

Project Update: June 2020

Summary

Since 15th March 2020 we have stopped our activities in the office as well as in field due to COVID-19. All the project team were working from home and almost all field activities in this project were stopped. However, we still keep in touch with our stakeholders in the field, such as Pak Kades Giriwungu and Pak Kadus Pejaten Basuki as well as the headmaster of the elementary school of SDN Pejaten, to monitor the situation in the project site.

Pejaten village follows national and regional policy – the governor of Yogyakarta Province instruction where people were encouraged to stay at home and prohibited from travelling to another area as well as to conduct community gatherings. During this situation they put a portal gate at the village entrance to stop visitors coming to this village. They also installed a banner which announced that this village was closed to outsiders.

In fact, most of the project activities are the field activities and involve many people in their implementation. Not all of these activities can be carried out through remote work mechanisms. We have decided to not take risks which could jeopardise the health of each individual implementing the programme and others around them.

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Java sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora* is an endangered bird species, endemic to Java and Bali. The populations have been extirpated from their habitat due to poaching activity. The remaining population in Gunungkidul karst region are located mostly near farming areas.

Gunungkidul karst region is part of Gunung sewu karst landscape, in which are dotted thousands of limestone hills stretching along the southern coast of Gunung kidul regency, Yogyakarta Province, Java Island Indonesia.

According to our survey in Gunungkidul at 2017-2018 in 15 former breeding sites, only five sites are still used (83-123 individuals) (Yayasan Kanopi Indonesia 2018). In 2016-2017, Kanopi Indonesia and WCS (2017) conducted a bird market survey in three bird markets (Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Purblingga), and found 759 Java sparrows were traded during the survey period. This investigation reveals that significant numbers of these birds were supplied from Gunungkidul Regency. This worrying fact leads us to conclude that bird poaching activity is still happening as we speak. Thus, being noted, it's very imperative for us to develop conservation activities to protect the remaining population by involving the local communities.

This project will engage with the local farmers and communities near Java sparrow habitat. We will actively encourage them to participate in various activities such as

safeguarding and monitoring the Java sparrow population. We will also actively educate the locals to reduce the number of conflicts between the locals and Java sparrow through participatory mapping and transfer knowledge to tackle the negative stigma of this particular bird in the locals, primarily rice farmers.

2. Objective

- a) Java sparrow habitat distribution survey in the project site.
- b) Capacity building for community to conserve Java sparrow and the habitat.
- c) Spreading awareness to local villagers about the important of Java sparrow conservation.
- d) Implementation of the monitoring and conservation mechanism.

3. Methods

- a) Java sparrow habitat survey,

These activities include interviews with local community especially farmers, literature study, and also direct observation. We will use opportunistic species observations data, collected from interviews with the local community and other informants. Hopefully, these informants could also share the historical data from previous years. This survey aims to spot at least 10 Java sparrow feeding sites and other encounter sites in their home range. Interviews will be conducted by purposive method to the potential informant, especially farmers, who live or own areas in the village pilot or which are located no more than 4 km from a Java sparrow roost site. We will record the feeding site GPS location, when and how many Java sparrows usually come and the owner's perception about Java sparrow. We also ask them whether he or she will available to be involved in Java sparrow monitoring as volunteers by sharing the information of Java sparrow encounters. To cross check the information we will conduct observation according to the information from the informant.

- b) Capacity building for community

This activity will involve around 15 persons from the local community, especially young people and farmers. This activity consists of: (1) Village mapping facilitation. Villagers will be trained to assess the local village landscape (settlement, farmland, forest, etc.) and Java sparrow distribution. The Java sparrow distribution data will also include the data from the previously conducted survey; (2) Bird monitoring training. The training will be focused in bird observation and reporting, and monitoring scheme introduction which will be implemented during this project; and (3) Community based conservation training. The training will be about the bird protection technique, field patrol methods, and swift report mechanism to the authorities (BKSDA ranger or police) regarding the poaching activities.

- c) Monitoring implementation:

We will involve the training participants and wider community from the local villages to work with the monitoring programme. Hopefully the villagers will also commit in the future

as monitoring volunteers. There will be three types of location to be monitored: (1) roosting or nesting site, (2) feeding ground, especially on the paddy fields, and (3) other locations which are reported to be visited regularly by the Java sparrow. The monitoring will be led by the local coordinator and three field coordinators (training participant). This team will collect every record from the monitoring volunteers. The data monitoring will only include the occurrence reports that provide date and location information. In this activity, Yayasan Kanopi Indonesia will only use data collected from pilot village. Any other data collected from another site will be stored in a different database. The monitoring implementation will be conducted for at least for 3 months at five locations involving 15 volunteers.

d) Awareness raising:

We will execute these activities through a school visit at two different schools and a village visit to two different villages. Awareness material production: This awareness raising activities will also include the productions of 500 posters, 500 infographic pamphlets and one billboard.

PROGRESS OF ACTIVITY

1. Capacity building for woman farmer local group

We had planned to conduct a meeting with woman farmer group on 4 April 2020 but later we cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting should have been about evaluation of the monitoring scheme and facilitating the next step to increase community participation in Java sparrow conservation and monitoring in Giriwungu village. This activity will be combined with training about ginger-based product improvement.

To keep coordination with group we have proposed to use WhatsApp groups and make communication with the chief of village but we have found it difficult to contact our group since the project place has a poor signal and many are not familiar with the android phone.

2. Awareness raising

a. Producing poster and installing billboard

We have designed a poster about Java sparrow conservation and will use this in the community. In early June we have constructed an awareness billboard and sent this to Giriwungu village but the installation will have to wait.



Figure 1. awareness material for billboard



Figure 2 billboard construction



Figure 3 informative poster which will be distributed among community, this poster will be proposed to be installed in Village meeting hall, school, chief of village house.

b. Visit to school.

In a previous report we reported that on 20th February 2020 we conducted coordination with elementary school in Pejaten Village to schedule the "visit to school" activity. We met with headmaster and we agreed to visit on 19th March 2020, but we delayed this due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result we had to make a rearrangement but so far we will not conduct this activity due to the pandemic.

According to the ministry of education and culture's official academic calendar, the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year is slated for July 13th 2020. According to the ministry the school will only be opened for the green zone province, while for the yellow, red and black zones, students still have to learn from home. As Yogyakarta is still considered as yellow zone do the school will not be opened immediately.

3. Bird monitoring activity.

From March to June, there only one encounter reported from community in the project site. On 16th June 2020 Mr Basuki (chief of Pejaten village) saw three individuals of Java sparrow visited Mr Subarno's farm field.

According to Pak Basuki, from March to June 2020 were no Java sparrow encounters reported from other monitoring participants. During this Covid-19 pandemic, no participants gave him their monitoring sheet. This might be due to the community in the project site reducing their outdoor activity including to their farm fields.



Figure 4. Communication. Java sparrow encounter report through online social media communication

Next step

To respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, we seem to be confronted with only two choices, under performance of the project implementation, or taking risks that jeopardise the health of not only each individual implementing the programme, but also others around them. Seeing that most of activities are affected by Covid-19, it suggests a need to modify our activities considering our national and regional policies.