

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2010)

Project Ref. No.	EIDP0035
Project Title	Tracking the Sociable Lapwing: conservation beyond the breeding grounds.
Country(ies)	Kazakhstan, Russia, India, Syria, Iraq, Sudan & Turkey
UK Organisation	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Collaborator(s)	ACBK, RBCU, BNHS, DD, NI, SWS, AEWA & Birdlife International
Project Leader	Rob Sheldon (contributions to the HYR by Maxim Koshkin, ACBK & Johannes Kamp, RSPB)
Report date	31 st of October
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website	www.sociablelapwing.org www.birdlife.org/sociable-lapwing

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).

From April 2010, the project team in Kazakhstan, undertook monitoring of Sociable Lapwing breeding colonies at the project's core study area in Tengiz-Korgalzhyn region. The team located and monitored a total of 131 nests. In 2010 nest survival was low with an overall success rate of 23.1% (Mayfield estimate) with only 60 nests monitored through to hatching. The primary cause for nest loss was predation with only 2.3% of nests lost to trampling. In addition, few chicks were seen fledged, and overall breeding success was only 0.2-0.3 fledged chicks per breeding attempt. However, post field season discussions suggest that these figures are likely to be under-estimates as the number of less experienced fieldworkers probably resulted in under recording of chicks (a difficult component of the field work). Survey effort in late July and August was also less than in previous years.

A total of 143 chicks were colour-ringed. Thirty-nine Sociable Lapwings ringed in previous years were re-sighted in the core study area.

The Kazakhstan field team was this year led by Maxim Koshkin who was responsible for all recruitment and logistics prior to the field season as well as delivering the fieldwork to a high standard from April to July. A total of six Kazakhstani students made up the team, two experienced fieldworkers employed on the project in previous years, and four new students who were trained in all aspects of fieldwork. The quality of the data collected was good considering the field teams inexperience but extra support may be required next year to ensure the same high quality of data collection of previous years – particularly the more difficult parts of the fieldwork, such as chick survival, later in the season. The ability for ACBK to deliver such a high standard of fieldwork with very little input from RSPB (the lead partner) is one of the long-lasting legacies of the two Darwin projects. Dr Rob Sheldon visited the field teams in June 2010 to offer support to Maxim Koshkin and any additional training requirements.

The remaining satellite tagged bird returned again to central Kazakhstan but away from the area it was tagged, being located about 200km north-east of Astana – a search for this bird located a previously unknown small breeding colony. This bird has again started to migrate and we are still collecting data on this individual which is revealing a fascinating insight to the life history of an individual Sociable Lapwing. Eight additional 5gram satellite tags were purchased

using resources from Darwin, RSPB and Swarovski Optik. Rob Sheldon and Maxim Koshkin undertook an expedition to the far east of Kazakhstan to deploy some of the tags. Four tags were successfully deployed in the Eastern Kazakhstan oblast', with four more deployed in the Korgalzhyn study area. All of the tags have transmitted some data with interesting information emerging in the last few months. The progress of the birds can be tracked by the general public using the Amazing Journey web-site (see the link above).

The development of the relationship with Swarovski Optik as joint Species Champions with the RSPB as part of Birdlife International's Preventing Extinctions Programme continues to progress strongly. The Amazing Journey web-site has been funded by Swarovski to promote their role as Sociable Lapwing Species Champions. We have been encouraged by the initial response to the web-site and we hope to get more public engagement with the site over the next six months.

Dr Rob Sheldon and Johannes Kamp undertook a two week survey of the Ural River valley and surrounds and the Mugodzarskoe area in the western part of Kazakhstan. The key aim was to locate stop-over sites and migrating Sociable Lapwing flocks. Migration appears to have started a little later this year and only two small groups of birds were seen. However, the habitat in a some of the survey area would suggest the potential for both breeding habitat as well as stop over sites.

In September Victor Fedosov undertook three weeks of survey and monitoring in the Manych wetland area, near Stavropol in SW Russia. We are currently awaiting a project report, but regular email correspondence during the survey work suggests that large numbers of Sociable Lapwings were located with flocks of 900+ reported. The total birds seen is likely to be higher than in previous surveys further highlighting the importance of this area as a key migration and stop-over site

Plans are well underway with project partners to undertake survey work on the migration routes and wintering grounds. Contracts and work programmes have been being agreed for survey work and the development of information materials in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Sudan and India. Following on from the first survey undertaken in Eritrea last winter, an additional survey is being undertaken in Jan 2011 supported by the Darwin project.

Links between the Darwin funded Sociable Lapwing and Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative projects continue to develop. Some preliminary results suggest that there is no influence of Saiga herds on bird communities, and they are not capable of creating the short swards preferred by breeding Sociable Lapwing. There is currently no evidence to support the hypothesis that Sociable Lapwings follow migrating Saiga. However, the number of Saiga remain drastically reduced compared to a century ago.

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 have been no notable problems in the last six months. This time last year we reported that we'd been unable to fit satellite tags, but this year we have made up for that with the fitting of eight tags in June 2010. These are currently providing us data which are available through the Amazing Journey web-site.

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

Not needed

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

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. We are pleased with the progress of the project and we're looking forward to a good final six months of survey work and continued data collection through the satellite tagged birds.

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**