie Clements*



Incubation set-up *Maria Godyaeva*



Chicks in transport to the aviary *Maria Godyaeva*

additional storage. A large headstarting team this year allowed for timely set-up of the facilities and equipment, maintenance of strict biosecurity and hygiene, adequate rest for all headstarting staff, and ample time for training in all headstarting protocols and theory.

Methods

Headstarting protocols largely followed the well-developed methods established in the previous decade of Spoon-billed Sandpiper headstarting, but some modifications were made. Notable differences include: a larger team divided into smaller teams (day/night shifts, indoor/outdoor shifts), stricter biosecurity and hygiene protocols, reduced contact with chicks, amended number of days reared indoors, reducing habituation to nets, and amended age of release. This year a modified shipping container was transported to the release aviary site (permanently) to serve as staff accommodation whilst the chicks occupied the aviary. Predator aversion methods were also due to be altered but could not be implemented this year. It was clear that some protocols/practices need to be altered further to improve chick health during outdoor rearing.

Results

38 eggs were collected in total (8 Dunlin, 30 Red-necked Stint). Of these eggs 33 were viable, and 33 hatched (8 Dunlin, 25 Red-necked Stint). One RNS chick hatched sickly and died shortly after hatch. The remaining 32 went on to fledge and were released. Incubation and indoor rearing were relatively straight forward with little cause for concern regarding egg/chick health and welfare. Outdoor rearing proved slightly more challenging in terms of health condition, later found to likely be cause by the substrates used within the aviary. This appeared to cause the chicks feet to dry and crack, with infection from open wounds in the most severe case. The chicks were treated but ultimately releasing them early (removing the cause of the issue) was the most effective treatment. Post release monitoring was conducted for 19 days after release, by which point the majority were thought to have started migration. Some HS birds were observed with other flocks of juvenile waders.

Conclusions

Results for headstarting this year were some of the best in Meinypilgyno so far. This can in part be attributed to:

- a new, large, dedicated facility,
- a larger team, strict biosecurity and hygiene protocols,
- and concentrated repetitive training with an experienced tutor.

It is clear there are still some methods and practices in need of alteration to increase the health and welfare of chicks whilst in our care. These are being discussed and will be implemented in 2027. With the new practices and facilities established this year it will be possible in future to scale-up headstarting efforts and increase the number of SBS chicks released annually, though this is dependent on the number of pairs available to collect eggs from. It is logistically possible to collect eggs from other local breeding populations and bring eggs to Meinypilgyno for release without significantly effecting the local donor population, as observed in egg collections made in 2011 and 2012 to begin a captive conservation breeding population. Discussions are underway as to whether this is viable in the next few years.



Released Red-necked Stint *Natalia Karlionova*

The second Spoon-billed Sandpiper Survey at the Kamchatka Plateau in 2026

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SBS male, incubating the brood *A. Ivanov*

After last year's successful expedition by Birds-Russia discovering Spoon-billed Sandpiper breeding on a plateau in Kamchatka (Leung, 2024; Lappo et al. 2025) another site in the western part of the Northern Kamchatka plateau was planned to visit in July 2026. Based on a SBS transmitter, marked in 2017 in China (Yellow XT), briefly visiting a similar habitats as K9, and probably had an attempt to breed there, but its tag stopped transmitting at some stage (Chang et al, 2020; R. Green et al., unpublished data).

The expedition started by flights to the local settlement on 7 July. Everything was prepared for the plan above, but the weather forecast for the western part of the plateau was very bad for the coming dates of the survey with clouds and low visibility for the flight. We could not wait for more than couple of days, because the hatching dates would be missed, when the SBS are the most active and visible, warning around their broods. Instead, we decided to change the plan flew to the eastern part of the plateau again, to the neighboring square to the place surveyed last year to find more SBS breeding at the new site visited by K9 to check the known breeding locations from 2025. The flight to the field camp by the same private helicopter "Robinson" with Andrey as pilot took about one hour. The field camp was located near the lakes on the plateau at 350 m height.

The weather was changeable, varying from sunny to heavy rain, very dense fog with wind and drizzle. The amount of snow was remarkably higher compared with previous year, due to a heavy snowstorm in April 2026. Because of this, snow-free patches at the beginning of egg-laying and incubation were limited. As a result of this the hatching dates of SBS for this year were a bit later than in 2025. Also the amount of snow in the valleys and on mountain slopes, and the amount of water in the lakes and streams was higher than in 2025.



Snow in the valleys and on slopes *Elena Lappo*



On the way to place of research inside helicopter "Robinson" *A. Ivanov*



Helicopter "Robinson" after landing on the place of future field camp *Elena Lappo*



Field camp on the plateau *Elena Lappo*

The survey's main aim was to search for SBS broods, precisely checking the surrounding of the broods A, B and C locations from 2025, because SBS are very site faithful.

During the survey the recording of SBS displaying, warning and chick's calls recordings was played from time to time using speaker system JBL Charge 6 Black, enhancing SBS search.

The total transect length during the survey was about 200 km, covering 15-20 km per day. Different types of habitats were covered (see photos and the map of transects), usually one day was spent within the new grid, and another day – within "K9 site".

On 10 of July the first SBS was heard and soon after male and female and their nest with two just hatched chicks and one egg were found. Both adult birds were caught and banded (female "LIME 54", and male "LIME 55").

