

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Cleveland Zoological Society (CZS)/Cleveland Metroparks Zoo (CMZ) – Asian Turtle Program
Project Title:	Keeping the legend alive: research and conservation of Swinhoe's soft-shell turtle in Vietnam
Date of Report:	18 th December 2013
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CEPF Region: Asia, Indo-Burma Hotspot

Strategic Direction:

1. Safeguard priority globally threatened species in Indochina by mitigating major threats

Grant Amount: \$9,217.50

Project Dates: 15th September 2013 – 31st October 2013

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):

Although we had no official project partners under the CEPF project there was a lot of collaboration with local authorities to accomplish this project, meetings and cooperation were necessary with district and commune Peoples committee to implement the Mid-Autumn festival in Kim Son commune. For the workshop/meeting component we had support from Hanoi Fisheries Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

Conservation Impacts

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

The research and awareness undertaken as part of our CEPF grant clearly contributes to the CEPF ecosystem profile objective to:

- i) Core populations of priority species identified and secured from overexploitation and illegal trade by implementing targeted, high- impact projects

We have built upon previous *Rafetus* worked supported through the earlier CEPF grant, 2009-2011. Using information obtained and activities initiated to further secure *Rafetus swinhoei* at targeted sites. This has been achieved through physically securing the priority site of Dong Mo Lake with a turtle proof net to reduce the risk of escape from the relatively safe lake to unprotected rivers downstream. Also through increasing local community and wildlife protection authority support for the project, essential for long-term objectives of securing the site and encouraging authorities to take over responsibility for more conservation.

- ii) The status and distribution of globally threatened plant species investigated and results applied to planning, management, awareness raising and/or outreach

Progress was made in developing a more comprehensive plan for conservation of *Rafetus* in Vietnam into 2014 and beyond through meetings and planning with Hanoi Fisheries Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). This is important as the foundations of a longer term plan for conservation of the species.

ii) Awareness and community activities have contributed to the conservation of the species as can be identified by some responses observed.

The agreement of local authorities to erect net supports and place semi-permanent fences within Dong Mo Lake shows that government authorities around Dong Mo lake are aware of the importance of the turtles within the lake. Also the support towards conducting the mid-autumn festival shows that within Kim Son commune in particular the ATP project activities are continuing to gain support.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project against the expected results detailed in the approved proposal.

Component 1: Securing Dong Mo Lake

Expected results

Interview surveys: Two nets will be constructed from high strength line to improve security of Dong Mo Lake for *Rafetus swinhoei*.

Actual results

The dam on Dong Mo lake had been opened for the first time during September 2013 releasing a large amount of water. Although temporary nets were put in place before the dam these remain inadequate for preventing such a valuable species from escaping into unprotected rivers downstream. The dams were also opened, only one of four gates, from the 7th to 14th of October 2013. From the 26th to 31st of October 2013 the ATP placed a new net between two sections of the lake with two concrete pillars holding the 180m x 18m net in place, this net can also be raised above the water surface when the dam is opened. Two additional concrete pillars were made before the dam and a second net 90m x 18m made, this net can be placed at times when the dam is opened but removed at other times to prevent theft. These nets have greatly improved the security of the lake although a permanent solution is still being pursued through Vietnamese authorities.

Component 2: Gaining support from national authorities

Expected result: meetings to be held with authorities in Hanoi, including fisheries, MoNRE and DOST to highlight needs of dam at Dong Mo lake, plans for 2014 including surveys, eDNA and trapping to bring possible animals together if sites identified through eDNA.

Actual results: On 23rd of August 2013 a letter was sent to Hanoi Peoples Committee to highlight the threats posed to the Dong Mo Lake *Rafetus swinhoei* by opening of the new dam in September 2013. Within this letter it was highlighted that more was required to protect the lake through creating of a permanent barrier to prevent the turtles escape and protect the species in general. Following correspondence from Hanoi PC assigned Hanoi Fisheries Department (HFD) to resolve these concerns.

A preliminary meeting was held on the 10th of October 2013 with (HFD) to discuss plans for steps to conserve *Rafetus swinhoei* in the wild and prepare an outline for topics to cover in a later meeting with Hanoi Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). This meeting involved the chief, vice chief and leader of the fisheries resources office.

On the 22nd of October 2013 a meeting was held at the DARD office in Hanoi with 10 participants including representatives from HFD and DARD, a number of presentations were made followed by discussion on a number of issues including:

- Requirements to make Dong Mo dam turtle proof and secure the conservation of *Rafetus* at the site
- Protection of the Hoan Kiem turtle
- Steps for future research and conservation including eDNA and trapping surveys, construction of a nesting sand bank and no-fishing zone in Dong Mo Lake.

