

Our Work in 2018

A Peak Into HSF’s Environmental Work

HSF Korea supports the process of reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. In South Korea, this includes regional development, in which the border region (DMZ) is especially focused upon. In North Korea, HSF attempts to contribute to the peaceful development in the region through activities aiming for international integration and cooperation of the DPR Korea in the field of environment

DPRK in the Ramsar Convention

An estimated 6% of all land in the DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, or North Korea) are wetlands and offer a unique habitat for many species, from plants to animals like birds, fish and amphibians. Those habitats are threatened by over-exploitation, pollution, water withdrawal, and climate change. The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Korea has been working for a better protection of wetlands in the DPRK for many years. This work is bearing fruit now with the accession of the DPRK to the *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar Convention”)* as the 170th contracting party. In particular, the role of two crucial wetlands, namely Rason Migratory Bird Reserve, were certified. Rason and Mundok are the first “Ramsar Sites” (Wetlands of International Importance) in the DPRK.

HSF has been supporting this process through various activities. An important aspect was to raise awareness among public officials, researchers and decision-makers. Therefore, the HSF organized workshops in the DPRK as well as abroad, and supported the process of translating the “Ramsar Convention on the Conservation of Wetlands” into Korean. During the Ramsar COP the updated wetland directory of the DPRK was presented, which lists 54 important coastal, inland and artificial wetlands. HSF supported the research and capacity-building activities to gather the information for the directory as well as the

final publication of it. The foundation has continuously supported efforts to conserve the environment on the Korean Peninsula. “Peace through Trust through Dialogue about the Environment” is a slogan used for this engagement and brought together representatives from DPRK with more than 20 international organizations as well as with representatives of national governments and scientific institutions. A better understanding for the nature will eventually also lead to a better mutual understanding and exchange on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. Communication is the key.



Task Force for the Baer’s Pochard

Once numerous in the region, the dark feathered Baer’s Pochard of all duck species living in Northeast Asia experienced the most rapid decline and is now on the brink of extinction. Under the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), a task force was founded to cope with the decline and devise strategies to conserve the species. The bird potentially breeds in the *Rason Migratory Bird Reserve*. In this reserve HSF Korea carries out projects

since 2009 and also regularly conducts surveys and consulting work which led to its designation as a Ramsar Site. HSF also supported the participation of a delegation from DPRK to get involved in the Task Force. This also serves as a platform for exchange with members from countries in Northeast Asia, including the Republic of Korea (RoK). This was done in hope to prevent the loss of this beautiful bird.

Partners in Songdo

Songdo International Business District is a smart city built from scratch on 600 hectares of reclaimed land along the waterfront of Incheon City. Despite the massive development of the former wetland, some biodiversity is left which results in a city of great contrasts. Between high-rise buildings and crowded streets, the Namdong Reservoir is located, a breeding site for the iconic, but globally endangered Black-faced Spoonbill, of which only about 3000 individuals remain. HSF met in 2018 several times with its partners based in Songdo, namely the EAAFP and UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). Together with these organizations HSF supports activities of various kinds.



Conservation of Ecosystems for Inter-Korean Cooperation

In the field of maritime cooperation, the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) is one of the key institutes in South Korea. HSF works closely with KMI. Aquaculture, capacity-building for Clean Development Mechanism projects, afforestation projects and wetland protection projects are focused on. In light of the recent efforts by the DPRK for participation in international mechanisms in the field of environment, trade and energy, it is important to develop an agenda for inner-Korean cooperation before meaningful engagement is possible. This matter was discussed in a workshop with KMI in Seoul in May 2018.

National Workshop in Pyongyang

More than 130 Korean and international guests participated in the National Workshop on Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in the DPR Korea. There, Dr. Bernhard Seliger of HSF Korea introduced issues regarding international environmental cooperation with DRPK and the region, among others the projects in Rason. After the workshop, site surveys in Mundok (West coast) and along the East coast took place, supported by HSF. The project on Wetland Conservation was strongly coordinated with and supported by international partners, such as the Ramsar Secretariat, the EAAFP, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Birds Korea, WWF, Beijing Forestry University and others.



Briefing in Songdo

Representatives from HSF, EAAFP, Birds Korea, Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists Trust, other NGOs and government officials gathered for a briefing to discuss about the conservation of migratory

water birds and wetlands in the DPRK. Once more it was emphasized how important it is to provide scientific and technological assistance to the DPRK to support wetland and water bird conservation. HSF has a project in Sangseo-ri to support sustainable reforestation and worked on wetland conservation since 2015. The joint efforts in all the protected areas in DRPK are crucial for the conservation of wetlands and biodiversity just as much as to enhance international networks with DPRK to provide detailed knowledge for the nation's environmental development.

