

# Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

<b>Project Ref. No.</b>	18-008
<b>Project Title</b>	Trans-boundary solutions to the Asian vulture crisis
<b>Country(ies)</b>	India and Nepal
<b>UK Organisation</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Dr Toby Galligan (RSPB)
<b>Report date</b>	31 October 2013
<b>Report No.</b>	Half year report number 4
<b>Project website</b>	<a href="http://www.vulturerescue.org">www.vulturerescue.org</a>

## 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, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1 and 5.2 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 in Nepal and some PVSZ in India; herding of cattle, and thereby vulture safe feeding sites, have been agreed within the Nepal VSZ; advocacy and monitoring programmes conducted by country partners and local NGOs are in place within all VSZs; regular on-on-one and group meetings between RSPB staff and in-country partners have ensured activities progress towards project objectives.

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

No formal control sites within the same eco-zone have been identified due to knowledge on the wide-ranging behaviour of vultures and difficulty of identifying independent sites where no *in-situ* conservation action is being undertaken. However, nationwide surveys of vultures in Nepal and India, and carcass surveys will provide control data on rates of decline and diclofenac contamination in other states in India to provide effective control data.

### **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**

Monitoring of vultures, pharmacy surveys and carcass surveys are ongoing at the local and national level in both India and Nepal, including within all VSZs. Nationwide vulture survey data has shown that rates of declines have slowed in all species. Analysis for the fourth and data collection for the fifth nationwide carcass survey in India are now complete. Our findings will be reported in early 2014 and early 2015, respectively. Similarly, data collection and analysis of pharmacy surveys in India and Nepal are complete and will also be reported in 2014. The general trend in all these studies is that diclofenac is becoming rarer on pharmacy shelves and in the food available to vultures. These three forms of monitoring will continue in the future.

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

The RSPB VSZ Coordinator and Conservation Scientist have made two trips to India and Nepal, for a total period of 10 weeks, to continue to support country partners and local NGOs (as an alternative to in-country staff visiting the UK).

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

Land for rabbit farming has been purchased and prepared. Rabbits, infrastructure and staff are being sort.

### **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, towards completion. Trialling alternative food for captive vultures (Output 6) continues to be the hardest initiative to complete. There is a ubiquitous reluctance to farm animals for vulture food that are not normally farmed for meat (i.e., rabbits) in India and Nepal. As a result, attracting farmers to keep alternative livestock and gaining approval from livestock authorities to do so has been slow. It is likely that progress towards this output will continue beyond the end of project. However, some progress, in the form of land purchase and site preparation, has occurred in the last six months.

**Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement? No**

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

**Formal change request submitted: Yes**

**Received confirmation of change acceptance: No 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?**

In September 2013, the Project Leader, Richard Cuthbert, resigned from the RSPB to take-up a new position with the Wildlife Conservation Society. He had nominated me, Toby Galligan, to take over as Project Leader. We have prepared an Application for Approval to Amend form.

**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.**