

# Our Work in 2020

## 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.*

### Bird Surveys in January and February

Along with the advancing development of the border areas to North Korea, the natural habitats of several species are reducing rapidly. Thus, wetlands on the westside of the Han River, important resting places for ducks, geese and other waterbirds, are disappearing. On that note, HSF Korea visited Kanseo wetland, Jungnangcheon estuary, Siam wetland, and Goseong to observe rare bird species on the Korean Peninsula. Dr. Seliger and Dr. Hyun-Ah Choi of the HSF Korea conducted a field survey with Dr. Amaël Borzeé of the Nanjing Forestry University.

### Cranes as Messengers of Peace

Dr. Hyun-Ah Choi joined the panel for an online seminar regarding cranes in the demilitarized zone held by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and the International Crane Foundation. Other speakers were Dr. Yunjeong Joo of Seoul National University, and Dr. Kisup Lee of Waterbird Network Korea. Dr. Lee had a presentation about the importance of the cranes in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) – especially, wetlands and agriculture area in Cheorwon - gun for the red-crowned cranes and white-napped cranes.



### Environmental Restoration on the Korean Peninsula

Not only war, but also environmental destruction and pollution threaten human life, and environmental pollution in North Korea will cause other pollution in the neighboring countries. Therefore, environmental cooperation among countries is as important as security and economic cooperation. Regarding this issue, a joint conference on the environmental restoration on the Korean Peninsula and sustainable inter-Korean cooperation was held by HSF Korea and Institute of Peace Affairs (IPA), with UniKorea Foundation’s sponsorship under the 31st Korean Unification Forum. Tongil Hankuk Forum is a regular series that brings together participants interested in unification issues and geopolitics in Northeast Asia. Dr. Bernhard Seliger, representative of HSF Korea, gave a speech on the sustainable inter-Korean environmental cooperation

and emphasized to approach humbly and not expect a great breakthrough by one action, but rather try to achieve many small-scale implementations.

### Inter-Korean Forest Center in Paju

Inter-Korean cooperation in the field of forestry is of great importance, as North Korea’s afforestation is a national priority on its project agenda and South Korea has had very similar experiences in this field in the past and can therefore contribute to North Korea’s success with important expertise and skills. With this in mind, the Center for Inter-Korean Forest Cooperation was launched in June near the inner-Korean border, operated by the Korean Forest Service and supported by the Ministry of Unification. HSF Korea participated in the opening ceremony to celebrate the opening of the Inter-Korean Forest Cooperation Center.



## Biodiversity on Baekryeong Island

Baekryeong Island is an island on the west side of South Korea in the Yellow Sea, close to Hwanghae-namdo in North Korea. The island is known for its rich marine life. HSF Korea conducted a bird survey on Baekryeong Island with Birds Korea, the Korea Federation for Environmental Movements (KFEM) and Trevor Rose of Rose Design Services Ltd from the 17th to the 19th of January. Participants of the survey were able to observe a variety of endangered species, such as a Greater Spotted Eagle, Horned Grebes, Rustic Buntings and even a group of five Snow Geese. The representatives of HSF Korea were also invited to attend a meeting in Jinchon on the future of the region. All participants agreed on working more to better combine ecological, cultural, historical and economic considerations for the future of Baekryeong Island. In addition, HSF Korea accompanied Trevor Rose while he installed the first frog ladders in Baekryeong Island and Yeoncheon County as part of the Baekryeong Wetlands Project. Baekryeong ecosystem is not only an important habitat for various bird species but amphibians as well. Due to human interference with nature, in this case through drains and gully pots, their natural habitats can transform into deadly traps.



## Environmental Law in North Korea

This year the 15th Unification Law Forum was held and organized by Korea Legislation Research Institute and Dr.

Seliger participated in the forum as an invited speaker. He introduced HSF's work and explained the basics of law legal practices in North Korea. He focused his report on environmental law, addressing topics such as afforestation, pollution and the DPRK's participation in the Ramsar Convention to protect its wetlands. Dr. Seliger also added information about wetlands, surveys in the Rason Ramsar Site and HSF Korea's forest project. Lastly, he addressed the topic of inter-Korean law and cooperation, giving a short overview of the history and past experiences before providing an outlook on which aspects can be improved.



