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THE NORTH AMERICAN-EAST ASIAN CONNECTION

Most who dabble in the world of birds in North America are familiar with the major paths migratory birds use during their seasonal traverse of the Americas: the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific Flyways. Fewer may know that migratory birds that breed in North America also can be found in the East Asian-Australasian and West Pacific Flyways. Numerous species that breed in Alaska and northwestern Canada use these flyways to travel between New World breeding grounds and Old World wintering areas.

Prevalent among these travelers of the orient are migratory waterbirds. Dunlins breeding on the Arctic Coastal Plain of Alaska have been sighted on mudflats in Japan, and bar-tailed godwits color-flagged in New Zealand and southeastern Australia have been spotted on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta of western Alaska. Northern pintails migrate to islands in the Pacific Ocean, and birds banded in Alaska have been recovered in Japan. Red-throated loons, equipped with satellite transmitters in northern Alaska, crossed the Bering Sea and hopscoched their way along the coast from eastern Russia to Japan, finally stopping offshore of South Korea.

As in North America, many wetlands throughout these flyways have been degraded or lost. In fact, 85 percent of all the flyways' wetlands are under some form of threat. *The Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 1996-2000* provides an international framework for the conser-

vation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats throughout the region. Like the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the strategy relies on partnerships of governments, conventions, national and international non-governmental organizations, development agencies, the corporate sector, and local communities to achieve its goals and objectives.

One of the strategy's main objectives is to develop a series of networks of internationally important sites for three principal groups of waterbirds: waterfowl, shorebirds, and cranes. Staff training, public education, and biological surveys are used to integrate waterbird conservation into the management of these important wetland sites, and local needs of communities at the sites are incorporated into all management plans. To date, 67 sites in 11 countries comprise the flyways' networks. Action plans have been developed to address conservation needs of broad wetland species groups and rare or threatened waterbird species.

Achievements during the first 5 years of the strategy's implementation prompted the countries and organizations serving on the Coordination Committee to approve a second 5-year strategy and action plan earlier this year. Last year, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service became an official member of the Committee. Administrative support for implementation of the strategy is provided by Wetlands International, and major financial support comes from the governments of Australia and Japan. Additional finances are urgently needed to implement priority conservation actions.

Wetland conservation in the Asia-Pacific flyways is no less daunting than that in the Americas. The cooperation developed



Japanese and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists work together banding shorebirds in Alaska, one of many opportunities made possible by *The Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy*, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

through the *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy* is a great step forward, however, that will benefit North American breeding and all migratory waterbirds found throughout the flyways.

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Asian-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee

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Dunlins breeding on the Arctic Coastal Plain of Alaska have been sighted on mudflats in Japan. /Karen Hollingsworth, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

