

Storks and Ibises

Black-faced spoonbill / *Platalea minor* / Kurotsurahera-sagi / クロツラヘラサギ

The black-faced spoonbill is an endangered species whose habitat is confined to East Asia. It is the smallest and rarest of the six spoonbill species. It migrates to Amami-Oshima tidal flats to winter; some spend their summer here as well. At 73 to 81 centimeters long, it is all white except for its dark legs, featherless black face, and long, black, spoon-shaped bill. During the breeding season, it develops a yellow crest and chest area. The bird feeds by putting its open bill in the water and moving its head from side to side to capture fish and crabs, a method that works best in murky waters.

Eurasian spoonbill / *Platalea leucorodia* / Herasagi / ヘラサギ

The Eurasian spoonbill is a far more common variety than the black-faced spoonbill, but it is an unusual winter visitor to Amami-Oshima and the other southern islands of Japan. It has a white body, wings, tail, and head, and a yellow tip on its black bill. During breeding season, the yellow part of the bill becomes larger, and a prominent yellowish crest appears on the back of the head. These birds often forage in shallow waters in groups to improve the efficiency of their catch, which consists of aquatic insects, amphibians, crabs, and small fish. The Japanese name for spoonbills is *herasagi* (“spatula heron”).