Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species



1st Annual Report (2004-2005)

Developing a model for the conservation of Croatia's grassland biodiversity

1. Project information

Project Ref. no.:	162/13/004
Project title:	Developing a model for the conservation of Croatia's grassland biodiversity
Country:	Croatia
UK Contractor:	Fauna & Flora International (FFI), UK
Partner organisations:	Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER), UK Žumberak-Samoborsko gorje Nature Park (Croatia)
Darwin grant value:	£150,600 (£50,772 in 1 st year)
Reporting period:	April 2004 – March 2005; Annual report 1
Project website:	www.ppzsg.org/darwin
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2. Project background

Situated at the crossroads of four bio-geographical regions, Croatia, in the western Balkans, has an incredibly diverse range of ecosystems, habitats and species relative to its small size. Since independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Croatia has undergone extensive social, economic and political change, including four years of regional conflict. As a newly emergent state, and in recognition of its rich natural heritage, Croatia established five new protected areas in 1999. Although Croatia now boasts a network of 18 protected areas, there is still a lack of capacity in areas such as management planning and stakeholder participation. There is also a recognised need to develop sustainable management and monitoring strategies for threatened habitats such as semi-natural grasslands. Croatia's semi-natural grasslands support a wealth of biological diversity including rare and threatened orchids, birds and butterflies but are under threat due to a rapid decline in traditional agricultural activities such as grazing and hay making.

3. Project purpose and outputs

Purpose

The main purpose of the project is to build the capacity of the Žumberak-Samoborsko gorje Nature Park (ŽSGNP) in management planning and the conservation of grassland biodiversity, and in doing so, develop a model for the conservation of Croatia's grasslands. The model will be extended to other protected areas through the provision of management planning training to Učka Nature Park (UNP) and training workshops for other protected areas in grassland management and conservation.

Outputs

The main outputs of the project are summarised below:

- i) A ŽSGNP management plan
- ii) ŽSGNP staff trained in participatory management planning & conservation of grassland biodiversity
- iii) UNP trained in participatory management planning
- iv) Other protected areas trained in the conservation of grassland biodiversity
- v) Production of habitat and species action plans for ŽSGNP
- vi) Public awareness of grassland biodiversity raised

Progress

The project has made very good progress against the logical framework (Annex 2). The first year of the project has concentrated on the development of ŽSGNP's first ever management plan. This has included providing training to the park authority in participatory management planning through a series of facilitated workshops, on-the-job training and mentoring. The park authority has made excellent progress towards the development of a draft management plan; establishing a main vision for the Park, areas of work, objectives and the majority of the actions. Stakeholders have participated in the management planning process through a series of participation activities such as interviews, workshops and village meetings.

Preliminary surveys of grassland biodiversity and management practices were conducted in the Park, although these were somewhat limited by the short field season in 2004. Training in biodiversity surveying and collecting management practice data was also provided to the Darwin scholar and conservation manager by FFI and IGER. Draft survey recording forms and farmer questionnaires have been produced and will be tested in the spring of 2005. In addition, as part of her professional development the Darwin scholar attended a workshop in the Peak District National Park in "Grazing for Wildlife"

The project has conducted a number of public awareness activities. A successful project launch and press releases led to interviews on Radio Croatia and Croatia's popular TV show "Good morning Croatia". Both Croatian and UK versions of the newsletter have been well received and we have had some very positive feedback, particularly from local communities and other protected areas.

The project also commenced management planning training with UNP in February, 2005.

Modification

Due to the late start up of the project (mid-May, 2004), and therefore lateness in the field season, some components of ŽSGNP's training have had to be deferred until the second year. These include a week of training in grassland surveying and attendance of a workshop/conference by a member of staff. For similar reasons, the purchase of some fieldwork equipment and computer software was also deferred till the following year. All of these have been approved by the Darwin Secretariat.

4. Progress

Project history

In the spring of 2003 the ŽSGNP approached FFI and IGER to assist them in developing methods to conserve the biodiversity rich grasslands of the Park. This was due to the lack of expertise in conservation practice and sustainable grassland management systems in Croatia. At the same time it became a legal requirement for protected areas to have a management plan, although there was no expertise in-country in management planning. The project was therefore specifically developed to address the identified needs of ŽSGNP and other protected areas.