On 11 July closer to the place of the field camp



The breeding area – the slope of the plateau *Elena Lappo*

in 2025, and near the lake a single SBS was seen (most likely female, who probably just left her brood, because she did not show any evidence of warning), or the partner of the second SBS nest No 2, which we found later, incubated by SBS male. All four eggs in the nest were with fresh cracks.

On 13 July all 4 SBS chicks of the second nest was found 108 meters SE from their nest in the small depression, by using thermal camera. All four chicks were banded (by metal rings on left tibia and Lime engraved flags on right tibia). See photos further below by E. Lappo and A. Ivanov.

Other breeding waders were Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (at least 2 nests and 1 brood), Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (2 nests and 2 broods) and Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis* (2 broods) and migrating Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* at the 260-424 m height.



SBS nest No 2 with two just hatched chicks and one egg



Banded adult birds (female "Lime 54" and male "Lime 55")



Single SBS most likely female, who probably just left her brood, did not show any evidence of warning *A. Ivanov*



SBS nest No 2 with four eggs *E. Lappo*







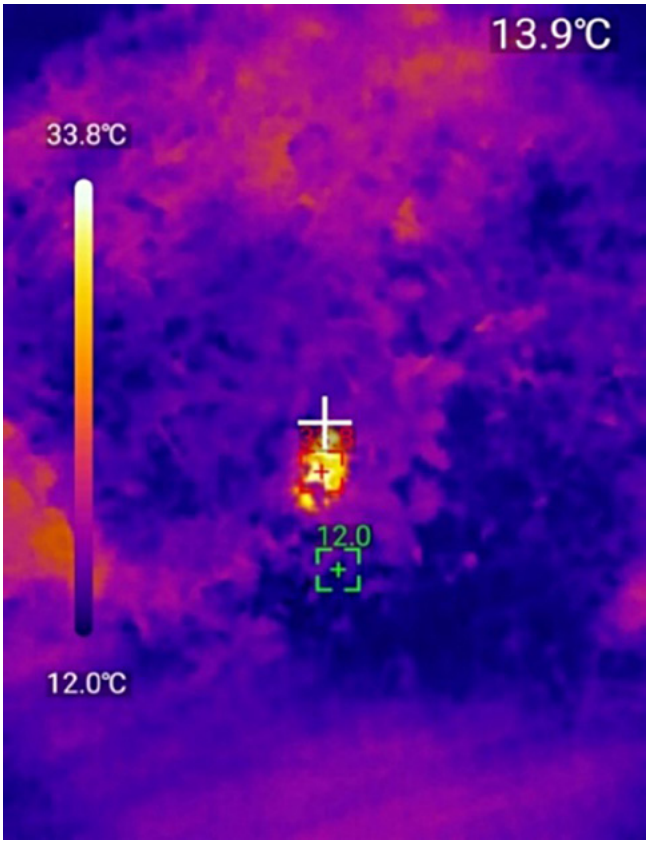



Photo of SBS nest by camera SONY DSC-HX80 (left) and by Thermal camera UNI-T (UTi721M), right

E. Lappo and A. Ivanov

Possible predation pressure and other threats

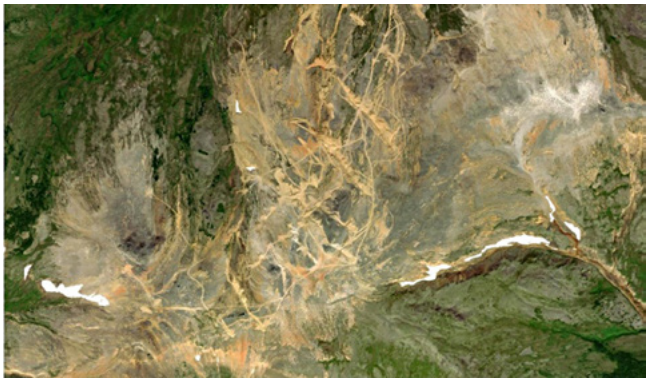
The list of potential predators consists of: Raven *Corvus corax* and Gulls *Larus spec*., passing by the area, Long-tailed and Parasitic Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* and *S. parasiticus*, Stoat *Mustela erminea* (observed in 2025), Brown Bear *Ursus arctos*, Ground Squirrel *Urocitellus undulatus*, and droppings of Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* were found. In addition, a small groups of wild or domestic reindeer crossing the area.

The human disturbance at the site seems to be quite low: one caterpillar road in the valley at a distance of 3-5 km, and rare evidence of reindeer keepers visiting the area, maybe in the past. The area is very remote and hardly accessible. But the area is potentially valuable for the precious metals, and surveys for mining and drilling works are on-going in some places in the eastern part of the plateau by different companies which might be dangerous for the habitats and need to be investigated in more detail.

Time was very limited for the survey, because of the flight schedule and bad weather.



