

Our Work in 2017

In Environment Cooperation, Wetlands and Birds

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.

Consultation with International Project Partners

Representatives of Hanns Seidel Foundation visited Songdo to meet with long-term partners of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and the UN-Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). A visit to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was an opportunity to establish first contacts and discuss the possibility of future cooperation.



UNESCAP and EAAFP are long-term partners of HSF and have contributed to the foundation's efforts towards nature conservation and reforestation in North Korea on several occasions. HSF has recently become an official member of EAAFP. The membership was made official earlier this year at the Meeting of Partners in Songdo in January.

The visit to the Green Climate Fund in Songdo, however, was the first contact of what HSF hopes to be the foundation of

future cooperation. Dr Seliger of HSF met with Mr. Stefan Zutt of the GCF at the office in Songdo, Incheon. Ever since its establishment in 2010 by 194 countries under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), GCF is mobilizing funds to invest in low-emission and climate-resilient development around the world. During the meeting, mutual interest for a possible cooperation in the future was expressed.

Joint Workshop with UNEP WCMC

In recent years, new policies and political emphasis have been supporting the North Korean environmental sector. This development comes along with an increased interest in international cooperation. Within the framework of the project on sustainable reforestation by HSF Korea and funded by the European Union, a joint workshop with UNEP WCMC (UN Environment - World Conservation Monitoring Centre) took place.



The workshop was opened by Felix Glenk, Project Manager for DPR Korea of Hanns Seidel Foundation. He gave a presentation about the work of HSF in North Korea with a focus on environmental cooperation. Subsequently, a presentation was given by a representative of the Ministry of Land and Environment Protection (MoLEP) of DPR Korea. Challenges regarding environment conservation as well as areas for potential international cooperation were introduced. Afterwards, a discussion explored potential cooperation in different fields related to the environment.



The second part of the workshop was led by Dr. Han Meng, China representative of UNEP WCMC. Han introduced the work of her organization and its China strategy. This introduction was followed by presentations on specific programmatic areas by Marine Deguignet (Programme Officer), the Protected Areas Programme of UNEP WCMC, through a video presentation.

Awareness Raising - The Rason International Trade Exhibition

For the 7th time, the Rason International Trade exhibition took place in Rason, DPR Korea. Domestic and international exhibitors presented their goods and services to local visitors. HSF Korea took part and hosted a booth to raise awareness for the Sonbong Migratory Bird Reserve within the Rason Economic and Trade Zone, and to introduce the importance of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. While the Rason Economic and Trade Zone shows some signs of an improvement of the local economy in recent years, the area is also of significance for the environment.



In cooperation with the EAAF Partnership Secretariat, an exhibition was created to introduce the nature reserve and to unveil the significance of North Korea as a stopover site for migratory birds to the local audience. For the first time, a video was shown presenting local bird species that were photographed in Rason during four environment surveys that were conducted within the last 2 years in the area. HSF Korea has been working in the Rason Economic and Trade Zone since 2009 to raise awareness of environment conservation.



International Seminar – Inter-Korean Cooperation

In October, a workshop was organized by KEI (Korea Environmental institute) and HSF Korea. Participants included local experts and representatives from environmental organizations. Mr. Willi Lange, Head of the Northeast Asia Department of HSF gave welcome remarks and emphasized the challenges of discussions between South and North Korea and the uncertainty of how the current political situation is affecting potential dialogue.



A self-introduction of the participants was followed by three presentations. The first presentation was titled “Suggestion for inter-Korean cooperation along the East-Asian Australasian Flyway” and was given by Mr. Spike Millington from EAAFP. He introduced the work of the EAAFP and explained the potential of habitats in North Korea for migratory birds, specifically in the areas of Kumya and Mundok.

Afterwards, Dr. Bernhard Seliger, Representative of HSF Korea, gave a presentation titled “International Cooperation in the field of environment and wetlands - Experience of HSF”. He suggested that North Korea should be seen as a partner on the working level and explained examples of the contribution HSF has made in cooperating with North Korea.

The third presentation, titled “Wetland, Sustainable Development and the DPRK” was held by Mr. Felix Glenk, project manager at HSF Korea, replacing Lew

Young from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat. He explained how North Korea being isolated affects international environment politics. Education and awareness-raising are key factors in cooperation. North Korea’s willingness to cooperate with international organizations was emphasized. He also mentioned MoLEP as a partner for cooperation in North Korea and the importance of accessing new areas, where there has not been any data collection.



In addition, Dr. Craig Boljkovac, Professor at Tsinghua University, discussed the connection between environment and social issues in North Korea. He explained how organizations can support North Korea achieve its NDCs and gave an insight into his experiences visiting a chemical plant in North Korea. He concluded that environmental issues, when effecting humans, become humanitarian issues. Thus, humanitarian work can benefit the environment.



Seminar - Wetland Inventory Methodology in North Korea

For several years, HSF Korea has been working towards the implementation of goals and plans aimed for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in North Korea, in cooperation with MoLEP, the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention and the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership, as well as other partners.



