

Globally significant birds in the Yellow Sea Ecoregion

A table of bird indicator species and their global significance

Indicator Species		Criteria for habitat and vulnerable species of global significance			
Scientific names	Common English names	Endemism (Definition: >50% of the population occurs in the Yellow Sea Ecoregion at some time of its life cycle.)	Criterion 2: Vulnerable Species	Criterion 3: Commercially Important Species (n/a: not applicable)	Criterion 4: Ramsar Criteria on Waterbird
<i>Grus japonensis</i>	Red-crowned crane	Yes	CK IUCN EN	n/a	Yes
<i>Grus monacha</i>	Hooded crane	Yes	CK IUCNVU	n/a	Yes
<i>Grus vipio</i>	White-naped crane	Yes	CK IUCNVU	n/a	Yes
<i>Platalea minor</i>	Black-faced spoonbill	Yes	CK IUCN EN	n/a	Yes
<i>Egretta eulophotes</i>	Chinese egret	Yes	CK IUCNVU	n/a	Yes
<i>Ciconia boyciana</i>	Oriental white stock	Yes	CK IUCN EN	n/a	Yes
<i>Anas formosa</i>	Baikal teal	Yes	CK IUCNVU	n/a	Yes
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Whooper swan	Yes (10 000)	C K	n/a	Yes
<i>Larus saundersi</i>	Saunders's gull	Yes	CK IUCNVU	n/a	Yes
<i>Haemantopus ostralegus</i>	Oystercatcher	Yes	K	n/a	Yes
<i>Tringa guttifer</i>	Nordmann's greenshank	Yes	IUCN EN	n/a	Yes
<i>Eurynorhynchus pygmeus</i>	Spoonbill sandpiper	Yes	IUCN EN	n/a	Yes
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Far eastern curlew	Yes	IUCN NT	n/a	Yes
<i>Anser cygnoides</i>	Swan Goose	Yes (Korean population. Among two populations, perhaps Russian FE birds migrate to Korea.)	IUCN EN	n/a	Yes
<i>Grus leucogeranus</i>	Siberian crane	Yes (Staging areas in Bohai Wan)	IUCN CR	n/a	Yes
<i>Larus relictus</i>	Relict Gull	Yes (Non-breeding migrant. Count data limited in Korea.)	IUCN VU	n/a	Yes

Notes

Each indicator species were assessed against Criterion 1, 2 and 3. When an indicator species meets Criterion 1 according to data available in China, then it is indicated by C (China).

Note 1: In Criterion 1,2 and 3 columns, C indicates that a criterion is applicable to the corresponding species according to data from China, K: South Korea.

Note 2: IUCN CR, IUCN EN, and IUCN VU indicate the species is classified as Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), or Vulnerable (VU) respectively in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Note 3: In Criterion 4 column Yes indicates the Ramsar criteria on waterbirds were applied to the corresponding species.

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Red-crowned crane



Saunders's gull



Saunders's gull

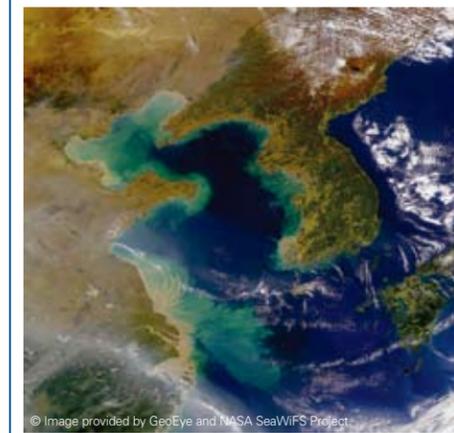


Spoonbill sandpiper



Whooper swan

Birds of the Yellow Sea Ecoregion and their habitats



Satellite photo of Yellow Sea Ecoregion



Black-faced spoonbill

Birds of the Yellow Sea Ecoregion

About the area

The Yellow Sea Ecoregion is one of the world's largest areas of continental shelf. The Yellow Sea Ecoregion encompasses the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea. It is a transboundary area and extends from the coastlines of China, North Korea, and South Korea to a depth of 200m.