Small group of Reindeers (most likely domestic escaped)
E. Lappo



Mining and drilling work to obtain the precious metals on the plateau (Google Earth)

Acknowlegements
We feel our survey would have been impossible without international cooperation and personal help of many people involved, so it is our pleasure to acknowledge:

- Expedition team in China and Chukotka in 2017-2018 and Katherine Leung personally in 2024 – for tagging SBS with satellite transmitter;
- Prof R. Green, Dr. N. Clark, Dr. S. Chowdhury and E. Weston for the preliminary analysis and providing the satellite data;
- A. Narykov (IG RAS, Moscow) for the satellite analysis of possible threats due to drilling work and tracks and other types of human disturbance;
- Dr. Yu. Gerasimov for his help in preparation of the expedition logistics, providing his living facilities and his unpublished data;
- A. Chupilka - the helicopter owner and pilot for the delivery to the survey area and taking us back;
- V.L. Basanov from Ossora settlement for his help in logistic and living facilities.
- BIOME and RSF grant 22-17-00168-P for the financial support for the survey and during data proceeding.

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Over-summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers at Tiaozini, Jiangsu

Ziyou Yang and Lin Zhang (SBSinChina)



A local surveyor walking on the Tiaozini sandbar *Ziyou Yang*

Over-summering in shorebirds refers to the phenomenon in which individuals do not complete their northward migration to their breeding grounds in the Northern Hemisphere but remain in southern non-breeding areas during the breeding season. This phenomenon is well documented among second-year shorebirds.

Spoon-billed Sandpipers *Calidris pygmaea* return to their natal areas and potential breeding grounds at a mean age of two years (in their third calendar year; Tomkovich and Loktionov, 2021), meaning that some subadults may over-summer elsewhere. The first record of over-summering subadult Spoon-billed Sandpipers was from Thailand in July 2010 (Eiam-ampai et al., 2011). Similar records were reported from Bangladesh in May and June (Li et al., 2016).

Since 2015, Spoon-billed Sandpipers have been recorded over-summering at Tiaozini, Jiangsu Province, and the majority of marked individuals were second-year birds (Zhang, 2016; Table I). For our surveys in Jiangsu, we generally define the over-summering period as June and early July, as failed breeders begin returning to Tiaozini in mid-July.

While we recorded over-summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers for six consecutive years between 2015 and 2020, records became sporadic from 2021 to 2025. This is partly due to disruptions to surveys caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Fangtang Estuary (approximately 32.70002°N, 120.91417°E) which is approximately 9 km to the south of Tiaozini, may also provide suitable foraging habitat and high-tide roosts, but this area has been under-surveyed. Some Spoon-billed Sandpipers

Table I. The over-summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers recorded at Tiaozini by the SBSinChina team, Jiangsu before 2026

Year	Marked individuals and banding history	Minimum number of SBSs
2015	None	6
2016	White X7, head-started as a chick in 2015 White X8, head-started as a chick in 2014 Lime flag unread on right tibia	6
2017	White 1A &1H &1M, head-started as chicks in 2016 Yellow MJ, marked as a stopover juvenile in Kamchatka in 2016 Lime A6, wild born in 2015 Lime M3 & U3 & K5 & E4, wild born in 2016 Yellow CH, marked at Tiaozini in spring 2017	23
2018	Yellow YE, marked as a stopover juvenile in Kamchatka in 2017 White A9 over orange plain flag, marked as a stopover juvenile in South Korea in 2016 White flag unread	12
2019	Lime J0, wild born in 2018 White flag unread	9
2020	Lime 7X & 5Y, wild born in 2019	5
2023	Lime flag unread on right tibia	3

may therefore have over-summered there without being detected. More importantly, the tidal flat area next to the Tiaozini Parking Lot and close to the seawall, which used to be a good location for observing Spoon-billed Sandpipers, has been substantially altered by the shifting of a major tidal channel towards the seawall (Chang et al. 2021). During low tide, waterbirds, including some Spoon-billed Sandpipers, tend to forage on the slightly higher-elevation tidal flats outside and to the east of the tidal channel, an area we refer to as the "sandbar" (approximately 32.73084°N, 120.96778°E). On days when high tides are high enough to submerge the sandbar, Spoon-billed Sandpipers fly from high-tide roosts such as the 720-mu roost to the tidal flats closer to the seawall near the Tiaozini Parking Lot as the tide recedes, where they may continue to rest, while some individuals

Table II. Spoon-billed Sandpipers recorded at the Tiaozini sandbar in June and July 2026

Survey date	Marked individual(s)	Minimum number of SBSs per survey	Number of surveyors
June 17	Lime 2T, marked as a chick in Chukotka in 2025	4	4 people
June 21	Lime C2, marked as a chick in Chukotka in 2025	2	1 person
July 18	Lime M8, marked as a chick in Kamchatka in 2025 Lime C2, marked as a chick in Chukotka in 2025	8	5 people
July 22	Lime 2C, marked as a chick in Chukotka in 2025	4	1 person
July 28	Lime 2C, marked as a chick in Chukotka in 2025 Lime flag unread	7	2 people



Lime 2T at the Tiaozini sandbar Dongming Li on June 17



Lime C2 at the Tiaozini sandbar Dongming Li on June 21



Lime M8 at the Tiaozini sandbar Dongming Li on July 18



Lime 2C at the Tiaozini sandbar Dongming Li on July 22

fly directly to the sandbar once it becomes accessible. As the tide continues to fall, more of the sandbar becomes exposed, and it is increasingly used by Spoon-billed Sandpipers for foraging.