As part of these joined efforts, a seminar was conducted at Kumgangsan area with 25 experts of North Korean environmental institutions and foreign experts to prepare an inventory of wetlands in North Korea. In his welcoming address, Dr. Bernhard Seliger of HSF referred to the positive results of the international cooperation.

Prof. Dr. Chong Jong-ryol of the Korea University in Tokyo and one of the initiators of the first wetland inventory in North Korea in 1995, emphasized his research on habitats of red-crowned cranes (*Grus japonensis*) and black-faced spoonbills (*Platalea minor*). David Melville, who is an advisor on environmental issues with experiences from working several decades on the protection of wetlands along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway gave an introduction into the criteria for wetland inventories and provided practical examples on how to conduct surveys.

Dr. Nial Moores from Birds Korea, an organization that focuses on the study and protection of migratory birds and their habitats on the Korean peninsula, put much emphasis on the importance of Korean wetlands for the East Asian - Australasian Flyway and the possibility and methodology of surveys. Dr. Bernhard Seliger of HSF shared the

foundation's experiences with three surveys in Rason. Director General Mrs. Ri Kyong-sim provided an overview on the current state of preparation of the planned twelve-month inventory that is meant to result in a publication on the new inventory of wetlands in North Korea.

Before the seminar, a brief environment survey of the former lagoon lake Samil-po in the Kumgangsan area and the adjacent rivers, rice paddies and coastal areas of Haekumgang was conducted. The survey lasted two days and revealed internationally significant concentrations of Yellow-billed Loons (*Gavia adamsii*) and Pelagic Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) in the coastal areas.

Workshop in Pyongyang - Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in North Korea

In June, a national workshop on the conservation and management of intertidal wetlands and migratory waterbirds of the West Sea of Korea was held in Pyongyang, bringing together more than 60 experts from relevant ministries like MoLEP and the Ministry of Agriculture, and institutions like the National Heritage Administration and the State Academy of Sciences. The workshop was organized by MoLEP and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as well as HSF.

The workshop started with opening remarks by MoLEP and Raphael Glemet of IUCN. Both pointed out the importance to raise awareness for the importance of intertidal wetlands in the West Sea. The first session looked at the importance of international cooperation for the management and conservation of coastal wetlands. Raphael Glemet discussed the tasks of cooperation from IUCN's point of view with particular reference to cooperation possibilities in the Yellow Sea area. Spike Millington of the EAAFP highlighted the importance of the Yellow Sea as a shared biodiversity resource of the adjacent countries. Dr. Bernhard

Seliger reviewed the status of environmental cooperation between international partners and North Korea, pointing out the rapid development of ties since the launch of the program in 2015. Kim Jong-Chol of MoLEP looked at the status of migratory birds in the West Sea of North Korea.



The second session looked at national conservation measures and possibilities for listing of national sites as UNESCO world cultural heritage. Ho Myong-hyok of MoLEP explained wetland conservation and the drafting of Ramsar Information Sheets in North Korea. Spike Millington again took the floor to look at the current efforts to list Yellow sea habitats as UNESCO world cultural heritage. In South Korea and China, these efforts are progressing. North Korea as an indispensable part of the eco-region could also try to list sites in the future. Finally, participants discussed in three groups the outcome of the workshop for their further work, identifying main threats and pressures on coastal wetlands and shorebirds, and recommendations on management and Ramsar and World Heritage designations.



International Cooperation through Birds - the 8th Asian Bird Fair in Ulsan

Many migratory birds fly across and land in different countries and thus build a connection between ecosystems in those countries. This connection and the protection of birds could be a unique opportunity for cooperation between countries and local and international organizations.

In this spirit, the 8th Asian Bird Fair took place in November this year in Ulsan, South Korea. The program of the fair consisted of an exhibition, in which international organizations could present their ideas and work in booths, and symposiums about migratory birds conservation and eco-tourism. Participants also had the possibility to join birdwatching tours.

HSF was also present with a booth in cooperation with Birds Korea and introduced the EAAFP to the audience.

Study tour and Workshop – Environment Cooperation

A study tour with a delegation from the DPRK took place in mid-September and introduced experts from MoLEP to the Mai Po Nature Reserve, the only Ramsar Site in Hong Kong. The tour, jointly organized by WWF Hong Kong, Ramsar Secretariat, and HSF Korea, provided insight knowledge on wetland and habitat management and how a designated Ramsar sites is managed in practical terms.

The study tour started with an introduction of Mai Po Nature Reserve, which was followed by a site visit. During the course of the tour, discussions with

various actors related to the Ramsar Site, e.g. government officials and NGOs, were arranged. It gave a chance to learn from different perspectives about the management of a Ramsar Sites and how the interests of different stakeholders should be respected and be included in the management plan of a Ramsar Site. The study tour was followed by a workshop on environmental conservation in the DPR Korea and potential international cooperation with participants from more than 15 organizations and 10 countries.

While much has been achieved since the start of the project, this can only be seen as the first steps towards a sustainable conservation of the environment on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. HSF Korea continues its efforts to support the further process.

