**SAVE Meeting Minutes Reviewed March 4; revised March 19**

Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 7pm Pacific

Location: Room 315C Wurster Hall, UC Berkeley campus

Attending: Derek (conductor and scribe), Fiona (forager, drinks), Jing (forager, drinks), Kinya (forager/deliverer, food), Marcia (forager, food), Randy, Shanna, Tami; John Liu; Tadao Fujiwara.

**1. approve meeting minutes from January 11 (Derek scribe)**

All were in favor of approving the minutes.

**2. Fukuoka update**

Kinya presented an overview of the “final” report from the Special Committee, about the Wild Bird Park on Island City.

The plan for Island City was announced in 1989 and construction began in 1994, but to this day the developers have not been able to sell many lots and instead are now leasing/renting land (since 2012). Kinya thinks this situation drove the design of the park; the members of the committee ignored SAVE’s advice and decided to design a more typical park, not real bird habitat, hoping to boost property values and make Island City more inviting to residents.

The report included a study on the birds living around Hakata Bay, and through dubious logic it emphasized sandpipers and plovers as target species for the park on Island City, dismissing Black-faced Spoonbills. It said only that the spoonbills already had habitat along the Tatara River and in the Imazu Tidal Flats, so those habitats should be protected. It did not mention that Black-faced Spoonbills had been roosting and foraging at Island City, or that the endangered status of the spoonbills would make them more important to accommodate. The spoonbills especially fed at a pond in the northwest corner – a graded hollow that happened to fill with rainwater. We suspect that this pond influenced the final design for the Wild Bird Park.

The report shows the final design for the park. Its area will be 12 hectares, which is the area that Shibata advised, but SAVE overall advised 16 hectares. The plan shows trees throughout, which may be “pretty” in a park for people but are not suitable for shorebird habitat. The western half of the park will include a lawn and human-centered uses, while the eastern half will include a rainwater-fed pond intended to serve as habitat for sandpipers and plovers. The pond and its sandy edges, however, will be surrounded by pathways and appear to be only 75 x 200 meters in total area, which may be too small to accommodate even sandpipers and plovers without violating their scare distances. The park also includes an additional northern area indicated for eelgrass and rocky shoals, outside the existing seawall, but we could not see whether this additional area would have a new underwater wall.

We wondered whether the committee ever really wanted bird habitat here or whether the public design meetings were all a farce. The design of the park passed through several agencies over the years, though, so we found it hard to suspect a consistent conspiracy.

Matsumoto had told Kinya that he was ashamed of the final design.

Randy said that he thinks SAVE’s involvement antagonized the mayor (who had a “spoonbill allergy”) and other officials in charge of designing the park. Although SAVE and LA205 spent a lot of time and money on alternative plans for Island City and the park, we may have unintentionally made the design worse than it could have been without us.

Action item: See below under “IslandWire”.

**3. Taiwan update**

Marcia recently got some alarming messages from Po-Hsiu, showing unexpected new projects being built in the National Scenic Area (NSA), including parts of a new “love/sex theme park” (similar to one on Jeju Island, Korea) and an airstrip.

These projects appear to be the pet projects of the current NSA director, Mr. Cheng, in a misguided effort to attract tourists. All local environmental/wetland groups oppose these developments. The members of those groups dislike the director, and he is even unpopular among the staff of the NSA. Many local people suspect that he is mentally unstable.

Some of the new developments have a theme of marriage or love, which seem cheesy or sappily sentimental and are probably not built to endure long, but we did not consider them inherently offensive. We would not object to them if they were sited appropriately, away from areas of ecological or cultural value. The new “Crystal Church”, built in 2014, has attracted some tourists and appears pleasant enough, but John Liu suspects that it will weather badly and be in ruins within a few years. A proposed “Diamond Church”, shaped like an engagement ring in a reflecting pool, would be located south of Shin Tsen Village and the Budai Salt Pan, on an intact salt pond that could be used more appropriately for ecological restoration or historic interpretation.

Another new project was the painting of buildings around the Beimen Visitor Center in bright colors, reminiscent of buildings on Caribbean islands. The colorful display is unrelated to Taiwan or the local landscape.

Another proposed development would install “up to 100” statues or sculptures in Beimen near the Visitor Center, with “love” or “wedding” imagery. (Po-hsiu has corrected our information on this item: The sex theme park, with the sexually graphic statues or sculptures, is planned to be installed somewhere in Yunlin County.) We agreed that the graphic sculptures seem inappropriate for any part of the NSA. Randy asked John whether Taiwanese people would be repulsed by such sculptures. John wasn’t sure, but thought people in Taiwan would at least would not interact with the sculptures with public displays, as people do at the park on Jeju Island.

All of these projects are located to piggyback on successful ecotourism attractions in the NSA – Beimen, Budai, Shin Tsen Village – but they cheapen and undermine the integrity of those attractions. Previous developments for tourists have been “sophisticated”– relating not only to spoonbills, but also to the former salt industry and other cultural or ecological factors.

John contrasted these new developments with one of Fuchang’s recent projects: a festival that honored and revitalized an older village (Jingliao, in Tainan City) that used to be a center for traditional wedding dresses and other wedding-related businesses. But it may be hard to show people how a place-specific project like this differs from a kitschy “love park”.