Environmental Award for HSF

The HSF Korea received an environmental award for their long-standing engagement on the Korean Peninsula at the tripartite meeting of the environment ministers of China, Japan, RoK. The projects of HSF on environmental protection in the inner-Korean border region, afforestation, and protection of migratory birds were particularly highlighted.



Working Group and Training for the Yellow/ West Sea

Wetland conservation along the Yellow/ West Sea has gained attention and awareness has increased sharply in recent years while at the same time around 66% of intertidal wetlands in the Yellow/West Sea have been lost in the past 50 years. This figure is alarming, but several organizations such as the Ramsar Convention, EAAFP and IUCN have made the issue a top priority. Among other efforts, a working group on the Conservation of the Yellow/West Sea Intertidal and associated coastal Wetlands has been created and met on 9 July 2018 for the first time. The event targeted the development of the Terms of

References (ToR) for the Working Group, to receive updates on the three participating countries and to discuss the development of a joint work plan.

HSF Korea actively supports these efforts and regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. A training for site managers followed the meeting. These managers are responsible for the management of wetlands along the Yellow / West Sea in China, the DPRK and RoK, respectively. The joint training also supported the exchange of experiences among representatives of the three countries as well as from international organizations.

Biodiversity Surveys in Rason

More than 228 bird species were discovered as part of four biodiversity surveys in the Rason Special Economic Zone, proposed and funded by HSF. To inform about the results Dr. Nial Moores, an important expert in the field of bird research, published an article in August in the 33rd issue of Forktail. Dr. Moores who lead the surveys writes about how it came to the surveys and briefly outlined the previous projects of the North Korean government. The species were found in the four bird observations. 12 of the species found are threatened worldwide, 15 species bred for the first time nationally in the DPRK or for the first time after several decades. The region has potential for conservation and ecotourism but challenges are the difficult political situation and the predicted population growth as well as the proximity to the fast-growing Chinese city of Yanji. A situation that calls even more for international help to support and protect those precious sites.

The 5th World Conference on Climate Change in London

Dr. Hyun-Ah Choi, Senior Researcher of the HSF attended as a speaker the 5th World Conference on Climate Change. The conference had the objective to bring leading climatologists, meteorologists, and environmental researchers together to exchange and share their experiences and research results regarding every aspect of climate change and global warming. HSF introduced the situation in RoK and DPRK and to rise awareness on changes through out the years.

Awareness about Biodiversity and the EAAFP

As the first Special Zone in DPR Korea, Rason Special Economic Zone was intended to “become the Singapore of the East” but lacked behind expectations for many years. Today, some progress and development can be seen, despite sanctions that also target the major industries in the zone, namely seafood and textile. Since 2014, HSF has conducted biodiversity surveys with international experts to Rason. It was found that the site hosts more than 20 000 waterbirds “regularly” in March and in October/November, that it assembles globally threatened waterbird species and serves as a stopover site for more than 1% of several waterbird species during migration. This led to the designation of the site as a Ramsar Wetland Site of International importance. Since DPR Korea is often isolated from the international community for internal and external reasons, it is even more important to share the concern of environmental issues that need transnational efforts. Through its activities, HSF Korea tries to address this concern. To do so, HSF had an educative booth at the annual Rason International Trade Exhibition which took place in Rajin, capital of Rason SEZ, for the 8th time.



Cooperation for the Environment in Northeast Asia

In September 2018 a seminar on international scientific cooperation for the environment took place in Vladivostok. Participants from Russia, Germany, Switzerland, RoK and DPR Korea discussed ways for environmental cooperation in Northeast Asia, in particular on the Korean Peninsula. The

recent improvement in relations of both sides opens up more opportunities for cooperation. Among the topics discussed were forestry, emissions trade and climate change, as well as renewable energy and water. The seminar is part of a series of exchanges organized by HSF Korea in cooperation with international experts as well as participants from RoK and DPR Korea.

2018 ESP Asia Conference

The main focus of the event was Communication and Engaging Ecosystem Services in Policy and Practice in Asia. Participants shared ideas, knowledge and integrating ecosystem services approaches, and scientific results during the period. To share the ecosystem services strategy at national level and practice of nature conservation and sustainable development in Asia the ESP Asia Intergovernmental Meeting was held on 9 October. Delegations from Vietnam, the Philippines, Nepal, India and RoK attended the meeting. HSF supported the participation of a delegation from the DPRK.



2018 International Crane Workshop in Cheorwon

Cheorwon basin is the most important crane sites on the Korean Peninsula with seven different species of cranes visiting regularly. It needs systematic conservation efforts to conserve the crane sites of Cheorwon. Cheorwon county also has plans to build an International Crane Center in 2019 and hopes that long-term projects are established with the International Crane Foundation to secure a co-existence between cranes and local people in the North and South of Cheorwon. Dr Choi, Hyun-Ah also attended

the workshop in October 2018 as a speaker and shared the case of Crane protection and organic farming in a project in Anbyon, DPR Korea.

