CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Royal University of Phnom Penh
Project Title:	Investigating the status of masked finfoot *Heliopais personata* in Cambodia
Date of Report:	28 February 2015
Report Author and Contact Information	Ms Thaung Ret, Ms Pheng Sokline, Dr Nicholas J Souter, Centre for Biodiversity Conservation, Royal University of Phnom Penh

CEPF Region: Indo-Burma

Strategic Direction: 1. Safeguard priority globally threatened species by mitigating major threats.

Grant Amount: $19, 996

Project Dates: 1 June 2014 – 31 January 2015

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):
Wildlife Conservation Society provided technical advice, local knowledge, project staff and assistance in undertaking field work

Forestry Administration (FA) and Ministry of Environment (MoE) – provided survey assistance and the field work was conducted under permission of both organisations where appropriate.

Local community members were interview to obtain updated information on masked finfoot presence, to investigate threats and regarding the potential for follow-up conservation actions at each site. Local community members were also employed as local guides.

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal):
The full survey of both the current areas where masked finfoot have been recorded in Preah Vihear and search for locations will not be repeated. WCS will use the information gained by the survey to inform their bird nest protection programme. Any breeding birds identified in known or new locations will be included in the WCS Nest Protection Programme and monitored accordingly.

The potential also exists for the development of an ecotourism site if masked finfoot are found in accessible areas and are able to be observed without impact. This could be undertaken in collaboration with the Sam Vesna Centre following a model similar to that employed at Tmatboey. This has the potential to provide income for the local community, which may act as a long-term and sustainable incentive to encourage the protection of masked finfoot and their habitat.

Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:

The full survey has been completed in the areas proposed in northern Cambodia as well as in the south of Cambodia in Koh Kong province. Unfortunately only a single nest was found during the survey period and as it was empty upon being revisited it was not added to WCS's nest protection programme. The sites where the masked finfoot were found were not thought suitable for ecotourism due to their remote location and lack of other attractions to support a tourism enterprise.

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal):

None in proposal

Actual Progress Toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:

None in proposal

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: None (not applicable)
Species Conserved: Masked finfoot *Heliopais personata*
Corridors Created: None (not applicable)

Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

We were successful in surveying a large area of riverine habitat in both the north and south of Cambodia for the masked finfoot, other riverine species of conservation concern and riverine habitat quality. The small number of masked finfoot observations and that only one (empty) nest was found did not allow any next protection to be undertaken. Also the remote location of the sites with masked finfoot did not recommend ecotourism as a conservation measure.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

We were pleased to find records of other endangered species such as white winged duck at a number of sites.

Project Components

Project Components*: Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.*

Component 1 Planned:

Objective 1: The current distribution of the species in Preah Vihear, north-western Cambodia, is understood. Activity 1.1: Conduct interview surveys in order to identify and prioritize potential masked finfoot sites for field survey. Activity 1.2: Conduct field surveys in order to identify masked finfoot sites

Component 1 Actual at Completion:

Masked finfoot were surveyed along 129 km of 10 rivers in Preah Vihear province and 35 km along 5 rivers at Sre Ambil, Koh Kong Province. Surveys were conducted between June - December 2014 Masked finfoot were not found at Sre Ambil but there were seven sightings from Preah vihear. Four from the Memay River, one from the Sen River and two from the Krolapeas River. All were found in the Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary.

Component 2 Planned:

Objective 2: Habitat extent and quality, threats to the species, and the long-term sustainability of known populations are understood. Activity 2.1: Undertake habitat assessment of known sites for the species. Activity 2.2: Undertake threat assessment at known sites. Activity 2.3: Assess the long-term sustainability of masked finfoot populations at known sites

Component 2 Actual at Completion:
As only seven finfoot were detected it was difficult to make robust conclusions regarding their habitat preferences. However most sites where finfoot were recorded had high emergent vegetation and overhanging tree cover. However there were many other places with the same attributes where we did not record finfoot, suggesting that habitat suitability does not entirely explain their presence or absence.
We assessed three habitat variables during the survey: river width, emergent vegetation cover and overhanging tree cover. We recorded the habitat variables along 20 m sections of river at both random points (each at least 1 km apart) and where Masked finfoot were sighted. Habitat was assessed at 198 sites. Vegetation cover was extensive over most of the Preah Vihear rivers with emergent vegetation cover of between 50-80% and overhanging tree cover of between 70-90% common. At Sre Ambil , the cover of both emergent vegetation and overhanging trees was lower with land clearance right to the edge of the river more noticeable than in Preah Vihear.
We assessed four threat variables at each habitat assessment site: gillnet length, recent logging, human activity and electro-fishing. None of these threats were recorded at Masked finfoot sites. Logging, gill nets and people were recorded from Preah Vihear.
At Sre Ambil we did not record gillnets or logging at our random points. However we counted 120 gillnets at other sites along the 5 rivers. We did not see any evidence of electrofishing at any sites.
In addition to surveying masked finfoot a range of other species were recorded. The presence of water monitors at Preah Vihear but not Sre Ambel suggests that hunting pressure is low at the former site and high at the latter. Masked finfoot are susceptible to hunting pressure and this provides a likely reason for their absence at Sre Ambel. The high level of incidental gill net records and land clearance also supports this conclusion.
Masked finfoot were only found at four sites in Kulen Promptep Wildlife Sanctuary at Preh Vihear. No nests directly found during the survey and only one in the area by a local ranger who had been assisting our work. These results do not suggest that the population is sustainable. However the low level of threats recorded is encouraging for the continued survival of maksed finfoot in the area.
Ecotourism is unlikely to provide a source on income and protection for the species as very few birds were found, they are in a remote and difficult to reach location and there is little else in the area to attract tourists.

