

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2012)

Project Ref No:	18-006
Project Title:	Integrated River Dolphin Conservation for Sustainable Ecosystem Services in the Brahmaputra
Country(ies):	India
UK Organisation:	Zoological Society of London
Collaborator(s)	Aaranyak, Wildlife Institute of India
Project Leader:	Dr Gitanjali Bhattacharya, Dr. Rajan Amin, Dr Abdul Wakid
Report date:	1 April 2012 - 30 September 2012
Report No.	Yr3 Half year report
Project website:	http://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/river-dolphin-india/

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).

OUTPUT 1:

1.9 Detailed specific research projects, methodologies, monitoring and data collection procedures developed for quantifying factors impacting on dolphins and wider ecosystem

Ongoing and all on track. Projects include: dolphin mortality levels and causes; riverine habitat status and restoration; impact of siltation and sand mining; dolphin sensitivity to salinity, water depth and temperature; impact of commercial non-traditional fishing on dolphins and fish stocks. Review documents were completed on the impact of pollutants and dams. Initial results will be included in the upcoming status report. One PhD synopsis on the Kulsu river dolphin was accepted by the Wildlife Institute of India-Forest Research Institute, Dehradun in June 2012.

1.12: Standardised dolphin post mortem procedures developed; training of at least 4 veterinary college dept staff completed in post-mortem, necropsy and pathology

This is currently reliant on receiving permission from the Forest Department to handle carcasses. However in the meantime, the project is working with the ZSL-based Cetacean Stranding Investigation Programme (CSIP) to develop a standardised necropsy protocol and appropriate training materials to help provide training for the local veterinarians. It is planned that the materials and video training will be finalised in the next couple of months.

2.5 Standardised annual dolphin and habitat status reporting template developed, staff trained in statistical data analysis and report production; 1st annual dolphin and habitat status report produced and disseminated

Dolphin visual observation data, acoustic survey data, habitat data and anthropogenic activity data analysis was completed at the Wildlife Institute of India by June 2012. The draft status report has been prepared and is currently under review by the technical advisors at ZSL, WII and the IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group. It is expected that the report will be published and circulated to relevant government agencies by December 2012.

2.9 Early summer/pre-monsoon season standardised dolphin and habitat survey across the Brahmaputra tributaries initiated

Completed high water season dolphin survey in Kulsu river in June and Subansiri river survey in Aug / Sept. Data analysis has been completed and report writing is ongoing.

4.2 Manuscript based on standardised seasonal dolphin and habitat surveys submitted for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Progress ongoing, after completing the winter season dolphin and habitat survey in Kulsu and Subansiri River, the manuscript will be prepared and submitted for publication.

OUTPUT 2:

2.8 Analyses of data on the use of dolphin oil, size and trade completed, report circulated to relevant

stakeholders; initiatives for stopping use of dolphin oil through protection and awareness-raising of fishermen in hotspots by Dolphin Conservation Network (DCN) members.

A collaboration has been established with the Ganges team for training fishermen engaged in dolphin oil bait fishing, in alternate oil bait preparation.

2.10 DCN activities in 30 priority sites across Brahmaputra Valley by trained DCN members supported by research staff and DCN Coordinator

In May 2012, a collaboration was established with the State Fishery Department of Government of Assam for a joint fishermen awareness campaign on the illegal fishing practices during the fishing ban season. Altogether 26 awareness programmes were conducted in June-July, 2012 in 26 sites covering 12 districts of Assam, where 12 district fishery offices, 52 fishery officers and about 2,942 fishermen participated. Dolphin mortality monitoring by DCN members is on-going and four dolphin mortalities were reported to the concerned management authority, out of which two carcasses were handed over to the management authority.

In addition to the above activities, the project hosted a visit from a BBC Radio 4 producer who undertook interviews with key project staff and local DCN members. The project was featured in a BBC Radio 4 show in May – “[Extinct!](#)”. As well as a 20-min long BBC World Service programme in Aug – “[Saving the Ganges River Dolphin](#)” and an article on the BBC News Environment [website](#).

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 has been a few challenges over the last six months. Heavy rains and unusual high floods during the monsoon season hampered the progress of some of the field activities. In addition, the civil unrest which took place in July / August due to communal riots caused issues especially in DCN activities and seasonal dolphin and habitat surveys in the Brahmaputra tributaries.

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

Discussed with LTS:	no/yes, in..... (month/yr)
Formal change request submitted:	no/yes, in.....(month/yr)
Received confirmation of change acceptance	no/yes in.....(month/yr)

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

Yes No

If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £

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

Dr. Gitanjali Bhattacharya has been added as the primary PI on this project along with Dr. Rajan Amin. Gitanjali is the programme manager for South and Central Asia so this project has always fallen under her supervision. Raj Amin is of course a vital part of the project and remains heavily involved although he is often called to other countries for long periods. During Gitanjali’s recent maternity leave Lucy Boddham-Whetham, maternity cover, was listed as project manager and was effectively the primary contact for the country staff. With Gitanjali’s return from maternity leave and Lucy’s departure, Gitanjali has been listed as the primary PI on the project in order to make the lines of management clear for the final 8 months of the project.

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 LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.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: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**