



# EUROPEAN UNION OF AQUARIUM CURATORS

## REPORTING FORM

### FOR *IN SITU* CONSERVATION PROJECTS FUNDED

# 2022

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#### 1 TITLE OF PROJECT

Project Batagur baska

#### 2 NAME OF APPLICANT

INSTITUTION

ADDRESS

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DATE OF REPORT: 07- July 2023

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**PLEASE SEND YOUR REPORT TO ISABEL KOCH, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF EUAC**

(ISABEL.KOCH@WILHELMA.DE)

**AND COPY TO**

João Falcato : [jfalcato@oceanario.pt](mailto:jfalcato@oceanario.pt); Brian Zimmerman: [bzimmerman@bzsociety.org.uk](mailto:bzimmerman@bzsociety.org.uk)

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**3 LOCATION OF PROJECT (REGION & COUNTRY)**

Bangladesh

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**4 PROJECT START AND END DATES:**

Batagur Project started 2010 and is ongoing.

The currently funded soft-release part was started in November 2022 and monitored in May 2023

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**5 PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR, ADDRESS AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION**

(IF DIFFERENT FROM APPLICANT)

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**6 PROJECT TYPE**

(TICK ANY COMPONENTS THAT APPLY)

- BIOLOGICAL/ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH
- VETERINARY/CONSERVATION MEDICINE
- ANIMAL WELFARE
- CAPTIVE BREEDING
- RE-INTRODUCTION/RE-STOCKING/TRANSLOCATION
- HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

- EDUCATION/PUBLIC AWARENESS
  - TRAINING/WORKSHOPS
  - COMMUNITY-BASED/SOCIAL POLICY
  - ECOTOURISM/SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
  - SUSTAINABLE USE
  - WARDENING/LAW ENFORCEMENT
  - PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT
  - OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_
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**7 FOCAL SPECIES (COMMON AND SCIENTIFIC NAME)**

The Northern River Terrapin (Batagur baska)

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## **8 IUCN RED LIST STATUS (OR OTHER THREAT LISTING) OF FOCAL SPECIES**

Critically Endangered A1cd

**CITES** YES

**APPENDIX 1**

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## **9 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

THIS PART OF THE LONG-TERM CONSERVATION AND BREEDING PROJECT BATAGUR BASKA IN BANGLADESH FOCUSED ON SOFT RELEASING 40 INDIVIDUALS INTO PROTECTED PONDS AT FOREST DEPARTMENT STATIONS WHERE THEY ARE ABLE TO FORAGE ON THEIR OWN WITHOUT HUMAN ASSISTANCE.

THE COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION PROJECT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2010 TO SECURE THE SURVIVAL OF THE NORTHERN RIVER TERRAPIN IN ITS COUNTRY OF ORIGIN. SUCCESSFUL BREEDING AND HEAD STARTING OVER THE PAST 12 PROJECT YEARS YIELDED SO FAR OVER 500 INDIVIDUALS. FIRST STEPS TO SUSTAINABLY REINTRODUCE THE TERRAPIN IN THE BANGLADESH SUNDARBANS WERE MADE IN THE PAST YEARS. MONITORING MIGRATION AND SURVIVAL OF REINTRODUCED ADULT INDIVIDUALS PROVED TO BE DIFFICULT. THEREBY WE DECIDED TO USE A DIFFERENT (SOFT) RELEASE APPROACH TO REINTRODUCE THE TERRAPIN INTO ITS NATURAL HABITAT THE SUNBARBANS. THROUGHOUT THIS MANGROVE FORREST THE FOREST DEPARTMENT OF BANGLADESH RUNS OVER 80 STATIONS WHEREOF SEVERAL OF THEM HAVE A LARGE POND. RELEASING INDIVIDUALS INTO THESE PONDS GUARANTEES PROTECTION FROM FISHERY BUT THE TERRAPINS ARE NOT FED AND HAVE TO FIND FOOD ON THEIR OWN.

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## **10 WAS THE OVERALL PROJECT PURPOSE FULFILLED?**

Yes, 40 turtles were released in November 2022 in 3 different ponds at Forest Department stations throughout the Sundarbans (the originally planned 2 ponds that were proposed for the EUAC project proposal were adjusted to 3 ponds after consulting the Forest Department and getting permits for the release).

The 40 individuals were checked 6 month past this release and had either gained weight or did not loose weight within the half year period. All turtles remained in Forest Department ponds.

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## **11 WHAT OBJECTIVES WERE MET?**

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- To release individuals in 3 ponds with permission of the Bangladesh Forest Department
- To check individuals after 6 month
- Individuals are able to find a sufficient amount of food
- Individuals are able to maintain their weight or gain weight during the period of 6 month
- Individuals are protected by the Forest Department staff which once in a while also check if they see individuals swimming in the pond

## **WHAT OBJECTIVES WERE NOT MET?**

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## **12 WHAT PROJECT ACTIVITIES WERE UNDERTAKEN?**

### **Part 1: November 2022 - Release of:**

20 individuals at Kokilmoni (14.11.2023)

10 individuals at Patkosta (14.11.2023)

10 individuals at Dobeki (15.11.2023)

(see also supplementary material for location)

### **Part 2: May 2023 - individuals check:**

Kokilmoni, pond size: 85 x 69,2m

4/20 individuals were caught due to a lot of vegetation and water lilies catching was difficult.

Individuals are in excellent condition. Mean weight gain = 596g (SE: ±54,5; n=4)

Patkosta, pond size: 85,6 x 67,2 m

9/10 individuals were caught, hardly any vegetation in this pond, individuals are in good condition. Mean weight gain = 57g (SE: ±24,7; n=9). Forest Department officials reassure us that vegetation will increase after the monsoon.

