

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	13-017 (former 268)
Project Title	The Atelopus Initiative: conserving endangered Tropical Andean amphibians
Country(ies)	Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia
UK Organisation	Conservation International-UK
Collaborator(s)	The Natural History Museum, IUCN, NatureServe
Report date	31 October 2006
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 3
Project website	www.andescbc.org/atelopus

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 project's yearly report was sent in May 2006. Between that period and now the following activities have been undertaken:

- 1) Maintenance and expansion of the tropical Andes amphibian network. In progress. The network's listserve (red_atelopus@yahoo.com) currently holds 145 subscribed members. The listserve is still actively used to post events, disseminate information, facilitate document exchange and provide a general forum for exchange of communications and information among amphibian specialists of the region.
- 2) Produce a regional survey and monitoring protocol booklet. Completed. Printing of the survey and monitoring field manual carried out in October 2006, with 3,000 copies produced for widespread dissemination. DI funds for this publication were matched by Conservation International's Andes CBC, Colombia's Corporación de los Valles del Sinú y San Jorge (CVS), and Universidad de Córdoba.
- 3) Biannual e-newsletter. In progress. Volume 2, number 1 was distributed as a pdf document on the tropical Andes amphibian network in July 2006. The next issue is due in December 2006.
- 4) Training of ca 35-40 herpetology students in survey and monitoring techniques. In progress. The third Atelopus Initiative training course took place earlier this year between 8 and 15 April 2006 in the locality of San Miguel del Bala, Bolivia, and was reported to DI in the project's second annual report. The fourth Atelopus Initiative's training course is scheduled to be held at the locality of San Lorenzo, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia, from 19 to 25 November, 2006. As in the previous course, this is intended to be a nation-wide course to allow more local participation and increase cost-effectiveness.
- 5) Identification tools and guides prepared for key groups of amphibians. In progress. There are currently two identification guides being developed, a Dendrobatid (tropical Andean poison arrow frogs) guide which is projected to be finalized in February 2007, and a booklet-format guide to the amphibians of San Miguel del Bala, Bolivia, projected to be finalized in

December 2006. The Dendrobatid field guide is intended to be a multi-authored publication with wide regional participation.

- 6) Fieldwork. In progress. Field searches for populations of the highly endangered genus *Atelopus* continue to be undertaken, monitoring efforts of the new species *Atelopus mittermeieri* have revealed new tadpole populations and new individuals, some of these specimens have been collected and were transported to the Endangered Amphibians Conservation Laboratory in Bogotá. We continue to collaborate with the Laboratory, which to date holds five adults and 200 tadpoles of this species. In addition, some DI seed-grant grantees (via the Threatened Species Initiative) have secured further funds from the UK's Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation to carry out the project "Conservation of Critically Endangered amphibians: *Atelopus farci* and *Bolitoglossa capitana* from Colombia."
- 7) Collate database of amphibian specimens from the Tropical Andean nations. In progress. To date, there are over 8,000 locality records in the Tropical Andes amphibian database, and as from November 2006 a collection (ICN, Universidad Nacional, Colombia) that houses over 55,000 specimens will begin to be georeferenced.
- 8) Scientific meetings. Presentation of the project's achievements and developments ("The *Atelopus* Initiative: A regional collaborative response to amphibian population declines in the tropical Andes") at the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists symposium "Patterns and Causes of Amphibian Populations Declines in Latin America: Results from the RANA network", Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, New Orleans, 12-17 July. The project coordinator was also the invited leader of the discussion forum "Policy issues related to amphibian declines: a Latin American perspective".
- 9) Peer-reviewed papers published, accepted or submitted under the auspices of DI: a) Angulo, A., A.R. Acosta and J.V. Rueda-Almonacid. Submitted. Diversity and frequency of visual defensive behaviours in *Hypsiboas geographicus* (Spix, 1824). The Herpetological Journal. b) Rueda-Almonacid, J.V., M. Rada, S.J. Sánchez-Pacheco, A.A. Velásquez-Alvarez & A. Quevedo. 2006. Two new and exceptional poison dart frogs of the genus *Dendrobates* (Anura: Dendrobatidae) from the Northeastern Flank of the Cordillera Central of Colombia. Zootaxa 1259: 39-54.
- 10) Additional activities: organization of a symposium and roundtable on amphibian research and conservation in Colombia, scheduled for November 27, 2006. It is expected that this event will contribute to the development of Colombia's national amphibian action plan.
- 11) Additional activities: collaboration with Cali Zoo on the implementation of a second Endangered Amphibians Conservation Laboratory in Cali, but in this instance emphasizing conservation of lowland species. In addition, the project is collaborating with Cali Zoo and both international and national partners in the organization of an ex situ training course scheduled for February 2007; this course is intended to be international in nature.
- 12) Additional activities: submission of a new project to DI, "Analysis of complex threats facing a global amphibian hotspot", in collaboration with the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) of the University of Kent at Canterbury, and the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (DWCT); this new proposal complements the legacy that will remain from the *Atelopus* Initiative.

