Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we <u>will not be able to confirm receipt of reports</u> but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No. EIDPo6/11-018

Project Title Flying the flagship: delivering the axolotl action plan at Xochimilco, Mexico

Country(ies) Mexico, UK

UK Organisation Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology

Collaborator(s)

Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco (UAM), Mexico.
Centro de Investigaciones Biologicas y Acuicolas de Cuemanco (CIBAC)

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Instituto de Biologia

Comision Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO - the National Commission for the Knowledge and use of

Biodiversity), Mexico.

Report date 30/10/05

Report No. (HYR

1/2/3/4)

HYR 1

Project website http://www.kent.ac.uk/anthropology/dice/research/axolotl.html

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

The primary timetable elements for the first six months were:

July 2005: Appointment of Darwin Initiative Axolotl Research Group Fellow (UNAM - under the supervision of Dr Zambrano);

July 2005: Initiation of student training (n=2) in axolotl population assessment; spatial distribution and GIS methods; trophic ecology; interactions with alien species; fish eradication methods and/or impact of pollutants (UNAM, UAM-X, PEX with DICE input);

September 2005: 'Workshop 1: training the trainers' (9 days – DICE and Mexican project team);

In terms of the research these have already been met and surpassed, with a considerable amount of in-situ and ex-situ scientific research is now underway. As laid down in the timetable Dr. Zambrano of UNAM has appointed the Darwin Initiative Axolotl Research Group Fellow (Elsa Valiente Riveros – MSc student) who is studying the effects of carp and tilapia distributions on the *Ambystoma mexicanum* population in Xochimilco. Four other researchers have also been awarded stipends; Sandra Evangelina Martinez Renteria - who is studying interactions between the axolotl and exotic species *Cyprinus carpio and Oreochromis* niloticus under laboratory controlled conditions; Marín Martínez Alma Itzel - who is looking at the behaviour of *Ambystoma mexicanum* in selecting plants for egg laying under laboratory conditions; Victoria Contreras - researching the distribution of axolotls in the channel system of Xochimilco; and Bustamante Castellanos Eduardo Martín (and others) - who are studying the fish resource *Oreochromis* niloticus in Xochimilco

Some of the research has already been presented at the following national and international meetings: Shallow Lakes Meeting, Belgium July 2005, Il Congreso de la Sociedad Mexicana de Limnologia at October 2005. The data are being integrated to provide a population analysis based on matrix models to understand the situation of the axolotl in Xochimilco channels and its probabilities of survival and extinction over the next 20 years. A journal manuscript on this subject is expected to be submitted by the end of the year.

There has also been close collaboration between Dr. Zambrano's team and the Laboratorio de Zooplancton in FES Iztacala (UNAM), which is studying predation by juvenile axolotls on zooplankton. Another study sharing its results is a genetic examination of the *Ambystoma* genus Gabriela Parra at the Instituto de Biologia, UNAM. At the same time UAM-X, though not supported by Darwin Initiative funds in this matter is also reporting to be undertaking axolotl related research – notably that relating to water quality.

The other major component scheduled for the first half year of the extension project was the training workshop 1: training the trainers' – this is now taking place between November 19th-December 2nd.

A noteworthy additional development has been the request by the newly reopened Museum of Xochimilco for help from the project to set up a permanent axolotl display with interpretative boards. A meeting with the Director of the Museum will be taking place during the November workshop to discuss this.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has
encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the
project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities

None

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

N/A

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in...... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any <u>planned</u> modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should <u>not</u> be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, <u>stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk</u>. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**