



Project report
“Survey of 3 potential Important Birds Areas
in collaboration with students in Uzbekistan”
ID:0447410



Location: Uzbekistan: the Shavazsay Gorge (15-22.05.2010, 27-28.09.2010), Akpetky Lakes (15-28.10.2010), Sarykamysk Lake (29.10-3.11.2010) and Ayakaghytma Lake (9-28.04.2011).

Partners: Uzbekistan Society for the protection of Birds (UzSPB), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), National University of Uzbekistan, Bukhara State University, Samarkand State University, Karakalpakstan State University, Kokand Pedagogical Institute, International Fund for Aral Sea (IFAS), «Shavazsay» game husbandry

Aim: To survey 3 territories of potentially high importance for birds and other wildlife and propose for Important Bird Area (IBA) nomination.

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Section 1:

SUMMARY

The aim of the project 'Survey of 3 potential Important Birds Areas in collaboration with students in Uzbekistan' was to cover the gaps in the network of IBA of Uzbekistan and to nominate three potential IBAs, the Shavazsay, Akpetky and Ayakaghytma, for IBA. In the course of the project one more area was added: Sarykamysh. These areas were included in the list of potential IBAs in 2006, but were not surveyed. Apart from the definition of the status of bird populations, particularly globally-threatened, the project had the task of increasing capacity of the project team members and students, and raise awareness of local communities towards the importance of their region.

In 2010-2011, surveys of four potential IBAs were carried out, in the course of which material on over 250 bird species was collected, including 16 globally threatened species. In addition, 4 field trainings for 23 students from 5 institutes were given, and 2 seminars for 25 schoolchildren and 18 local people were held in Shavazsay and Ayakaghytma.

In September 2011, the BirdLife Secretariat approved the IBA status for three territories: 'Akpetky lakes and surrounding Aralkum desert', 'Sarykamysh lake and surrounding Ustyurt Plateau' and 'Ayakaghytma Lake and surrounding desert'.

INTRODUCTION

In nature there are key areas, particularly significant for conservation of animals and plants. In 1985, BirdLife International worked out the 'Important Bird Areas' programme for territories, important for conservation of birds and wildlife in general. The history of IBA programme in Uzbekistan began in 1998; the inventory of IBAs started in 2005, in 2008 48 sites were confirmed as IBAs. Currently, the Uzbekistan Society for the Protection of Birds (UzSPB) is the main executive agent of the IBA programme (Important Bird Areas in Uzbekistan, 2008).

The project planned to carry out surveys on 3 potential IBAs. Additional financing from International Fund for Aral Sea (IFAS) made it possible to survey one more territory. Materials collected in the course of the implementation of the project served to prove the IBA status, and may become in the future a base for the protection of areas. The IBA programme attaches great importance to the last question, which became the reason why the project paid so much attention to the capacity building of students and to raise awareness of local community.