Progress

The project has generally progressed in keeping with the baseline timetable with the exception of those activities which have been postponed with the approval of the Darwin Secretariat. The first two months of the project were spent on staff recruitment (Project co-ordinator and Darwin scholar) and project planning. The project was launched during an induction trip in July at the Ministry of Culture (Zagreb) and publicised through press releases and website postings. The successful project launch and press releases lead to interviews on "Radio Croatia" and the popular TV programme "Good morning Croatia" in August. Preliminary surveys on grassland biodiversity and management practices commenced in August with the development of recording forms and

farmer questionnaires. From August last year to March 2005 the project has concentrated on developing a participatory management plan for the ŽSGNP. This has included an extensive stakeholder engagement programme and facilitated training workshops in management planning. In October the Darwin scholar, as part of her training, attended a workshop in the Peak District on "Grazing for Wildlife". In February the first issue of the project newsletter "*Kosilica*" was printed and distributed to stakeholders of the ŽSGNP. An additional English version "*Grass cuttings*" (pdf format) was also produced for international audiences (see attached file).

Slippage

The printing & dissemination of the first newsletter was delayed by a month or so. This was for two reasons. Firstly it was decided that two versions of the newsletter, targeting very different audiences, should be produced. This strategy has proved to be very effective and we have had excellent feedback from the local community. It has also improved the Park's public relations with the local community. Secondly, there were unanticipated delays in the translation and printing of the newsletter.

Additional outputs

The project has delivered on a number of additional outputs and activities including i) an additional training workshop for ŽSGNP in management planning, ii) the production of a specific project website (<u>www.ppzsg.org/darwin</u>), iii) the initiation of participatory management planning training for UNP and iv) additional staff development for the Darwin scholar (time management skills, presentation skills etc).

Achievements

Participatory management planning

One of the project's main achievements in the first year has been the participatory management planning activities with ŽSGNP. This has included a comprehensive stakeholder participation programme and facilitated training workshops for Park staff in management planning. The main aim of stakeholder participation was to gather different opinions and viewpoints on the values of the Park, what threatens it, and its future management. The activities comprised a stakeholder workshop, over 70 semi-structured interviews, eight village meetings and a newsletter "Kosilica". These activities have enhanced existing partnerships and developed new ones for the Park, for example, a hunting society have offered to mow a third of the Park's meadows. They have also promoted support and buy-in-to the management plan from the local community, thereby increasing its sustainability. By bringing in different perspectives, new skills & approaches the stakeholder participation activities have also had a large impact on shaping the developing management plan. An example of this is that the future plan will now have a local community theme. In addition, the project has initiated a database of stakeholders which will be incorporated into the biodiversity database as it develops. The development of the ŻSGNP management plan has been guided and facilitated by FFI's management planning expert, Paul Hotham. Through a series of training workshops, the ŽSGNP has now established its main vision for the next 10 years, its areas of work, its objectives and a large proportion of the management actions. Once complete the management plan will ensure the logical, effective, and adaptive management of the ŽSGNP.

Preliminary surveys of biodiversity and agricultural practices

The project managed to conduct some preliminary surveys on biodiversity and agricultural practices despite the lateness in the season and subsequent time constraints. The project has developed a user-friendly rapid survey form for park rangers, due to be tested in the spring of 2005, and a semi-structured farmer interview format for collecting data on agricultural practices.

Public awareness activities

The project's first year has been very active in raising the public awareness of grasslands, with broadcasts on Croatian radio and television. In addition to the planned newsletter the project also has developed a bi-lingual website where the project's progress can be followed and newsletters/handbooks downloaded as they are produced.

Difficulties

There have been no significant difficulties other than the lateness of project start up whose impact on project implementation and delivery have been noted elsewhere.

