

Illegal Wildlife Trade: Half Year Report

(due 31 October)

Project Ref No: XXIWT012

Project Title: Citizen-Ranger Wildlife Protection Program (CRWPP) in Kyrgyzstan

Country(ies): Kyrgyzstan

Lead Organisation: Snow Leopard Trust (SLT)

Collaborator(s): Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan (SLFK); State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic; INTERPOL

Project Leader: Dr. Charudutt Mishra

Report date and number (eg HYR1): 30 October, 2015; YR1

Project website: www.snowleopard.org and <http://www.snowleopard.org/blog>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).

1.1 SLT/SLFK disseminate flyers to Reserve Administration

It has been decided that 19 Protected Areas will be part of the CRWPP program. An MoU has been signed between Department of Forest ecosystems and Protected areas of the State Agency of Environment protection and Forestry, Snow Leopard Trust (SLT), Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan (SLFK).

To promote the program, we have produced 5,000 brochures in Kyrgyz and shared 2,500 of them with the Protected Area Department and Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) Secretariat. The PA Department is very excited about the program and were happy to help distribute brochures to all parks and reserves. A copy of the brochure has also being sent to all relevant organizations and individuals across the country. We are pleased to recognize support of IWT Challenge Fund on the brochure.

A copy of the brochure is attached.

1.2 Mass media used to broadcast CRWPP

A press release was created and local press has picked up the news and publicized it locally. One press release was sent out by INTERPOL to all its partners that was widely discussed nationally and internationally. Additionally, SLF was interviewed live on radio channels on general theme of snow leopard conservation, and specifically mentioning the CRWPP program.

A copy of the press release is attached.

1.3 Community meetings to announce CRWPP (Q2 & Q3)

For efficiency, our team members at SLFK plan to announce CRWPP to some communities in combination with other regularly-scheduled community engagement field trips. These trips are planned for later this year. In addition, during the ranger training (discussed below) rangers were requested to share program information with their local communities and were sent back to their PAs with extra fliers to distribute. Hopefully they are reaching communities now, and we hope to have more information to share in our next report.

2.1 INTERPOL finalizes training module, guidebook

SLT supported INTERPOL to conduct a pre-training needs analysis. Interpol then adapted a standard training module based on Standard Enforcement Training, customized to suit specific requirements of snow leopard and specific laws and regulations relevant to Kyrgyzstan. The module was then translated into Kyrgyz. We cannot overstate the immensity of this feat. These contents have NEVER been translated into Kyrgyz before—they are otherwise only available in 4-5 standard languages. In total, more than 1000 pages of training materials was brought into Kyrgyz.

Currently, INTERPOL is working on synthesizing the most critical pieces of this massive tome into a

handy pocket booklet that rangers can easily carry with them in the field.

2.2 Trainings held and guidebook online

From 21-25 September, law enforcement training for front line rangers in Kyrgyzstan was provided by INTERPOL Environment Security trainers and coordinated by Snow Leopard Trust, Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan (SLFK), and Protected Area Department of Kyrgyzstan. Rangers from 20 protected areas across Kyrgyzstan attended the course.

The training covered the following topics;

- Crime Scene Investigation including field based exercise (included operational planning, note taking, scene security, evidence handling and collection, forensics)
- Search warrants – application, execution and field based exercise (included operational planning, note taking, scene security, evidence handling and collection, witness statements)
- INTERPOL tools and services

The training was provided in a cohesive storyline to help trainees better understand the important details of investigating wildlife crime scenes, collecting evidences, and building watertight cases. Most importantly, the training emphasized the need for rangers to ensure their safety first—even if it means slowing down processes and seeking collaboration from police, border security forces or other staff of the Protected Area.