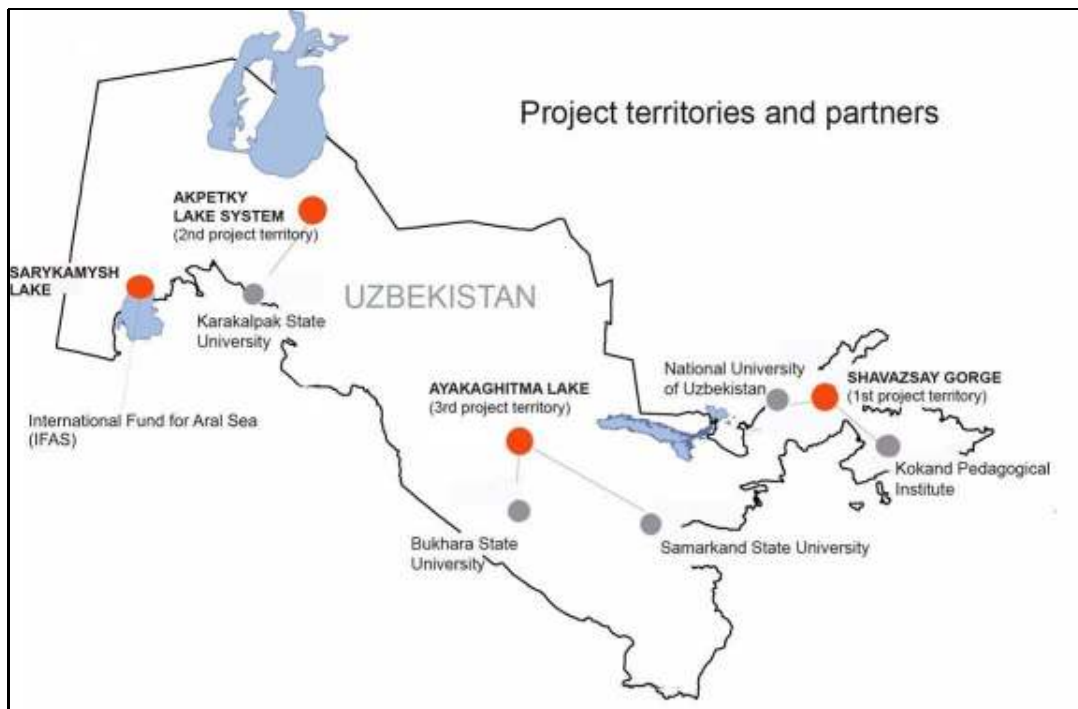


Fig. 1 Project territories and partners

Initial project territories data and their nature conservation significance (fig.1).

- The Shavazsai is situated on southern slopes of the Chatkal Range in the Western Tien Shan (Fig.2). The protection of the boundaries of the game husbandry, situated in this gorge, suffers little anthropological impact. There is little data, in 2008 Maxim Mitropolskiy made a brief survey of Shavazsai (Mitropolskiy 2008).
- The Akpetky is situated in the eastern part of the Southern Aral Sea Region. This lake system formed on the former bottom of the Aral Sea about 40 years ago. As the territory of Akpetky is remote and difficult of access, it is rather little-studied and low anthropological impact. Two short-term surveys had been carried out: in spring 2007 and June 2008 (Ten 2008).
- The Sarykamys is located in the south of Ustyurt. Rare desert birds nest on the Ustyurt, birds of prey build their nests in the precipices, while the lake itself is important for migrating birds. The Sarykamys is little-studied. Some data on the Uzbekistan part of Lake Sarykamys are known from

the works of V. P. Kostin (1956) in early 1960s. Afterwards only Gulara Matekova carried out survey in 2007, and in June 2010 a reconnaissance was conducted here with the assistance of FFInt (Kashkarov 2010).

- The Ayakaghytma is situated in Kyzylkum desert. This waterbody is very important for migrating and wintering birds as a place of rest and feeding. In 2000 there was conducted winter count on IWC programme (Atadjanov et al. 2001). Short spring and summer surveys were carried out in 2006 and 2007 within the frames of the project 'IBA in Uzbekistan' (Lanovenko 2006; Mitropolskiy 2007). In April 2008, a survey within an OSME project was carried out with the purpose of finding the Slender-billed Curlew (Welch et al. 2010).



Fig.2 Shavazsay Gorge

Key partners and their role

- Uzbekistan Society for the Protection of Birds (UzSPB): materials, field equipment, project logistics, methodological support and relation with other partner universities.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB): financial issues, participation of sabbaticals, check and editing of IBA Data Sheets.
- Agency of International Fund for Aral Sea (IFAS) in Uzbekistan: financial support for survey on Akpetky and Sarykamys.

PROJECT MEMBERS

Anna Ten: project coordinator, aged 29. Speciality: ornithologist. Education: master degree at the National University of Uzbekistan. In 2001-2007, she worked in the ornithology laboratory at the Institute of Zoology of Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In 2007-2011, she worked for Uzbekistan Society for the protection of Birds as an IBA programme assistant. Currently, she is a researcher at the breeding center 'Jayron' Ecocentre. She is experienced in organising and carrying out surveys, expeditions, conducting trainings for students and seminars for local community.

Within the project she was responsible for the project logistics, collection and processing of materials, mapping in ArcGIS programme, preparation of IBA Data Sheets and filling of databases.

Oleg Kashkarov: team member, aged 25. Speciality: journalist. Education: postgraduate of the National University of Uzbekistan. Since 2007 till present time he works as a public relations assistant in UzSPB. He is experienced in organising and giving trainings for students, conducting seminars for local people, and preparing articles and short films along with publications, where he works on design and layout. Within the project he reported on the project activity (radio and television reportage, short films and articles) and organised and held seminars for students and local people.