Since late 2025, with funding from the Tiaozini local government, SBSinChina has been conducting regular surveys of the sandbar. We generally walk to the sandbar during low tide, scan for Spoon-billed Sandpipers foraging on the sandbar, and return by boat as the tide rises. In June and July 2026, SBSinChina and/or local surveyors Feng Qian and Dongming Li conducted five Spoon-billed Sandpiper surveys on the sandbar. We recorded at least ten different individuals, four of which were marked: Lime 2T, Lime C2, Lime 2C, and Lime M8. All four were subadults born in the previous year (Table II). The first three were from Chukotka, while the latter was from the newly discovered mountain plateau in Kamchatka.

Lime 2T and Lime C2 are "typical" over-summering birds first recorded in June. Although Lime M8 and Lime 2C were first recorded in mid- and late July (outside of the over-summering window mentioned earlier), we still consider them to be over-summering individuals, because they are also second-year subadults and were recorded at Tiaozini relatively early in the autumn migration period. They may have remained at sites further north or elsewhere in June before arriving at Tiaozini in July.

It is also worth noting that over-summering individuals may be relatively mobile and move between different sites during the over-summering period. At a local scale, Lime 7X, a then subadult observed near the Tiaozini parking lot in June 2020, was not recorded at this site during July or August, but was later recorded at Fangtang Estuary in early September 2020. Subsequent surveys recorded this individual again at Tiaozini in mid-September and October. At a broader scale, Lime 2T and Lime C2, which were no longer recorded at Tiaozini after July this year, were subsequently recorded by SBSinChina at Dongling on September 9, a site approximately 70 km south of Tiaozini. Together, these observations suggest that over-



Lime C2 at Dongling on September 9, showing less breeding plumage than on June 21 *Yimin Zhang*

summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers may move across a relatively large area, and that the absence of these marked individuals from a particular site does not necessarily mean that they have left the wider area. This highlights the importance of surveying multiple sites when monitoring over-summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers.

Regarding moult status, the ten Spoon-billed Sandpipers observed in June and July showed varying degrees of breeding plumage, ranging from 0% in some individuals to nearly full breeding plumage in others. SBSinChina's previous observations have shown that some second-year birds may develop advanced breeding plumage even if they do not breed, so plumage cannot be used as a reliable indicator of age. On July 18, Lime M8 was also observed to be undergoing primary moult, with the three innermost primaries already replaced, corresponding to a moult score of three. In summary, SBSinChina's survey results have shown that Tiaozini has been and remains an important over-summering site for Spoon-billed Sandpipers. Tiaozini is not only a well-established stopover site during spring and autumn migration, but also an important site used by the species for almost eight months of the year, from late March to late November. Our surveys in 2026 also highlight the importance of including the sandbar in surveys at Tiaozini, following substantial shifts in the position of the main tidal channel. As we did not survey the sandbar during spring migration in 2026, it remains unclear whether the four marked over-summering individuals were already present at Tiaozini earlier in the spring. If funding allows, future surveys should therefore also include the sandbar during spring migration. Due to limited funding, our 2026 surveys did not systematically cover other tidal-flat areas within Tiaozini, such as Dongsha shoal, and we therefore cannot yet assess how Spoon-billed Sandpipers use these areas relative to the sandbar under different tidal conditions. Further surveys covering multiple tidal-flat areas and different stages of the tidal cycle would help clarify the relative importance of these areas and provide a better understanding of how Spoon-billed Sandpipers use different areas within Tiaozini. In addition, observations of marked individuals suggest that over-summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers may move between sites over relatively large distances, meaning that their absence from a particular site does not necessarily indicate that they have left the wider area. We therefore encourage birders in other areas to look for Spoon-billed Sandpipers during the over-summering period and early autumn migration, as observations from multiple sites may help identify additional over-summering sites and better understand the movements of these birds.

Acknowledgement

We thank the Russian expedition team for their efforts in banding the Spoon-billed Sandpipers, which made it possible for us to determine their ages and track their movements. We also thank Katherine Leung for sharing the banding histories of these marked individuals.

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Scan Survey for SBS Population Estimate in Southern Jiangsu, Autumn 2026

Katherine Leung on behalf of the survey team

Monitoring of the population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in non-breeding ground has always been a challenging task, because of their small population, they don't form a flock of their own species and are often mixed in with other small shorebirds at roosting site and it is not easy to pick them out especially when they are roosting with their bills hidden. Due to the difficulty of obtaining accurate direct count, a standard method called the "mark-resighting scan surveys" (Green et al 2024) was applied on the species since 2014 to monitor Spoon-billed Sandpiper population size and trend across a series of non-breeding areas (both stop-over sites and wintering grounds) to enable a robust and scientific estimation of local and global population. Scan survey involved recording of flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper individuals and obtaining the proportion of individuals carrying flag vs not carrying flag. This year, 2026, is the 6th year of the autumn scan survey to cover all current major Spoon-billed Sandpiper sites in Southern Jiangsu: Tiaozini (including Fangtang Estuary), Yangkou-Fengli, Dongling and Tongzhou Bay.

