

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

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| Project Ref. No. | 18-008 |
| Project Title | Trans-boundary solutions to the Asian vulture crisis |
| Country(ies) | India and Nepal |
| UK Organisation | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) |
| Collaborator(s) | Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) |
| Project Leader | Dr Richard Cuthbert (RSPB) |
| Report date | 31 October 2011 |
| Report No. | Half year report number 2 |
| Project website | www.vulturerescue.org |

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Planned project activities in normal type, activities undertaken in *italics*

- 1.1 Sites and local conservation NGO partners identified for expansion of Vulture Safe Zones (VSZ) in Nepal and neighbouring areas of India
Three NGOs have now been identified in India (Mahseer Foundation (Uttarakhand), Katarniaghat Foundation and Tarai Nature in Uttar Pradesh) in order to establish VSZ sites. Work in Nepal has now established working relations with local NGOs in 14 districts.
- 1.2 Agreement in place with local and national partners for *in-situ* work
Agreements are in place with local and national partners for VSZ work
- 1.3 Diclofenac stocks removed and replaced with vulture safe meloxicam in VSZ, infrastructure and agreements in place for herding cattle and feeding sites established around breeding colonies, local advocacy programme and printed materials in place, and monitoring of vulture numbers established by local teams
Surveys in India and Nepal have failed to locate veterinary diclofenac in the VSZ sites, so currently no meloxicam swapping is planned. Advocacy programmes are in place in Uttarakhand State and in Nepal, but need developing for Uttar Pradesh
- 2.1 Minimum of one suitable control site for monitoring effectiveness of *in-situ* work located in same eco zone in India
No single control site has been established. Instead nationwide surveys of vultures, pharmacies and carcasses will be used for monitoring both in-situ sites and control areas
- 2.2 Vulture monitoring, NSAID surveys and carcass samples collected from Nepal and India from *in-situ* sites and from control area(s) in India
Vulture monitoring, NSAID surveys and carcass sampling is underway
Carcass sampling and NSAID surveys are being undertaken in both Nepal and India.
- 3.1 Continued support from DNPWC and West Bengal State for expansion of project infrastructure at the site in Chitwan National Park and Buxa Tiger Reserve
Both DNPWC and West Bengal State continue with their support for the breeding centres in Nepal and India
- 3.2 Design and budget for aviaries and facilities agreed with partners in Nepal and West Bengal
The final design of the colony aviary has been agreed between the Nepalese partners
- 3.3 Colony aviary, chick aviaries and visitor facilities constructed
Construction of the colony aviary in Nepal is due to begin in November.
- 3.4 Pump and tanks installed to improve water supply, and back-up generator bought and installed to provide reliable electricity
The pump and water tank are now in place at the Nepal centre. A generator needs to be sourced.
- 4.1 Recruitment and renewed contracts for breeding centre staff in Nepal and West Bengal

Staff contracts have been agreed and signed

- 5.1 Training requirements for project staff identified and dates fixed for staff visits to UK
A training visit for 1 member of the BNHS team was arranged in Year 1 of the project. No training., involving UK visits, has been identified for Year 2
- 5.2 Training workshops planned for Nepal/India and dates fixed for visits
A workshop was undertaken in Uttar Pradesh involving staff from India, Nepal and RSPB
- 5.3 Themes and visits for staff in Nepal and India agreed and visits arranged
A second visit of Nepalese staff to India is taking place in November. Further training needs will be discussed at this coming visit.
- 6.1 Small-scale trials of alternative food sources established with local communities surrounding breeding centre in Nepal and West Bengal
This work has not yet been initiated, but the prospects for this happening will be discussed in November at a project planning meeting.

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.

The project has been trying to recruit a programme coordinator for the vulture safe zone activities in India, as to successfully undertake this work it requires someone on the ground for several months, working with local communities and local NGOs. Unfortunately despite BNHS advertising this position, interviewing on two occasions and offering the position to two candidates we have been unable to fill this position. BNHS vulture research biologists have been drafted in to assist with the work, however they have other research commitments and cannot commit all of their time to this. Due to these difficulties the RSPB is planning to recruit a project coordinator from the UK to work in India. The selected candidate is a UK citizen of Indian origin, and has worked on conservation projects in both India and Nepal. We will utilise the Darwin funds available for this salary in India to part fund this position, with the remainder of the salary coming from the RSPB's vulture programme fund.

In Nepal the colony aviary construction is behind schedule due to the need for the three Nepalese partners to sign a new joint MOU between them for the running and management of the breeding centres. This MOU is now signed and the construction can begin. Unfortunately the delay in signing the MOU led to knock-on delays in the construction work.

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

No

Discussed with LTS: No no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Formal change request submitted: No no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

Received confirmation of change acceptance no/yes in.....(month/yr)

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No

If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £

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

Not applicable.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**