

Oversummering Spoon-billed Sandpiper discovered in Thailand

Title On July 19, 2010, a shorebird survey team observed a first-summer individual of the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Erynorhynchus pygmeus* at Khok Kham, on the coast of the Inner Gulf of Thailand about 50 km southwest of Bangkok. This is the first record of the species oversummering in its wintering grounds. The observation confirms what many shorebird biologists had suspected, because other species such as Red-necked Stint spend their first-summer in their non-breeding range. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper breeding grounds are far to the north of Thailand in the Far East of Russia. The team members Krairat lamamphai (Head of Bung Boraphet Wildlife Research Station), Thithi Sonsa and Somchai Nimnuan (both from Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation) were also excited to observe the species feeding on the mudflats. ?This is also the first confirmed sighting at Khok Kham of Spoon-billed Sandpiper feeding on the mudflats,? said Somchai Nimnuan, who also took photographs of the observation. Khok Kham has become the most reliable site in South-East Asia to see the species from November to March but all previous observations there were from man-made salt pans. ?The numbers of Spoon-billed Sandpipers currently known to occur in the Thailand?s Inner Gulf are very small ?perhaps now only around ten birds in total, of which only a proportion will be first-years?while the area of mudflats are vast,? said Assistant Professor Philip D. Round, an ornithologist who is world authority of birds in Thailand and a member of the BirdLife Partner?s Bird Conservation Society of Thailand Conservation (BCST) Committee. ?This finding should spur us to look for more over-summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers, more surveys and studies, and of course more conservation actions. Thailand must do its share to conserve this species through protecting Inner Gulf Coastlines, both offshore mudflats and onshore salt-pans, which the birds are known to frequent for much of the tidal cycle and by preventing the illegal netting of shorebirds for food, which still continues,? added Gawin Chutima, Chairman of BCST. Photo: Somchai Nimnuan (images were digiscoped)