Survey of as yet un-surveyed parts of the Bangladesh coast to search for wintering shorebird concentrations (particularly Spoon-billed Sandpiper) and assess the hunting threats

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Bangladesh Bird Club
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Report to Oriental Bird Club

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Bangladesh Bird Club

Supported by a small grant from OBC, a fishing trawler based survey was carried out by Bangladesh Bird Club (Bbc) from 13 to 22 March 2011 at the coast of Bangladesh with the aims to find previously unknown concentrations of wintering shorebirds, especially Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SbS); and assess the threat of hunting/trapping of shorebirds there. Modest concentrations of shorebirds were found, and at one previously unsurveyed location four Spoon-billed Sandpipers present, but bad weather affected the survey. The survey was conducted by six birders: Enam Ul Haque, Delip K. Das, M Faysal, Omar Shahadat, Indranil Kishore and Gazi Mansur Aziz.

Background and Aims

The Bangladesh coast is already known to support significant numbers of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper, but few have been recorded in recent mid-winter counts during the Asian Waterbird Census. Searches in spring 2010 found numbers at two of the known best sites, but were only able to cover a fraction of the overall coastal zone. The short survey reported here covered areas of the coast that have not in recent years been surveyed at all for shorebirds. The aims were to:

1. Search for any previously unknown concentrations of wintering shorebirds,
2. Find and count any Spoon-billed Sandpipers in these areas (and other threatened and non-threatened shorebirds),
3. Identify the locations and habitats present and their suitability for shorebirds, and
4. Rapidly assess the extent of any hunting and trapping of shorebirds based on interviews with local fishers and villagers.

Survey Results

During the 10 days of survey seven new sites were visited (Table 1 summarises their locations and physical conditions).

At one of these, Thengar Char (N22° 18.925', E91° 24.185'), four SbS were found; and about a thousand unidentified shorebirds were also present. Although several of the sites surveyed had wet soft mud, this site unusually had a rippled surface.

Three "new" sites, Urir Char (which held a flock of SbS in 1992), Daumar Char and Char Shah-Amanat, were found with good concentrations of shorebirds including *Calidris* but no SbS. Unfortunately conditions meant that many of the shorebirds at the later two sites were too distant to identify. In addition one SbS was found at a site already covered in surveys for the Asian Waterbird Census, Char Shahjalal, from where none had previously been reported (counts for this site are not included in the attached tables).

Full counts of all shorebirds are given in Table 2. Apart from SbS, the species recorded were typical of coastal Bangladesh. Great Knot as recorded at three sites (Daumar Char, Shah-Amanat Char, Hadi Char) in modest numbers (total 29), and the most abundant species was Lesser Sand Plover. Overall 24 species of shorebird (counting Little/Red-necked Stint as one since based on experience from the November 2010 ringing expedition to Sonadia close views and measurements are needed to distinguish these species in winter plumage and both occur on the Bangladesh coast.

However, the coastal water was unseasonably rough at this time, which handicapped the ability of our boat and survey team to reach sites we planned to visit, and also affected fishing. Consequently there were few fishers active at the sites, so we could not collect useful information on hunting/trapping during the survey.

Observations

A fishing trawler based survey carried out over a longer period of time in December, January and February is needed to search more thoroughly the entire active coastal zone and find new sites for shorebirds and SbS along the coast of Bangladesh. More time is also needed to interview fishers and other villagers about hunting. At least two tours of 12 days each are needed to survey new sites and collect from there data on shorebird trapping.

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Table 1 Habitat data summary: Bangladesh coastal shorebird survey March 2011

	Joiroti Char	**Thengar** Char	**Jahajjeer** Char	**Urir** Char	**Daumar** Char	**Shah-Amanat** Char	**Hadi** Char
GPS coord	N 22 30.727 E 090 59.984	N 22 18.925 E 091 24.185	N 22 40.186 E 091 35.145	N 22 38.211 E 091 20.616	N 22 03.302 E 091 05.791	N 21 51.987 E 090 48.886	N 22 30.699 E 090 36.183
Date	13 March 2011	14 March 2011	15 March 2011	16 March 2011	18 March 2011	20 March 2011	22 March 2011
Hour	4-5 pm	11 am - 4 pm	3-4 pm	7-9 am	8 am - 6 pm	7 am - 3 pm	7-9 am
Tide condition	Rising	Falling-Rising	Declining	Rising	All	All	High
Soil condition	Wet soft mud	Wet soft mud	Wet soft mud	Sandy-mud	All	All	Harder mud
How deep people **sink** in soil	15 cm	15 cm	35 cm	5 cm	5-35 cm	5-50 cm	0 cm
Slope	Sloping gently	Sloping gently	Sloping gently	Flat	Flat	Sloping gently	Flat
Surface texure	Smooth	Rippled	Smooth	Smooth	All	All	Rippled
Water present / absent on soil	Some standing water on parts of soil	Some standing water on parts of soil	Some standing water on parts of soil	Some standing water on parts of soil	Some standing water on parts of soil	Some standing water on parts of soil	Some standing water on parts of soil
Vegetation	None	None	None	None	Little (grass)	None	Substantial (grass)
Sediment **color**	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
Erosion/Accretion	Accreting	Accreting	Accreting	Eroding	Accreting	Accreting	Stable
Photographs #	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21
Bird **behavior**	Feeding	Feeding, Roosting	Feeding	Feeding	Feeding, Roosting	Feeding, Roosting	Feeding, Roosting
Distance of water from bird	00	2-3 m	20 m	2 m	00- 15 m		
Shorebird count	72	1726	616	1150	4753	2270	155
Calidrid count	02	98	300	60	237	111	5
SbS count	00	4	00	00	00	00	00

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Table 2 Shorebird Counts: Coastal Survey March 2011

Place	**Joiroti** Char	**Thengar** Char	**Jahajjeer** Char	**Urir** Char	**Daumar** Char	**Shah-Amanat** Char	**Hadi** Char
Date	13 Mar	14 Mar	15 Mar	16 Mar	18 Mar	20 Mar	22 Mar
Avocet *R. avosetta*							18
Small Pratincole *G. lactea*		2			22	38	
Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva*					650	35	30
Grey Plover *P. squatarola*		4			30	9	
Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*	3			150	22	2	
Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*		540	200	300	1500	400	
Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*		25	100	160	30	80	
Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*					6		
Black-tailed Godwit *L. limosa*	45	32			70	220	90
Bar-tailed Godwit *L. lapponica*	1				7		
Whimbrel *N. phaeopus*	3	1		80	13		
Eurasian Curlew *N. arguata*		5	10	100	22	140	
Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus*	13		3		60	18	
Common Greenshank *T. nebularia*	5		1		18	4	10
Terek Sandpiper *X. cinereus*		9		300		12	
Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*			2		4	1	2
Broad-billed Sandpiper *L. falcinellus*		3			2		
Ruff *P. pugnax*		3					
Unidentified shorebirds		1000			2000	1200	
TOTAL NON-CALIDRIS	**70**	**1624**	**316**	**1090**	**4516**	**2159**	**150**
Spoon-billed Sandpiper *E. pygmeus*		**4**					
Dunlin *C. alpina*	2	2			2	1	
Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*					8	16	5
Sanderling *C. alba*					3		
Little / Red-necked Stint *C. minuta / ruficolis*		60	300	60	220	70	
Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*		36			4	24	
TOTAL CALIDRIS	**2**	**98**	**300**	**60**	**237**	**111**	**5**
GRAND TOTAL	**72**	**1726**	**616**	**1150**	**4753**	**2270**	**155**