Component 3 Planned:
Objective 3:
Threats to known populations of the species are successfully mitigated. Activity 3.1: Include newly-identified masked finfoot nest sites in WCS nest protection programme. Activity 3.2: Draw up a series of detailed threat mitigation recommendations for masked finfoot.

Component 3 Actual at Completion:
Fortunately there were no direct threats found where we recorded the birds. However the Memay River is close to villages and there are a few farms along the river. Although we did not find any threats to masked finfoot at sites where they were recorded logging and gillnets were found along the rivers in the same area presenting threats to the birds. These threats were not addressed during this project as no active logging was observed and we did not have the authority to remove nets.
No nests were found during the surveys. However in the survey area a ranger found a nest, but on returning the next day it was empty, likely the result of predation. Thus no nest protection was implemented.
Two of the sites with masked finfoot were found close to an economic land concession but no contact with the company was made, however this is recommended for follow up work.

As the identified threats were quite sparse in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary recommendations for threat mitigation are: control riverside land use, particularly prohibiting logging and clearance of riparian vegetation for agriculture; restrict fishing during the breeding season and control the use of gillnets. Our data and recommendations have been passed on to the Kulen Promtem Wildlife Sanctuary management authorities, via WCS.
The local people at Preah Vihear are aware of the importance of the masked finfoot. This could be capitalized by developing positive slogans about the bird, providing education about their importance and ways in which they may be protected. Fisher men should be targeted as they are likely to have the most contact with the masked finfoot.
Although we did not find any masked finfoot in Sre Ambel the locations of other species recorded have been provided to Wildlife Alliance who will more actively patrol the area.

Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?
All components were completed, some with more success than others, mainly due to the low number of birds recorded and only a single nest being found.

Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.
Not applicable

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)
The project design process went very smoothly with good relationships established early between all major project partners. Establishing good relations early is a well-known principle of good project implementation, which this project has reiterated.

Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)
Project implementation lessons are very project specific:

- Data collection was carried out by boat and often there wasn't enough water to allow passage. Future surveys carried out by walking along the bank should be trialed during the breeding season.
- Some rivers where difficult to access due to the dense vegetation and by cutting our way through, we likely disturbed any birds in the area.
- The masked finfoot is a fast and shy bird and in order to record them we need to be as silent as possible, floating down the river and not using an engine is recommended.
- Overall the survey technique was suitable and no extra habitat or threat variables were thought required. However threats should be recorded along the whole river, as many were not identified in the random survey locations but abundant elsewhere. This will be required if future surveys are to be followed up with active threat mitigation.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:
All lessons detailed above.

Additional Funding

Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of the CEPF investment in this project.

No direct additional financial contributions were made to the project, all additional support was inkind:

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
WCS	In-kind	$5,000	Technical advice, government liaison, and field surveys.
RUPP-CBC	In-kind	$1,000	Equipment (binoculars, GPS, digital camera)
RUPP-CBC	In-kind	$1,630	Staff time for the Project Manager, University Capacity Building Project

Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:

A *Project co-financing (Other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)*

B *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project.)*

C *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

Sustainability/Replicability

Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.

An assessment of ecotourism as a potential for sustainable conservation was made but due to the remote and inaccessible location of sites where masked finfoot were recorded, along with the absence of any other suitable attractions in the same area, this was deemed to unlikely to succeed.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

None

Safeguard Policy Assessment

Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.

Not applicable

Additional Comments/Recommendations

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

Please include your full contact details below:

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Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets

(Enter Grant Term)

Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant.
Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.

Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.	Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.	Describe the principal results achieved from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. (Attach annexes if necessary)
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.	No			Please also include name of the protected area(s). If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?	No			Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1below.	No			

If you answered yes to question 5, please complete the following table

Table 1. Socioeconomic Benefits to Target Communities

Please complete this table if your project provided concrete socioeconomic benefits to local communities. List the name of each community in column one. In the subsequent columns under Community Characteristics and Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit, place an X in all relevant boxes. In the bottom row, provide the totals of the Xs for each column.

Name of Community	Community Characteristics								Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit												
									Increased Income due to:												
	Small landowners	Subsistence economy	Indigenous/ ethnic peoples	Pastoralists/nomadic peoples	Recent migrants	Urban communities	Communities falling below the poverty rate	Other	Adoption of sustainable natural resources management practices	Ecotourism revenues	Park management activities	Payment for environmental services	Increased food security due to the adoption of sustainable fishing, hunting, or agricultural practices	More secure access to water resources	Improved tenure in land or other natural resource due to titling, reduction of colonization, etc.	Reduced risk of natural disasters (fires, landslides, flooding, etc)	More secure sources of energy	Increased access to public services, such as education, health, or credit	Improved use of traditional knowledge for environmental management	More participatory decision-making due to strengthened civil society and governance.	Other
Total																					

If you marked "Other", please provide detail on the nature of the Community Characteristic and Socioeconomic Benefit: