



Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

Project Ref No	19-012
Project Title	Saving the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper from global extinction
Country(ies)	Russia and Myanmar (and various countries across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway)
Lead Organisation	RSPB
Collaborator(s)	WWT, BirdLife International, Birds Russia, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA), Moscow Zoo and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (through the EAAFP & BirdLife International).
Project Leader	Paul Insua-Cao / RSPB
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	31 October 2014
Project website	www.saving-spoon-billed-sandpiper.com

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Output 1. Mortality due to trapping in the Gulf of Martaban, Burma is further reduced (building on good progress made over the last year), and the reduction is made sustainable in the long term

Three more local conservation groups have been established at Kyar Si Aung, Kyan Dine Aung and Myan villages bring the total to seven. More funding has been secured from CEPF to provided additional training and support for these groups.

Market surveys are carried out once a month at four markets Kyeikhto, Paung Ahlat, Thahton and Bilin by local conservation group members and BANCA project staff. Surveys are recorded in log-books maintained by each local conservation groups.

Livelihood grants have been dispersed to the first four local conservation groups, which covers about 60 people. Boats and fishing equipment were provided to each of the groups, and one group also received a motorbike. In addition freshwater ponds were provided to five villages. Funds have been raised to provide another three ponds. Paul Insua-Cao visited the Gulf of Mottama in May visiting six villages and all five freshwater ponds, which had been constructed. Access to freshwater is an issue for all villages and freshwater ponds are a common way to store freshwater in the region.

The Swiss Development Agency has just published for tender for a large project for community development in Mon State. This Darwin Initiative project has contributed to the development of that project.

Output 2. Proposal developed for a Protected Area within the Gulf of Martaban, together with a Zonation Plan for critical parts of the Burmese coastline specifying which areas can be developed and which should be protected

Myanmar joined the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) Partnership in March. The Gulf of

Mottama has been nominated by the national government as an EAAF Flyway Site covering 195,096 hectares, including the whole area of mudflats on the eastern and western sides of the Gulf of Mottama, based upon the original vision for a Ramsar Site. The conditions for nominating a Flyway Site are deliberately a simplified version of a Ramsar Site nomination, to ensure strong compatibility between the two. This affirms the government's commitment to vision of the whole area as an important wetland for conservation. Nevertheless, the boundary for the Gulf of Mottama in Mon State currently agreed covers half of the desired area for Mon State, as the State is cautious about commitment to a larger area at this stage. Workshops have been held in Kyaito and Bilin townships with representation from all involved villages. Signed minutes of the workshops have been presented to Mon State government give strong support for Ramsar site designation. This is progress but it is disappointing that the current scale has been cut back and progress is slow.

Output 3: Knowledge of the distribution of SBS outside the breeding season enhanced, together with knowledge of the use made of key sites by local communities

Surveys were carried out in Rudong in China, a crucial stopover site, in September and October, the latter as a run-up to the Task Force meeting. At least 226 Spoon-billed Sandpipers were recorded during the September survey and a total of 16 flagged head-started birds between the two. These are both very exciting results.

A coordinated survey across the wintering states has been planned to take place between 19 and 24 January 2015.

A visit was made to sites in southern Vietnam with a local bird tour company to look at coastal habitats and local livelihood activities, as a step to developing a coordinated action plan for the species for Vietnam.

Output 4: Awareness raised among decision-makers and the public in relevant countries of the importance of intertidal habitats along the East Asian–Australasian flyway for ecosystem services (e.g. flood protection), local livelihoods (e.g. through the support of vital shellfisheries) and biodiversity, and of the urgent need for key threats to these habitats to be tackled

As a result of the Flyway Officer position, based in the BirdLife Asia office in Singapore, the following activities have taken place during the past six months:

- A meeting was held in Singapore on 11-12 June 2014, bringing together over 80 decision-makers and site managers from 11 countries across South East Asia along with academics and experts in the field of coastal management to raise awareness of the need to conserve and effectively manage intertidal areas.
- An International Workshop on Intertidal Wetland and Management in the Yellow Sea Provinces of China was held in Beijing, China on 15-17 September, 2014, bringing together over 160 government representatives with site managers and academics to raise awareness of the need to conserve intertidal areas in the Chinese Yellow Sea. A declaration was produced outlining six priority actions for implementation in China.
- A conservation project was begun in South Korea to conserve the intertidal mudflats of the Geum Estuary, the most important site for migratory birds in South Korea, and a regular stopover site for Spoon-billed Sandpiper. A site visit to meet with stakeholders including local government, EAAFP and the UN World Tourism Organisation was undertaken 17-22 May 2014. A monitoring workshop, to gather data and identify a methodology for collation in the future, was held from 1-5 September 2014.
- Brochures, banners and other messaging to promote conservation messages have been produced.
- Preparations have been completed for Welcome to the Birds 2014, with an anticipated 11 organisations across the EAAF to take part, beginning October 2014. Welcome to

the Birds is an awareness-raising festival of events to raise awareness of birds and their migration throughout the EAAF.

A Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force workshop was held in Rudong, China held on 14 October with representatives from all range states and representatives from WWT and the RSPB. The workshop reviewed progress so far in all countries and identified priorities. Hosting the workshop at Rudong was a demonstration to local authorities of the international attention this important site receives and enabled task force representatives to meet the Forestry Bureau and discuss steps for higher level advocacy.

Output 5: Robust captive population established to act as a source of birds for augmentation of the wild population, to prevent it falling below a critical level from which recovery is impossible (or for rapid reintroduction, if the worst happens and the wild population goes extinct) – and Russian capacity in this field significantly enhanced

It was hoped that the captive birds at Slimbridge would start breeding this year, but while promising breeding behaviours were exhibited, it was not to be.

Another season of head-starting activities was completed with another 26 eggs, making 51 eggs altogether. One male (referred to as Lime 8) was recorded at the breeding this season. The first record so far of a head-started Spoon-billed Sandpiper breeding.

2a. 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.

Rob Sheldon left the RSPB at the end of the 2nd project year. Paul Insua-Cao, who is the Partner Development Officer covering Thailand and Myanmar covered activities in Myanmar. When Clare Stringer replaced Rob as Head of Globally Threatened Species Recovery Unit, it was agreed within the RSPB that Paul Insua-Cao should continue to manage the project through to the close, reporting to Clare. A change request was sent and accepted

BANCA underwent major changes of management during the past year, which has resulted in some members, who have been closely involved in the Gulf of Mottama, leaving. The staff implementing the project remain, although some level of guidance and experience within BANCA for the Gulf of Mottama has been lost. The slow progress designating the Gulf of Mottama as a Ramsar Site has been frustrating and the loss of some experience within BANCA probably has not helped. The project will enable Dr. Christoph Zockler, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force coordinator, to visit BANCA and national government to identify the main issues and support progress towards designation of the area in Mon State. There will be a follow-up RSPB mission early in 2015.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: Yes

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely

that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

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

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 can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**