

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2013)

Project Ref No	19-012
Project Title	Saving the critically endangered spoon-billed sandpiper from global extinction
Country(ies)	Russia and Myanmar (and various countries across the East Asian Australasian Flyway)
UK Organisation	RSPB
Collaborator(s)	WWT, BirdLife International, Birds Russia, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA) Moscow Zoo and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (through the EAAFP)
Project Leader	Dr Rob Sheldon, RSPB
Report date	3 rd October 2013
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website	www.saving-spoon-billed-sandpiper.com

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).

We are continuing to make good progress against all the project objectives and remain confident that we will meet, and surpass, all expected outcomes.

Outputs 1 and 2. Since the start of the Darwin project significant progress has been made by BANCA and RSPB to get the Gulf of Martaban designated a Ramsar site. RSPB has continued to support BANCA and the Government of Myanmar with the development of the paperwork and guided them through the designation process. Initially we were hoping for the designation to be completed and announced on World Wetlands day in February 2013. Whilst The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Forestry (MOECAF) remain committed to establishing the Gulf of Mottama as a Ramsar site, they have asked for BANCA to help with further consultaion with local communities. This work will get underway in early 2014. A National Spoon-billed Sandpiper species Action Plan has been prepared by BANCA and RSPB and is to be endorsed by MOECAF – this Action plan has the Ramsar designation at its core. We expect the Action Plan to be officially endorsed by MOECAF later this year.

BANCA have continued there excellent work with local communities in developing alternative livelihoods, establishing Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) and developing Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) initiatives. Visits to local communities and awareness raising activities have continued. Equipment such as fishing boats and motorcycles have been purchased for use by the LCGs. The plans for constructing tube-wells and enhancing access to safe water have been agreed with village leaders and the work will be carried out in the next 4-6 months.

Encouragingly there have been no reports of shorebird hunting by local communities since the Darwin project was initiated. The RSPB project leader will be visiting Myanmar in late October to agree the next phase of work and also to visit the Gulf of Mottama. RSPB have also established a full country programme within Myanmar to support the development of BANCA.

Output 3. Analysis of remote sensing data has been completed and a draft research paper has been prepared – this is currently being consulted on with co-authors.

Alongside this BirdLife Asia has continued to compile information on key spoon-billed sandpiper sites and an assessment of conservation of opportunities is underway. We hope to be able to fully report on this in the next Annual Report.

In October 2013, we are organising a Spoon-billed Sandpiper monitoring workshop with BirdLife partners from all the key wintering countries to develop skills in monitoring techniques and potentially develop a series of co-ordinated counts. The workshop will be held just outside Bangkok, with participants from Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand, China and Vietnam; and will be facilitated by the Darwin Project Leader.

Output 4. Significant work has been undertaken to plan a region-wide 'Welcome to the Birds' awareness-raising festival across the whole of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway in October 2013. A logo has been developed, along with communications materials. A significant number of BirdLife International Partners have agreed to host Welcome to the Birds activities and educational programs.

BirdLife Asia undertook communications and advocacy training in Malaysia (July 29 to August 2) in order to raise the capacity of the BirdLife International Partnership in these fields. Welcome to the Birds will be used as a working example during this training, in order to encourage more Partners to undertake educational and communications activities during this festival.

Planning is underway for a workshop in early 2014 in Singapore on the importance of the conservation of intertidal habitats, particularly in relation to climate change. Target attendees will be government representatives from across South East Asia, and academics working in the field.

We've continued to build on the success of the IUCN situation analysis on "East and Southeast Asian intertidal habitats, with particular reference to the Yellow Sea" – that was launched at the IUCN World Congress in October 2012. We are currently finalising plans for a follow up workshop to be held in China in spring 2014.

Output 5. There are no further expeditions planned to the Russian breeding grounds as part of the Darwin project. Although, funding received through the IUCN Save Our Species Fund has supported a programme of work called headstarting – we will report fully on this exciting initiative in the next Annual Report, as it complements the Darwin project.

The captive population held at WWT Slimbridge is developing beyond all expectations. There was no breeding this year (which was always going to be a challenging milestone), but the birds from the 2011 cohort did exhibit breeding behaviour. We are confident that the birds from both 2011 and 2012 will breed next year.

The captive population currently consists of 28 birds. DNA sexing has confirmed that we have 15 males, 12 females and 1 individual of unknown sex.

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 are notable problems that have developed over the last 6 months. However, it is probably worth recognising that progress has been slower than expected in Myanmar due to the rapid political changes within the country, but we are still expecting to meet all of our outcomes by the end of project. The Project Leader has 2 visits to Myanmar planned in the next 6 month period, and an RSPB Country Programme officer is also likely to be visiting BANCA several times in the coming months. However, we are generally pleased with the continued progress.

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

No – at this stage we don't feel that we need to change any of our plans, but are just highlighting Myanmar/BANCA here for information.

Discussed with LTS:

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?

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 . 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**