

# Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

## Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

<b>Project Ref. No.</b>	EIDPO18
<b>Project Title</b>	Evaluating approaches to public engagement in saiga conservation
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Kalmykia, Russia
<b>UK Organisation</b>	Imperial College London
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	Centre for Ecological Projects, Kalmykia
<b>Report date</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2006
<b>Report No.</b>	HYR 1
<b>Project website</b>	<a href="http://www.iccs.org.uk">www.iccs.org.uk</a>

### 1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) 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).

The agreed baseline timetable for this period was as follows:

*Throughout project:* Monitoring of saiga herds, anti-poaching patrols in Stepnoi Sanctuary, CWA visitor centre open, project activities with local schools and temples, rotating cow project.

*May 2006:* Calf monitoring. CWA visitor Centre opened. Technical support given to local schools.

*September-October 2006:* Imperial College field study in collaboration with CEP, of attitudes to saiga conservation in 3 contrasting areas.

*October 2006:* Competition in UK and Kalmykia to choose exchange participants.

The activities are proceeding as planned. The main activities include:

On May 11<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, E.J. Milner-Gulland and C. Howe visited Kalmykia. We participated in calf monitoring and observed the implementation of the agreed monitoring protocol first-hand. We visited a family involved in the rotating cow project to discuss their experience of the scheme. We attended the grand opening of the CWA's Saiga Breeding Centre visitor centre (by the Head of Kalmykia, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov). We also discussed project aims and administrative needs individually with the team leaders of all 7 of the Kalmykian organisations participating in the project, and agreed roles and reporting arrangements. We had meetings with the CEP, our main partners, to discuss the full details of project management and implementation.

On June 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, A. Kuhl (Imperial College) presented an analysis of data collected under the previous Darwin project at the Society for Conservation Biology's Annual Meeting.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, the third issue of *Saiga News* was published, including articles written by our project team and an announcement about the Darwin Initiative post-project award.

In August, a commissioned article by E.J. Milner-Gulland and Aline Kuhl on saiga conservation was published in *BBC Wildlife*, producing a lot of interest in the UK.

In August, our partner school (Yashkul' school) had a field trip to the Centre for Wild Animals (CWA), where they carried out tree planting and learnt about the environment and saiga ecology and conservation.

On September 14<sup>th</sup>, Caroline Howe (Imperial) arrived in Kalmykia to start a 10 week field season working with Ruslan Medzhidov (CEP) to evaluate local people's attitudes to saiga conservation, and the influence of various types of conservation intervention on their attitudes. She will return from the field in

early November, and data analysis will be completed by March 2007.

On September 21<sup>st</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, E.J. Milner-Gulland (Imperial), Olga Obgenova (CEP), Yuri Arylov (CWA), Anna Lushchekina (project consultant), Anatoliy Khludnev (Stepnoi Sanctuary) attended a set of saiga meetings in Almaty, Kazakhstan. We first attended a meeting of a parallel project researching saiga ecology, funded by INTAS and coordinated by EJMG. There, team members gave presentations on the aims of and background to the new Darwin project. We also agreed to form an organisation, the Saiga Conservation Alliance, to promote saiga conservation in the range states and internationally. In our engagement with the public in Kalmykia, we will act under the Saiga Conservation Alliance banner, to give cohesion to our work and enable the public to join an organisation to express their willingness to work for saiga conservation.

We next participated in a Technical Workshop to support the first meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on saiga conservation, under the Convention on Migratory Species. We were invited as expert participants, and EJMG acted as co-convenor of the meeting under the auspices of the IUCN Antelope Specialist Group. Recommendations from the meeting were fed into the subsequent meeting of the Range States, and were accepted. This meeting is a major milestone for saiga conservation, committing range states to action on saiga conservation, and to reporting back on progress. The 5-year medium-term work programme was drawn up by the Technical Workshop, and includes activities that our team felt were vital for the success of saiga conservation.

From June onwards, substantial effort has been put into advertising the Cultural Exchange which will take place in May-June 2007, including a press release by Imperial College. The closing date for the UK competition is 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006. After the participants are chosen, their Kalmykian partners will be selected to ensure compatibility of interests.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, E.J. Milner-Gulland was an invited exhibitor at the Wildlife Conservation Network's annual Conservation Expo in California. We sold saiga-related handicrafts, including some made by children at Yashkul' school, and discussed our conservation work with the public and potential donors.

**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.**

Our main problem has been the need to negotiate a contract with the CEP after the commencement of the project, due to the withdrawal of Anna Lushchekina from the project leader role for personal reasons. The negotiations were slow for various reasons including restructuring within Imperial College, summer vacations, documents being mislaid by the courier company and language difficulties requiring the draft contract to be translated. This has substantially delayed the delivery of the first tranche of money to Kalmykia. The Kalmykian teams have continued working to schedule, however the purchase of capital items (e.g. equipment for schools) has been delayed. It is hoped that these initial teething problems have now been ironed out, and future transfers of funding will be straightforward.

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

We agreed the change of personnel with the Secretariat, as well as minor changes to the work programme, partly reflecting the likely delays caused by the need to negotiate the contract. We also agreed redistribution of funding to reflect the new role of the CEP and the increased need for translation.

**Discussed with the DI Secretariat:**                      **yes, in May 2006**

**Changes to the project schedule/workplan:**    **yes, in May 2006**

**3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures? No**