

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Conservation of critically endangered <i>Gyps</i> spp. vultures in India
Country	India
Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Project Ref. No.	162/10/013
Report date	October 2001

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Apart from the vulture surveys for the first year (see 2.1. below), the project has progressed as planned. So far, (1) we have equipped, opened and staffed a vulture diagnostic laboratory at the PDRC, (2) Dr Vibhu Prakash has attended the 2001 meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation (as have Drs Cunningham & Pain, on separate funding) to describe results from, and plans of, the Darwin Vulture Project, (3) Dr Cunningham has visited India twice to provide consultative training to project staff at the PDRC and Dr Pain has visited India (under separate funding) to provide project supervision to BNHS staff, (4) the Vulture Captive Care centre is under construction at Pinjore, Haryana (see 2.2. below), (5) a 1 week workshop is being organised for January and delegates have been invited, (6) Dr Prakash is currently in the UK for a three-month period of training in the captive care of vultures, (7) one scientific paper has been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal and a second is in preparation, and (8) press releases about the project have been released in the UK and India and national and regional media (newspaper, radio and television) coverage has been obtained in both countries. Also, we have established an educational web site (www.vulturedeclines.org) about this Darwin project and the issues surrounding it, and in which we actively encourage and guide others to participate in vulture conservation measures. This web site has links to the Darwin Initiative web site, amongst others.

It was originally envisaged that Dr Cunningham would make six consultative visits (each of one week duration, at two-monthly intervals) during the first year of the project. These visits have been going extremely well and we have found that they are crucial to the operation of the project at the PDRC. However, the overall project would benefit more if one of the first-year visits was deferred to the second year of the project. We, therefore, seek permission for this to be instituted.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments, that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will effect the budget and timetable of project activities. Have any of these issues been discussed with the Department and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

1. Difficulties in transferring monies to the BNHS resulted in a delay to the arrival of initial funds to the BNHS. This money was required for the payment of staff to conduct vulture surveys. As these surveys must be carried out at the same time of year to be comparable with previous work, we had to cancel this aspect of the first year's work. However, the money thus saved will now be transferred to the following year (permission has been given by the Darwin office to do this) to enable vulture surveys and population monitoring to be carried out in a more in-depth and detailed way than would otherwise have been possible. The lack of survey data in the first year is regrettable, but over the three-year period of this project, the extra detail of information obtained will enhance our ability to develop a recovery plan for the *Gyps* spp. vultures.

2. Changes of personnel in the positions of Chief Wildlife Warden and Deputy Wildlife Warden of Rajasthan meant that the permission to build vulture aviaries in Rajasthan was no longer automatic and required re-negotiation. This can be a lengthy process, but fortunately Mr Jakati, the Chief Wildlife Warden of the neighbouring State of Haryana, intervened and offered the required permission. This has allowed vulture aviary construction to proceed almost without delay. We do not envisage any problems arising from the change of

location of these aviaries. Indeed, the personal interest of Mr Jakati in the project is likely to be beneficial – for example, in expediting the granting of other permissions required and in the provision of wildlife warden services that would otherwise not be available.

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures.

One of the reasons underlying the problem described in 2.1. above was the inability of the BNHS to take on staff without funding up-front. The Darwin Initiative requires retrospective reimbursement for the first three months' work. If it is not possible to change this rule, it would be worth pointing it out to future applicants so they do not budget for work that requires advance funding in the first three months of their project.

Completed forms to: Rose Clarkson, Darwin Initiative M&E Project Manager, John Muir Building, Kings Buildings, University of Edinburgh, Mayfield Rd., Edinburgh EH9 3JK, Scotland. Email: R.Clarkson@ed.ac.uk