

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

Project Ref. No.	18-008
Project Title	Trans-boundary solutions to the Asian vulture crisis
Country(ies)	India and Nepal
UK Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Collaborator(s)	Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC)
Project Leader	Dr Richard Cuthbert (RSPB)
Report date	31 October 2011
Report No.	Half year report number 3
Project website	www.vulturerescue.org

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Activities 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1 and 3.2 completed and summarised in earlier reports.

Planned project activities in bold type, activities undertaken in normal type.

1.3 Diclofenac stocks removed and replaced with vulture safe meloxicam in VSZ, infrastructure and agreements in place for herding cattle and feeding sites established around breeding colonies, local advocacy programme and printed materials in place, and monitoring of vulture numbers established by local teams

Diclofenac is being replaced with meloxicam on a case by case basis, advocacy programmes and monitoring are in place at all VSZ sites, herding of cattle has only been agreed within the Nepal VSZ site.

2.1 Minimum of one suitable control site for monitoring effectiveness of in-situ work located in same eco zone in India

No single control site has been established. Instead nationwide surveys of vultures, pharmacies and carcasses are being used for monitoring VSZ areas.

2.2 Vulture monitoring, NSAID surveys and carcass samples collected from Nepal and India from in-situ sites and from control area(s) in India

Vulture monitoring, NSAID surveys and carcass sampling are underway and a major round of NSAID pharmacy sampling is planned to be completed by March 2013.

3.3 Colony aviary, chick aviaries and visitor facilities constructed

The second colony aviary in Nepal is now complete and birds have been transferred in to this facility.

3.4 Pump and tanks installed to improve water supply, and back-up generator bought and installed to provide reliable electricity

A decision on the generator will take place in November 2012.

4.1 Recruitment and renewed contracts for breeding centre staff

Staff contracts have been agreed and signed for the third year of the project.

5.1 Training requirements for project staff identified and dates fixed for staff visits to UK

Funding has been sought for a visit of one team member to the UK in March 2013.

5.2 Training workshops planned for Nepal/India and dates fixed for visits

An egg incubation course was run in September 2012 for Indian and Nepalese staff

5.3 Themes and visits for staff in Nepal and India agreed and visits arranged

Further training needs and visits will be discussed at the project's annual review meeting (November 2012)

6.1 Small-scale trials of alternative food sources established with local communities surrounding breeding centre in Nepal and West Bengal

Funds have been transferred for undertaking a pilot project farming rabbits at one of the Indian vulture centres.

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 project is proceeding well with all of its key objectives, however progress in certain work areas is behind schedule and all of the project's objectives will not be completed by the original project end date (31 March 2013). The project has succeeded in expanding the number and extent of VSZ sites and initiated conservation activities in these new sites and has also provided support for staff training and project infrastructure at the breeding centres. However the main delays have been on trialling alternative food sources (now being undertaken in India) and most critically evaluating and testing the effectiveness of the VSZ at conserving vultures in the region. The reason for these delays are mainly due to staff changes in Nepal (the project has had three different project coordinators at Bird Conservation Nepal during the three years of the programme) and because we were unable to recruit a programme coordinator for the vulture safe zone activities in India (necessitating recruiting additional staff at the RSPB to help work on this). These changes in staff and delayed recruitment, along with the "normal" complexities of working in India and Nepal, have meant that there has been some slip in the original delivery time-table. Due to these delays we would like to request a no cost extension to the project to allow the project to continue to 31 December 2013 in order for the project's second main output (*Effectiveness of in-situ conservation actions tested across Nepal and India*) to be completed.

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

Not until now. However, a change request form has been submitted along with this half year report requesting a no cost extension to the project.

Discussed with LTS: No no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Formal change request submitted: Yes on 31 October 2012

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?

Not applicable.

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**