

OBC Conservation Committee Funding Priorities

May 2009

The Conservation Committee will consider all proposals that aim to promote bird conservation in the Oriental Bird Club region. The Committee has three priority objectives and projects that meet these objectives will generally be preferred when funding is awarded. The priority objectives are:

- Projects benefiting Globally Threatened bird species
- Projects benefiting threatened habitats that are important for bird conservation
- Projects undertaken by Asian residents

The priority objectives are outlined in more detail below. A range of secondary objectives is also suggested.

Threatened bird species

The first priority objective is to fund projects that will benefit globally threatened bird species in the IUCN Threat Categories: Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable. The Committee will also consider worthwhile projects on Data Deficient or Near Threatened species; for example, survey work to support the reclassification of a declining species to a more severe IUCN Threat Category. Up to date information on threatened bird status can be found at

<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/index.html>

A secondary objective is to fund work on nationally or regionally threatened species, where conservation programmes are sufficiently developed to identify threats at this scale. In many cases, projects in this category will involve protection of important bird habitats so they may qualify under the next priority objective.

Threatened bird habitats

This priority objective is to encourage projects that benefit important bird habitats. Most important habitats will already be part of the BirdLife International Important Bird Area (IBA) network. Sites qualify as IBAs if they fulfil at least one well-defined test of conservation importance. Details of the IBA qualifying criteria and the existing IBAs can be found at:

<http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/sites/index.html>

<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sites/index.html>

The IBA network may not be complete so the Committee will look favourably on proposals to investigate candidate IBAs, where new evidence suggests that a site may qualify. The Committee will also consider work in buffer zones around IBAs that are designed to protect the IBA itself.

A secondary objective is to encourage work on generic habitat issues that have a far-reaching influence on the conservation of many bird species. A good example is the change from traditional to intensive modern agriculture, which can adversely affect bird populations. This has been a major conservation issue in temperate regions, but has received little attention in the OBC region. There have been great changes in agriculture

in the region: e.g. the switch from flood-fed, seasonal rice growing to irrigated multiple-cropping. Other possible subject areas could include forest or wetland restoration, flood/erosion control or coastal development.

Participation of Asian residents

An important objective of the OBC award scheme is to help Asian conservationists develop the skills and experience that they will need to advance bird conservation in their region. For this reason, projects with Asian principal investigators and team members will usually be preferred over applicants from outside the region.

There are many ways that projects can meet this capacity building objective. Projects run by experienced conservation workers that offer training to promising, but inexperienced, local team members are particularly welcome. Where appropriate, projects should work closely with existing conservation programmes or seek to complement them. This results in more effective use of limited resources and helps develop support networks amongst conservationists.

In certain circumstances, the Committee will consider proposals from experienced workers from outside the region. Such projects must include a substantial element of training for local workers. A contribution to training is an important requirement for the Expedition Award, which is specifically aimed at supporting work by experienced non-resident conservationists.

Conservation awareness projects should also aim to encourage greater involvement of their target audiences, before and after the main training events. Where possible, a two-stage approach is preferred: first investigate the local conservation issues and the needs of the people and, secondly, design the training programme based on this information. Seeking feedback from the participants in discussion sessions can help develop future conservation work that is relevant to local needs and more likely to be continued. One successful approach has been to ask the participants to discuss what they had learned, how they could apply their new knowledge and what they thought the conservationists should do in the future to meet mutual goals.

Reporting on projects

In the future, the Conservation Committee hopes to make all project reports available over the Internet. All projects reports must be submitted electronically in a form suitable for downloading. In exceptional circumstances, large files of additional material (e.g. photographs intended for monitoring future habitat change) may be submitted separately on disk.