As part of the storyline, and in addition to classroom seminars, rangers were able to practice in two 'real life' situations. In one situation, INTERPOL set up a mock crime scene in a nearby PA (replete with fresh carcass of a livestock as a stand-in for poached ibex). Rangers practiced marking the scene and collecting evidence. In the second scenario, SLFK rented an apartment in Bishkek for the day and mock illegal wildlife contraband along with some evidences to strengthen the case were hidden inside. The rangers practiced finding the contraband and recording their investigation.

In terms of dissemination and open access: during the training all rangers were provided with a complete printout of the training to take back with them. The Government has been notified that copies are always available in full, as many as they need, free of charge from SLFK or SLT when needed for those working in law enforcement and investigation. However, during the process of developing course content, we determined it could be detrimental to put the course online as access could be hard to control and it could accidentally inform those who would seek to subvert the law.

2.3 Training feedback collected

A post-training survey was administered to attendees to assess their satisfaction with the course. Feedback was received from majority of participants and translated into English. There was a high level of engagement and enthusiasm for the training, and trainee feedback was largely positive.

Despite this, there were some challenges with the course, namely lack of prior experience among the trainees. This is discussed more in the next section.

2.4 Equipment disseminated (moved from YR 2 to YR 1)

As already discussed with and approved by IWT Challenge Fund, we moved dissemination of equipment out of YR2 and into YR 1 so that rangers could immediately begin applying their learning. We are excited to report that we will be able to provide MORE equipment to rangers than original anticipated. In total, rangers will receive an investigation kit, a set of binoculars, and a digital camera.

During the training, rangers expressed concern at not having access to even the most basic tools INTERPOL was showing them, e.g. flags, site markers, tape, gloves, etc. At one point, they even indicated that while the training was useful, they most likely would not follow it without these tools. We then realized that preparing simple investigation kits for rangers to take back to their PAs was an important new addition to the project.

INTERPOL has since given SLFK a list of materials to source from local markets in Bishkek to assemble the kits. This has made preparation of the kits relatively inexpensive. We examined our budget and found that if we slightly reduce the number of digital cameras provided to each PA (one instead of 2) we could easily absorb the kits. These kits, the new equipment, and the handy pocket booklet mentioned above should—altogether-- considerably increase rangers' capacity to control illegal poaching and wildlife trade in the Protected Areas of Kyrgyzstan.

Currently we are sourcing all equipment and kit supplies so that they can be distributed at once. We hope to distribute no later than January 2016 (and hopefully much sooner). We have since updated our

timetable to reflect this change.

3.2 Cases reviewed by CRWPP committee

A committee has been tentatively decided upon with the PA Department. The general guidelines and protocols agreed via the MoU above. Further details will be refined and reviewed once more nominations arrive.

At this point, the committee has not yet started review of cases. In our public communications about CRWPP, we requested cases be submitted at any time (no specific deadline) so they could be reviewed on a rolling basis. However, we were over-confident in our original timetable regarding case review. Flyers announcing CRWPP were fully distributed in August/September and following that, in October, national elections swept the country and fully occupied the attention of all sectors of government—even down to the rangers. Most likely due to the short amount of time and divided attention, no cases have yet been received by the committee.

We hope to jumpstart this process by announcing that we will hold the project's first award ceremony. Tentatively, we are considering March 5, 2016, World Wildlife Day. We plan to produce significant media/PR to advertise the event, and we will set a hard cut-off deadline for consideration of cases (i.e. all cases received up until this date will be accepted for review). Big PR and a deadline will hopefully create more awareness for the program and momentum for submitting cases. Holding the event and conferring awards to rangers for successfully apprehending illegal hunters—making the program tangible—should entice other rangers to scale up their patrolling and improve their performance.

Due to these circumstances, we request a change to our timetable to extend the amount of time for reviewing cases, and move the date of the ceremony.

We would like to note that in our timetable, another ceremony is already pending for October 2016. We will still consider holding this ceremony as well.

