



An approach to the Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) status in Indochina

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Introduction

The Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) has the most extensive breeding range of any stork (Hancock *et al.* 1.992). The estimation of global extent of occurrence is of 1.000.000-10.000.000 km² (Birdlife International 2.007) through three biogeographic realms. It is a widespread, but rare, breeding species that discontinuously ranges from Western Palearctic to the far East Palearctic, mostly between 40° and 60° N (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1.992). It also breeds in Southern Africa from Zambia, Namibia and Malawi to Cape province, in the Afrotropic, where is a wintering area for this species. The third ecozone occupied by the Black Stork is the Indomalayan ecozone, where is officially a wintering and vagrant species (figure 1).

The most detailed and completed information of the species is focused on the Western Palearctic population. The lack of information about the Black Stork is especially few and scattered in the Indomalayan ecozone, and particularly in Indochina, the Southeastern extreme of the distribution area. There is not a compilation approach of the current and available recoveries from local and international birders and historical bibliographic information because is a rare species. This communication only pretends to provide a first overview of the current status of the Black Stork in Indochina.



Figure 1. Distribution of the Black Stork around the world. Source: Modification from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Ciconia_nigra_distr.png



Figure 2. Indochina peninsula, in the far East.

Area of Study

Indochina, or the Indochinese Peninsula, is a region in Southeast Asia, between the East of India and South of China (figure 2). Indochina is located approximately from 26° N to nearly the equator line and between 96° E and 110° E. Indochina comprises, in the wider sense (better described as Mainland Southeast Asia) the territories of the following countries: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR), Myanmar, Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Traditionally Vietnam is also divided in three different ornithological regions (Robson 2.005): Tonkin (North Vietnam), Annam (Central Vietnam) and Conchinchina (South of Vietnam, low Mekong river area). The Black Stork has been cited for all these countries of the Indochina peninsula except Singapore and Malaysia.

Method

I have been gathering information about Black Stork in the far East, and particularly from Indochina through different sources:

- Library of BirdLife International in Indochina, Vietnam,
- Reports, journals, check lists, monitoring and project programmes, regional and local census which are available in the internet,
- Personal records and comments from zoologists, specialists, ornithologists, birding guides, managers of ecotourism projects in birding areas,
- Birding online forums in Asia,
- General and specific bibliography on Black Stork.

All information gathered on Black Stork from Indochina has been analyzed under a historical perspective, including the information from the breeding and wintering regions of Asia (mainly from the Peninsula of Korea and China) to try to understand possible changes of the species in the South-East Asia. Finally, it has revised the status of the Black Stork from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/49665/summ>) and Birdlife Species Factsheet data (http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/search/species_search.html?action=SpchTMDetails.asp&sid=3830&m=1).

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Result

In spread sense, the presence of the Black Stork has decreased during the last decades in Indochina, especially in Thailand, Lao and Vietnam (Strange, 2.003; Duckworth *et al.*, 2.002; Nguyen Duc Tu and Hung Le Manh, pers. com.). There is **not any known recent record for Cambodia**, in spite of considering the species as a vagrant bird for this country (Strange 2.003). However, the **presence of the Black Stork is continuous in the North and West of Myanmar** during the wintering period (Li & Mundkur, 2.004 and 2.007), in the Northwestern extreme of the Indochina peninsula (figure 3). Briefly, this is the situation:

Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR)

It is a species at **risk in Lao** (Duckworth *et al.* 2.002). The recent Lao records come only from the **Nakai Plateau and Chiang Saen**. Formerly it was an infrequent winter visitor to the Plain of Jars and, probably much more commonly, to the Upper Lao Mekong (Duckworth *et al.* 2.002). The Black Stork has no been recorded in the Asian waterbirds census from 1.997 to 2.004 (Li & Mundkur, 2.004 and 2.007).

Thailand

It is an **endangered species in Thailand**. The Black Stork is considered a declining species as wintering bird in Thailand from the last decades (Strange, 2.003; Round, 2.002). There are few records in the last decade, including in the Asian waterbirds census in 2.001 (Li & Mundkur, 2.007). In Thailand, **there are still places where the records of Black Stork remain practically every year at the present** (BSCT bulletins, several years), mainly in the North, and **especially in the Golden Triangle** (Chiang Saen, Chiang Mai).

Myanmar

There are not relevant references about the Black Stork in Myanmar in the classical bibliography (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1.992; Hancock *et al.* 1.992). However, nowadays, **the Black Stork is a common wintering species in the North and West of Myanmar**, at least from the end of nineties, though the number of individuals is variable every winter season, from less 100 to more than 300 individuals (Li & Mundkur, 2.004 and 2.007). The known presence in the West of the country comes from the middle nineties (Robson *et al.* 1.998). Thanks to the international project "New Odyssey" (<http://www.rozhlas.cz/odysea/ang/>), in the internet, we already know that part of those storks come from central Mongolia, and show fidelity to the wintering places, like in Western Palearctic.

Cambodia

Thought it is considered a vagrant species in Cambodia (Robson, 2.005), there are not found records available for this approach.

Viet Nam

The species has been cited for Viet Nam from long time ago to at the present (Hung Le Manh, pers. com.), concretely it has been located in Tokin –North of Viet Nam-, along the Red river basin (Nguyen *et al.* 2.000; Robson, 2.005). However, **there is not any record for this species in the last time in Tonkin**, though the number of birder and monitoring programmes have increased (Nguyen Duc Tu and Hung Le Manh, pers. com.). Only **it have been gathered two records in the last decade** -1 individual in 2.000 and another in 2.001- (Li & Mundkur, 2.004, Vy *et al.* 2003), both in Cat Tien National Park (Annam region).

Discussion

The status and distribution of the Black Stork in far eastern Asia in general, and South-East Asia in particular, have been changing along the last century as it has happened in Western Palearctic, but it has not been described in detail. During the first decades of the last century, the breeding population disappeared at least from South Korea (Hancock 1.992; Nial Moores, pers. com.), and at the same time, the species has become really rare of Asia during the wintering season in some parts, where a decline is also evident; Hong Kong (Carey *et al.* 2.001) and the Indochina peninsula (except North and West of Myanmar) would be two good examples. On the other hand, new wintering places have been described in China, even close to Beijing (Weidong, pers. Com.). From this first approach, It is suggested considering the Black Stork a vagrant species for Lao and Vietnam in stead of native species as the Birdlife Species Factsheets data considers (http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/search/species_search.html?action=SpchTMDetails.asp&sid=3830&m=1).



Figure 3. Wintering distribution of Black Stork in Indochina.

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