Lessons learnt

In the first year the project has had to focus more time on training and staff development than originally anticipated. In light of this, the project will be refining and restructuring training methodology to target incountry needs better. In the initial proposal the project anticipated that the ŽSGNP would play a significant role in the training of other protected areas in management planning and biodiversity conservation in the 2nd and 3rd year of the project. However, many of the concepts of management planning, strategic planning and stakeholder participation are new to Croatia and the project underestimated the skills shortage/experience gap in these areas. To ensure the training requirements of the project are met the UK partners will provide additional support and guidance, drawing on ŽSGNP where appropriate.

Project design

There have been some minor changes in project design over the last year, primarily to accommodate the late start up and in response to in-country needs. These are detailed in the table below. The biodiversity surveying workshop for ŽSGNP, which was scheduled for July 2004, will now occur in July 2005, and the monitoring & management workshops will be pushed forward till the autumn of 2005. For similar reasons the establishment of permanent quadrats, dependent on the biodiversity survey work, will also be pushed forward till the autumn of 2005.

Date	Key milestone
Apr 05	Annual report
Apr 05-Aug 05	Survey of biodiversity, policies and past/present agricultural practices in ŽSGNP
Apr 05-Oct 05	Stakeholder analysis and participation in UNP
May 05	Handbooks 1 & 2 produced
Jun 05	Conference attendance by Darwin scholar and other member of Park staff
Jul 05	Surveying training workshop ŽSGNP & other PAs
Jul-Sept 05	Darwin Scholar's study visit to IGER, 2 nd Newsletter
Oct 05	Management & monitoring workshops (ŽSGNP), establishment of permanent quadrats
Nov 05	Stakeholder workshop and management planning workshop at UNP
Jan 06	3 rd Newsletter
Mar 06	Handbooks 3 & 4

Timetable for next reporting period (2005-2006)

5. Actions taken in response to previous reviews

N/A

6. Partnerships

As to be expected with all new projects there were some initial teething problems as the roles and responsibilities of the various project partners were established. These were dealt with through discussions and more structured project and personnel management. The collaboration between the UK partners, FFI and IGER, and the host country partner, ŽSGNP, has gradually strengthened over the past year particularly as the partnership has led to visible results in country. This strong partnership with ŽSGNP has enhanced the credibility and profile of the UK partners, and hence project, in Croatia and paved the way for further good collaboration with other protected areas.

To date the project has not collaborated with other projects in the region directly but the Darwin scholar and other park staff have attended workshops in management planning organised by the GEF Karst Ecosystem Conservation project.

The stakeholder participation and public awareness raising activities, for example, the project launch and village meetings, have established and enhanced links with not only local communities and organisations but also academic institutions in Zagreb. The project intends to build on these new links in the next year, particularly the local community, UNP and other protected areas, the Natural History Museum (Zagreb) and the Centre for Grasslands.

7. Impact and sustainability

Profile and public awareness

The profile of the project in Croatia was initially small, overshadowed to some extent by the large GEF Karst Ecosystem Conservation project. However, through a series of targeted promotion activities and, most importantly, word of mouth, the project has increased its profile considerably both at a local and national level. Targeted activities to promote the project within the country have included a project launch, press releases, radio and TV interviews, a newsletter and a designated website. The programme of stakeholder participation in the management planning process has also indirectly raised the profile of the project, the ŽSGNP and biodiversity within the local community.

Croatia has a small protected areas/biodiversity network and word of mouth is proving to be an excellent means of stimulating interest in and promoting the project. For example, the project and the visible benefits of the project in ŽSGNP has had a very positive impact on our interactions with UNP, who are now keener than ever to start the management planning process.

Capacity building

The project specifically targets a lack of expertise and experience in participatory management planning and grassland biodiversity conservation within Croatia's protected areas, through a series of training workshops, professional staff development and guidance. The training provided to ŽSGNP in participatory management planning, and the subsequent stakeholder participation activities, has already had a positive impact not only in the Park's public relations but in forging new partnerships for biodiversity conservation. For example, a hunting society, following one of the Park's stakeholder participation activities, offered to mow a third of the Park's meadows.

