

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	162/13/031
Project Title	Pioneering an Innovative Conservation Approach in Sierra Leone's Gola Forest
Country(ies)	Sierra Leone
UK Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Collaborator(s)	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL); Forest Division (FD) of the National Commission on Environment and Forestry, Sierra Leone
Report date	07 November 2006
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website	<i>None, but please see</i> http://www.rspb.org.uk/international/conservation/sierraleone/index.asp for RSPB article about the project

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 has focussed its attention during the reporting period on developing the management plan for the forest and the conservation concession/partnership agreement. This is in addition to the ongoing 'on the job' capacity building of the project staff. The biological surveys are also continuing after a break was taken during the wet season. Collaboration with communities continues to go well.

The **training programme for the Forest Guards** is an ongoing process and lectures continue.

The **management plan** is being compiled by the project team (RSPB, Forestry Division and CSSL) in consultation with communities. Each of the 7 chiefdoms has established a small committee to represent the community in management plan negotiations. The project team, and biodiversity team have been drafting specific sections of the plan. It is expected that the plan will be completed early 2007.

Concession Agreement has been drafted by the project team and circulated to the project partners for comment. The draft agreement is a groundbreaking document, as such an agreement has never before been tried in Sierra Leone and perhaps in the whole of Africa. It is expected to be completed together with the management plan and will be reviewed by legal advisers during the next reporting period.

The **Biodiversity surveys** took a break during the main part of the reporting period due to the wet season. The team has spent much time analysing data and writing up reports, draft tree and fauna reports have been written and the project was visited by a butterfly expert who, in his report suggests the Gola forest has one of the highest butterfly diversities in the Upper Guinea Forest Hotspot.

Illegal activities are down to a minimal level and continue to remain so, a vindication of the conservation concession approach of ongoing compensation, community engagement and

enhanced law enforcement.

Fundraising has gone very well during the reporting period. We have grant offers from the French GEF and the European Union for implementation of the management plan and concession agreement for the next 5 years, beginning in early 2007. Contracts will be developed in the next reporting period.

The project is building close relations with a Government and World Bank led protected area project for the country. This project will hopefully be funded in 2007 for 5 years and will lay the groundwork for an 8 site protected area network for the country. The Gola project is a key part of this programme and will be the model for the developing protected area network throughout the country.

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?

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?

No

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.