Nodir Azimov: team member, aged 24. Speciality: biologist. Education: master degree at the National University of Uzbekistan. In 2008-2009 he worked as a teacher of biology in a college. He is experienced in teaching, and has participated in several expeditions, including international ones. Within the project he was engaged in the collection and analysis of materials; he also participated in the giving of trainings and holding of seminars for local people.

The project team consists from 3 people, but as real a lot of students helped us, especially Shamsidin Ziyovaddinov, Ikbol Atamuratova, Shakhnoza Ibotova and their supervisor Alisher Atakhodjaev from Phasianus Birdwatcher's club (National University of Uzbekistan) (fig.3).



Fig.3 Project team (from left to right): Oleg Kashkarov, Alisher Atakhodjaev, Ikbol Atamuratova, Shamsidin Ziyovaddinov, Anna Ten, Nodir Azimov.

SECTION 2:

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the project is to survey 4 territories of potentially high importance for birds and other wildlife and propose for Important Bird Area (IBA) nomination.

Objectives:

1. Increase the capacity of project team members and students of a birdwatching club network in bird census and monitoring techniques
2. Definition of status of bird populations (especially globally threatened) and threats of project territories
3. Raise awareness of local communities towards the importance of their region (IBAs and globally threatened species)

Initially, the project planned to survey 3 territories; however, in the course of the project, one more territory, Lake Sarykamysh, was surveyed with the assistance of IFAS. By the end of the project materials on 4 project territories were prepared to nominate them for the IBA status. In September 2011, the BirdLife Secretariat confirmed the IBA status for 3 of them.

The objectives of the project were changed upon a remark from the CLP commission members received in April 2010. In accordance with this remark, in the second objective bird species status monitoring was changed by definition of status for key species.

METHODOLOGY

A. Increase the capacity of project team members and students in bird census and monitoring techniques.

The training of future conservationists is possible only if there is a good scientific base; therefore, the training programme was worked out with the participation of specialists from UzSPB, and the trainings were given with the help of club's supervisors and sabbaticals from RSPB.

The training programme included: bird's identification, counts, mapping, work with GPS, collection and processing of material, random count method and IBA criteria (fig.4). Methods of working with local community were also included. The trainings were carried out together with surveys.

B. The carrying out of survey with the purpose of nominating the territories for IBA; estimation of the population status of bird species and existing threats.

1. Collection and analysis of available information:

To carry out a survey with the purpose of preparing a basis for IBA wants much data, which does not concern only birds. Therefore preliminary information on the project territories was collected. Most of the materials were taken from UzSPB and local experts, the latter having been involved in the carrying out of surveys and preparing IBA Data Sheets.

2. Carrying out of surveys: the definition of the status of key species, including globally-threatened, and collection of missing materials and information on threats for IBA.



Fig.4 Field training: the interactive game on random count method, Akpetky 2010

The survey was carried out with the use of standard methods. The point count was used with lakes, while on flat sites and in mountains the survey was accomplished with line transects (Novikov, 1949; Colin et al.2005). All points and routes were recorded with the help of GPS, which were used in ArcGIS for making up maps with suggested boundaries for IBA. Birds were defined with the use of binoculars with x10 and telescopes x40 and x60. We used field guides: «Bird Guide: The Most Complete Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe» (Mullarney et al. 1999) and «Birds of Middle East» (Porter, Aspinall 2010). Rare and little-studied bird species were photographed with camera with an objective 300 mm.

Threats were identified and described in conformity with a special form, worked out for IBA programme.

3. Analysis and processing of all the materials for filling IBA Data Sheets.

The analyze and filling of IBA Data Sheets were conducted in conformity with the recommendations given in Central Asian IBA Guidelines (2003).

All the information on the surveys was put into the AviCA database (www.avica.uz) and World Bird/Biodiversity DataBase System (www.globalconservation.info).

C. Raise awareness of local communities towards the importance of their region (IBAs and globally threatened species).

Two seminars for local people were held - 26-27 September 2010 in Shavazsay and 14-16 April 2011 in Ayakaghytma. The aim of the seminars was to familiarise local people with the IBA programme and rare species and to tell them about the importance of their territory for conservation of biodiversity on a global scale. In the course of the seminar presentations were carried out, interactive games were played and trainings in birds identification in nature were given.