Valuable nutrients flow from the Yangtze and Yellow rivers and combine with sunlight and shallow waters to create an area that teems with abundant marine life.

Diversity of bird species

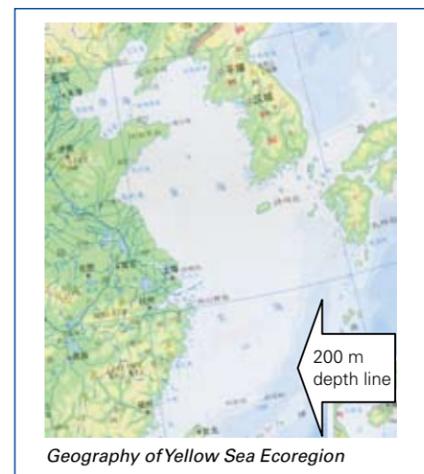
Yellow Sea Ecoregion supports a large number of wetland and marine bird species. In China, 173 species of waterbirds and 9 species of seabirds have been recorded, and in South Korea, 162 waterbirds species including egrets, ibis, storks, cranes, ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds, and gulls have been observed.

What is an ecoregion?

Biodiversity is not spread evenly across the Earth but follows complex patterns determined by climate, geology and the evolutionary history of the planet. These patterns are called ecoregions. WWF defines an ecoregion as a large unit of land or water containing a geographically distinct assemblage of species, natural communities, and environmental conditions. The boundaries of an ecoregion are not fixed and sharp, but rather encompass an area within which important ecological and evolutionary processes most strongly interact.

A refuge for migrating birds

The Yellow Sea Ecoregion is often likened to a very important 'international airport' for migratory birds. This is because each year over a million waterbirds fly to many wetlands in the Yellow Sea Ecoregion to rest and 'refuel' by feeding on rich aquatic animals and plants, so that they can safely continue their long journey to destinations as far away as Alaska or Australia. Scientific data shows that in South Korea alone, coastal wetlands support more than 10% of populations of 14 shorebird species. The Yellow Sea Ecoregion also provides habitat for 22 species listed in China's nationally compiled red list of endangered species and 11 globally threatened birds in South Korea.



Geography of Yellow Sea Ecoregion

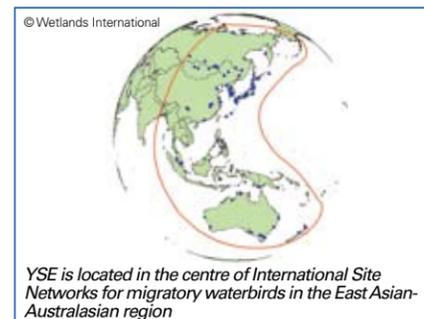
Birds and People

Historically, the hunting of waterbirds has long been a source of food as well as a commercial activity. Until recently, the hunting of shorebirds in China was done mostly for commercial purposes. But with improved economic conditions, pressure from hunting has dropped. It is now illegal in China to hunt birds in the wild.

People have converted natural wetlands in coastal areas into large areas of artificial wetlands, which now provide important habitat for waterbirds. For example, salt pans provide roosting areas for shorebirds at high tide, and estuary dams have become home for a large number of ducks, including the Baikal teal, a globally vulnerable species. Artificial wetlands may have lost the original ecological character of natural wetlands, but they nevertheless still play an important role in supporting waterbirds.

Threats to Birds

Large-scale habitat loss is the single most serious threat to waterbirds in the Yellow Sea Ecoregion. Habitat loss is mainly caused by conversion of coastal wetlands by reclamation into agricultural land, salt pans, fishponds and other industrial and urban development. In South Korea, about 43% of intertidal wetlands were lost during the 20th century. In China, about 37% of intertidal wetlands have been converted in the last 50 years. Other threats include pollution of the aquatic environment, over hunting and illegal hunting of some species, human disturbance and competition for aquatic products between people and birds. The introduction and spread of invasive alien plant species is another recognised threat to waterbirds in China.



YSE is located in the centre of International Site Networks for migratory waterbirds in the East Asian-Australasian region

