

## PHOTO SPOT



ponds include two Red Data Book Species: Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* and Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*.

A regular banding study has commenced in the area and almost one hundred shorebirds have been caught in two visits. This work will continue for at least three years to determine the way in which the shorebirds use the Klang Islands. Information on weight and pre-migratory fat build up, moult patterns and schedules, and measurements will be obtained. Data on pre-migratory fat build up can help to determine potential flight distances on migration and target areas elsewhere in the flyway for survey work at appropriate times of year. As there are often size differences between different breeding populations of shore-



### Electric shorebirds

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A coal-fired power station may not seem like one of the best places in Asia to observe shorebirds but near the town of Kapar, on the west coast of Malaysia, the shallow ash-settling ponds of the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Power Station have become one of the most important high tide roosting sites for shorebirds in the country. On high spring tides, up to ten thousand shorebirds wing their way over the security fence from intertidal feeding grounds around the Klang Islands. The open shallow water and wet ash of the settling ponds is ideal, undisturbed habitat on which the birds can rest and preen before returning to the mudflats exposed as the tide falls.

Ash settling ponds at coastal power stations have been used as high tide roosting sites by shorebirds in a number of parts of the world so the phenomenon is not unique



to Malaysia. In parts of the world where rapid coastal development has occupied large areas of coastal wetlands and potential roosting habitat for shorebirds, the only suitable, undisturbed roosting sites may be artificial habitats such as this.

The species which use the ponds include large numbers of Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* (see photo), Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* and Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. Counts show that the largest numbers occur during the highest spring tides when all birds are forced off intertidal areas. At this time, particularly large numbers of Greenshank and Redshank occur on the roost. Rarities sighted on the

birds, measurements will help to elucidate the breeding origins of birds visiting the area. This information will be very useful in establishing fully the significance of the Klang Islands in the flyway. In this way, large-scale port and industrial development proposed for the area can be planned to reduce adverse effects on shorebirds and their long-distance migration.

Asian Wetland Bureau is working with technical and engineering staff of the power company that runs the station to develop management guidelines for the lagoons to ensure that the company can meet its objectives and ensure continued safe roosting habitat for shorebirds. The enlightened approach of the power company in seeking ways of achieving both development and conservation objectives is an example for the rest of Asia.



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