Throughout the course of September, local surveyors organized by NGO SBS in China conducted scan surveys across the four main sites with 50 man-days dedicated to the survey. The survey collected over 700 scan observations and recorded 21 flagged individuals. Besides those recorded during the survey, 12 other flagged individuals were resighted by birdwatchers and photographers. Table 1 summarises the flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper resighted in Southern Jiangsu this autumn. Of interest was the movement of two of the over-summering flagged individuals (Lime 2T and Lime C2, see page 23) from Tiaozini to Dongling.

The scan data will allow unbiassed estimation of both local and world population sizes and trend of Spoon-billed Sandpiper, so that the Task Force

Table 1. Individually marked Spoon-billed Sandpipers reported from sites in southern Jiangsu in autumn 2026

Sites:	Tiaozini	Dongling	Tongzhou Bay
Adults marked on Russian breeding grounds	Lime 24, 50, 52, 61, 88, 97, 99	Lime 27, 79, 95	-
Wild-reared chicks marked on Russian breeding grounds	Lime 0J, 2C, 2U, 7L, KH, L7, M4, P9, U3	Lime 2M, 2T, C2, VC, Y7	Lime L0
Head-started chicks marked on Russian breeding grounds	-	-	-
Juveniles marked in Kamchatka, Russia	Yellow XJ		
Adults marked in Jiangsu, China	Yellow 53, HU, CV, XU	Yellow EV	Yellow LY
Adults marked on wintering grounds (Thailand)	Orange A6	-	-



Surveying at shrimp ponds construction site in Dongling *Jing Li*

can monitor the effectiveness of the conservation actions carried out across the EAAF according to the SBS Action Plan 2025-2035. Besides scan surveys of Spoon-billed Sandpiper, scan surveys of Nordmann's Greenshank were also carried out simultaneously at these four sites aiming to produce the first world population estimate of Nordmann's Greenshank by mid-2027.

The survey team also monitored and recorded threats and changes of the habitats. Since the large-scale Spartina eradication programme along the Chinese coast in 2024/25, no sign of significant regrowth of Spartina was recorded at the four southern Jiangsu sites surveyed, only some sparse patches were observed in Tiaozini and Dongling mudflats.

Mudflats near the main car park area at Tiaozini have become a popular Spoon-billed Sandpiper observing location this year, tens of birdwatchers/photographers were often present there. It was welcoming to receive a good number of resighting records of flagged Spoon-billed Sandpipers from this location. After the Spartina removal works, this section of mudflats has become elevated and acted as a temporary high tide roost for the shorebirds. As soon as tide receded and this section of mudflats was exposed, Spoon-billed Sandpipers and small shorebirds left the '720' roost site and landed in this area. Like in previous years, limited feeding was observed on the upper tidal flats area close to the seawall. Most of the feeding was observed at the outer mudflats near the sandbar in the south, about 1.2 km east from the seawall. Only one Spoon-billed Sandpiper was observed at the northern roost in September, but as the water level increased in October, a minimum of 10 individuals were seen feeding at the roost.

Like in the 2025 autumn, only two Spoon-billed Sandpiper were observed at Yangkou – Fengli this year. The survey team found small shorebirds (mainly Sand Plovers) roosting at a temporary construction site with green mesh as most of the aquaculture ponds in the area which used to serve as high tide roosting site have been converted to solar farms.



Lime 97, Yellow 53 and Yellow HU were regularly reported at the Tiaozini Carpark mudflats throughout the autumn *Zhou Minjun*



Père David's deer (Milu Deer) at the northern roost at Tiaozini *Katherine Leung*

Dongling's habitat condition was like previous year. In order to observe feeding Spoon-billed Sandpiper, we walked to the lower mudflats for about 1.5 km away from the seawall, where Spoon-billed Sandpiper used to feed before the Spartina removal works. Some new shrimp ponds were being built in September and we found Spoon-billed Sandpipers roosting at the construction site (Photo 1). By October this roosting site disappeared as the shrimp ponds infrastructures has been erected. The 5 km^2 solar farm on the northern mudflats area has not been extended in area, and we observed a Chukotka flagged juvenile from this year (Lime VC) feeding on the mudflats not far away from the solar panels.

At Tongzhou Bay, the power station on site is now in full operation. Only two ponds in the area had suitable water level for roosting shorebirds and only 3 Spoon-billed Sandpipers were observed.



Temporary construction site at Yangkou used by small shorebirds as roost *Xin Yu*



Spoon-billed Sandpiper Lime VC feeding on the heavily disturbed mudflat of Dongling *Zhang Lin*



Roosting pond at Tongzhou Bay with the power station at the back *Katherine Leung*

The power station plans to "relocate" the roost to another pond further north in the area away from the station by manipulating the water levels. However, that would mean birds have to travel another 3 km further from the mudflat feeding area in the east, flying over the buildings to reach the "new roost". Such "relocation" might not work for some of the birds.

To conclude, it is important to repeat the scan survey every autumn to monitor local population trend in relation to the changes in habitat observed each year. Based on resighting records of the flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper individuals over the years, we can see that many individuals are faithful to their autumn stopover sites. Hence, it is critical to conserve all four major sites in southern Jiangsu for the long-term survival of the population.

