

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

Project Ref. No.	EIDPO022
Project Title	Conservation actions to secure the recovery of Gyps species vultures
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), Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Project Leader	Dr Richard Cuthbert (RSPB)
Report date	31 October 2008
Report No.	Half year report number 2
Project website	www.vulturerescue.org

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

An ELISA training workshop was held from the 29 March to 6 April 2008 at the Pinjore Vulture Breeding Centre, Haryana, India and was run by Dr Mark Taggart. Vulture Conservation staff from BNHS (2 staff) and IVRI (2 staff) received training on the extraction of tissue samples and ELISA analysis methods. This activity was originally planned for 2007, however delays in sourcing equipment and establishing the new collaboration on this work (as reported in previous Darwin reports) has meant the training occurred 8 months after the original schedule. Extraction and analysis of carcass samples is now underway at IVRI, following the transfer of all equipment and reagents from BNHS to IVRI and purchase of an ELISA.

Carcass sampling has been undertaken across six states in India from October 2007 to June 2008, and over 1250 samples have been collected (the original timetable for collection was to collect from August to December 2007).

A paper on the methodology for carcass sampling has been accepted for publication in the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society and should be published by the end of 2008.

NSAID surveys of pharmacies have been undertaken in 8 districts in Nepal throughout 2007 and in 7 sites in India during 2008, analysis of the results is under preparation.

In-situ conservation work is underway at two sites in Gujarat State, India, where two team members and a field assistant have run at least five meetings with non-trained vets (“quacks”), pharmacists and milk vendors, as well as undertaking a diclofenac for meloxicam swapping programme. Additional work has been made to ensure that three Panjarapols (animal shelters) only use meloxicam for the treatment of animals. In-situ conservation work in Nepal has created a great deal of interest following BCN’s work in the Nawalparasi district where diclofenac for meloxicam swapping, conservation education, provision of safe food and the establishment of view facilities has proven successful. BCN is involved in overseeing or collaborating in similar work at five other sites in Nepal. Two district level workshops on vulture conservation were held in Chitwan, Nepal, on the 25 & 26 September.

A three-day visit was made by keepers and staff of the Nepal Vulture Centre to the BNHS Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre in Pinjore, Haryana. Nepali staff worked with their counterparts and saw the management and care procedures that are in place at Pinjore.

A 6-month review meeting was held at Kathmandu Zoo on the 22nd June where progress on the

first 6 months of Nepal's breeding centre were discussed and plans were set for construction of colony aviary and the production of Nepal's Vulture Action Plan. All three Nepali collaborating organisations on the breeding centre were present as well as project staff from the RSPB.

A three-day vulture review meeting was held from 24th to 26th June in Himachal Pradesh, India. The meeting reviewed progress of the breeding and advocacy programmes and formulated guidelines for immediate progress on the most important issues. It was attended by officials from Hyderabad, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana forest departments, experts from IVRI, the Wildlife Institute of India, BNHS and international advisors and project staff.

Dr Devojit Das (BNHS Project Veterinarian) received a travel scholarship from Cambridge University and travelled to the UK in August where he worked with and received training from project staff and collaborators at Cambridge University, the RSPB and ZSL.

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.

Delays in sourcing equipment and in establishing a new collaboration on the ELISA testing work have meant that the training and start of carcass sampling was delayed. However, this part of the project is now up and running.

The other major difficulty has been in recruiting a suitable field biologist to coordinate the in-situ conservation work within Gujarat, India. Three people have been interviewed for this post, however none were of sufficient calibre or motivation to take on this work. Two more interviews are scheduled for November 2008 and the scope of this work will be assessed depending on the outcome of this.

Some initial results have highlighted potential problems with the quality and effectiveness of certain meloxicam formulations in India and Nepal, which may be hampering efforts to replace diclofenac. This is being urgently looked in to.

One of the two Nepali field biologists resigned in August 2008, reducing the project staff to two positions. A new position focused on community mobilisation/advocacy has been advertised.

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

Delays in the ELISA training and some of the issues with the in-situ work were discussed in early 2008.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: Yes , in...03/08..... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: No , in.....(month/yr)

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures? No

Please send your **completed form email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum.