

Our Work in 2019

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 in the field of environment

1st Swan Goose Festival in Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve

The North Korean wetlands are of utter importance as it is the preferred habitat of rare migratory bird species such as the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and plays an essential role for a sound ecosystem. Yet, these wetlands have drastically shrunk over the past 50 years. Fortunately, environmental awareness in North Korea has increased in recent times and provoked the government to increase awareness on nature conservation through activities fostering public education. Within the framework of the United Nations Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve is one of the first two Ramsar Sites of International Importance in North Korea. In spring the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Korea was able to coordinate the visit of a Hong Kong delegation to the Migratory Bird Reserve. During this visit, discussions with North Korean experts were held about raising awareness and encouraging public participation to further improve the condition of the Bird Reserve as a safe habitat for endangered species. Following this successful visit, at the time of World Migratory Bird Day our partner in North Korea held their first Swan Goose Festival on the 13th of October at Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve, to join the global celebration of the amazing journey of migratory waterbirds. HSF Korea supported the Ministry of Land and Environmental Protection (MoLEP) to organize the Swan Goose Festival alongside the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Secretariat,

WWF Hong Kong and Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. A total of 160 participants attended this first-ever event on World Migratory Bird Day. The festival and the following training workshop and bird survey were a further step towards improving the environmental awareness of North Korea and integrating the Northern part of the peninsula into the international environmental network. For this occasion, HSF Korea has edited a short videoclip that shows impressions of the festival celebrating World Migratory Bird Day, the training workshop educating participants about wetland management, environmental education, bird identification and monitoring, and the final bird survey. We look forward to more upcoming projects like this in the future and hope to continue to work together with our partners to spread awareness for wetlands and its endangered habitats.



Options for a National Forest Inventory

North Korea has lost around 40% of its forest cover in the last 25 years. Yet, at the same time the country hosts vulnerable and threatened species and valuable

biodiversity, while academic research about it is rare. To widen the knowledge about the ecosystem in North Korea, HSF Korea has carried out activities to support the National Forest Inventory in North Korea, as well as research on Amphibia during seminars and field surveys. HSF Korea was able to lead Dr. Heino Polley, vice-head of the Thünen Institute for Forest Ecology for a visit in North Korea to share his experiences and expertise about the German Forest Inventory. At the same time, a seminar on the importance of amphibians for the ecosystem, their threats and the current amphibian crisis was held. The following day, field visits to the Central Tree Nursery and a model reforestation site were conducted. The project sites and tree nurseries in Mundok and Onchon were visited as well. With projects like this, HSF Korea aims to raise the awareness on the importance of forests and a healthy ecosystem in North Korea. Bringing experts like Dr. Polley can not only assist in exchanging special knowledge, but also in building transnational conversation and connections that can lead to a peaceful development on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.



The Aftermath of the EU-Project

To improve the capacity of the North Korean forestry sector and consequently the living conditions of the population in the rural areas, HSF Korea implemented a project on reforestation in North Korea from 2014 until 2018, funded by the European Union. HSF Korea continues to work on improving the condition of North Korea's forests through various projects and events. One of said events was the New Forest Symposium, organized by the Korea Forest Service where inter-Korean forest cooperation and forest restoration in North Korea were discussed with the EU project Training Centre for Sustainable Forestry in the mindset. HSF was invited to participate in the conference and to share the experience on reforestation work in North Korea.

Inter-Korean Cooperation and Forestry

During the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week the central themes of the forum were positive dimensions of forestry, the integration of forestry into the wider context of environment, society and sustainable development, and restoring forests. During this event, HSF Korea was able to share their experience in the field of forestry and discussed further directions towards inter-Korean forestry cooperation.

International Forest Restoration Experiences

The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030. The Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) approach, that aims to restore ecological integrity, as well as improve human well-being through multifunctional landscapes is crucial to achieve these goals and are of high significance for North Korea. In order to introduce the Bonn Challenge and FLR to an audience in North Korea, HSF Korea supported a two-day seminar in Pyongyang for more than 50 representatives of the North Korean forestry sector. Experts from the International Union for the Conservation

of Nature (IUCN) and the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) led the seminar and shared their experiences and expertise with the participants. With events like this, HSF hopes to raise awareness on the importance of forests in North Korea and aims to motivate the country to participate in global efforts like the Bonn Challenge to work together with other nations for a common goal, the restoration and protection of deforested areas.



