

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	162/13/030
Project Title	Gurney's Pitta Research and Conservation in Thailand and Myanmar
Country(ies)	Thailand, Myanmar
UK Organisation	RSPB
Collaborator(s)	Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST), Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNPWPC, Thailand), Forest Restoration Research Unit (FORRU; Chiang Mai University, Thailand), Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (Myanmar)
Report date	30 October 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	1.1
Project website	Under development

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).

Excellent progress has been made in Thailand, and the situation there appears far better than at any time in the last decade:

- Following on from an RSPB-led training course in February, Thai researchers from BCST and DNPWPC, working closely together, continued radio tracking Blue Pittas at Khao Yai National Park, prior to being granted permission to radio track Gurney's Pittas in southern Thailand. These researchers are now sufficiently well trained to be able to radio track birds by themselves.
- BCST and DNPWPC researchers are in the process of establishing a permanent study plot at the Gurney's Pitta site in southern Thailand. This involves the permanent marking of all trees over 1cm in diameter in an area of 16 hectares, and will allow far more detailed assessments to be made of fine-scale habitat use by Gurney's Pittas, and so guide future reforestation strategies.
- Reforestation is underway at a number of sites in the core area in southern Thailand, and illegal encroachment has virtually ceased, largely due to improved patrolling in the area. These patrols are guided by the results of ongoing research, funded by this project.
- A full survey of all sites in southern Thailand was undertaken from April to July 2005. This yielded a population estimate of at least 20 pairs, a figure almost identical to that in the last census in 2000. It is extremely encouraging that the population has been at least stabilised after years of severe decline. The population remains highly fragmented, although reforestation measures currently underway aim to reconnect fragments to allow birds to move between them. A paper on the results of recent surveys will be prepared within the next year. Another paper, comparing bird populations in forest with those in oil palm and rubber plantations, has been accepted for publication by *Bird Conservation International*.
- Much effort was expended in trying to find nests for research and species management. However, the lack of rain this year means that birds appear not to have nested. Efforts will be renewed if the rains

come late.

- Two forest staff, one from the Wildlife Sanctuary and one from the National Reserve Forest, have received training on reforestation techniques at FORRU's base at Chiang Mai university. Further training is planned for them. They will then be encouraged to spread the benefits of this training with their colleagues.
- FORRU researchers have visited the Gurney's Pitta site in southern Thailand to collect plant samples to guide future reforestation. FORRU are also designing the tree nursery, which should be completed in the near future.
- In October 2005, a Government-funded community forestry project opened at the Gurney's Pitta site, providing financial and infrastructure resources to support sustainable use of the forest. Although not directly part of the Darwin project, it is most unlikely that this scheme would have opened were it not for the conservation investment in the area provided by RSPB and Darwin.
- Meetings were held between UK partners and all Thai partners in October 2005. In addition, British Embassy staff in Bangkok were briefed on progress of the Darwin project in October 2005.

In Myanmar progress has been slower, although few actions were actually planned for this period:

- Meetings were held with project partners and other stakeholders at a strategic planning workshop for BANCA held at Udo in September 2005 (partly funded by another Darwin project in Myanmar). RSPB staff contributed to the planning and training workshop as part of RSPB's co-funding to the current Darwin project.
- Three Burmese candidates were interviewed for the post of Project Officer. Additional candidates were screened as potential field staff. Capacity certainly exists in-country to fill all the project's research requirements. The project officer will be appointed in October 2005.
- A survey protocol is being developed using satellite imagery to identify key areas for survey.

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.

Developments in Thailand have exceeded expectations and no problems have been encountered or are foreseen. Previous problems regarding official permission to undertake certain work in southern Thailand appear to have been resolved. In Myanmar, it has been difficult to identify a sufficiently well-qualified project officer, but three candidates have recently been identified and interviewed, and one will be appointed shortly. This delay in appointing a project leader has not delayed start of the core work in Myanmar, as fieldwork is not planned to start until January 2006. All work on Gurney's Pitta so far has been undertaken by existing BANCA personnel.

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 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.**