

Birds Korea Blueprint 2010

Title The Birds Korea Blueprint aims to support ongoing conservation initiatives as part of the Republic of Korea's (ROK) efforts to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss (by 2010), in line with commitments to the Millennium Development Goals. It is a collection of articles and recommendations based on the understanding that biodiversity underpins the functioning of the ecosystems on which people also depend for life and livelihood. The Blueprint's focus is the conservation of avian biodiversity of the ROK part of the Yellow Sea or 'Yellow Sea Blueprint Region' (YSBR), and contains essential information on key sites, species and conservation initiatives divided into three main habitats (intertidal wetland, open sea areas, and islands). The YSBR is at the heart of the East Asian - Australasian Flyway, and 34 out of c.340 annually occurring species are globally threatened. At the same time, the YSBR is a region under huge development pressure. Reclamation is the major driver of avian biodiversity decline and has reduced the national area of intertidal wetland by more than 70% to only c.106,000 ha, less than half the estimate of remaining 'coastal wetland' in the official Fourth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The health of remaining intertidal wetland is also threatened by pollution, estuary dams and infrastructure development along rivers, including the Four Rivers project. The majority of shorebird species and species dependent on intertidal wetlands are therefore in decline or are globally threatened. The 40,100 ha Saemangeum reclamation project, one of many ongoing projects, has already resulted in the loss of livelihood of >20,000 local people and a measurable decline in shorebirds at both the site and the Flyway level. This includes >20% of the world population of Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* (requiring its reassessment as globally Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List). Additional reclamation and mega-projects, e.g. tidal-power plants in Incheon, will cause further massive habitat loss and population declines. There is less information on seabirds and birds on islands of the YSBR. However, the marine environment of the Yellow Sea is increasingly 'stressed', and seabirds at sea are likely threatened by oil and other pollution, in addition to unsustainable fisheries. In addition, some seabird colonies, including of Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, are threatened by invasive alien species. Many migrant bird species on islands, like the island-nesting Styan's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella pleskei*, also appear to be in decline. The Blueprint therefore recommends that data needs to be shared, science needs to underlie policy, and improved collaboration is required to achieve a reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss. The [2010 online version of The Blueprint](#) will, as intended, be updated regularly and made available for participants to the 2012 IUCN World Congress (Republic of Korea).