

## Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

<b>Project Ref No</b>	18-015
<b>Project Title</b>	Addressing the illegal trade in the critically endangered Ustyurt Saiga
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan
<b>UK Organisation</b>	Fauna & Flora International
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK); Forestry and Hunting Committee under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan (FHC); Imperial College London; Institute of Zoology, Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan; State Inspectorate (Gosbiocontrol) under the State Committee for Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan (SCNP)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Paul Hotham
<b>Report date</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> of Oct 2012
<b>Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)</b>	HYR 3
<b>Project website</b>	n/a

**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).**

*Law enforcement training and equipment provision*

In August 2012 a training and resource needs assessment was conducted in Kazakhstan led by FFI and ACBK. Participants included representatives from the Territorial Inspection and Okhotzooptom, the state saiga services. Identified training needs included i) application of modern monitoring techniques, software and database use, ii) national legislation (including prosecution and seizure), iii) international agreements and conventions (e.g. CBD, CMS, CITES). There is a need to build regular refresher training into the duties of responsible agencies. In cooperation with the FHC we are seeking to develop a similar training to the one developed for Uzbekistan, which aims to provide targeted training for rangers and potentially the customs service.

In terms of equipment, we identified the need for modern optics, motorbikes (a proposal has been submitted to finance this with co-funding) and basic winter gear, such as tents, warm sleeping bags and pads, boots, etc. as most urgent. While we understand that this type of equipment requires frequent renewal, we anticipate that an initial purchase will enforce current anti-poaching activities and emphasise the importance of including sufficient funds for resource needs in the state budget. We are currently in discussion with the FHC to make a final decision on training and equipment provision.

*Sniffer dogs*

Both countries have dog training units to support the search for drugs, explosives, weapons and cash. The Dog Centre of the Customs Control Committee, which is under the Ministry of Finance of Kazakhstan in Almaty, is a recognized institution offering training on the use of sniffer dogs across Central Asia. The head of the dog training centre expressed his interest in supporting the training of dogs to detect illegal wildlife products (including saiga horn). We are currently supporting the FHC to prepare an official MoU with the Customs Control Committee to formalise future cooperation.

We have established good contact with WWF Germany and jointly organised the participation of the head of the dog training centre in the international conference on 'Wildlife Detector Dogs', Budapest, 24-26 April 2012. Unfortunately the trip had to be cancelled at the last minute as the head of the dog training centre was called back to duty at short notice. A possibly exchange visit with the dog training centre of the Czech Republic is under discussion and a

workshop on sharing experience in using dogs for the detection of illegal wildlife products is planned for the end of this year.

#### *Awareness campaign*

Saiga video clip were prepared in different languages (Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Karakalpak, with and without English subtitles) and of different durations meeting the national requirements (104 sec and 30 sec in length). All versions have been approved by the respective governments and we are in the process of negotiating broadcasting terms with the local TV and Air Astana. InterNews in Kazakhstan have agreed to broadcast the video for free and a License Agreement is currently under preparation. OSCE Kazakhstan offered to broadcast the video in the Aarhus Centres of Aktay, Atyrau, Karaganda, Pavlodar and Shymkent. The Aarhus Centres serve as a link between the government and NGOs promoting the Aarhus Convention principles at national and local levels.

A total of 1,000 saiga posters emphasizing the national law regarding the ban on hunting and trade in saiga products were printed in Kazakhstan and distributed among the FHC, the Territorial Inspection, Okhotzooptom, the Customs Control Committee, local village governments, the eco-youth clubs, and national partners. An official request to post the posters at public sites such as train stations, airports and bus stations has been submitted to the FHC.

We further translated previously published saiga comic books developed by the Forestry and Hunting Committee of Kazakhstan, the Saiga Conservation Alliance, NABU and Animaster into Kazakh language. We have printed 1000 copies for distribution at schools and to partners. As the Kazakh language is closely related to the Karakalpak language the comic books were also distributed on the Uzbek Ustyurt (Karakalpakstan).

A project flyer for general distribution has been developed in English and Russian language.