Dobeki, pond size: 70,6 x 57,2m:

8/10 individuals were caught, hardly any vegetation in this pond, individuals are in good condition. Mean weight gain = 222g (SE: ±35,1; n=8).

3 individuals that gained the least weight (<150 g) were taken out of the pond to reduce the individual count and thereby pressure. Mr. Iqbal Husain Chowdhury (Ass. CF) shows us 2 further stations and we decide to place the 3 individuals in one of them (Kalagachia, pond size: 35,7 x 36 m) on 30. May 2023, a pond with a middle island and a good amount of vegetation, again this pond belongs to a Forest Department station and fishing is prohibited.

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## **13 WHAT OUTCOMES WERE ACHIEVED DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT?**

Overall the soft-release pilot study was a success, individuals survived and gained weight.

This provides the first possibility to sustainably reintroduce the critically endangered northern river terrapin in its habitat with a certain amount of protection against fishery. The FD staff at the respective forest stations where the animals were release are very supportive and understand the magnitude of the project and ensured to provide protection for the turtles.

### **ARE ANY ONGOING?**

A further release of individuals in other forest station ponds throughout the Sundarbans is planned for November 2023

### **DID ANY EXPECTED OUTCOMES FAIL?**

Expectations were kept to a minimum and we were actually surprised that the terrapins looked very well and in good condition at all stations we visited. We also were excited to see the enthusiasm of the on-site forest staff for the terrapins they are now in charge of and protect. So, none of the expected outcome failed.

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**14 DID LOCAL PEOPLE/COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT? IF SO, HOW MANY AND WILL CONTINUED CONTACT BE MADE?**

The soft release in November was accompanied by Forest Department officials and the local station manager and project manager. For the check in May the Zoo team traveled with 19 local fishermen, the local station and project manager as well as the officer in charge of the respective stations that were visited. We met with the local Forest Department staff who are on site for a period of 2 years at their respective stations and informed them about the project and the protection of the endangered terrapins they now have in their forest department pond. Continued contact exists between the zoo and the local station manager as well as the project partner, the Forest Department.

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**15 DID THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HOST COUNTRY RECEIVE INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT'S RESULTS?**

A biannual report about project activities is passed on to Forest Department which provides information to the ministry of environment in Bangladesh.

At the end of the trip in May 2023 the team of the Vienna Zoo (Anton Weissenbacher and Doris Preininger) had an extensive meeting with the leading Forest Department officials to discuss the outcome of the release pilot study and the future of the project Batagur baska.

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**16 HOW DID THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER NGOS WORK? WERE THERE ANY ISSUES?**

There are no other NGOs apart from the Project partner Prokriti O Jibon Foundation involved in this project.

The cooperation with our partners is well developed and supported by continues reports.

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**17 TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (IN EUROS)**

Please see details below for Part 1 and 2 of the soft release study

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**18 AMOUNT OF MATCHING FUNDS SPENT:**

**19 AMOUNT SPENT FROM EUAC FUNDS:**

All funds were spent

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**20 EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN (IN EUROS)****06.-20. November 2022****Soft release PART 1**

	<b>Details</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Euro</b>
Ticket Rupali project manager	Kolkata /Dhaka	37900	
Snack		390	
Lunch	Airport	1770	
		40060	<b>501,00</b>
		<b>BDT</b>	
Dinner		780	8,39
Food		1620	17,42
Hotel Dhaka		9720	104,52
Food		1390	14,95
Food		1605	17,26
Catchers	Turtle catch Including	8500	91,40
Boat	Karamjal	139500	1500,00
Hotel Pasur	stay	14000	150,54
Hotel Pasur	food bill	4695	50,48
Hotel Pasur	laundry	1500	16,13
Transportation - car	10 days incl south	46599	501,06
Hotel Dhaka		2970	31,94
		232879	<b>2504,08</b>
<b>Total amount Nov. 2022</b>			<b>3005,08</b>
<u>EUAC Funding</u>			<u>3000</u>

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**25. May - 02. July 2023****Soft release PART 2**

	<b>INR (80)</b>	<b>BDT (120)</b>	<b>EURO</b>
Tickets Zoo team			1951,65
Visa Zoo team			140
Ticket Rupali + visa	57000		712,50
Transportation - car	6000,0		75,00
Dinner		780,0	6,50
Snacks		235,0	1,96
food		2720,0	22,67
food		1190,0	9,92
food		1725,0	14,38
food		2190,0	18,25
hyacith		9600,0	80,00
Richmond Hotel Dhaka		20100,0	167,50
Transportation - car		29500,0	245,83
Snacks		1010,0	8,42
Dinner		1500,0	12,50
help in Karamjal		2100,0	17,50
catchers		8200,0	68,33
Boat (Karamjal)		1700,0	14,17
Boat (Sundarbans)	25People	359000,0	2991,67
Hotel Pashur		9000,0	75,00
Hotel Pashur		18000,0	150,00
Hotel Pashur		1730,0	14,42
Hotel Pashur		24000,0	200,00
Hotel Pashur		600,0	5,00
Pashur tip		1500,0	12,50
Karamjal expenses		13000,0	108,33
Snacks		1300,0	10,83
Snacks		3600,0	30,00
Dinner fishermen		1000,0	8,33
Labor fishermen	19People	43000,0	358,33
scale		4000,0	33,33
Transportation - car		69000,0	575,00
Prokirtipolli Hotel + Dinner		18110,0	150,92
Richmond Hotel Dhaka		16000,0	133,33
<b>Total amount May 2023</b>			<b>8424,07</b>
<u>ZGAP Funding</u>			<u>5900</u>

the remaining costs were paid by the Vienna Zoo

**21 PUBLICATIONS PRODUCED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT**

none