Local people and SAVE members are divided over whether to speak out against Director Cheng and his projects, or simply to wait and see what happens. Some say (or hope) that he will soon be forced out of his job, but they do not know whether his successor would keep building these types of projects. Some fear that other directors/managers around Taiwan will hatch their own controversial or inappropriate projects to attract tourists for a few years. Some worry that speaking out against Director Cheng will only give him more publicity, while others say that we need to “bring the hammer down” before he gets more support or gets anything else built.

We agree that SAVE should write a letter expressing our disapproval of these new developments, calling for more rigorous vetting of any new projects, and insisting on the removal of Director Cheng. We can cite our many years of partnership with and support of the NSA, as well as the recent award to Taiwan by BirdLife International for exemplary conservation. We can explain that Director Cheng’s actions are ignoring the master plan for the NSA and undermining these past successes, and are a dangerous precedent.

As for the airstrip north of Ding Shan Village, Po-Hsiu said it would be 500 meters long and would serve “small aircraft”, but we do not understand who proposed it and why it is located where it is. Did anyone write an EIA for it? Who is paying for it? Is there a plan available to the public? John said he could talk with the Vice Mayor of Tainan, after we know more about it.

Action item (Derek): Draft a stern letter, on behalf of SAVE, to the Minister of Transportation and to the leader of the Executive Yuan. Circulate to SAVE-Exec for comment.

Action item (Marcia and John Liu): Get more information about the airstrip – a plan, EIA, etc.

**4. research for a new publication on BFS geometries, and “reconnecting with contacts”**

Having re-enrolled for his final semester as a Ph.D. student at UC-Berkeley, Pedro searched a variety of scientific journals through CalNet for spoonbill-related articles since 2008, and he found 30 articles. Tami has categorized them, including China, Korea, Taiwan, and “other” (Hong Kong, Macau, general information, etc.). Randy and Yekang can work together on Korea; Derek and Jing on China; Tami and Marcia on Taiwan; Fiona and Kinya on Japan; Shanna on the “other”. After we have read the articles, we can identify gaps in our knowledge and reach out to old and new contacts.

Action item (Tami): Upload the articles to the SAVE Box.

Action item (Randy, Yekang, Derek, Jing, Tami, Marcia, Fiona, Kinya, Shanna): Read the articles and prepare to discuss next steps.

**5. IslandWire**

We reaffirm that we would like to get a SAVE article in Earth Island’s biweekly IslandWire every other month or so. Our first article can be about the problematic outcome for the “Wild Bird Park” in Fukuoka. Our next one can include the results of the 2015 Black-faced Spoonbill Census, when the numbers are released.

Action item (Kinya): Draft a paragraph (100-150 words), and then send it to Marcia for review and Shanna for submittal.

**6. LA205**

The project is underway. It involves four sites in southwestern Taiwan that need updated (or even first-time) planning. Derek gave an introductory lecture about SAVE and spoonbills last week. Randy and Marcia gave their lectures this Monday and Wednesday, and will be in Berkeley for another week. The students’ initial presentations today were already very good. Hsiao-Wen’s team provided a lot of information (GIS, reports, etc.) for the Jiading project last year, so this year’s students are building on that base of knowledge. A big thanks to Tami and Jen Natali for transferring last year’s class Box contents to SAVE’s Box!

SAVE members have signed up to attend the mid-review (Wed., March 4), final review (Wed., March 18), or desk-crit sessions.

**7. next meeting**

We scheduled the next meeting for Sunday, March 22, at 2pm Pacific. Fiona’s apartment is the tentative location.

**8. Tadao’s thesis and reporting from Japan**

Visiting student Tadao Fujiwara, from Professor Masato Dohi’s studio at Tokyo Institute of Technology, presented his thesis, about SAVE’s activities since we began in 1997. The research goal was to examine our work in Taiwan in the early years, which was successful, and compare it to our involvement in Fukuoka so as to inform future Fukuoka work.

Tadao had read the SAVE newsletters (*Spoonbills Speak*), reports, and meeting-minutes, and compiled a list of roughly 170 actions and campaigns that SAVE had undertaken. He categorized them by location, type of activity, relations. He noticed a burst of activity in SAVE’s early years (1997-2002), mostly in Taiwan; then a lull for several years; and then a resurgence since 2009, much of it involving Korea and Japan.

Tadao’s thesis showed careful thought, and it was interesting for us to see a report about ourselves, though we recognized that the report did not include certain information about SAVE that we had chosen not to publicize in our newsletters, reports, or minutes.

Tadao went on to describe the efforts of Masato and his studio relating to the Black-faced Spoonbill in the last year. (Masato learned about the history of SAVE’s work during the Democratic Design Conference last March, and was eager to form “SAVE Japan”. He has since joined our Executive Committee.) He and his students visited Fukuoka in May 2014 and found that very few citizens of Fukuoka had ever heard of the spoonbill, unlike in Taiwan, where the spoonbill is popular and well-known. This lack of awareness, they supposed, may have contributed to SAVE’s problems with influencing the Wild Bird Park at Island City. Masato and his students have launched a new group, SPOON (Spoonbill People of Oriental Nations), in order to raise awareness of the spoonbill. They have set an initial goal of making 10,000 people aware of spoonbills in Japan, starting in Tokyo. The group will have a website, Facebook page, a “track-a-spoonbill” feature, and merchandise, possibly inspired by the colored leg-bands on spoonbills.