OUTPUTS AND RESULTS

The main aim of the project was achieved: 3 of the 4 project territories were given the IBA status in September 2011 (fig. 5).

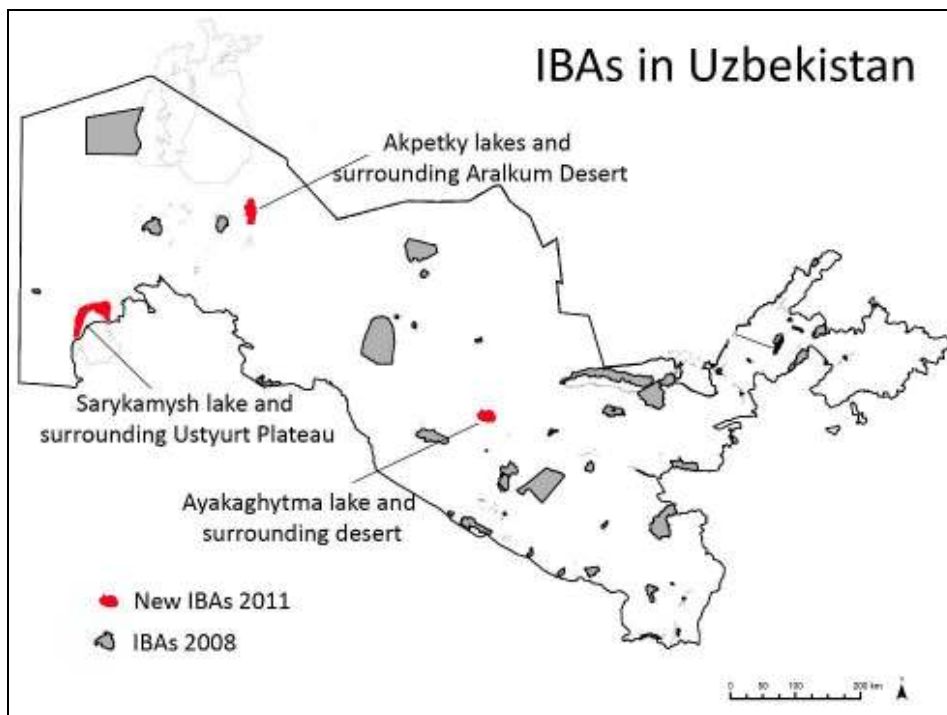


Fig. 5 New IBAs in Uzbekistan

The project planned to gather information on the number and distribution of three globally threatened species: Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (CR), Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (EN) and Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (VU). In the course of the project the largest amount of information was obtained about the distribution and number of Egyptian Vulture (fig.6). The Lesser Kestrel was encountered only once, in Shavazsay, while the Slender-billed Curlew was never found. Altogether, information on 37 rare species was collected in the course of the project, of which 16 are globally threatened and 33 species are rare on a national scale (table 1).

Table 1. Rare species observed in the course of the surveys on 4 project territories

No	Species	Globally-threatened Species (GTS)	Uzbekistan Red Data Book (2009)	Shavazsay 15-22.05-28.09.2010	Akpetky 15-28.10.2010	Sarykamysh 29.10.-3.11.2010	Ayakaghytma 9-28.04.2010
1.	<i>Anser erythropus</i>	VU	+		+		
2.	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		+		+	+	+
3.	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>		+			+	
4.	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	NT	+		+	+	+
5.	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	EN	+		+	+	
6.	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		+				+
7.	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>		+	+			
8.	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		+				+

9.	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		+				+
10.	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		+				+
11.	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>		+		+		+
12.	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	VU	+		+		+
13.	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>		+		+		+
14.	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		+	+			+
15.	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		+		+	+	
16.	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>		+	+			
17.	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	EN		+			+
18.	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		+	+			
19.	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>		+	+			
20.	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	NT	+	+			
21.	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		+	+			+
22.	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	NT	+		+		+
23.	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	VU	+				+
24.	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>		+	+	+		+
25.	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	VU	+		+		
26.	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		+	+	+		
27.	<i>Aquila pennata</i>		+	+			
28.	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	VU	+	+			
29.	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	VU	+	+		+	+
30.	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		+				+
31.	<i>Chlamydotis macqueenii</i>	VU	+				
32.	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	NT	+			+	
33.	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	NT					+
34.	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	NT			+	+	+
35.	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>		+			+	+
36.	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>		+		+	+	
37.	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	NT		+			
	Total	16 GTS	33	14 (5 GTS)	14(7 GTS)	10 (5 GTS)	20(8 GTS)