Acknowledgement
We would like to thank the following parties for their financial support towards the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Nordmann's Greenshank scan surveys in Southern Jiangsu:

- International Conservation Fund (ICF)
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Wader Quest
- Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) Asia Conservation Fund

Spoon-billed Sandpiper Fieldwork at Yubudo, Republic of Korea, Autumn 2026

Katherine Leung

Built upon the knowledge gained from the pilot survey in 2025 autumn, the SBS Task Force team returned to Yubudo for fieldwork on Spoon-billed Sandpiper from 27 Sep to 2 Oct 2026. This year the fieldwork had two main objectives:

1. Carry out "mark-resighting scan sampling" survey for Spoon-billed Sandpiper population estimate, with focus on the juvenile population;
2. Attempt catching, marking and deploying tracking device on Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

With the coordination support from Hanns Seidel Foundation and the EAAFP Secretariat, "oversea" members of the SBS TF (Katherine Leung, Rhys Green and Ewan Weston) teamed up with local researchers from Seoul National University, Kyung Hee University, Incheon National University and Meet Green Institute this year.

Yubudo is not only the site with highest count of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the Republic of Korea (peak count of 11 individuals from October



White 1H was a head-starting chick from July 2016 and it was recorded at Yubudo most autumns in the past 10 years
Katherine Leung



The northern roost of shorebirds and birdwatchers/photographers during high tide *Katherine Leung*

2025), the proportion of juveniles which stop-over here each year is also significantly higher than the southern Jiangsu coast in China. Our 2025 pilot scan results show that 80% of scan observations are juveniles at Yubudo, comparing to only 5% in southern Jiangsu. This means that Yubudo is currently the only site in the EAAF that we can carry out a reliable estimate on the juvenile population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Such estimation is important to understand the population dynamics of the species, which helps the TF to make important decision on the appropriate conservation actions needed.

The team carried out scan surveys when birds were concentrated at the two roosting sites on the island as well as during low tide when birds were spread out on the mudflats. The number of Spoon-billed Sandpiper seen this year was lower than previous year, probably due to presence of other roosting sites in proximity. We only recorded White 1H and another juvenile with lime flag (code not read). Both of them were only observed on one of the five days survey despite good survey effort and coverage. Nevertheless, we still obtain adequate scan survey data for analysis. Other than White 1H, no other flag sighting was received from birdwatchers/photographers throughout the autumn.

We understand that trying to capture one Spoon-billed Sandpiper among thousands of shorebirds



Whoosh net set up at the southern roost with a Spoon-billed Sandpiper (red arrow) just 4 m outside the net *Ewan Weston*
A whoosh net is a trapping method powered by two elastic bungees attached to the front corners of a rectangular 8 m x 4 m net. The netting is laid folded as a line on the beach with a remote triggered system attached to it. When our target species, Spoonie, is in the catching area, the remote is triggered and the netting launch along the metal pole like a flying carpet to cover the catching area.



Using thermal camera to check the northern roost for catching at night *Katherine Leung*



Team photo by Meet Green Institute and Seoul National University



"Korean-style" ringing station set up on the path *Katherine Leung*

would almost be "mission impossible". We tried using whoosh net during the day time high tide and on one occasion, we had a Spoon-billed Sandpiper not far from our net set (photo 4). We also tried to catch at night with mistnets. Although we ended up with no Spoon-billed Sandpiper, over 3 nights we captured over 50 shorebirds of 9 species to help with the local shorebird research.

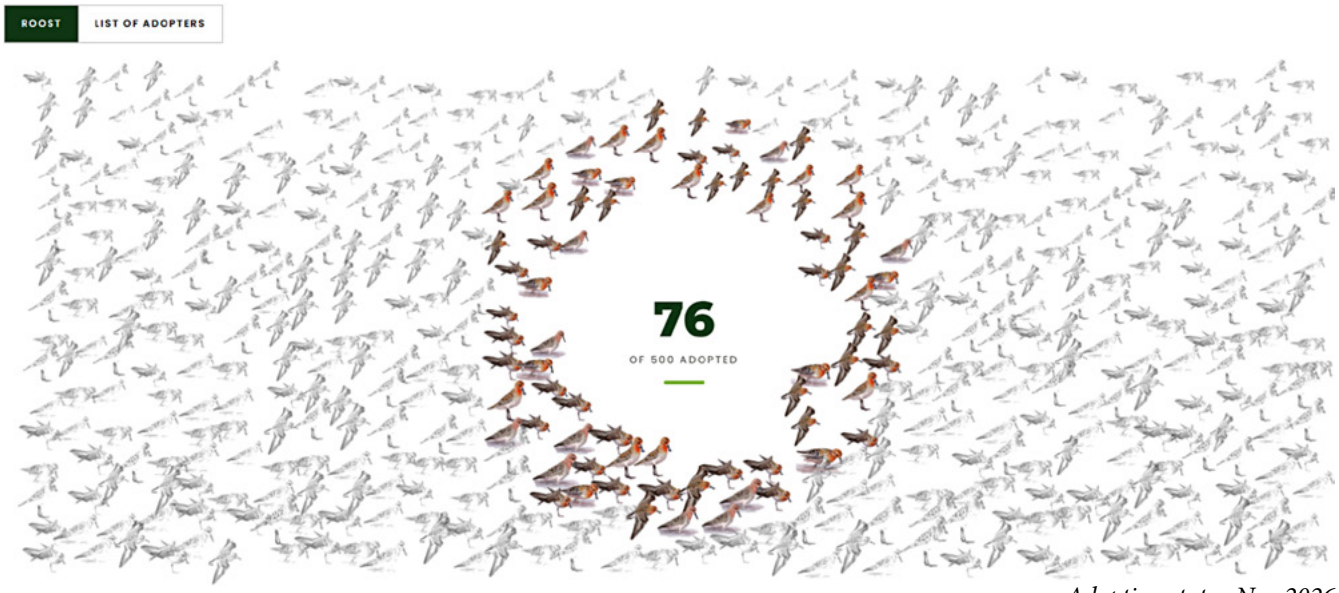
From the five-day fieldwork, we have gained much knowledge on the birds and how they use the habitats at the site. Via the EAAFP Secretariat, we also provided some suggestions on the protection and conservation management of the site to the local government. The collaboration and friendship with the local team is also the highlight of the trip and the SBS TF team has developed plans to continue fieldwork at Yubudo annually for Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other shorebirds which use this important World Heritage Site.

