

Bako Buntal Bay:

Important Stopover and Wintering Site for Migratory Shorebirds



SARAWAK

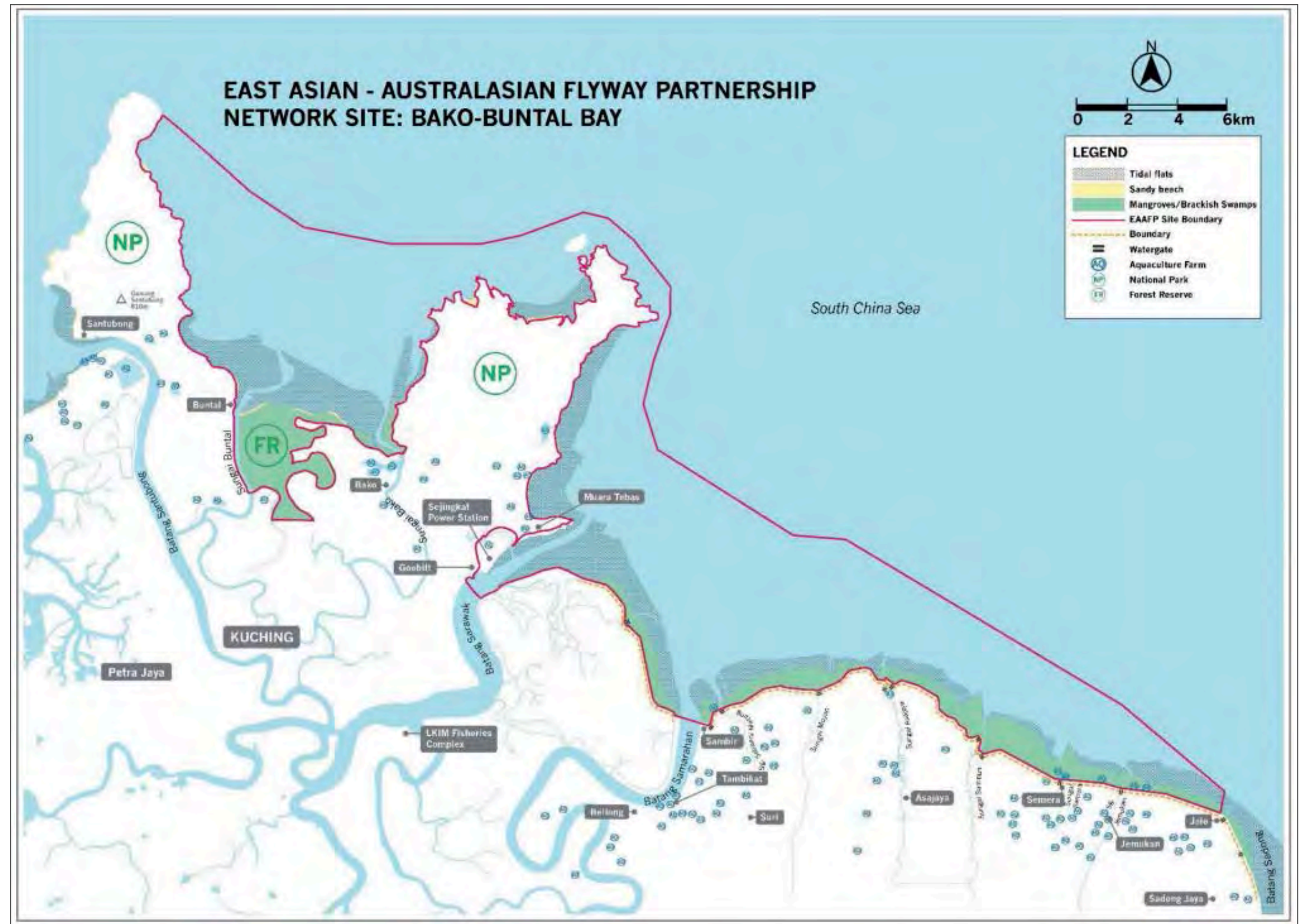
- Borneo island is located in Southeast Asia which is shared by three nation namely Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), Brunei and Indonesian Kalimantan but not much information is known on shorebirds in general.
- Sarawak forms a huge part of the northwestern coastline, 1,035 km with diverse coastal environments such as mangrove forests, rocky shores, sandy beaches, intertidal flats and mudflats.
- Sarawak is known to host globally threatened migratory shorebirds such as Far Eastern Curlew, Great Knot, Nordmann's Greenshank and Chinese Egret.



Map 1. Sarawak is located on the island of Borneo (Credit: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.)