Peaceful Use of the Han River Estuary

The river Han is not only the largest and most important river of South Korea, but also – in its Westernmost course and estuary – forms the border to North Korea, where tensions often flare. Recently, also plans for a peaceful use and development of the border area in this region have been discussed by the local communities, Gimpo, Goyang, Paju and Gangwon-do. The DMZ and the surrounding border areas became a refuge for rare animals in habitats untouched by South Korea's rapid economic development. This year, HSF Korea organized and participated in many events aiming to further improve the peaceful and sustainable ecological use of the Han River estuary. One of these events was a forum in Gimpo City to discuss various perspectives of a sustainable and peaceful use of the estuary. Dr. Bernhard Seliger, the representative of HSF Korea suggested a cross-border cooperation on nature protection between Gimpo and North Korea in form of joint surveys. This would assist in opening conversations between both sides of the border, but also contribute to the preservation of the Han River estuary's ecosystem. HSF Korea took various trips to the Han River this year. In January, the foundation organized a trip to Yu-do Island, a small island with the only inhabitants being birds, many of them migratory birds, and can only be

met at specific times of the year. In April, a boat trip at the Southern part of the border area, around the Siam wetland was taken by officials and representatives of civil society and in September, HSF and its partner EAAFP took a trip to the same region and the near Yu-do Island. During this survey, the participants could watch many different peculiar bird species. Among those was surprisingly a Northern Wheatear, who was presumably brought over by the typhoon Lingling.

Another event concerning the Han River estuary, where HSF Korea participated in, was a round table discussing the designation of the region including the North Korean area. The historical and ecological value of the estuary were highlighted, new strategy plans of the DMZ and the Han River estuary were suggested, and bird survey results were shared. Dr. Hyun-Ah Choi from HSF Korea explained multilateral environment cooperation approaches for the region based on previous experiences in the field of wetland and biodiversity. All participants agreed to further work together for the designation of the Ramsar site in the Han River estuary.



As a final step, HSF Korea signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Gimpo City to share experiences concerning all matters of the Han River estuary region. Dr. Bernhard Seliger, the representative of HSF Korea and Mr. Ha-Young Jung, the mayor of Gimpo City agreed to engage in a close cooperation for the conservation of the region. After the ceremony, HSF Korea and Mr. Jung and officers of Gimpo discussed in a meeting more cooperative activities in the future. The HSF is looking forward to support developing the Han River estuary towards a peaceful and nature preserving area that will further assist in loosening up tension at the border region between South and North Korea.

Sustainable Seafood and Nature Conservation

Environmental awareness puts pressure on industries to contribute to the conservation of the environment. Given the large economic value of fisheries and its impact on the environment sustainable seafood becomes significant for nature conservation, wetlands and biodiversity. HSF Korea supported a visit of a delegation from North Korea to Hong Kong to discuss with Chinese and South Korean experts about important matters concerning sustainable and certified seafood. The North Korean delegation attended a workshop on ASC and MSC standards and presented efforts to conserve marine protected areas in the country. Additional parts of the program included discussions with WWF Hong Kong on modern approaches to conserve wetlands and the relationship between economic developments and environment conservation. The delegates were able to meet Oxfam and the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, where they presented about the Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve while also discussing about conserving North Korea's biodiversity and increasing the cooperation with partners.

The Future of the Yellow/West Sea

During the 3rd Meeting of the Management, Science and Technical Panel in Qingdao the Yellow Sea was the most important topic. Especially the development of a Strategic Action Programme for the Yellow/West Sea was discussed as an issue of high importance. Dr. Hyun-Ah Choi of HSF Korea was invited to share information about HSF projects on wetlands and biodiversity in the Yellow/West Sea. As a country bordering the Yellow/West Sea, the development of a Strategic Action Programme is an important issue for North Korea as well.

Engagement through Nature

Environmental destruction is a global problem. The Korean Peninsula is affected from natural and man-caused destruction of the environment as much as any other

country. Nevertheless, the common cause, saving the environment, leads to international environmental cooperation. Therefore, projects in North Korea support the establishment of international cooperation in the country, one example of this would be the Ramsar Convention. In the briefing "Environment Conservation and Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula – Engagement through Nature" hosted by HSF Korea and its close partner EAAFP the concept of engaging North Korea through environmental issues was discussed. One of the presenters was Felix Glenk from HSF Korea, who emphasized the building of trust between both Koreas through depoliticized dialogues and exchanges. Other presenters talked about experiences of bird surveys on the West and East coast of North Korea, the Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve, the UNESCO Biosphere Reverse Programme, and the prospects for cooperation on the Korean Peninsula.



Environmental Cooperation in Northeast Asia

One of the most important Northeast Asian institutions in the field of environment is the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC). Every year specialists and officials from China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Mongolia and Russia come together to discuss environmental issues. This year the agenda consisted of air pollution and transboundary cooperation on nature protection. In the coming years, networking between nature reserves and parks in the Tumen river delta area will be enhanced, with potentially the first cross-border Ramsar site in Northeast Asia. HSF Korea will continue to cooperate with NEASPEC on this and other projects in hope to enhance nature protection on the

Korean Peninsula and, through that, working towards peace in the region.

