

# Statement in Support of World Migratory Bird Day 2014 Destination Flyways: Migratory Birds and Tourism



**Dr Simon Stuart**

**Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission.**

IUCN is looking forward to celebrating World Migratory Bird Day 2014 and promoting this year's theme of "Destination Flyways: Migratory Birds and Tourism". IUCN's Species Survival Commission and Global Species Programme, in partnership with SOS – Save Our Species, are driving the fight to save species for people and nature.

The charismatic Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*) travels 8,000km from its wintering mudflats in Myanmar and Bangladesh to its breeding grounds in the Chukotka region of Russia. Listed as Critically Endangered on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper has suffered a population decline of nearly 90% between 2002 and 2009, with illegal hunting and the reclamation of tidal flats for industry, infrastructure and aquaculture being the main causes of this catastrophic decline.

IUCN Member and SOS – Save Our Species grantee, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, are working to save the Spoon-billed Sandpiper from extinction, through a conservation breeding programme in Chukotka while working with villagers in Myanmar and Bangladesh to reduce the pressures of hunting. In fact, last year the project successfully hatched 20 eggs and just one month after hatching, the fledglings embarked on their first 8000km migration – a remarkable feat! This year we hope to see the first adults from the programme returning to Chukotka to breed – this would be a superb achievement for the project.

Along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper provides a spectacle for communities thousands of miles apart. By celebrating World Migratory Bird Day 2014 and 'The Destination Flyways Project', we can highlight the importance of cross-border cooperation in conserving migratory species, and the role that ecotourism plays in developing local economies as well as raising awareness about how we all depend on and are inspired by nature.