## Ecotourism at Saemangeum in Jeollabuk-do

The tourism pattern in South Korea has changed and the demand for green tourism is increasing amidst the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic resulting in the need for new innovative project ideas. Jeollabuk-do Ecotourism Sustainable Center (JBESC) visited HSF Korea and proposed a future cooperation plan named the Jeonbuk Saemangeum Green Tourism Monitoring Plan. Following the meeting, HSF Korea and JBESC agreed to hold an offline workshop to re-evaluate Saemangeum's ecological value. After a month, HSF Korea, JBESC, local experts and the international amphibian expert, Professor Amaël Borzée from Nanjing Forestry University participated in a workshop to observe the ecological transition of the agricultural areas in Saemangeum. Saemangeum Project unfolds around a very complex plan for the usage of the area. A Flood Control Bank is built on the outer rim of the

development site to reduce any harm to farmland. From and to this bank, a two-lane road and small parks are to be built, considering the water-friendly and ecological environment. Furthermore, within the framework of an agricultural science site, an eco-friendly high quality modern agricultural industrial basis, as well as an export-friendly basis, R&D and agricultural service support, farming village ecological tourism basis, bio-crop complex, and an agricultural city are planned to be built and installed during the progress of the project. Ultimately, the surroundings of this area are built to function as an agricultural science site for diverse convergence and a farming village tourism complex. Yet, the management of breakwater is also a major concern of the Saemangeum Project, including the environmental management of the Saemangeum area.

## Planting Trees in Goseong Border Area

Taking care of nature preservation in the inter-Korean border regions postulates one of the major working fields of HSF Korea. A trip to the southern part of divided Goseong County was an opportunity to check on the local developments and contribute to the work done in the region. Because of an increasing number of more or less deep concrete trenches, built to drain the water from rice fields in the modern Korean agricultural landscape, many reptiles and small mammals are not able to migrate back and forth. Thus, in order to save the frog population in Songjeong-Ri, frog ladders were built, consisting of enkamat-wire that frogs can climb in order to get out of the trenches. Members of the HSF Korea along with Mr. Young Choi, member of Seoul Korean Federation For Environmental Movement (KFEM), Mr. Young-Kook Byun and Mr. Myeong-Gi Lee from Goesong Country, Pastor Seok-Geun Chang, head of the environmental citizen group Sockcho, Yangyang, Goseong KFEM, and frog expert Professor Amaël Borzée from Nanjing Forestry University joined and supported the installation of the frog ladders.



## Birds Connect People Over Borders

Suncheon Bay has one of the most spectacular views of all remaining South Korean coastal wetland sites. HSF Korea partnered up with a delegation of EAAFP and went on a trip to Suncheon. A forum on potential inter-Korean cooperation took place, also attended by Mr. Heo Seok, the mayor of Suncheon City and Mr. Seung-Oh Suh, Executive Director of the Ramsar Regional Centre East Asia. Giving an overview of the HSF's work on wetlands, Dr. Bernhard Seliger also mentioned the foundation's project on wetlands in North Korea. He introduced the idea of a possible sister city-ship between South Korean Suncheon and North Korean Sunchon based on ecological cooperation and referred to past experiences of town twinning between East and West Germany. Related to the current situation, he pointed out that birds always, even during a global pandemic, have close bonds to North Korea and called for jointly working on the habitat protection of these birds in a cooperative way.

## Water Management and International Cooperation

Water is one of the most important elements on earth. Along with K-Water (Korea Water Resources Corporation), HSF Korea discussed topics such as water management, tidal power and Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). Dr. Bernhard Seliger visited the K-Water headquarter to discuss the issues of cooperation in 2020 and actively explored opportunities to be active on the entire Korean Peninsula.

## Sustainable Environmental Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula

The 32nd Tongil Hankuk Forum was the first time that the event had a focus on nature conservation as a platform for exchange and cooperation on the Korean Peninsula, supporting trust-building and the reconciliation process. The panels included Dong Wook Han, Head of Research at PGA Wetland Research Center, Seung Oh Suh, Center Director of the Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia, Kisup Lee, and Dr. Bernhard Seliger. Through emphasizing the importance of coastal wetlands in the Korean Peninsula, the discussants examined proposals to bring inter-Korean cooperation and preserve wetlands that are crucial for biodiversity. Dr. Bernhard Seliger presented the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the DPRK and how training abroad and in the DPRK supported the environmental sector and lead to an improvement of skills and knowledge.