International Cooperation on Environment and Energy

During the International Conference on Environment and Energy in Artyom, Russia, scientists from various Asian countries, including North Korea, discussed cooperation on environmental issues like fine dust, green growth and maritime pollution. HSF Korea was invited to share their experience on the importance of international cooperation regarding environmental work.

A Strategy for the Conservation of Cranes

There are seven species of cranes in East Asia that undertake long-distance migration reaching alongside the East Asian-Australasian Flyway from Russia and Mongolia, to China, North Korea, South Korea and Japan. But due to declining numbers many of these species require a special protection status. According to IUCN, Siberian Cranes are critically endangered, Red-crowned Cranes are endangered and White-naped Cranes are a vulnerable species. Effective conservation of these species requires international cooperation so that the cranes and their habitats are protected at all stages of migration. In order to develop a long-term strategy and action plan for cranes along the East Asian – Australasian Flyway of birds, EAAFP, Beijing Forestry University and the International Crane Foundation organized a workshop in Beijing. Felix Glenk of HSF Korea participated and held a presentation on HSF projects in North Korea on the wise use of wetlands and the first two Ramsar Sites of International Importance in the country along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.



Nature Conservation in the Civilian Control Line

While nature conservation in the DMZ between North and South Korea is a well-known issue, there is less information on the same matter within the Civilian Control Line. The Civilian Control Line is an area located in South Korea and 10km South of the Military Demarcation Line that divides North and South Korea. The Korea Forest Service and the Korea Forest Conversion Association held a symposium to raise awareness of nature conservation in the Civilian Control Line. Felix Glenk of HSF Korea supported the event as a speaker. He introduced HSF and their values and goals as well past and current projects of the Korea Office to conserve nature and biodiversity in North Korea. Additionally, he talked about the European Green Belt as a comparison to the inter-Korean border area.



Environmental Cooperation with Mid-Latitude Regions

HSF Korea held a workshop at Korea University where John O'Dea and Dr. Woo-Kyun Lee each held a presentation related to environmental cooperation with Mid-Latitude Regions. O'Dea focused on his work in North Korea and the chances and challenges coming along with it. Dr. Lee focused on agricultural implementation of new technologies in North Korea and South Korea.



Water and Energy in Northeast Asia

Water and energy are among the most pressing problems of mankind, and climate change and population growth as well as deforestation and pollution are among the causes for problems with clean water supply. At the Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok a workshop on water and energy was co-organized by the School of Regional and International Studies as well as HSF Korea. Participants were from Russia, North Korea, South Korea and Germany. In the discussions concerning water management, water resources, and biochar and low-carbon technologies, scientists searched for new areas of international cooperation.

How to Implement Sustainable Development Goals?

The Korea Sharing Movement organized a workshop on the "Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" on the Korean Peninsula and invited HSF Korea to share different ideas on possible SDG implementations in North Korea based on their work in the field of environment and nature preservation. The current status of the SDG implementation in both North and South Korea was a central topic of this workshop. Difficulties and possible new methods of implementing SDGs, especially in North Korea were discussed and HSF could contribute to this discussion with their experiences in environmental approaches.

Environmental Restoration and Sustainability on the Korean Peninsula

HSF Korea hosted an excursion with an integrated seminar in Goseong in South Korea. The two-day program started with a seminar on Environmental Restoration and Sustainability on the Korean Peninsula. Dr. Bernhard Seliger, representative of HSF Korea was invited to give his opening remarks on the event. On the second day two field studies were conducted. One group went on a field study on the Korean borderlands where they visited the Civilian Control Line, the Unification Observatory and the Geonbongsa Temple. The other group

conducted a bird survey where various species, among them the Ancient Murrelet could be found.



The Use of Renewable Energy

The South-North Korea Exchanges and Cooperation Support Association organized a field trip to the Hongcheon Eco-friendly Energy Town and a solar power plant. Various organizations attended the event, among them HSF Korea. The trip was a great opportunity to figure out ways to implement renewable energy in North Korea. Especially the system of the Hongcheon Eco-friendly Energy Town can be applied to the case of North Korea as an environmentally friendly and sustainable source of energy.

Supported Publications

This year HSF Korea supported various publications to spread awareness and knowledge in North Korea about the country's environment and ecosystem. To improve the North Korean National Forest Inventory, HSF supported the publication process of a manual containing guidelines from general definitions to various inventory and analysis methods. HSF provided essential data in the publication process. Another publication supported by HSF Korea is an information booklet on identification guidelines for shorebird species in North Korea and on the East Asian - Australasian Flyway. To draw more attention to the precarious situation of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and to encourage further protective measures HSF also supported the publication of an information brochure with specific details on the endangered bird species. Finally, to celebrate "World Migratory Bird Day", HSF Korea supported the publication of a photo book on the "Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve - Wetland on the West Coast of Korea".