As a result of the meeting both HFD and DARD agree to cooperate with ATP for future research and conservation activities for *Rafetus swinhoei* in Vietnam. Initially we had hoped that Professor Gerald Kuchling would be able to participate in this meeting, he coordinates *Rafetus* conservation activities in China on field research and with captive animals maintained in Suzhou zoo. But he made an earlier visit to Vietnam from the 10th – 11th of September 2013, just prior to commencement of the CEPF grant, to visit project sites and discuss our plans for future conservation activities in Vietnam. As it was felt his return to participate in the workshop was not essential as inputs could be conveyed and rather he returned in 2014. Funding from this aspect of the CEPF and some of the workshop costs was reallocated to support additional equipment for monitoring such as GPS, hides etc provision of books for a conservation library in three schools around Dong Mo and other activities.

Component 3: *Maintaining monitoring at key sites.*

Expected results: Ongoing monitoring was to be continued at four sites in northern Vietnam at which local counterparts are already employed.

Actual results: monitoring was continued at four sites through local counterparts, this was essential at Dong Mo Lake where the dam has been opened and we had some concerns that the turtle might have escaped. The local counterpart observed the *Rafetus* in Dong Mo on the 5th of September and 16th of October. The local counterpart was also essential for organising and placing new nets and monitoring temporary nets during periods the dam was opened.

Some initial water samples were collected and processed to determine if a simplified method of water sampling will be viable for *Rafetus swinhoei* before it is undertaken at further sites.

Component 4: *awareness activities*

Expected results: we intended to complete awareness activities including school programs and a mid-Autumn festival for conservation focused around Dong Mo Lake.

Actually results: On the 18th of September 2013 an event was organised for the Mid-autumn festival, locals from seven villages around 300 participants. While engaging the community with fun activities such as songs, dancing and games (including tug of war, blindfold catch the chicken and water filled pinata's) a strong conservation message for *Rafetus* occurring in the local Dong Mo lake was also present throughout.

From the 7th to 9th of October 2013 school programs were completed for 6th grade students in Kim Son and Co Dong secondary schools with 9 classes and 313 pupils participating in the *Rafetus* lesson plan. Books were also purchased to establish conservation libraries in three schools around Dong Mo lake, the presentation of these books was not made until early December 2013.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected:
Species Conserved:
Corridors Created:

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

Long term impacts (3+ years)

Swinhoe's Soft-shell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) will be better protected in Vietnam through Securing core sites where the species is known to confirm or has potential to survive in the wild. Embracing the necessary authorities in our activities and ensuring they are clearly aware of future proposed activities in 2014 and beyond will ensure that when we intend to implement these activities we will have the necessary support and cooperation from these departments. This is important to the long term goals of the project which include seeing conservation authorities within Vietnam taking more responsibility for conservation of the species.

Short term impacts (1-3 years)

Although this was a short project of only two months the construction of more permanent nets to prevent escape of *Rafetus* from Dong Mo lake through dams has been an important step. This has been considered one of the greatest threats to the turtles within the lake as was confirmed in 2008 when an animal that escaped was caught downstream and narrowly escaped being butchered or sold to China when authorities were quickly notified and mobilised to confiscate the animal.

The opportunity to discuss plans with conservation authorities in Vietnam and global experts on the species has allowed us to plan more comprehensively for actions in the future, specifically into 2014 and 2015.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Positive:

The response from Hanoi PC to a letter sent in August 2013 was particularly rewarding as this has assigned the HFD to be involved in conservation activities focused on *Rafetus*. This provides a partnership in which their ability to undertake reinforcement or more easily coordinate with other departments.

Challenges:

With a short project period and limited activities we encountered few problems, the only consideration would be timing, if we had been able to approve the project more quickly then Prof. Gerald Kuchling's visit may have coincided better with HFD meetings.

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 was rather simple for only two months of activities but by having a long term working presence at the focal site in Dong Mo lake and a long term team working on the Rafetus project we were able to accomplish the proposed activities and more within a tight time frame.

Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

The returns from formal communications with authorities are made clear by this project. Although it may sometimes be time consuming and more complicated to involved authorities directly in project activities there is also the potential to gain support, make them more aware of priority actions for conservation and hopefully ultimately take a pro-active role in conservation of the target species.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

N/A on short term project

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Turtle Conservation Fund	A	\$1,000	2013
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo	A In-kind	\$2,000	2013 core program support

***Additional funding should be reported using the following categories**

- A** Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF 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 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.

The activities undertaken as part of this grant show the replicability of the project components as they are all built upon previous activities. The financial support of the project, and thus its sustainability, continues to be challenging for the overall Rafetus project with core activities supported by a number of small consistent donors. Incorporating national wildlife protection agencies into the project is intended to help sustain sustainability.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

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

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. (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.	N			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?	N			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.	N			
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	N			
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.	N			

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

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

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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