EXTRA Results:

While planning the ranger training, INTERPOL mentioned the need for a national-level workshop to inform and sensitize top-level managers to the issues addressed by CRWPP, and gain their support for further ranger capacity-building. This in turn raised interest in broader, transboundary workshop for senior officials from Kyrgyzstan and neighbouring countries.

The result was a 2-day technical Regional Illegal Wildlife Trade Workshop, held September 17-18, 2015, directly preceding the CRWPP ranger training. The workshop was organized in collaboration with INTERPOL, UNDP, Snow Leopard Trust, Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan, and the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) Secretariat to develop a strategy for combating illegal wildlife trade in Central Asia.

The workshop was attended by representatives of national law enforcement agencies from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Tajikistan, as well as intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations from the region. During the workshop, a regional network was proposed as part of the draft enforcement strategy that the delegates developed, and the Snow Leopard and Wildlife Enforcement Network (SLAWEN) was created. SLAWEN will focus on common themes cutting across international boundaries to provide greater control over poaching and trafficking of wildlife, to share intelligence, conduct joint operations, engage in advocacy and identify capacity building opportunities.

This new enforcement strategy was officially released on October 23, 2015—International Snow Leopard Day. This workshop was fully funded by other sources and did not detract or alter our current IWT Challenge Fund budget.

A press release about the regional workshop, a media release about SLAWEN and the strategy document are attached.

2a. 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.

The following are notable developments we encountered:

1) In relation to the ranger training, we determined it would be most beneficial for the rangers to have equipment in YR 1 instead of YR 2—so they immediately reinforce and apply their training. This move affected our timetable and our budget; the budget change was submitted to IWT Challenge Fund and approved. We will update the timetable to reflect the change.

2) The timetable for reviewing claims, and subsequently the timetable for holding the first award ceremony for rangers who successfully filed claims, have both been delayed. The receipt of claims has been delayed because it took longer than anticipated to fully distribute awareness materials about CRWPP, and because government attention was usurped for national elections. This shift necessitated moving the date for the award ceremony away from October 2015, when it was originally scheduled; we are tentatively planning for a ceremony in March 2016.

2) We found the ranger training—which is the first of three—a highly valuable learning experience for INTERPOL as much as the rangers. The training will help INTERPOL further formalize and contextualize their follow-up materials, now that they have ‘met their audience.’

Despite having conducted a pre-training needs analysis, it quickly became apparent that participants previously had not been trained in basic/standard enforcement methods and techniques.

Originally, we anticipated that the trainees would later become trainers in order to build the capacity of Kyrgyzstan’s 500+ ranger corps. However, at this point, we feel none of the rangers are yet ready to be trainers.

We have thus adjusted our expectations and plans for how to disseminate or share this learning more broadly. INTERPOL recommends that any training provided in 2016 focus on standard law enforcement and investigation fundamentals with a view to retraining targeted and competent officers in 2017.

Once there is an established and competent core number of trained officers, then considerations can be made to train them to be trainers—but that is likely beyond the scope of this project. Most likely, what we will accomplish by the end of this project is to contribute to this ‘competent core’ and produce rangers who can be ‘specialists’ or advanced resources for their units regarding wildlife crime. Given the previous limitations of front-line staff, we still consider this a significant advancement.

The various timetable changes mentioned above are being submitted with this report, along with and updated timetable and concomitant Change Request Form.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: Yes

We broached the ideas of moving the equipment from YR 2 to YR 1 via email prior to submitting our change request.

We have not yet discussed changes to our timetable with LTS.

Formal change request submitted: Yes

A formal change request was submitted for the change in our budget related to moving equipment purchase from YR 2 to YR 1.

We are submitting a second change request with this report regarding amendments to our timetable.

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

We received confirmation for the budget change.

We await confirmation for the timetable change.

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to IWT challenge Fund management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

We are grateful for the support. This project truly would not have been pursued or possible without the support of IWT Challenge Fund. Thank you.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Joanne Gordon at IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 001 IWT Half Year Report**