

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Melisa Bal
Project Title	Take action for the Northern Lapwings: Monitoring and awareness raising activities in Kızılırmak delta, a Ramsar site in northern Turkey
Application ID	34014-1
Date of this Report	17.05.2022

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Avoiding damage of Northern Lapwing nests by agricultural machinery in the rice fields				Due to the muddy structure of rice fields, it was impossible to reach some nests, even when incubating birds were observed. Furthermore, this year's weather circumstances shifted the plowing activity up to 3 weeks. Some fields were not dried out due to the rainy weather and the ploughing started later this year than last. Thus, the chicks in some nests hatched before the ploughing and those nests were not marked.
Collaborating and involving stakeholders to the process to find possible solutions				We collaborated and involved locals, especially farmers, to the process but we need to collaborate with other stakeholders (municipalities, ministries, universities, NGOs) to take more sustainable steps and get better results.
Raising awareness of locals about Northern Lapwings and threats the species faces				Most of the locals knew northern lapwings, but they were unaware of the threats they faced. The training and meetings we organised helped to raise awareness about this issue.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). A total area of about 2.7 km² was scanned. In the three villages, a total of 75 northern lapwing nests were recorded. 17 of these nests, recorded in the field before ploughing, were marked with bamboo sticks. 4 of the marked nests were skipped during ploughing and 16 eggs were saved from being crushed.

Although our project aiming to protect northern lapwing nests, 16 black-winged stilt nests were found and marked. 2 nests were skipped during ploughing and five eggs were saved being crushed.

Apart from saving eggs, we gathered current information about breeding population and biology of northern lapwings in Kızılırmak Delta, which have not been studied since 1992.

b). Apart from rice agriculture, the other threats in the area for northern lapwings were identified. Golden jackals, fox, marten, badger, livestock trampling, crows,

shepherd dogs and hunting dogs of the villagers were recorded as a threat. For future studies, this information will be considered.

c). Locals were involved in the process and their awareness was raised. 109 students from five village schools were reached through training and birdwatching activities. For the first time, primary and secondary school students informed about birds in their surroundings and went to birdwatching activity. A total of 90 people were contacted during four meetings held in three different villages' coffee houses and surveys were conducted to gather information.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

First unforeseen difficulty was the walking in rice fields. Due to the muddy structure of the rice fields, we couldn't walk sometimes in the fields, even when we observed the incubating individual and therefore some nests could not be reached. However, we talked with the field owner and warned them about the nests.

The other unforeseen difficulty was that the farmers were biased against us because of previous problems they had with the authorities in the field. Although they were supportive and helped us mark and skip the nests, they were always deliberate to have some problems with government. They thought that we could prevent them from doing rice farming and take their fields from them. However, we have always stated that we want to involve them in the process and collaborate with them. Also, we have always said that these habitats are important for northern lapwings, so agriculture will not be stopped, but we want to take some actions that will benefit both sides.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

We reached 109 students from five village schools. Training was given to 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grade primary and secondary school students. In training, we did a presentation about northern lapwings and what we did in Kızılırmak Delta for protecting them. We prepared activity and coloring book for the students and after the presentation, we did the activities together. Besides, we organised birdwatching activities for all the students who joined the trainings to observe northern lapwings in their natural habitat. After training and birdwatching activities, we did interviews with some students. They stated that it is the first time that such activities are organised for them and wanted us to come again.

We kept in touch with all the farmers during our fieldworks. When we went to find northern lapwing nests in the rice field, we always communicated with them and showed them nests with telescope. Apart from that, four meetings were held in three different village coffee houses (Yörükler, Üçpınar and Doğanca) to give information about northern lapwings, share our findings from monitoring studies and gather information from locals about threats to northern lapwings that they observe in their fields. In the end of all meetings, we did surveys to them. In meetings, we contacted 90 persons. Some farmers were very satisfied with these meetings, and they stated

that we are the first persons who came to take their opinions and involve them in the process.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, we're planning to continue this work because with this project we have new questions to investigate. First, we want to use different technologies like thermal cameras to identify more nests in challenging rice fields. Second and the main research subject is searching the main reason of predation and find if the main threat is golden jackals as locals stated. Third we want to investigate the effects of pesticides and the last we want to collaborate with the other stakeholders (municipalities, ministries, universities, NGOs) and prepare an action plan for a long term.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

We have already shared our results in International Wader Study Group Conference (8-10 October 2021) and V. ELVONAL Conference (14-15 January 2022). Also, we did interviews with different media platforms such as newspapers (AGOS), magazines (MAGMA, EKOIQ, BUĞDAY e-magazine) and news sites (yesilgazete.org, ekoia.com, bilimenc.tubitak.gov.tr). We gave a talk about our project in a café (Café Büyük Ev) in Samsun for people who live near to our study area. We're planning to attend more conferences to reach more people.

We shared some of our results from our social media accounts (Instagram: @savenorthernlapwings [201 follower], Twitter: @ALapwings [15 follower], Facebook: @savenorthernlapwings [45 follower]) and website (savenorthernlapwings.com).

Also, we have some short videos from fieldwork, training and meetings and we're planning to make a short video about what we did since the beginning of the project. We will share this video in our social media accounts.

We submitted a paper titled 'First proved breeding record of the Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) for Turkey' in Zoology in the Middle East journal. The first breeding record of common snipe in Turkey was found during the fieldwork of our project. We mentioned in the article that the nest was found during 'Take action for the Northern Lapwings: Monitoring and awareness raising activities in Kızılırmak delta, a Ramsar site in northern Turkey'. Additionally, we're preparing two different papers with our data collected in this project. One is about current status of breeding and wintering populations of northern lapwings in Turkey and the other one is about our conservation activities in Kızılırmak Delta. Once they are completed, we will submit them in related journals.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Kızılırmak Delta is a very important area for breeding northern lapwings and the most important next step will be to continue long term and systematic monitoring studies. Breeding northern lapwing population should be monitored in all habitats in the Kızılırmak Delta collaboration with all the authorities.

We observed that predation is a huge problem. So, the other important next steps will be the finding the main reason of predation and preparing an action plan with the help of all the stakeholders.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, the Rufford Foundation logo was used in brochures, posters, booklets, banners and cloth bags. We also used the logo in our presentations during meetings, training and conference talks. We mentioned The Rufford Foundation's support and add the logo in our social media accounts (Instagram: @savenorthernlapwings, Twitter: @ALapwings, Facebook: @savenorthernlapwings) and website (savenorthernlapwings.com).

Posters containing the Rufford Foundation logo were hung in village coffee houses, village schools, restaurants, university. Brochures also containing the Rufford Foundation logo were distributed to the locals.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Deniz Oğuz- He made all the drawings for printed materials, and he also helped us in fieldworks.

Zehra Torun- She helped us in the fieldworks, birdwatching activities with primary and secondary school students and meetings with locals.

Akif Bilir, Yasir Sevil and Nizamettin Yavuz- They helped us in the fieldworks.

Sonay Ortayazıcı-She helped us designing cloth bags.

Beril Tezel-She helped us designing posters and brochures.

Melike Yurda-She helped us in birdwatching activities with primary and secondary school students and meetings with locals.

Ömer Faruk Sülek-He helped us in trainings in primary and secondary schools.

10. Any other comments?

I would like to thank to The Rufford Foundation for their support to early career scientists. I am immensely grateful for this opportunity. This project strengthened my self confidence and showed me that I can do! Thanks to this project, I have different offers from different universities to pursue my PhD which has been always my dream to continue my research.