BCST supporting a Local Conservation Group

Title Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST. BirdLife in Thailand) recently brought members and birders to survey birds at public land near Bornok village in Prachuab Khirikhan Province, 300 km south of Bangkok. This survey was connected to local people?s efforts to protect their common land as a source of living and heritage for their children. There was an attempt to construct a power plant but the project was finally cancelled after local people formed a strong conservation group to fight against it for years. Then the area was later encroached by outside investors who turned much of it into shrimp farms, resulting in severe degradation. At present, these people have already withdrawn and some were put in prison. However, their courageous and untiring fight by Bornok Conservation Group, which became national news attracting supports from all over the country, was won with the loss of its leader, Mr. Jaroen Wat-aksorn, who was murdered. Recognising that having more information about values of the area in terms of biodiversity would help them strengthen their efforts to protect the land, they contacted BCST to conduct a bird survey there. BCST, on the other hand, saw that the area?s long sand beach, which still maintained much of its nature, could be another breeding site of Malaysian Plover and other birds similar to an area in Laem Phak Bia, Petchburi Province, where BCST has conducted studies and tried to protect in the past two years. BCST mobilised volunteers from our members and birders in Bangkok to survey the area. Altogether 24 people went to Bornok that weekend and were joined by 35 local people and children who received a lecture and basic training by two BCST committee members on how to use survey tools. They divided into ninw teams to survey the triangle-shape area of about 150 hectares, consisting of abandoned shrimp ponds, irrigation canals, flooded plain, shrub forest and mangrove, bordered on the east by a six-kilometre long sand beach and in the west by railway and private lands. In total, 83 bird species were identified - a relatively high bird diversity, considering that the degraded area just began to recover itself. Existence of certain species, such as Pied Kingfisher, Purple Heron, Mangrove Whistler, and Green, Blue-tailed and Blue-throated Bee-eaters, indicated its natural richness. The three bee-eater species were found to breed there ? a very rare event. Other species found breeding there included Little Tern, Red-wattled Lapwing, Black-winged Stilt, and Oriental Pratincole that migrated to breed in Thailand. Six breeding pairs of the Near Threatened Malaysian Plover, a target of this survey, were found together three wandering chicks closely watched by their parents. The species is one of the only two residential shorebird species in the country. Bornok area is therefore another important site for birds and biodiversity in Thailand as sand beaches in Thailand that are safe enough for birds to use as breeding sites are becoming rare, destroyed by coastal erosion and encroachment by human beings. In the end, collected data was compiled as a bird list of Bornok for all those took part in the survey. It was then given together with publications on birds to the local conservation group to use in its conservation efforts to protect this area for people, birds and biodiversity to use together. Now

BCST?s relation with the LCG is firmly established and more surveys in migratory season to acquire more complete and accurate information about birds there are being discussed. ?BCST is happy to support any local people and conservation groups safeguarding on one hand, their livelihood, and on the other hand, birds and biodiversity. Without them, our efforts to protect bird species and sites, such as Malaysian Plovers and their breeding sites, would not be possible?, said Gawin Chutima, Chairman of Bird Conservation Society of Thailand. Reported by Gawin Chutima, Wicha Narangsri and Smith Sutibut Photo credit: BCST