Acknowledgement:
The fieldwork was financially supported by Hanns Seidel Foundation, Seoul National University and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).
We thank Paul Howey and the staff of Microwave Telemetry Inc. for developing the new 1.2-gram satellite tracking device for Spoon-billed Sandpiper.
The tracking devices are financially supported by RSPB, International Conservation Fund (ICF) and Oriental Bird Club (OBC).



Adopt a Spoonie! Claim your place in the flock!

International Conservation Fund ICF



Adoption status Nov 2026

There are many ways to support the protection of the natural world. Rainforest groups e.g. handed out small plots of rainforest that could be purchased. ICF developed a brilliant new way for our species. You can now adopt a Spoonie. All donations will support the work of the Taskforce! Your monthly support funds real, ongoing conservation work protecting Spoonies in the wild.



A digital certificate

Naming your bird and its place in the roost — in your language to keep, print, or share.

Bi-yearly field updates

Twice a year, dispatches straight from the field partners guarding the flyway — see how the effort is progressing, mudflat by mudflat.

A chance to win a Spoonie painting

When we reach 250 adoptions, one lucky adopter will be randomly chosen to receive an original Spoon-billed Sandpiper painting, hand-painted by Szabolcs Kokay just for this milestone.

A place in the roost

Your bird holds its spot in the roost ring for the length of your adoption, visible to every visitor who comes looking.

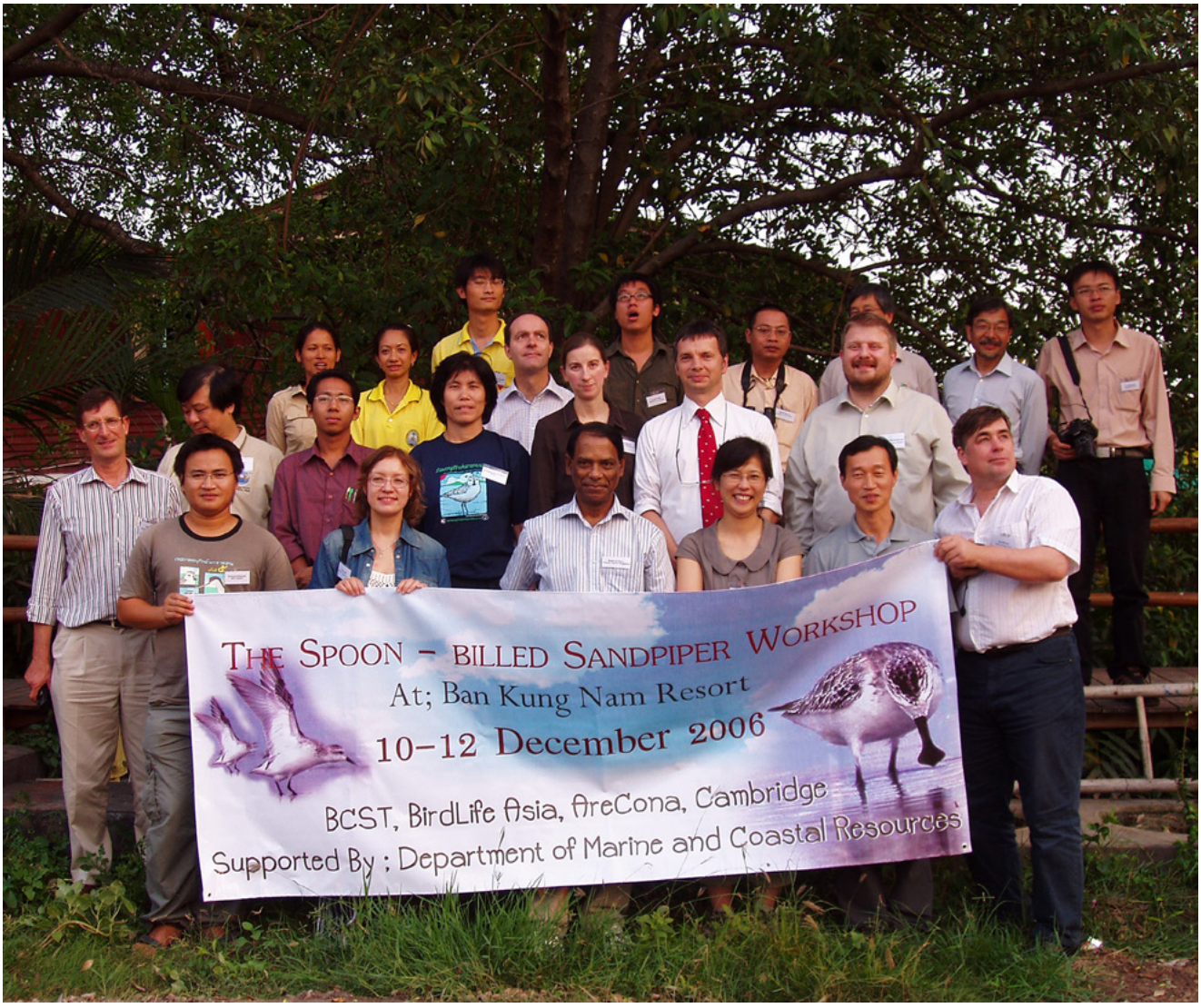
https://internationalconservationfund.org/spoonie/

