

Darwin Fellowship

Interim Report for the period October – April 2010

Name: Samuel Mutisya

Ref: EIDPS022

Darwin Main Project Ref No	15/040
Darwin Project Title	Building Capacity to Alleviate Human-Elephant Conflict in North Kenya
Name of Darwin Fellow	Samuel Mutisya
UK Organisation	University of Cambridge
Your Organisation(s)	OI Pejeta Conservancy, Laikipia, Kenya
Your role within your Organisation	Ecologist
Start/end date of Fellowship	1 September 2009 – 30 September 2010
Location	Durrell Institute for Conservation Ecology (DICE), University of Kent
Darwin fellowship funding (£)	
Type of work (eg research, training, other, please specify)	MSc in Conservation Biology
Main contact in UK Organisation	W.M. Adams
Author(s), date	Samuel Mutisya, April 2010

I remain truly grateful to Darwin Initiative for sponsoring my MSc programme (Conservation Biology) here at the University of Kent – Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) 2009/2010. This has presented a unique opportunity for me to enhance my conservation skills and career at large.

In this report I aim to outline the progress, challenges and experiences gained during the first six months of this funding.

1.0 Travel arrangements

I arrived in UK on the 8th of October 2009 – about two and a half weeks after the course had officially begun (21st of September 2009). This delay was occasioned UK visa refusal after the first round of application. The UK Border Agency claimed that *scholarship award letter* was not an original copy (despite the official stamp!?). Repealing this verdict would have taken at least a month to process, so I was forced to re-apply after sourcing several letters from Darwin offices in UK. It became clear that in future, as the immigration rules become much more stringent, these delays should be foreseen and avoided.

However, despite my late arrival, the staff at DICE were very supportive making it easy for me to catch up.

2.0 Progress: the Masters programme at DICE

DICE recognises the multidimensional nature of factors causing biodiversity loss. Their MSc programme is therefore tailored to develop an interdisciplinary approach to biodiversity conservation and management. This programme is divided into two terms; the first being class based while the second incorporates field research.

The first term started in September 2009 and terminated in April 2010. This term comprised two parts; 4 compulsory modules in Part 1 while part II comprised 4 modules selected from a total of 9 modules on offer.

Below is a summary of the modules I and a brief write up of the contents:

2.1 Term 1 Part I

DI879 Foundations of Natural Science for Conservation

This module is designed to introduce the principles of population biology and genetics and how these can be applied to biodiversity management.

Assessment: Coursework 60%; examination 40%

DI878 Social Science Perspectives on Conservation

This module is designed to provide an overview various social science perspectives on conservation, and to facilitate the development of professional skills that will enable working in across disciplinary setting.

Assessment: Coursework – two assignments, 50% each.

DI884 Research Methods for Natural Science

This module provides a review of the approaches used by natural scientists in the design and analysis of research projects. It encompassed aspects such as the principles of experimental design and how these are applied in field projects, the nature of quantitative and qualitative data, sampling strategies and the role of probability in inferential statistics and how this feeds into descriptive statistics and measures of variability in data exploration. It also gives a hand on experience in use of the statistical programmes such as the SPSS.

Assessment: Coursework – two assignments, 50% each.

DI876 Research Methods for Social Science

The module gives a broad overview of social science approaches to research, highlighting contrasts with standard natural science techniques and focusing on the qualitative-quantitative divide. It introduced individual methods such as participant observation, qualitative interviewing, questionnaire surveys and focus groups. It also examined the principles of integrated research design and mixed-methods approaches.

Assessment: Coursework 60%; examination 40%.

2.2 Term 1 Part II

DI836: Integrated Species Conservation and Management

This was aimed providing the necessary conservation skills to tackle problems at the species level of organisation such as the definition of ‘species’ and how they have evolved and gone extinct over evolutionary time scales. It showed how species can be used to provide political or financial leverage in conservation programmes, while others may play fundamental roles in ecological systems, priority setting in species conservation - quantitative and qualitative methods of achieving this, including the IUCN Red List system. The role of organisations such as NGOs and zoos was discussed and evaluated. This was covered in Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust at the International Training Centre at Jersey Zoo.

Assessment: Coursework 80%; class test 20%.

DI880: Conservation and Community Development

Community approaches to conservation draw heavily on experiences in rural development. This module explored theoretical and practical issues to do with working with local communities, in order to develop expertise relevant for community aspects of conservation practice. Issues covered include consultation, participation and collaboration; community organization and decision making processes; indigenous peoples and conservation, and the role of local or traditional knowledge.

Assessment: Coursework 75%; class test 25 %

DI841: Managing Protected Areas

This module was aimed at introducing the main topics that managers of protected areas need to know, both to establish a representative network of protected areas and to manage existing areas on a scientific and economically sustainable basis. The course outlined techniques for integrating people living outside protected areas into conservation of those protected areas. The module covered conservation planning, law enforcement and economics and administration in protected areas as they relate to biodiversity conservation.

Assessment: Coursework 80%; class test 20%.

3.0 Next Steps

In the second term (after the Easter holidays), I will determine my research area/title and literature review before leaving for fieldwork in May. The project design should be discussed, reviewed and approved before field work

I expect to travel back to Kenya in June and July for the research project. The project shall be based on Human elephant conflict alleviation in Laikipia and will aim to support the goals and objectives of Laikipia elephant project (LEP) work that has been in existence in Laikipia for over ten years. This will also give me an opportunity to interact and consult with the on ground project personnel such as Tobias and Dr Maxx Graham.

I expect to return to UK by the end of July to finalize on the project under the guidance of the DR Bob Smith (DICE) – the project supervisor. The progress on the project shall continually be shared and discussed with Prof Nigel Williams and Bill Adams whose advice and guidance is vital.

4.0 Challenges

I regret to admit that losing my father to sudden illness disrupted my studies and destabilized me for quite a while. My return flight to Kenya for the Burial put some severe constraint on my finances and crucial study time. However, I am grateful to DICE for allowing me to be away during this difficult time and being lenient on the various academic deadlines I had to meet upon return.

5.0 Conclusion

The support by Darwin fellowship through the University of Cambridge has been timely and consistent making my stay as comfortable and conducive for studies. I sincerely appreciate the support and guidance given from time to time by the various Darwin fellowship project personnel.