

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	162/11/020
Project Title	Building capacity for biodiversity monitoring and assessment in Nepal
Country(ies)	Nepal
UK Organisation	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
Collaborator(s)	King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC)
Report date	29 October 2004
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	Year 3 of the project
Project website	http://www.unep-wcmc.org/collaborations/BCBMAN

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 in Nepal has focused on field work to test the survey methods for key species and habitats, to collect baseline data and refine the monitoring protocols. In April a team of six people were trained in field survey techniques for Snow Leopard and Blue Sheep in the Manang district of the Annapurna Conservation Area. This work was led by Dr Graham Tucker, and involved the location of sample plots and transects. One of these team members then tested these monitoring protocols in the Phu Valley area, including data collection on the relationships between blue sheep and snow leopard populations and local people, agriculture and livestock. A total of 13 blue sheep herds and 256 animals were observed in the survey area of 45 square kilometres, with a total estimated population of 1,095 animals. A total of 50 snow leopard signs were recorded in 13 transects totalling 6,207 metres, resulting in an estimated relative abundance of 3-4 individuals per 100 kilometre square.

Training was also conducted in April of four KMTNC staff in forest bird survey methods and the development of a monitoring protocol. The method of Timed Species Counts was tested and the protocol for locating sample plot sites was adapted as a result of field testing. Permanent plots were established in the Manang district and baseline forest bird data obtained, as well as records of nesting Himalayan Griffon Vulture and Lammergeir.

From mid-May a month of fieldwork was conducted to survey for the globally vulnerable Cheer Pheasant in Lower Mustang. This has resulted in significant new localities for the species being identified and a baseline population estimate of 85 to 111 breeding birds in the 22 square kilometres of the valley. A nest of the species was observed and information gathered on its habitat requirements and pressures from hunting and agricultural practices. Conservation education and the promotion of bird-watching tourism for the species are being planned.

Testing of the forest inventory monitoring protocol was conducted from June to September in Mustang district, using a stratified sampling technique and focusing on the forests intensively used by local villages. A total of 193 sample plots of 500 sq. m. were laid out for inventory of trees. Initial analysis of results indicates good regeneration in the forests. The results will be used by the Conservation Area Management Committees of each village to develop the Operational Plans for their forests.

Further to the project's objective of assessing the impact of community involvement on biodiversity conservation, surveys were conducted in two villages of Lower Mustang to research local people's perceptions of conflict with or benefits from local wildlife. Preliminary analysis of results from a

structured questionnaire from 53 randomly selected households and key informants, indicate that many wild mammal species are agricultural pests and the benefits from tourism are not equally distributed.

A booklet titled "Mammals of the Annapurna Conservation Area" has been prepared in Nepali for use in conservation education programmes with local schools and adults. The booklet contains information on the identification, ecology and local and global conservation status of the species.

In addition to the April training visit to Nepal, UNEP-WCMC has provided technical support on the development of the monitoring protocols and the analysis of field data. The draft guidelines on biodiversity monitoring in protected areas have also continued to be developed in conjunction with KMTNC.

Dr Siddhartha Bajracharya has been appointed to lead the development of management plans for three other protected areas, where the Government of Nepal intends to delegate the management to the KMTNC. The training and guidelines of this project are being incorporated into the biodiversity assessment plans for these areas.

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 principal difficulty for the project is the conflict between Maoist and Government of Nepal forces, which has greatly limited the ability of KMTNC to conduct fieldwork in the southern sector of the Annapurna Conservation Area. Project field survey sites have been carefully chosen to avoid areas of conflict, so that training has been able to continue but the extent of data collection has been limited. The senior KMTNC staff member leading the project in the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), Mr Ram Chandra Nepal, left to start an MSc in Norway in August, but has been replaced by a new staff member. The project is led in Nepal by Dr Siddhartha Bajracharya, former Director of ACA, who is responsible for biodiversity monitoring and the research on human-wildlife conflicts.

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

These issues have not been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat. No changes to the project's outputs or schedule are considered necessary.

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

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: No. 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 by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**