

BP Conservation Programme

Final Report

Project title: Conserving the lakes of Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol for waterbirds

Location: Kyrgyz Republic

Organisation: Karatal-Japyryk State Reserve

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The main aim of the project was to conserve waterbirds and their habitat at Son Kol and Chatyr Kol lakes, to ensure that both sites remain viable breeding and stop-over areas for migrating birds. The project had the following 4 objectives:

1. To provide **reliable base-line data** on species present, their distribution and overall status throughout the year at both sites and establish a **monitoring plan**.
2. To conduct a series of **land-management interventions**.
3. To **increase the understanding of local communities** about the importance of the area.
4. To contribute towards the **designation of the sites as Important Bird Areas**.

What has been done:

Objective1

During the project there have been organised several trips to the sites in order to conduct bird surveys and form database on status of waterbirds throughout the year on Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol lakes.

In preparation for the first trip in April project leader Almaz Oskonbaev came to Bishkek to purchase all necessary materials and equipment (books, engine for boat, binoculars, tents, photo-camera, canned food etc). Also in April all existing materials on waterbirds on Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol lakes were collected and analysed, project members learned about methods of bird

monitoring and received some consultations from Scientific Adviser of the project, Professor Emil Shukurov.

Trip 1 was organised on May 20, 2003. The project team spent there 2 weeks conducting surveys. During this period the team was assisted by 4 rangers of the reserve based on Son-Kol lake. To fill the data there have been developed special bird monitoring cards by Almaz after his training course in USA. It was designed to include all key information on birds (please see Annex 1 for the form) During this trip we selected 4 stationary monitoring points: 1) Kaz-Uya island (the main island in the lake), 2) Batai Aral (second smaller island), 3) Tepshi and 4) Kumdu Suu (both on the Southern eastern part of the lake).

Monitoring points were selected with the aim to allow monitoring of birds from the shore as well as from islands which enable watching and recording data during breeding, hatch and moulting periods.

During this trip outline of monitoring plan was worked out by the team (please see Annex 1).

During all trips project team has been accommodated in yurtas provided by Almaz Oskonbaev.

Summary of spring count on lake Son-Kol:

From near-shore waterbirds the most common is grey heron (1-10 birds), whose maximum number was recorded on May 29 (17 birds) in Southern-eastern part of the lake. There have been also observed:

Demoiselle crane (*Anthropoides virgo*)-5 birds, Black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) -8 birds, Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) - 30 birds, Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) -25 birds, *Tringa nebularia* -2, *Charadrius alexandrinus* -50, *Charadrius dibius* -50, *Tringa hypoleucos* -10. Also in large numbers we observed *Charadrius hiaticula* -120 and *Tringa tetanus* -52.

From waterbirds the most common are *Podiceps cristatus* - 480, *Podiceps nigricollis* -60, *Anatidae cinerea* -500, *Podiceps auritus* -20, *Tadorna ferruginea* -500, *Anas platyrhynchos* - 230, *Anas penelope* -34, *Anas querquedula* -20, *Anas acuta* -370, *Aythya fuligula* -56, *Aythya ferina* -30, *Fulica atra* - 120, *Phodostethia rosea* -600, *Larus ichthyaetus* -400, *Larus canus* -670, *Sterninae sandricensis* -450, *Anser indicus* -15, *Anser anser* -38, little grebe - 5, *Phalacrocorax carbo* -4.

The least number (1996 birds) of waterbirds have been registered on May 20, and biggest number on May 25 (3880 birds).

Trip 2 was organised to lake Chatyr-Kol on June 1-8, 2003. The surveys were conducted by the project team and 2 rangers of the reserve. The team has carried out surveys from different parts

of the lake, 2 monitoring points have been established - Karasai Bulak and Kara –Suu (approximately 30- 50 meters from the water, please see Annex 2 for maps), at each point 2 days (from dawn to the sunset). All the information obtained during the surveys has been filled in the forms (please see Annex 3).