BAKO BUNTAL BAY (EAAF112)

- Bako Buntal Bay is an important non-breeding site for migratory waterbirds (3,590 ha).
- The site stretches from its northernmost point, Tanjung Buluh to the easternmost point, Tanjung Setok.
- The site encompasses two Totally Protected Areas which are the Santubong National Park and Bako National Park.
- More than 30 species of shorebirds (estimated 20,000-30,000 individuals) winter in the bay and the surroundings.
- This site is the first and only Flyway Network Site for Malaysia and is also an Important Bird and biodiversity Area (IBA).
- The two main sites well surveyed in the IBA is **Buntal Bay** and **Sejingkat Ash Pond**.



Map 2. Overview of the Bako Buntal Bay Flyway Network Site (Credit: Dossier Concept For Sustainable Use, SFC)

BUNTAL BAY

- Holds large areas of intertidal flats and exposed mudflats during low tide providing a huge expanse of foraging ground for migratory shorebirds.
- Also, a significant roosting area during neap tide and spring tide.
- Several globally threatened and near threatened species such as the Nordmann's Greenshank, Great Knot, Asian Dowitcher and Far Eastern Curlew make their stops here.
- The area supports more than 1% of the global population of Chinese Egret, Far Eastern Curlew, Nordmann's Greenshank.
- Great Knot numbers are among the highest for sites in Malaysia.



SEJINGKAT ASH POND



- Sejingkat Ash Pond belongs to Sarawak Energy Berhad where the pond serves as coal ash dumping site for the power station.
- The ponds play an important role as high-tide roosting ground for shorebirds.
- Several globally threatened and near threatened species such as the Nordmann's Greenshank, Asian Dowitcher, Great Knot and Far Eastern Curlew roost here
- Currently two active ponds are used by the birds.



Far Eastern Curlew

- Largest shorebird species in the world and an endemic species to East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF).
- Listed as Endangered in IUCN Red List in 2015 as the population is facing rapid decline.
- About 25% of the population is thought to spend the non-breeding season in Borneo, the Philippines, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea but most of the population spend the non-breeding season in Australia.
- Previously the species is thought to only stopover Sarawak during their migration season but recent data shows that the Far Eastern Curlews are present all throughout the migration season in Sarawak.
- Highest count about 800 individuals in Sejingkat Ash Pond and 600 individuals in Buntal Bay.

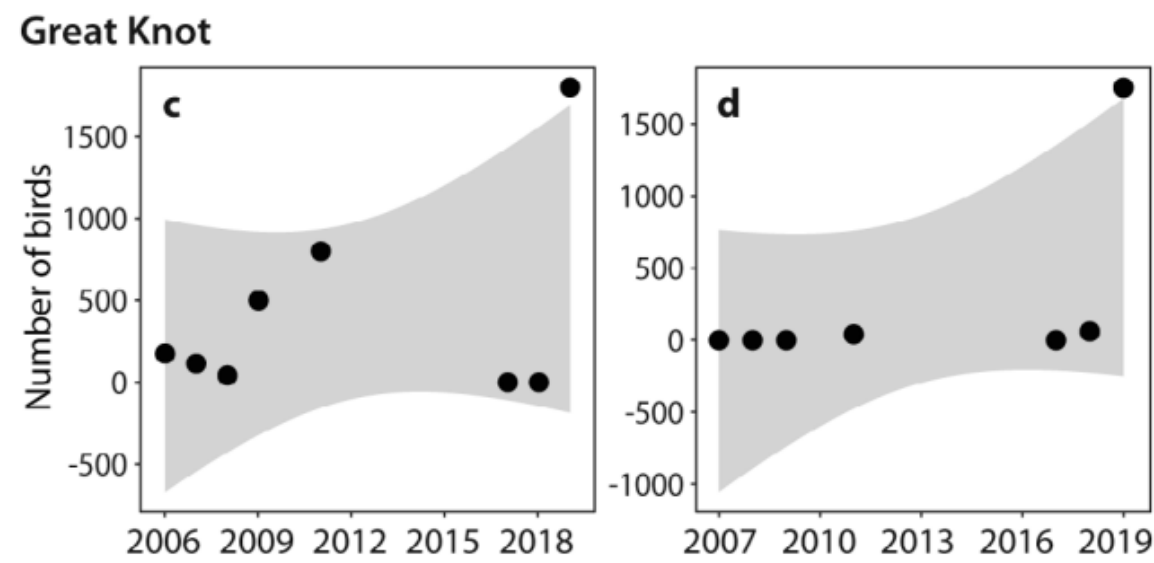
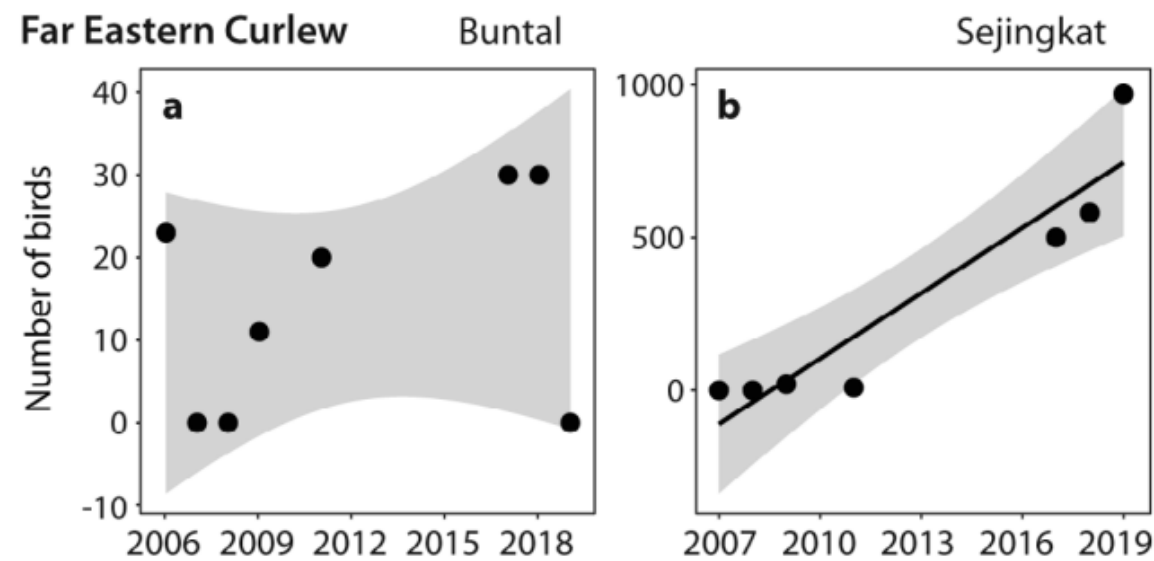