Sustainability and exit strategy

The development of participatory management plans for ŽSGNP and UNP, based on a logical process of analysis and evaluation, will ensure the sustainable and effective future management of these protected areas. The methodology in producing the management plans is based on facilitation; which ensures buy-in and ownership from all park staff members. As the plan is produced by the protected area, and not something imposed on by outsiders, it is more likely to be implemented. In addition, the management plan will provide continuity of management regardless of future staff changes. The ŽSGNP are fully committed to the training and professional development of their staff and will continue to employ the Darwin scholar once the project ends.

All these factors, and the fact that the project focuses on training and professional development of protected areas staff in biodiversity conservation, provide an exit strategy for when the project finishes.

8. Post-project follow-up activities

N/A

9. Outputs, outcomes and dissemination

As stated elsewhere, outputs and milestones relating to the surveying of biodiversity have been postponed or only partly achieved. These include the training workshop in surveying, purchase of some fieldwork equipment and computer software for analysis.

The project has delivered on a number of additional outputs and activities including i) an additional training workshop for ŽSGNP in management planning, ii) the production of a specific project website (<u>www.ppzsg.org/darwin</u>), iii) the initiation of participatory management planning training for UNP and iv) additional staff development for the Darwin scholar (time management skills, presentation skills etc).

The project has conducted a number of dissemination activities, which have targeted different audiences. The dissemination activity and target audience are summarised below:

- 1. National press release and posting in FFI website
- 2. Local and national press release and posting on ŽSGNP website
- 3. Project launch & presentation, July 04; Over 40 invited guests including representatives from ministries, nature conservation agencies, NGO's, stakeholders of ŽSGNP, academic institutions etc.
- 4. Interview on national radio, August 04: general public
- 5. Interview on Croatia's popular TV programme "Good morning Croatia", August 04: general public
- 6. Presentation of Darwin project at stakeholder workshop, October 04: stakeholders of ŽSGNP
- 7. Local and national press release in Croatia, October 04
- 8. Article in local magazine, January 05; Local communities in the ŽSGNP
- 9. Newsletter "Kosilica", February 05; stakeholders of the ŽSGNP
- 10. Newsletter "Grass cuttings"; UK and international academic and conservation organisations
- 11. Website posting on UNP's website, February 05
- 12. Project presentation, March 05; FFI staff
- 13. Project website, March 05, <u>www.ppzsg.org/darwin</u>

It is not anticipated that dissemination activities relating specifically to the Darwin project will be continued once the project finishes. However, raising public awareness in the biodiversity and conservation of grasslands will be continued by the Park as it is a planned activity in the management plan.

Code No.	Quantity	Description	
6A	12	x2 training workshops in management planning to ŽSGNP staff;	
		training & mentoring in stakeholder participation, surveying,	
		grassland biodiversity & conservation	
6B	4	weeks	
6A	2	Training of Darwin scholar & conservation manager in	
		stakeholder participation, surveying, grassland biodiversity &	
		conservation. Including workshop in "Grazing for Wildlife" in the	
		UK	
6B	6	weeks	
8	23	FFI & IGER staff weeks in Croatia	
14A	3	Presentation of project/project launch (40 participants);	
		Stakeholder workshop (25 stakeholders); Presentation of project at	
		FFI	
15A	3	Local press releases (Croatia)); short article in local magazine	
15B	2	National press release (Croatia)	
15C	1	National press release (UK)	
16A	2	2 versions of newsletter targeting different audiences	
16B	2,500	Newsletter "Kosilica"	
16C	200	Newsletter "Grass cuttings"	

Table 1. Project Outputs (According to Standard Output Measures)

18A	1	TV interview on "Good Morning Croatia"
19A	1	Radio interview on Radio Croatia
?	1	Project website

Table 2: Publications

Type * (e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (title, author, year)	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. contact address, website)	Cost £
Newsletter	<i>"Kosilica"</i> , Winter 05		www.ppzsg.org/darwin	-
Newsletter	"Grass cuttings", Winter 05		www.ppszg.org/darwin	-

10. Project expenditure

From the original budget of £50,772 for the 2004-2005 financial year (as per proposal) the project requested a carry forward of £5083 from the Darwin Secretariat which has been approved. The details of this and the expenditure for the 2004-2005 financial year are detailed below.