Summary of spring count on Chatyr-Kol lake:

#	Latin name	Number
Near-shore species:		
1.	Himantodus	30
2.	Charadrius dibius (Kentish plover)	16
3.	Charadrius hiaticula	4
4.	Tringa nebularia	12
5.	Charadrius alexandrinus (Lesser sand plover)	12
6.	Callidris minuta	42
Waterbirds:		
7.	Anser indicus	170
8.	Anser anser	120
9.	Anatidae cinerea	270
10.	Tadorna ferruginea	300
11.	Anas platyrhynchos	120
12.	Anas querquedula	120
13.	Anas crecca	60
14.	Anas acuta	200
15.	Larus ichthyaetus	4

Trip 3. June 15 – June 20, 2003. The group 1 leaded by Almaz Oskonbaev and Ainura Asanova has visited Son-Kol lake in order to conduct surveys during breeding and nesting periods (for results of surveys please see Annex 2)

Trip 4 June 15-June 20, 2003, the group 2 headed by Talant Omuraliev and Ulan Naamatbekov visited Chatyr-Kol lake to collect data on breeding and nesting habits of waterbirds (Annex 2)

Trip 5 was held in the period of July 20 - August 5 and was aimed at carrying bird surveys at Son-Kol lake during moulting period. Please see Annex 1 and 4 for results of surveys and also for short information on moulting period)

Trip 6 (September 15-23, 2003) *and Trip 7* (September 25 –October 5, 2003) were to both lakes with the purpose to conduct autumn bird counting (for collected data please see Annex 2)

Summary of autumn bird count on lake Son-Kol:

#	Latin name	Number
Near-shore species:		
1.	Ardea cinerea	12
2.	Egret	16
3.	Demoiselle virgo	5
4.	Ciconia nigra	14
5.	Himantopus himantopus	30
6.	Charadrius alexandrinus	36
7.	Charadrius dibius (Kentish plover)	58
8.	Charadrius hiaticula	70
9.	Vanellus vanellus	34
10.	Arenaria interpres	28
11.	Tringa nebularia	2
12.	Tringa totanus	80
13.	Actitis hypoleucos	8
14.	Tringa ochropus	6
15.	Tringa glareola	8
16.	Terekia cinerea	20
17.	Limosa limosa	18
18.	Charadrius dibius	4
19.	Tringa erythropus	1
20.	Phylomachus pugnax	2
Waterbirds:		
21.	Podiceps cristatus	900
22.	Podiceps nigricollis	190
23.	Podiceps auritus	27
24.	Little grebe	6
25.	Anas strepera	1000
26.	Tadorna ferruginea	540
27.	Anas platyrhynchos	300
28.	Anas penelope	38
29.	Anas querquedula	46
30.	Anas acuta	500
31.	Athya fuligula	60
32.	Athya ferina	40
33.	Fulica atra	2000
34.	Larus ridibunda	750
35.	Larus ichthyaetus	300
36.	Larus canus	830
37.	Sterna hirundo	662
38.	Anser indicus	10
39.	Anser anser	30

The biggest number of birds has been registered the last day of survey i.e on October 4, 2003 (7960 birds), the least on September 27 (5090 birds).

Summary of autumn bird count on lake Chatyr-Kol

#	Latin name	Number
Near-shore species:		
1.	Ardea cinerea	1
2.	Himantopus himantopus	42
3.	Charadrius alexandrinus	12
4.	Kentish plover	25
5.	Charadrius hiaticula	8
6.	Tringa nebularia	14
7.	Callidris minuta	42
Waterbirds:		
8.	Anser indicus	230
9.	Anser anser	107
10.	Anatidae cinerea	440
11.	Tadorna ferruginea	10000
12.	Anas platyrhynchos	200
13.	Anas querquedula	160
14.	Anas crecca	260
15.	Anas acuta	280
16.	Larus ichthyaetus	2

The biggest number of birds has been observed on September 21, 2003 (11422 birds) and the least –September 18, 2003 (8882 birds).

Objective 2

In May the project team and several rangers from the reserve installed fencing on Son-Kol lake. According to the project the team should have fenced 4 sites (each 1 hectare), but in the result of discussions with the reserve team and consultations of ornithologists it was decided to unite 4 small sites and fence them as one. There has been fenced 6 hectares in Southern eastern part of the lake (please see the map in Annex 3), which waterbirds use as stop-over, breeding and nesting area.

Thanks to fencing there has been formed a “quite” area for waterbirds and disturbance factors as grazing cattle has been reduced to minimum. Also fencing help rangers to protect the area more effectively.

Objective 3

The project team jointly with Community and Business Forum have conducted several meetings with local communities living around the lake on the importance of conservation of waterbirds. 2 main and 2 follow-up meetings have been organised with participation of reserve rangers and local herders. At these meetings project team told about their project and about the importance of the lakes for migratory birds.

Also the team explained about the Ramsar Convention and need to designate Son-Kol lake as Important Bird Area as it represents an important stop-over place for many migratory birds.

During the meetings people asked a lot about life of waterbirds, about the work of the project team and how they could help the team to protect endangered species at the lake.

