

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2009)

Project Ref. No.	16-013
Project Title	Strengthening partnerships for Ramsar implementation in South-East Asia
Country(ies)	Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam
UK Organisation	BirdLife International
Collaborator(s)	Ramsar Administrative Authorities (RAA) in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam; Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST); Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)
Project Leader	Richard Grimmett
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1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Discussions with RAAs to review national workplans and the outcome of COP10 have taken place in all four countries. In Cambodia, the Darwin project has translated and printed several key Ramsar COP10 resolutions into Khmer at the request of the RAA Focal Point (to build the capacity of his staff and others with limited English-language skills), including the entire *Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015*. Following discussions with the RAA in Malaysia, MNS has been appointed as the coordinator for a review of the *National Wetlands Policy*.

Review of implementation of site conservation strategies with local stakeholders took place at six sites. In Cambodia, meetings between the Darwin project and the Preaek Toal management team (part of the RAA) to discuss designation as a new Ramsar site led to agreement on a joint work plan; the Ramsar Information Sheet and other required documentation is being prepared and planning has begun for a second project phase, to commence when the Darwin project ends, to complete the designation process. In Malaysia, a three-year collaboration has been agreed between MNS and Sarawak State Planning Unit for conservation and awareness work at Bako-Buntal Bay, with a multi-stakeholder workshop held there in August to develop a site conservation strategy, and discussions have been held with Selangor State Executive Council and local villagers about management issues at Kuala Selangor. In Thailand, the Darwin project team met with provincial and national officials to discuss how to improve the coordination of management at Don Hoi Lot Ramsar site, and organised a study tour for government officials and Local Conservation Groups to the recently designated Sam Roi Yot Ramsar site. In Vietnam, a work plan for the designation of Ba Be as a new Ramsar site has been agreed following discussions between the RAA, National Park Director and local government; the draft Ramsar Information Sheet has been reviewed by the RAA and other wetland experts, and the revised draft has been translated into English and will be sent to the BirdLife Secretariat and Ramsar Bureau for technical review and consultation.

Wetland monitoring training was provided to national civil society trainers by UK experts: The project has developed and tested a site monitoring protocol for Boeung Preaek Lapouv and Kampong Trach in Cambodia, incorporating monitoring guidelines developed by BirdLife, the Ramsar Convention and WWF. A wetland monitoring framework for Vietnam, drafted by Nguyen Duc Tu (project co-ordinator in Vietnam) with support from BirdLife's UK experts, was piloted at Xuan Thuy Ramsar site by park staff and local community members from September onwards. A regional training workshop covering site monitoring and the

implementation of the Ramsar Convention will be held in Malaysia in early November, during which lessons learned in the four Darwin project countries will be shared with participants from another 12 Asian countries and territories.

Regional training in Ramsar commitments and priorities will take place during the workshop in Malaysia in November.

Training in site conservation and wetland wise-use for local stakeholders: In Cambodia, the project is providing training to Local Conservation Groups at Boeung Preak Lapouv and Kampong Trach in survey techniques and monitoring, and is encouraging three local civil society groups and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust to develop projects to strengthen the capacity and support the conservation activities of the LCGs. In Thailand, the project team ran a training camp for university students covering the importance of the Inner Gulf of Thailand for biodiversity and human livelihoods and how to contribute to conservation of the site, and organised meetings in two provinces involving the RAA, provincial government and local communities about the Ramsar Convention and the process to designate new Ramsar sites. The Vietnamese edition of the *Ramsar Handbook #11: Inventory, assessment, and monitoring for the wise use of wetlands* has been reviewed by the RAA and a final draft will be published by the end of October 2009.

Public awareness activities: In Cambodia, the project has assisted Beoung Chmar Ramsar site management team to prepare a brochure designed to introduce the site and encourage donors and research institutes to support conservation activities there. MNS has published a report on World Wetland Day events in Malaysia on their website. In Thailand, several public meetings have been organised to raise awareness of wetland conservation and the Ramsar Convention, and at the Inner Gulf of Thailand a schools education programme and youth camps were run to raise awareness of the importance of inter-tidal wetlands. In Vietnam, WWD activities had to be postponed in February 2009, and an event was instead organised on World Environment Day (5th June); the RAA translated the WWD materials and sent them to all 63 Vietnamese provinces, produced a poster and held an event in Hanoi attended by 200 people.

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 affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Nguyen Duc Tu (project co-ordinator in Vietnam) resigned from his post at the BirdLife Vietnam Programme at the end of September, which is a loss to the project because of his great experience in wetland conservation issues. He has been replaced on the Darwin project by Tran Van Hung, who will require greater support by the project management team.

In Cambodia, the designation of Preak Toal as a new Ramsar site was delayed because of an initial lack of support from the Core Area management team. This has now been resolved, but the delay has meant that the designation of the site will not be endorsed by the Minister of the Environment by March 2010 as had originally been planned. A follow-up project will need to be developed to ensure that the process to designate the new Ramsar site is completed.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

No issues have been discussed, and no change in the agreement is necessary.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

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