There was an under spend in printing costs of £224. This was primarily due to the fact that it was decided to only print the Croatian newsletter "*Kosilica*" and have the UK newsletter available as a downloadable/e-mail pdf on the project website. In addition, the newsletter was printed in Croatia thereby reducing printing costs considerably. The savings made on printing were used to fund an additional management planning workshop for the ŽSGNP and hence the small increase in travel and conference costs under these budget lines.

Table 3: Project expenditure during the reporting period (Defra Financial Year 01 April to 31 March)

Item	Budget	After carry- forward	Expenditure	Balance

11. Monitoring, evaluation and lessons

The project is monitored and evaluated twice a year using Fauna & Flora International internal reporting cycle. In addition, the project partners have had regular meetings to monitor progress both in the UK and Croatia. The Darwin scholar also reports back to the UK partners on project progress on a regular basis.

Although the project has been running for less than a year the outputs are already contributing to the overall project purpose, as measured against the indicators (see logical framework in annex 2). Through the training and guidance provided by the project the ŽSGNP has made great progress in developing its first management plan. The participatory management planning process has already increased the park authority's capacity to effectively manage the ŽSGNP and has had a large impact on the structure, content and direction of future management.

The stakeholder participation activities undertaken by the Park has been very beneficial to public relations and the management planning process. It has ensured that the management plan is informed, appropriate and considers local needs, thereby increasing its sustainability. In addition, the programme has opened up new avenues of collaboration between the Park and its stakeholders (stakeholder integration). This includes the management of a third of the Park's meadows by a local hunting society, a significant contribution towards conserving the Park's grassland biodiversity.

Lessons learnt

The project overestimated the level of experience/knowledge of park staff in management planning, human resources and biodiversity conservation and therefore underestimated the training requirements for ŽSGNP. The project has taken this on board and adjusted future training activities for ŽSGNP, UNP and other protected areas accordingly.

12. Outstanding achievements

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year: 2004/2005

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2004- Mar 2005	Actions required/planned for next period
 in resources to achieve The conservation of biological The sustainable use of its com 	diversity,	ingdom to work with local partners in countries	-
		into the management plan etc. (2) The management planning process at ŽSGNP has created much interest and enthusiasm from UNP, who are very keen to start working with the project.(5)	

Outputs (insert original outputs)	(insert original output level indicator)	(report completed activities & outcomes that contribute toward outputs & indicators)	(report any lessons leant resulting from the project & highlight key actions planning for the next period)
1. ŽSGNP Park Management Plan	1. Production of management plan	The stakeholder participation programme for management planning has now been completed & integrated into the immerging management plan. Activities have included a stakeholder workshop, 8 village meetings and over 70 semi-structured interviews.	The next year will focus on developing management actions to achieve the objectives of the plan, annual work plans & budgets.
2. ŽSGNP park staff trained in management planning, surveying, monitoring and habitat management	2. No. of weeks in-country training, 4 Workshops, 2 Conferences, UK study visit, Course attendance.	The ŽSGNP have received extensive training in stakeholder participation and management planning including two training workshops, on-the-job training and mentoring. UK partners have spent a total of 23 weeks in country. The Darwin scholar attended a workshop in "Grazing for Wildlife" in the UK.	Further guidance will be provided to the ŽSGNP to enable them to complete the management plan. Training will focus on the conservation of grassland biodiversity, including a surveying workshop.
3. Other PAs trained in above	3. Additional management planning workshop for another PA, 4 training handbooks, 3 training workshops	Training in participatory management planning has already started with UNP, through a 1 day workshop and guidance.	Further training & guidance in management planning is planned for UNP as is the production of a management planning handbook. A surveying workshop is planned for other protected areas as is an accompanying handbook.
4. Production of habitat and species action plans	4. Production of habitat and species action plans		
5. Public awareness of grasslands raised	5. Educational poster, press releases, TV or radio broadcast, 5 newsletters	The press releases early on in the project led to Radio & TV interviews in Croatia. Two versions of the first newsletter (targeting different audiences) have been produced & distributed with very positive feedback from the local community. In addition, the project has also produced a separate	Producing two versions of the project newsletter, targeted at different audiences (local and international) has proved to be an effective public awareness/relations strategy. This will be repeated bi-

	project website (bi-lingual)	annually.