Methodology

- Buntal and Sejingkat were both surveyed twice each month for six months (October to March) for two migration seasons (2018-2019, 2021-2022).
- High tide roost counts were conducted during neap tides for Buntal (<4.5m) and spring tide for Sejingkat Ash Pond (>5.0m).
- Birds were counted individually, if possible, but large flocks were estimated in multiples of 50 or 100. Counts are considered independent.



Credit: Batrisyia Teepol



- Our comparisons show that the total number of waterbird species fluctuated at both sites, although there was a substantial increase in numbers at both sites in 2019, particularly among Far Eastern Curlew and Great Knot.
- The total count of Far Eastern Curlew in Sejingkat nearly doubled from 2018 to 2019. The total count of Great Knot in Buntal also doubled from 2011 to 2019.
- The large increases in counts of these two threatened shorebirds are unusual, given that global populations of both Great Knot and Far Eastern Curlew are in decline.
- First sighting of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the whole island of Borneo (Buntal Bay) in February 2022

Teepol, B., J.J. Ng, D. Kong, D.L. Yong, J.J.H. Teo & N.J. Au. 2021. Long-term count data demonstrate the regional significance of Bako-Buntal Bay, Malaysian Borneo, for wintering shorebird conservation. *Wader Study* 128(2): 174–182.



Credit: Batrisyia Teepol



Credit: Ng Jia Jie



Credit: Batrisyia Teepol

Leg flags

- A lot of flag sightings in Buntal Bay and Sejingkat Ash Pond comes from Great Knots which were flagged in Mai Po, Hong Kong (White/Yellow), Yalujiang, China (Green/Orange) and Kamchatka, Russia (Black/Yellow)



