ABSTRACT

Globally significant biodiversity in north coast of West (Yellow) Sea in DPR Korea

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The East Asian-Australasian Flyway has more endangered and threatened waterbird species than any other flyway. The more a shorebird species depends upon the Yellow Sea the greater the rate of decline of the population. The West (Yellow) Sea is the 'weak link' in the chain of sites in the EAAF. Surveys of shorebirds conducted in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) between 2009 and 2019 have identified sites of international importance for nine species. The wetland inventory of the DPRK has identified 24 sites in the West Sea that meet Ramsar listing criteria but all face some threats, in particular land claim for aquaculture and overexploitation. It appears that there has been a loss of c20% of tidal flats along the West Sea coast of DPRK in the past c15-20 years. There is a risk that environmental impacts of land claim extend beyond the direct footprint loss of intertidal habitat as changes in hydrodynamics may affect sediment and benthos. There is virtually no information on the use of tidal flats by shorebirds in DPRK, but satellite tracking is providing some insights. The West Sea coastal wetlands are also of international importance for a number of other wetland birds. It is hoped that DPRK will consider nominating sites for inscription on the World Heritage List as part of a multi-lateral West (Yellow) Sea listing.

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