Twenty Years ago – From the Archives

Thailand 2006

Christoph Zöckler

In 2006 we have had our first working meeting in Samut Sakhon in Thailand to finalise the first Action Plan. Members of the Taskforce (SBS Recovery Team at the team) present were from Russia, Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Thailand, as well as from BirdLife International and the UK and Germany. At least three members will be expected again for the upcoming meeting in Laem Phak Bia this November almost 20 years later at almost the same place to discuss the implementation of the second Action Plan 2025-2035!



Latest News

India



Sandip Das, West Bengal, India

A welcome return – Spoon-billed Sandpiper (2K): The leg-flagged Spoon-billed Sandpiper (2K), previously recorded at the Patibunia–Susni mudflats, photographed again at Kargil Beach on 24 October 2026. Despite monthly surveys, the young bird went unrecorded from May to September 2026, possibly having moved to nearby suitable mudflats or having been overlooked. The bird has remained present since its return, highlighting the importance of this coastal complex for the Critically Endangered species.

SUC

Russia





The book for children "Kulik lopaten" about a SBS chick, its life and migration with scientific-popular explanations on Chukotka nature, the motherland of SBS by Andrey Maksimov (member of many SBS expeditions in Chukotka and in Asia) and Nadezhda Dorofeeva and drawings by Elena Gleyser is coming soon out, published in Abricobooks, Russia.

Kids and their parents, everybody who is interested in the SBS story can enjoy the text and pictures of a small migratory wader that is now on the brink of extinction. All SBS life is depicted in important details. The authors describe how and where the Spoon-billed Sandpiper nest and where it raises its chicks, and migrates to and spent the winter.

The authors also share how scientists from many countries are working together to ensure this bird does not disappear—so that today's children, and their own children in the future, will still be able to see them. This book is for budding nature enthusiasts and young aspiring scientists.

EL

Latest News

Germany





Max Kullmann

The film "Saving Spoonie" has won the renowned German Nature Film Price in the category 'Man and Nature' at the Darß Nature Film Festival in October 2026. Secretary of State of the Ministry for the Environment BMUKN Jochen Flasbarth presented the price to film director Till Harms

Thomas Tennhardt

Myanmar





It was a big shock for our Taskforce, when the news came in that U Myo Lwin passed away on 19th October. From 2016 to 2020 we were travelling on his boat along the southern most coast of Myanmar in search for Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Nordmann's Greenshank and Mangrove conservation six times. In November 2016 we found the first SBS in Bokpyin with the help of his boat. In 2018 a maximum of three birds were there. He was very familiar with the region and the sea, always in control of the boat, avoiding storms but also riding deliberately into heavy rain to get a free shower for cleaning. His legendary dragon tatoo featured dominantly, almost threatening on his back, but he was a very gentle and caring soul, loved by everybody in his community. He left us far too early, only 57 years old, leaving his wife and seven children behind. We will miss him dearly.

CZ

80th Anniversary of Minoru Kashiwagi

Elena Lappo and Christoph Zöckler



Minoru in July 2003 in Meinypil'gyno

This last October Minoru Kashiwagi celebrated his 80th Birthday. The SBS Taskforce is congratulating!

Minoru is a key member and supporter of our species conservation pretty much from the start. He is a founding member of our Taskforce, then Recovery Team in 2004 in Edinburgh and still an active member representing the Ramsar Network Japan in our group.

Already in 2002 and 2003 he joined our expeditions to Chukotka. He was also instrumental in securing the first funds for our fledgling group. In 2003 Minoru was unlucky in Chukotka when his helicopter caught fire and had to abandon its flight midway to Meinypil'gyno, only for Minoru and the Ukrainian constructors, who travelled with him to watch the helicopter and the several kg of supplies in pork fat burning down, Luckily, all survived unharmed.

Minoru was key in fundraising for our first expedition to Myanmar in 2008. Unfortunately, he was hold back by some Visa issues and could only join us towards the end but he participated on several expeditions to Myanmar and many countries of SBS flyway including Vietnam in 2009.

He hosted us in Japan many times, also at his mother's, very Japanese style-house in Tokyo.

On behalf of our Taskforce we wish Minoru many happy returns and the best of luck for his continued work in shorebird conservation!

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