

Regular Briefing (220518)

91 endangered black-faced spoonbills were spotted on an island near Seocheon tidal flat

Briefed by the Director of National Institute of Biological Resources Kang Jae-sin on Tue, May 17, 2022 at 10:30 AM

Hello. We are happy to deliver the good news to the public that we have discovered 91 endangered black-faced spoonbills breeding in a group on an uninhabited island near the Seocheon tidal flat of Chungcheongnam-do.

The National Institute of Ecology (NIE), an affiliate of the Ministry of Environment (ME), recently spotted 91 black-faced spoonbills, a class I endangered species, breeding on an island near Yubudo Island, Seocheon-gun.

In April of this year, researchers of the NIE Research Center for Endangered Species confirmed that a group of black-faced spoonbills is breeding in this region. Other waterbirds such as the Eurasian oystercatcher, a class II endangered species, and the black-tailed gull, protected by the Ministry of Environment, were also spotted here.

Researchers believe the black-faced spoonbills have chosen this region as their nesting site after dispersing from nearby breeding areas, such as Seocheon-gun of Chungcheongnam-do and Yeonggwang-gun of Jeollanam-do.

Black-faced spoonbills are summer-migratory birds with white feathers and a spoon-shaped bill, and they usually feed tiny fish or shellfish.

Black-faced spoonbill is a species that breeds only in East Asia, specifically in South Korea, Hong Kong, China's southeastern area, and Taiwan. It is estimated that there are 6,162 black-faced spoonbills in the world as of January of this year.

Over 90% of the world's black-faced spoonbills breed on the west coast of South Korea, including uninhabited islands in Ganghwado and Yeongjongdo of Incheon.

Black-faced spoonbills lay an average of three eggs between the end of March and July and spend the winter mainly in Hong Kong, China's southeastern area, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Adult black-faced spoonbills breeding in Korea increased by 1.19 times from 3,096 in 2020 to 3,690 in 2021.

Incheon and Gyeonggi Bay are home to 2,914 black-faced spoonbills (79%) in Korea, while the rest live on deserted tidal flat islands in Seochon-gun and Yeonggwang-gun.

The NIE plans to extend the activities of the existing Joint Consultative Body for Black-faced Spoonbills from Incheon to nationwide, considering the fact that there is a gradual increase in the number of black-faced spoonbill breeding habitats. We also plan to research more systematically by examining the newly identified breeding sites in the tidal flats near Seochon.

I will now go over the specifics of the panels in more depth.

It is a graph showing the black-faced spoonbill population. From 2000 to 2010 and 2022, the number of black-faced spoonbills has increased by nearly 22 times.

The right indicates a rising trend of breeding in 15 out of 22 black-faced spoonbill breeding places marked with green nationwide. The six sites recently showed decreasing tendencies of breeding. We marked in orange for the breeding places newly discovered.

These are photos of recently discovered black-faced spoonbill breeding sites. Eurasian oystercatchers and black-tailed gulls were also seen at these breeding locations, along with black-faced spoonbills.

Some of the risk factors in Korea's current black-faced spoonbill breeding sites include tidal flat reclamation, land reclamation, and human interventions such as illegal trafficking of birds and collecting their eggs. Eurasian eagle-owls or raccoons prey on the eggs of black-faced spoonbills as they hunt on nests. While human actions have decreased in recent years, predatory activities by raccoons or Eurasian eagle-owls have increased.

This concludes the announcement.