Community and Business Forum gave short information about the donors of the project BP, Birdlife International and Fauna and Flora International and distributed leaflet about the reserve and the waterbirds produced by project team in Kyrgyz.(please see Annex 4 and 5).

The project team and CBF visited local fishing groups to give them information about the project and explain the significance of the lake as important bird area and seek collaboration on the project.

Currently at the lake there are operating 14 small fishing groups (about 5-8 people in each group). About 7 groups have been involved in the meetings and received leaflets about the reserve and rules for fishing, which have been developed (on the base of acting regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources) and produced by the project team jointly with the reserve staff and CBF.

Lake Chatyr-Kol is located in a very remote and isolated area and there is no local communities around the lake, so the project team distributed the rest of leaflets among the local environmental NGOs, local schools. Copies of leaflets and fishing rules have been provided to Section of Biodiversity Protection of the State Forestry Department, Hunting Agency, Association of Fishermen and Ministry of Agriculture.

There have been also published 2 articles in local and 1 article in national newspapers about the project and waterbirds conservation. (please see Annex 6)

Letter of appeal regarding designation of Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol lakes as Important Bird Areas has been prepared and circulated among the reserves, Section of Biodiversity and Reserves of State Forestry Service, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, Ministry of Ecology and Emergencies, State Hunting Agency.

Objective 4

Final report with results and recommendations has been provided to the administration of Karatal-Japyryk State Reserve, BirdLife International, Fauna and Flora International, Section of Biodiversity and Reserves of State Forestry Service, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources.

Conclusion

The project was implemented according to the developed plan. During the project the project team has carried out birds surveys on Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol lakes. The project has revealed that the reserve has many gaps in research and monitoring of waterbirds.

Main outcomes of the project are:

- Obtained scientific data and materials on waterbirds of Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol lakes.
- Fencing was installed to establish a quiet zone for waterbirds at Son-Kol lake.
- Key habitat and nesting sites of waterbirds have been determined through surveys along the water area of the lake.
- Main areas of anthropogenic impact have been determined.
- Several meetings with local communities on the importance of conservation of lakes for waterbirds have been organized, in the result of which public awareness has been raised.
- Meetings with fishermen to explain the importance of conservation of lakes for waterbirds have been carried out. This was the beginning of joint activities on reducing fishing during nesting period.
- Spring and autumn bird counts on two lakes have been conducted. Before because of the lack of finance the reserve staff was not able to do such surveys on the whole water area.

What is the benefit?

- In the last 10 years neither the reserve nor other research institutions had reliable scientific materials about birds inhabiting the lakes Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol.
- Protection of waterbirds habitat on the lakes was strengthened.
- Fencing installed help to reduce disturbance factor.
- There has been increased an interest of local communities and youth on protection of waterbirds.
- Due to involvement local communities learnt more about the importance of the lakes for conserving wild fauna.
- Information on birds of alpine and forest zones of the region was collected.

What does the project team has at the moment?

- Scientific materials about the waterbirds
- Materials of the spring and autumn bird counts .
- Information on main habitat and nesting sites have been gained. Next year we plan to enlarge the territory of quiet zone for waterbirds.
- Sufficient technical equipment to carry on research work.
- Materials, which will help to include these territories into Ramsar Convention.

What difficulties/obstacles did the project team have?

- Unfavourable weather conditions (road problems, especially in spring time)
- Night fishing in places of bird concentration in the territory of the reserve
- Very short terms of the project.

Project recommendations:

To reserve:

- Strengthen conservation and protection activities on the lakes
- Continue further bird monitoring with involvement of ornithologists from Issyk-Kul reserve and National Academy of Science to exchange data and analyse changes and dynamics of bird migrations on the lakes.
- Collaborate with other reserves and research centers to study ecosystems and wildlife.
- Involve and work more closely with local communities on conservation programmes
- Any eco-tourism activities on the lakes should be strictly controlled and regulated by the reserve.
- Carry more active public programmes through TV, radio and newspapers.
- Work closely with secondary schools and universities.

To the government:

- To undertake measures to more effectively conserve natural complexes of Inner Tian-Shan rich genofund of fauna and flora and unique alpine ecosystems,
- Reduce anthropogenic impact on lakes Son-Kol and Chatyr-Kol. In particular, it is necessary that the government prohibits fishing during nesting period.
- Strengthen infrastructure of the reserve.
- Enlarge the protected area on Son-Kol lake to the North-West to provide more area for nesting for waterbirds.