

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

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| Project Ref. No. | EIDPO18 |
| Project Title | Evaluating approaches to public engagement in saiga conservation |
| Country(ies) | Kalmykia, Russia |
| UK Organisation | Imperial College London |
| Collaborator(s) | Centre for Ecological Projects, Kalmykia |
| Project Leader | E.J. Milner-Gulland |
| Report date | 31 st October 2007 |
| Report No. | HYR 2 |
| Project website | www.iccs.org.uk |

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 project's planned outputs for the period April-September 2007 were:

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.

April 2007. Project workshop to discuss project progress and develop recommendations based on report.

May 2007. Calf monitoring. UK participants visit Kalmykia. Extensive media coverage of visit.

June 2007. Kalmykian participants visit UK.

July-Sept 2007: Public awareness campaign, in Kalmykia, UK and internationally.

July 2007 onwards: Internal monitoring and evaluation (including SWOT analysis). Support to Kalmykian partners to build capacity and funding base, to ensure sustainability of conservation and public engagement activities.

The activities took place as planned. The main activities were:

Ongoing activities: The patrols and herd monitoring continued throughout the period. The data arising from these activities have been transferred to the project database for analysis. The rotating cow project has also continued successfully, with another 2 families in two more villages receiving calves this summer. The CWA visitor centre and the activities with local schools and temples have continued, and were particularly highlighted during the exchange visit of the UK participants, with art competitions, school trips to see saigas and saiga-related musical events timed to coincide with our visit for maximum local impact.

Project workshop and cultural exchange (Kalmykian leg): On May 10th-20th, the UK-based cultural exchange participants visited Kalmykia. E.J. Milner-Gulland went with them, and used the opportunity of the visit to have extensive meetings with all project participants, both individually and as a team. Hence the project workshop took place in May rather than April (as in the plan), in order to ensure cost-effectiveness. The cultural exchange was an enormous success, with both sides finding the experience enriching and informative. Rosa Baik filmed both legs of the trip, and participants from both sides also compiled video diaries of their impressions. The participants spoke about their impressions at schools and children's environmental clubs, and visited our partners in the field. Full details on the outputs of the cultural exchange will be provided in the final report of the project (the project end date is 31/12/07).

Calf monitoring: This took place in both the Chernye Zemli Biosphere Reserve and the Stepnoi Sanctuary, using the protocol developed in previous years. E.J. Milner-Gulland visited the monitoring team towards the end of the fieldwork to witness their work, and the data from this monitoring have been stored electronically in the project database.

Cultural exchange (UK leg): The Kalmykian participants in the cultural exchange paid their return visit to the UK on June 10th-20th 2007. The visit was particularly helpful in giving them an insight into the voluntary sector in conservation in the UK, and the role that private citizens play in conservation in their local area, which is something that is outside the Russian tradition. They were also impressed with the UK's tradition of preserving its rural traditions and built environment. Another area of interest was education, and the fact that UK children are already being educated on environmental issues at primary school age. The Kalmykian participants gave public talks to at schools, wildlife trusts and Spitalfields City Farm, and attended a meeting of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (antelope section). More details will be given in the final report.

Media campaign: There was some good media coverage of the exchange in the local and specialist press in the UK, as well as in the Kalmykian press (details in the final report).

Public awareness campaign: This was carried out in Kalmykia after the second leg of the exchange, and included the distribution of leaflets to local people, highlighting the results of our survey of people's attitudes to and knowledge of saigas and conservation interventions (carried out in year 1). In the UK, we used the local contacts of our three exchange participants to carry out a grassroots publicity campaign, including an art exhibition of paintings and sculpture at the Arundel festival and displays about saiga conservation at Spitalfields City Farm. Internationally, we attended the Wildlife Conservation Network's annual Expo event in San Francisco on 6th-8th October, where we had a stall selling saiga-related goods (including handicrafts made by Kalmykian children, the proceeds of which will go back to their school), and gave presentations to donors and the public. This is a high-profile event, and is followed up with publicity online and in newsletters, because the Saiga Conservation Alliance is a WCN partner. We also presented our work at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology in South Africa, June 30th-July 3rd. On June 30th, the fifth issue of the SCA's e-bulletin *Saiga News* was published, including articles written by our project team.

Monitoring and capacity-building: On 12th-13th September, we held the first meeting of the Steering Committee of the Saiga Conservation Alliance in Tashkent, with E.J. Milner-Gulland in the chair, and Olga Obgenova (Kalmykian team leader) and Yuri Arylov (Kalmykian team member) in attendance. At that meeting we carried out a SWOT analysis for the SCA as a whole, and also analysed the Darwin project in Kalmykia. The key outcome for our project is that the Kalmykian team has decided to set up a regional filial of the SCA, with its own internal structure and membership. This will act as a pilot for the SCA in other saiga regions, and will give permanence and strength to the network which we have set up during this Darwin project, particularly for schoolchildren and local people, who can now become members of the organisation. This is a major step in fulfilling our exit strategy of ensuring sustainability of the achievements of the Darwin project.

We are also building capacity within the SCA through a small grants programme, and two Kalmykian initiatives arising out of our Darwin project were funded in the first round - one making a school book about saigas for younger children (a direct result of experience gained in the UK), and the other developing the potential for ecological education and tourism in the Stepnoi sanctuary, which was galvanised by the visit of the UK cultural exchange participants to the reserve. We have also applied for a British Council Bridge grant to build links between Imperial College and the Kalmykian State University.

In the final three months of the project, we will finalise publications arising from the project (including a report to *Saiga News* and a journal article), continue to work to build capacity within Kalmykia and ensure a sustainable future for our work, and conduct a final debrief with the exchange participants.

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.

There have been no problems or unexpected developments.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have

changes been made to the original agreement?

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? No

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 the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.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: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**