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.

Because of the new Resource Allocation Framework, the large GEF project proposal addressing the issue of amphibian declines and climate change in the tropical Andes that project personnel had been working on has changed from a regional scope to individual national efforts. The impact of this change will be reflected in the degree of regional involvement in any one of the national projects should they be successful in obtaining funding. This will not, however, have an impact on the current project's timetable or activities.

The Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA) was recently conducted and published in 2004. Because of the short time lapse between the publication date of the GAA and now, the amount of additional information garnered for the reassessment of the species threat categories for amphibian species of the tropical Andes has been limited to only a few species. Looking ahead, there will be a continuing flow of information, as research continues and as the actual status of some populations in the field changes. With these considerations in mind, we have reconsidered our strategy, concluding that it is more cost-effective to conduct species threat reassessments through our electronic network than to conduct a regional workshop, as had originally been planned. Thus, we will request our Andean amphibians specialist electronic network to reassess those species, for which new data are available, and encourage and assist national governments to consider these preliminary reassessments when they re-evaluate their national lists of threatened species. Beyond the lifetime of this project, we will encourage government agencies to update their threatened lists on a regular basis and promote periodic evaluation of amphibians, given their pressing conservation needs and the continuing flow of new information. The impact on the project's budget will be less expenditure on regional workshops and re-channelling of these funds towards action plans (see below).

The reviewer of Year 2's annual report commented: "as stated under 'difficulties' in the report, there has been a lower number of project proposals submitted [to the Threatened Species Initiative] under the species and site management planning process and there is consequently a review of whether to continue with the original framework or to alter the design to the formulation of national action plans. This is an understandable but major turning point in the programme delivery and should be resolved as a matter of urgency." Following this recommendation, we have reviewed our strategy and have opted to take an adaptive approach, supporting the formulation of national action plans where possible, and species and site action plans in countries which are not yet ready to formulate plans of national scope. The advantage of a national action plan is that efficiency is increased, as sometimes individual species action plans can be repetitive. There is also greater integration in national action plans. This alternative strategy has been met with great enthusiasm in some countries, such as Venezuela and Colombia, who are (Venezuela) or will be (Colombia) carrying out in-country consultation processes regarding amphibian conservation. Because of particular political circumstances in the individual tropical Andean nations, and variation in the degree of commitment and leadership to spearhead such processes, other tropical Andean nations are not at the same stage of development as Colombia or Venezuela. However, we hope that with the models provided by these two countries other Andean nations may be encouraged to conduct their own processes. In parallel with this, we will work towards the generation of species/site specific action plans, as envisaged in the original proposal, in those countries where national action plans are not being developed, i.e. Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. The changes with regards to budget will be to channel resources originally intended for a second workshop into national action plan meetings and species-specific action plan meetings.

One of the project's outputs is to enhance key amphibian collections. In response to the reviewer's comment "further work is clearly required and being addressed with respect to forming a professional understanding with curators of museum collections", there are currently negotiations with the Andes CBC of Conservation International to invest additional funds towards georeferencing data and database development. Also, we are exploring the scientific

collection needs in Bolivia and Peru, to determine how to best support these collections. No change is envisioned with regards to budget and activities.

While we have explained in the project's last annual report a reduction in the number of conferences to be attended for dissemination of project activities, we believe that the project will have international exposure through its widely-disseminated publications (miniguides and manual), which have been requested well beyond the tropical Andean region (South, Central and North America, Europe), as well as project staff participation in the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan. We do not envision that this will bring about changes to the project's budget or activities.

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

No, although some (action plans, reassessments, reduced number of international meetings) have been reported in the project's last annual report.

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 planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not 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, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**