Fig.6 Egyptian vulture *Neophron percnopterus* on Ayakaghytma

Indicators

Obtained materials

- Scientific report (Annex 2)
- 4 IBA Data Sheets (Annex 3)
- All IBAs data are included in WBDB online database www.globalconservation.info, while data on field surveys - in AviCA www.avica.uz.
- 2 science articles (Annex 4).
- Educational materials for local people and students were printed according to project plans and distributed among participants of the seminars, partners (Annex 1).

Measurement of a project progress:

- Number of filled registration cards, and point and route registrations. The length of line transects was 216 km; the number of points– 59; the number of registration cards filled – 48.
- The number of students – 23.
- The number of the participants of the seminars – 43: 25 schoolchildren and 18 adults (fig.7)
- The number of organizations, which received the science report – 5



Fig.7 Participants of seminar on Ayakaghytma village, 16.04.2011

Distribution of project information:

- 2 short films were prepared;
- 1 radio-interview (August 2011)
- 1 TV reportage in Russian and Uzbek broadcast on the local channel 'Poytaht' in the programme 'Ecopoytaht' (July 2011);
- Information on the process of the project was constantly being published on the UzSPB site www.uzspb.uz:
 - <http://www.uzspb.uz/clp.html>
 - <http://www.uzspb.uz/event192.html>
 - <http://www.uzspb.uz/event182.html>
 - <http://www.uzspb.uz/event162.html>

as well as in CLP newsletters www.conservationleadershipprogramme.org :

- <http://maildogmanager.com/page.html?p=000001XDDtjKGdH7lcfGo+zqgsHKVikg==>
- <http://www.maildogmanager.com/page.html?p=000001XDDtjKE+TroUdGI2xqAkFK1qmg>

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

The field survey carried out in the project territories revealed the general problem. All the project territories were either remote from settlements, as in the case with Akpetky and Sarykamysh, or were situated far from populous areas, as were Shavazsay and Ayakaghytma. All the territories have one common feature: direct dependence of land users and local community on natural resources (fish resources, pastures and firewood). Currently, excessive and irrational use – poacher fishing, overgrazing and deforestation – led to lack of resources. Therefore, the work with local population with the purpose of introduction of methods of sustainable use of resources and realization of necessity to conserve the biodiversity of their territory is of great importance. In the last expedition to Ayakaghytma we tried to pay more attention to local people and held a three-day seminar for pupils, in which we told them about birds and rare animals in their region, and familiarised them with the riches of their lands (fig.8 and 9). We hope that a link between UzSPB and the Ayakaghytma school was formed and the base for long-term collaboration founded.



Fig.8 Familiarise fishermen with rare waterfowl of their region, Ayakaghytma 2011



Fig.9 Presentation of IBA programme in Shavazsay, 27 September 2010

In May 2010 7 students from 2 universities participated in the first field training for students in Shavazsay. As the students were on a different level, many of them participating in a field work for the first time, we had to involve more experienced students in trainings. These students shared their experience with those participating for the first time. After such cooperative work on the preparation of a seminar for local people in Shavazsay, in September 2010 the students were able with their own efforts to make presentations for local people and tell them about their work. The students were still more active in the work with local people at Ayakaghytma, where they prepared and carried out their own programme (fig.10 and 11). To enhance a sense of responsibility and independence in the students was a very important point of the project, aimed at training future conservationists. We hope, these students will continue their activity in nature conservation, in which UzSPB renders technical assistance.



Fig.10 Presentation about birds species, Ayakaghytma school 14.04.2011



Fig.11 First steps in bird identification, Ayakaghytma school 15.04.2011

Section 3:

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the project was achieved, 3 of the 4 project territories having received the international IBA status: 'Akpetky lakes and surrounding Aralkum desert', 'Sarykamysh lake and surrounding Ustyurt Plateau' and 'Ayakaghytma Lake and surrounding desert'. These territories, with a total area of 167,974 ha, are important for conservation of 16 globally-threatened bird species.

