Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No. 13-032

Project Title Addressing a threat to Caribbean amphibians: capacity building in Dominica

Country(ies) Commonwealth of Dominica

UK Organisation Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London

Collaborator(s) Veterinary Services Division, Government of Dominica (VSD)

Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division, Government of Dominica (FWD)

Flora and Fauna International (FFI)

London Zoo, Zoological Society of London Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (DWCT)

North of England Zoological Society (Chester Zoo)

Report date October 2006 (submitted December 2006)

Report No. (HYR

1/2/3/4)

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Project website www.mountainchicken.org

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).

A draft management plan on the control of chytridiomycosis was drawn up following the very successful international workshop held in Dominica in March (see first annual report). This plan has not yet been published, as had been timetabled, as it has not yet been agreed by all parties. It is anticipated that this will happen soon and that the management plan will be published in March 2007.

During July and August 2006, an MSc student in Wild Animal Biology carried out a research project to investigate if the amphibian chytrid fungus could be detected in the environment in different habitat types within Dominica. The results of this project, which showed that there appear to be low levels of environmental contamination, will be used to inform the chytridiomycosis management plan.

The captive breeding centre was timetabled to be completed by July 2006, but this part of the project has met with a series of delays. Initially, there was a delay while the most suitable site was found that also met with Government requirements and did not impinge on current or likely future Government department projects. Once the site was agreed, further delays occurred due to the slow nature of the Government tendering process for the construction contractor. The contractor has now been appointed and construction work is due to start early in 2007. The delay to building the centre has had knock-on effects to the rest of the project; therefore there currently are no mountain chicken frogs in captivity either in Dominica or in London or Chester Zoos.

The delays, however, have not been met with silence. During this period, improvements have been made to the culturing of native Dominican crickets in an effort to develop a sustainable food supply for the frogs once they are in captivity. Also, research has been initiated at Jersey Zoo to find out if the mountain chicken frogs (from Montserrat) held there can be trained to take dead food. If this species can be trained to take dead food, it will improve the chances of success for the captive breeding programme in Dominica.

In August, Frank Clarke (FFI) conducted a two-week training workshop for the 13 forestry officers working on the chytridiomycosis project. During this period, previous training in amphibian monitoring techniques was consolidated and additional training was given to improve the identification and monitoring of species of Eleutherodactylid frogs. The monitoring of mountain chicken frogs is going well, although it is worrying that very few animals are seen or heard. There is not yet enough transect data for analysis to detect patterns or trends, but this should be possible towards the end of the project period. The molecular analysis of swabs taken from animals caught during transects is going well, with duplicate swabs being analysed at the Institute of Zoology, London as part of the quality control programme.

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.

See above for details of unexpected delays. These delays are not expected to affect the budget or completion of the project activities within the life-time of the project. The transfer of monies from the UK to Dominica for the construction of the captive breeding centre took place as planned as money transfers are in advance of the work being done and the delays were not anticipated at this time. We have adapted our timetable slightly in order to enable us to catch up with the overall project timetable once the breeding facility is built. In addition, London and Chester Zoos have agreed to provide additional staff time to assist with the capture and care of mountain chicken frogs and to conduct husbandry training of Dominican staff.

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

No.

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. <u>Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.</u>