Note: Please do NOT expand rows to include activities since their completion and outcomes should be reported under the column on progress and achievements at output and purpose levels.

Annex 2: Logical	l Framework
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Project summary	Measurable indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
Goal:			· · ·
rich in biodiversity but poor ithe conservation of b		United Kingdom to work with lo	cal partners in countries
	•		
	e sharing of the benefits arising of	but of the utilisation of genetic re	sources
Purpose To build the capacity of the ŽSGNP and to initiate the development of sustainable management systems to conserve the biodiversity and wildlife riches of grasslands in Croatia.	New data on habitats, species and agricultural practices in the ŽSGNP Stakeholders integrated into management/action plan (s) Restoration/maintenance of high conservation value meadows and pastures. Mosaic of landscapes/habitats maintained in park Other PAs initiate sustainable management systems for grasslands	Biodiversity data base No. of stakeholders collaborating with Park Stakeholders integration in PAs management/action plans Habitat management and monitoring reports Annual reports, work plans Reports, correspondence and newsletters from other nature parks	Stakeholders (farmers, hunters, etc.) wish to participate The Government (central and local) supports the initiative and develops agri-environmental policies Traditional agricultural practices are economically viable for remaining stakeholders Supplementary income generation is feasible (eco- tourism etc.)
 Outputs 1. ŽSGNP Park Management Plan 2. ŽSGNP park staff trained in management planning, surveying, monitoring and habitat management 3. Other PAs trained in above 4. Production of habitat and species action plans 5. Public awareness of grasslands raised 	 Production of management plan No. of weeks in-country training, 4 Workshops, 2 Conferences, UK study visit, Course attendance. Additional management planning workshop for another PA, 4 training handbooks, 3 training workshops Production of habitat and species action plans Educational poster, press releases, TV or radio broadcast, 5 newsletters 	 Management plan Travel itineraries, Workshop attendance, Presentation of UK study visit and report, Conference/course summary presented to other park staff Handbooks distributed to PAs, A list of trainees attending workshops and assessment records/feedback, Preparation of additional management plan Habitat/species action plans Copies sent to Darwin Initiative 	Management plan is adopted and implemented Prescribed management and monitoring is adopted and continues to be supported ŽSGNP Darwin scholar, staff motivated and responsive to training ŽSGNP staff able to train others Trainees motivated and responsive to training Trainees initiate sustainable management systems in other PAs

Activities

Activity Milestones (Summary of Project Implementation Timetable)

1. Workshop, stakeholder assessment, surveys, data collation; 2. Workshops, onthe-job training, study visit, conferences; 3. Training workshops, handbooks; 4. Stakeholder participation, collaboration with experts, surveys, data collation; establishment of database 5. Press releases, poster, newsletters, broadcast. **1.** Yr 1) Management planning workshop, Biodiversity/agriculture/policy and stakeholder assessment, consultations. Yr 2) Collation and analysis of data, Establishment of database. Yr 3) Management plan review workshop, Production of draft management plan. **2.** Yr 1) Workshop in surveying techniques, DI scholar attends course, Conference attendance for 2 key staff. Yr 2) Workshops in habitat and species management and monitoring, UK study visit for Darwin Scholar, Conference attendance for 2 key staff. **3.** Yr 1) -. Yr 2) Workshop in Surveying, Production of 1st and 2nd handbook, Management planning workshop for additional PA. Yr 3) Production of 3rd and 4th handbook, Workshops in habitat management and monitoring, Management plan review for other PA. **4.** Yr 1) Biodiversity surveys and consultations with experts, stakeholders etc, Literature reviews. Yr 2) Collation and analysis of data, Establishment of database. Yr 3) Production of habitat and species action plans. **5.** Yr 1) Press releases, 1 newsletter, project on websites. Yr 2) Press releases, 2 newsletters. Yr 3) Press releases, 2 newsletters, educational poster.