## Inter-Korean Forest Cooperation Center

Forestry makes a major contribution to the regeneration of the earth, especially in the field of environmental protection. As reforestation has been a present topic in South Korea for the last 60 years and has been implemented in the context of continuous cooperation with worldwide organizations, the Centre for Inter-Korean Cooperation in the Forestry

Sector is established to share its knowledge and resources with North Korea in order to enable debate and progress in the north of the Korean Peninsula. The Inter-Korean Centre for Forest Cooperation will be established and located in Paju in Gyeonggi Province, south of the demilitarized zone to make preparations for future comprehensive forest cooperation through the Korean Forest Service (KFS) easier. It will serve as a comprehensive platform for supporting inter-Korean cooperation in the field of forestry, such as intelligent tree nurseries and administrative buildings. Dr. Hyun-Ah Choi attended a workshop regarding this establishment to discuss the future direction of cooperation in the forest sector with experts from non-governmental organizations, including the Korea Sharing Movement and Forest for Life.

## Preservation of the Hwaseong Wetlands

With four main types of wetlands, consisting of rice fields, freshwater wetlands, a reclamation lake, and intertidal areas, the Hwaseong wetlands are home to many different species on top of being an important resting place for many waterbird species, among whom many are endangered. To support the symposium's purpose to spread this information, HSF Korea sponsored the 3rd international Symposium on "Getting the Benefits of Hwaseong Wetlands Conservation" held in Hwaseong. This year's symposium for the Hwaseong wetlands was conducted with precise regard to their importance and mutual benefit for people as well as nature. The necessity of the wetlands' protection and conservation and its benefits were stressed in the symposium. Speakers including Dr. Nial Moores, director of Birds Korea, highlighted the need to pursue the goals anchored in the Ramsar Convention of 1971.





## Peace at the Han River Estuary

July 27 of 2020 celebrates 67 years since the Korean Armistice Agreement, the armistice that brought about cessation of hostilities of the Korean War and established the 38th parallel as well as the demilitarized zone surrounding it. Around this area lies the Han River Estuary, an ecologically important and politically neutral zone where the use is allowed for both Koreas. However, since the use of Han River Estuary was restricted, Gimpo city has been organizing the boat survey as part of the peaceful use of Han River Estuary. Although this year's survey was postponed due to weather conditions and political issues, the city of Gimpo invited experts and organized the roundtable to mark the historical day of the Korean Armistice Agreement and discuss the peaceful use of Han River Estuary. Dr. Hyun-Ah Choi attended the roundtable and discussed the direction for the sustainable and peaceful use of the area.

## Rason and SDGs

The Rason Special Economic Zone was established in 1992 by North Korea's government in order to promote economic growth through foreign investment. HSF Korea and Hananuri organized a joint online seminar on Rason and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in North Korea. Dr. Bernhard Seliger spoke about the Rason Special Economic Zone in an online seminar. He further discussed the topics of Agriculture, Environment, and Development in Rason, but also addressed some of the coming challenges in the area and possible problems of

long-term cooperation. There were comments on the topic of regional development and environmental conservation in the Rason Special Economic Zone as well.



## Biodiversity in Goseong

Goseong in Gangwon Province and HSF Korea have been partners for the sustainable development of the inner-Korean border area since 2005. Dr. Bernhard Seliger and Young-Soo Kim of HSF Korea had meetings in the Goseong County office to discuss the possibility to carry out a project to establish eco-corridors particularly for amphibians, through "frog ladders". They carried out several projects, like establishing an eco-trail in Seongjongri, had numerous joint seminars and workshops, and worked on the establishment of a partnership with Bayreuth county in Germany, in the former inner-German border area. The meeting also discussed the reforestation process in parts of Goseong which was hit hard by a forest fire last year. HSF Korea promised to support the afforestation of the land as part of its project with Goseong this year.

## Climate Change and Biodiversity in North Korea

Consequences and challenges that climate change poses for the conservation of migratory birds and wetlands are severe. In this regard, the monthly virtual lunch talk of the independent evaluation unit (IEU), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Dr. Watkins, and Dr. Seliger, was about biodiversity in

the context of the omnipresent problems of climate change in North Korea under the title "Climate change and biodiversity conservation measures in North Korea: challenges and opportunities." The participants discussed key elements to be taken into account when planning and evaluating climate change adaptation projects. In terms of reforestation in North Korea, the problem of the lack of sustainable forestry and national forest areas results in annual natural disasters. Dr. Bernhard Seliger emphasized the need for a clean financial channel for international projects and the importance of creating closer relations with North Korea.



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