Korea, HSF and the Role of Suncheon Bay

In 2018, local representatives involved in wetland conservation in Suncheon and beyond, as well as actors that are involved in wetland conservation in DPR Korea came together in a workshop. As one of the model cases of HSF the project on reforestation and the efforts to conserve wetlands in DPR Korea with the goal to promote international EAAFP was presented. Suncheon City, South Jeolla Province, has been working closely with HSF on various projects, for example related to the DPRK and Yellow / West Sea Wetland Conservation using its experiences from managing the Suncheon Bay Wetlands, one of the most diverse and important sites in RoK. In December 2018, HSF signed a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA) and Suncheon City, to vitalize inter-Korean ecological exchanges, to share experiences and work together in the fields of wetlands and biodiversity. This is to secure the wetland conversation and wise use in countries in East, Southeast and South Asia.

DPRK as a Partner in the EAAFP

In Hainan, China, the 10th MOP (Meeting of Partners) of the EAAFP opened in December to discuss the future of migratory bird protection. For the first time, also the DPRK was among the partner governments. The accession of DPR Korea to the EAAFP has been supported by HSF in recent years. Also, eight new flyway network sites, including Kumya Wetland and Mundok Wetland in DPRK as well as Hwasong Wetland in the Republic of Korea, were recognized. This step towards a better international connection is not only important for environmental protection of unique biotopes in DPRK, but also a mean for building trust and starting a dialog with DPRK and other countries .

Cooperation in the Field of Forestry in Pyongyang

HSF Korea supported a seminar on forest inventory in Pyongyang, as well as discussions about potential cooperation in the future on topics related to the environment. In Germany beginning in the 18th century qualitative evaluations of forests started, and over time a sophisticated toolbox to analyze and describe forests emerged, which is regularly in use during the so-called "Federal Forest Inventory". The HSF made several visits to the Central Tree Nursery in Pyongyang and the Model Reforestation Site in Sangseo-ri, Pyongannam-do. Both sites have been part of a project on sustainable reforestation, which was implemented by HSF from 2014 until 2018, with the objective to improve the capacity of the North Korean forestry sector and consequently the living conditions of the population in the rural areas. The project was funded by the European Union. Global topics, such as forestry as well as environmental challenges allow for cooperation despite political disagreements.



Protection of the Environment and Peace in Korea

Border-triangles like the "Golden Triangle" between Russia, China and Korea are very important places for international relations. "Wherever countries meet, and borders exist, there are restrictions of movements of people and goods, but also opportunities for trade and exchange". These regions always face many challenges balancing economic development and environmental conservation, and the opportunities that the unique biodiversity in the border region upholds. HSF tries to draw

attention to these areas. But also chances for a restoration of the environment and a sustainable development in the DPR Korea are constantly explored. HSF supported the membership of the Ministry of Environment and Land Protection to the IUCN. Within these frameworks and networks, room for discussions and joint efforts with international partners, especially in Northeast Asia, can be used to tackle environmental challenges as a global task.



Ways for South - North Environmental Cooperation

Due to the rapid economic development in RoK during the last 30 years, a large part of its natural resources disappeared, but in recent years the country has been realizing that it is important to try to preserve those natural resources. Also, DPR Korea seems to be aware that economic development should not happen at the cost of the environment. Therefore, environmental issues are a starting point for possible South-North cooperation projects. HSF often presents examples for such environmental cooperation between both countries. In order to make significant changes, it is important to first identify the causes for environmental problems in the DPRK and then try to find solutions or ways to mitigate those problems. Though it might seem more impactful to cooperate on the state level, in practice working together on city or county level is not only easier to realize, but also more likely to give useful practical results. Also, concrete budgets for possible projects and positive outcomes from earlier projects between HSF and Korean partners show that such projects are not only possible, but also likely to be rewarding. In order to promote and inform about such possibilities for cooperation, the HSF organized a

workshop together with Ongjin County and the UniKorea Foundation.

Protection of Coastal Wetlands of Yellow / West Sea

Dr Choi, Hyun-Ah attended the symposium and introduced the work of HSF Korea to conserve the Yellow/West sea. The participants discussed a variety of topics including ecological conservation and sustainable development.



DPRK and the World Climate Conference

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the world's central climate treaty, designed to prevent the climate system from becoming even more unbalanced and preventing, or at least mitigating, global warming. Over 2000 international organizations and 197 countries are now members of the UNFCCC, including the DPRK. Therefore it was very important to have representatives from the DPRK being present at the climate summit in Katowice, Poland, in December 2018. And indeed, three delegates from DPRK were able to attend this year's conference. One delegate was supported by the HSF.