#### *Saiga Day Celebration*

In May 2012 the eco-youth club from Shalkar village with support from ACBK celebrated the first Saiga Day on the Kazakh Ustyurt. Not only was this the first Saiga Day celebration, it was also the first international Saiga Day in any of the saiga range states; guests were invited and attended from the Uzbek side of the Ustyurt to exchange their experience on saiga conservation. Invitees included the deputy director of a school and the supervisor and three members of the eco-youth club from Karakalpakia, Uzbekistan. The children performed a concert, plays, recited poems and played games related to saiga and the environment. In the afternoon there was an excursion to Shalkar lake. The feedback on the saiga day was highly positive.

A video clip of the event was produced (available upon request due to size) which was shared with the FHC, the SCNP and several schools in both countries. Articles have been published by the Saiga News, Summer Issue 2012. Media coverage through the quarterly published FFI update/ magazine is planned.

#### *Environmental resource centres*

In response to the results of the socio-economic survey on providing support to sustainable livelihoods on the Ustyurt (financed by co-funding) we are in the process of exploring the establishment of environmental resource centres in villages close to the Ustyurt. The resource centres will promote a local constituency for conservation by providing access to information and strengthening cultural connections to the Ustyurt. Through the provision of a computer and access to affordable internet and a small library, the centres will build up a knowledge base and provide a platform to meet and discuss community concerns focusing on but not limited to environmental problems. The centres might also offer seminars for adults on requested topics, e.g. access to micro-loans, small sustainable business development, sustainable natural resource management. We have already had requests for seminars on small scale gardening, simple water saving and conservation techniques, health care, etc. In addition, information on job and/or higher education opportunities could be provided.

While this activity does not directly link to conservation, the resource centres will offer space for motivated community members to take action and to mobilize and organize themselves. A strong civil society will ultimately benefit the environment if key principles of local sustainable

development are understood and followed.

*Reporting Committee meeting*

The second Reporting Committee met in August 2012 in Kazakhstan. The meetings was led by FFI and ACBK and involved representatives from the FHC, the Territorial Inspection, Okhotzooptom, the Dog Centre of the Customs Control Committee, the Institute of Zoology, USAID and SMEDA, a local NGO from Aktobe focusing on community development. During the meeting an update of past achievements was provided and next steps were discussed. The meetings provide a platform for an open discussion of progress made, project strategy and lessons learned among key stakeholders.

**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.**

In consideration of the continuous challenges we face with respect to FFI's registration in Uzbekistan, we anticipate that we will not be able to continue operation in Uzbekistan in the time remaining under this Darwin Initiative Project. As such, and subject to Darwin approval, we aim to shift focus to and upscale activities in Kazakhstan.

This shift of focus has caused a further delay in the delivery of the law enforcement training. Finally negotiations are taking place with the FHC to determine the nature and timing of training and resource provision. Once this is agreed, the existing training package developed for Uzbekistan will be adapted for Kazakhstan. Should we succeed in registering in Uzbekistan after the closure of this Darwin Initiative, the material produced will be applied using co-funding, which is secured until 2014. This will enable us to conduct the planned training and follow up on activities in Uzbekistan.

We are facing a further challenge to promoting transboundary cooperation due to the construction of a border fence between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on the Ustyurt Plateau. This is a critical issue impacting on the planned transboundary meeting. The erection of a permanent barbed wire fence between the two countries, directly threatens the saiga antelope, as the fence will cut the saiga off from critical winter pastures in Uzbekistan that allow it to survive harsh winter conditions. Responding to explicit requests made by the FHC and with support from the US Embassy Export Control and Border Security Program and the Convention on Migratory Species we are assessing the situation and, in cooperation with the Frankfurt Zoological Society, are in the process of developing recommendations on constructing wildlife friendly fence options that can be crossed by the antelope without harm (funded by co-finance).

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

A formal Change Request was submitted to LTS on 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2012

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

No.

**Formal change request submitted:** no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

Four formal Change Requests were submitted to LTS on 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2010, 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2011 and 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2012 (revised 7<sup>th</sup> of February).

**Received confirmation of change acceptance** no/yes in.....(month/yr)

Yes, all change requests were approved in November 2010, February 2011, November 2011 and February 2012 respectively.

**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?

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 LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto: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**