This survey was carried out with the participation of students of biology, future conservationists. 4 field trainings were given to the 23 students.

Two seminars for local people were organised in the villages of Shavazsay and Ayakaghytma. In the course of this work the project managed to establish good contacts between UzSPB and inhabitants of Ayakaghytma village.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND LESSONS LEARNT

- **Which project activities and outcomes went well and why?**

Most of the activities went in accordance with the time table. The surveys and trainings for students, as well as analysis and processing of materials were carried out in due time. Thanks to the organisational assistance from UzSPB, the project did not come across any financial or administrative delays.

Moreover, the collaboration with UzSPB and IFAS led to receive additional financial support, which made it possible to carry out surveys in one more territory near the southern shore of the Aral Sea: Lake Sarykamysh.

In conformity with the project, IBA cards for all the four areas were prepared. Upon the end of the project, the consideration of the four Uzbekistan IBAs in the BirdLife Secretariat was also finished. This resulted in the IBA status for three of them, namely, for Akpetky, Sarykamysh and Ayakaghytma.

- **Please detail any problems that the project encountered or deviations from original project plans. Describe how these problems were addressed and what solutions were found to deal with these issues.**

The project encountered certain problems, which led to change or corrections in original plans.

Transfer of finances.

The project began its work right after it was approved in April 2010. The survey, training for students and seminar for local people in Shavazsay were scheduled for May. However, because of a certain delay in transfer of finances, project handouts were prepared only in June 2010. That is why the work with local people was put off till September and the terms of the survey were shortened.

Education process

In May 2010, complications arose because of examinations at the National University and Kokand Pedagogical Institute. It was difficult to coordinate the surveys in Shavazsay with the education process. As a result, two groups of students were united in one.

Weather conditions

Heavy rains occurred in Shavazsay during the survey, which resulted in a limitation of the survey term to a seven-day period.

Changes in the management of project territories

The project began its work in the game husbandry Shavazsay in May 2010. In the summer of 2010 this territory was passed to other managers. The project could not agree with the new management of the husbandry about further cooperative work.

Unexpected expenses

As a result of financial problems in 2010, RSPB shortened the support for the sabbaticals. By that time the project had already confirmed the participation of 3 RSPB sabbaticals in an autumn survey of Akpetky and Sarykamysh. As a result, a small additional part of the project finances was spent on the sabbaticals. This expenditure was approved by Stuart Patterson, the manager of SOS projects, in the autumn of 2010.

- **Briefly assess the specific project methodologies and conservation tools used.**

Detailed IBA identification methods, which were described in the Central Asian IBA Project Guidelines prepared by Geoff Welch and Sergey Sklyarenko were used in the project (Central Asian IBA Project Guidelines, 2003). The utilisation of these methods made it possible to prepare information for potential IBAs.

- **Please state important lessons which have been learnt through the course of the project and provide recommendations for future enhancement or modification to the project activities and outcomes.**

Support of partner organisations and experienced specialists is necessary in the implementation of any project. The experienced tutors helped avoid errors and implement our project on a good level.

IN THE FUTURE

Currently, we have definite future plans only with respect to Ayakaghytma. UzSPB plans a further collaboration with the people of the village of Ayakaghytma, where good contacts were established with its inhabitants and the local school. In the following year UzSPB plans to prepare a project aimed at the development of the protection of the territory by local caretakers. Students are also expected to participate in this work.

Ayakaghytma was also included in a BirdFair project, planned for September 2012 and aimed at investigation of the autumn migration route of the Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria*.

Section 4:

APPENDICES

1. Financial report
2. Scientific report
3. 4 IBA Data Sheets
4. Copies of articles on the project
5. 2 science papers on the project materials.
6. 2 short films on the project: «Shavazsay» и «Save our species»

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Distribution list

1. Uzbekistan Society for the protection of Birds (UzSPB)
2. National University of Uzbekistan
3. Samarkand State University
4. Bukhara State University
5. Karakalpakstan State University
6. Kokand Pedagogical Institute
7. State Biological Control of the Republic of Uzbekistan
8. State Committee for the Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan
9. Institute of Zoology of Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan
10. Institute of Bioecology of Karakalpakstan Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan
11. International Fund for Aral Sea (IFAS)
12. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
13. «Shavazsai» game husbandry