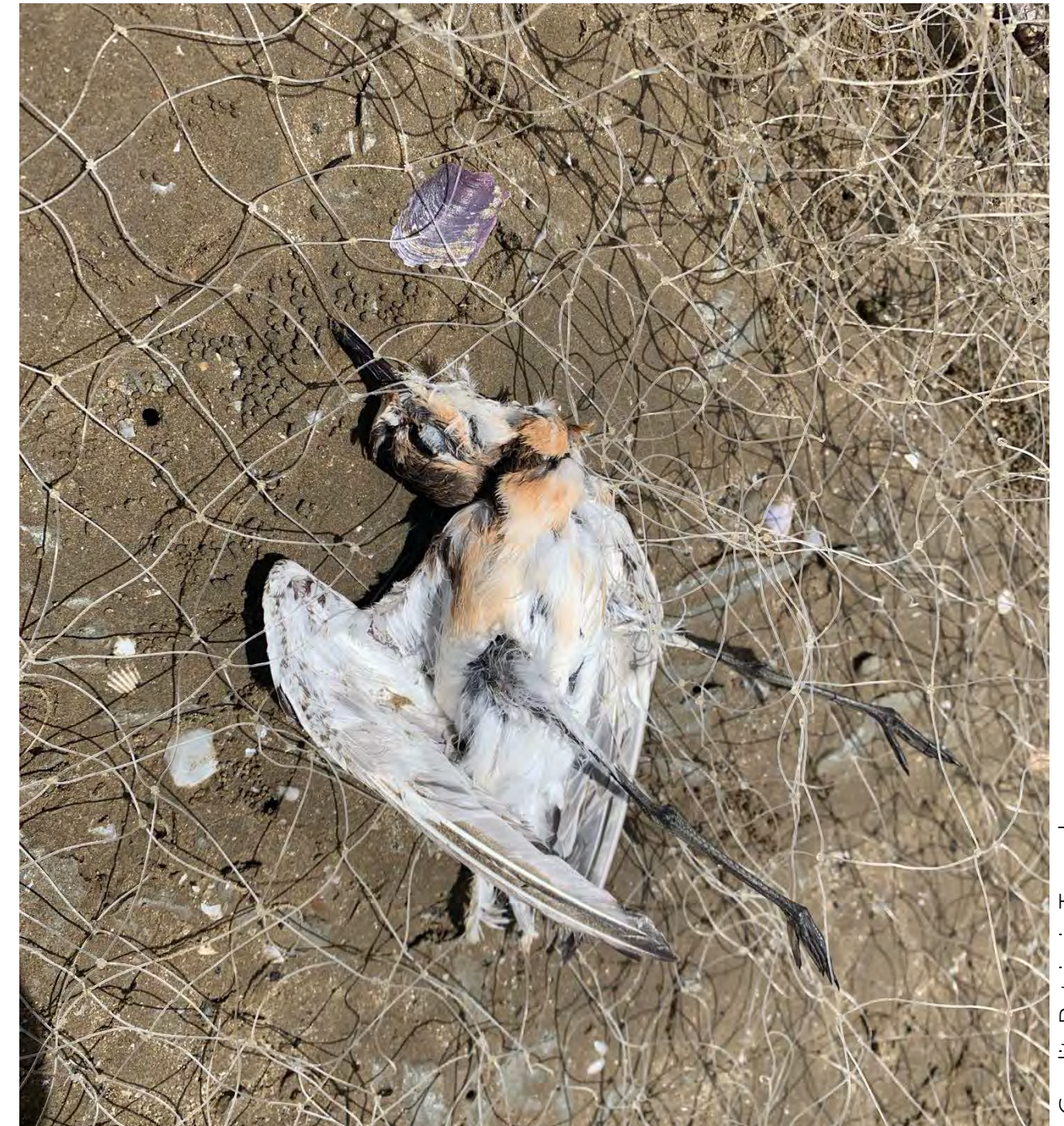
Activities done together with the government, SFC

- Annual Asian Waterbird Census
- ASEAN Waterbird Census (Dec 2019 – January 2020)
- Outreach programs for schools within the site
- Community awareness programs
- Shorebird workshop trainings
- Monthly monitoring of shorebird counts
- High tide roosting site surveys



Threats to Bako Buntal Bay

- Anthropogenic debris and fishery wastes found along the shoreline
- Ghost nets found along the mudflats



Moving forward

- To conduct more exploratory and regular surveys at other sites along the Sarawak coastline
- To explore leg bandings and satellite tracking to fully understand the temporal and spatial movements of shorebirds within Sarawak
- MNSKB will work closely with the government, SFC to better manage and protect the site
- MNSKB will continue to reach out to the public and promote shorebird conservation to the public



Credit: the Borneo Post

OCTOBER 15, 2022

Len Talif: No road planned for mudflats reserve-gazetted Telok Bako-Buntal

KUCHING (Oct 15): The Sarawak government has no plan to develop any road infrastructure in the Telok Bako-Buntal area in...

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Credit: Hilda Jelembei

A large flock of birds, possibly terns, is captured in flight against a bright blue sky. The birds are scattered throughout the frame, with some in sharp focus and others blurred, creating a sense of movement. A dark grey rectangular overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing the text "Thank you" in a white, serif font.

Thank you