

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	14-004
Project Title	A Biodiversity Monitoring System for Trinidad and Tobago
Country(ies)	Trinidad and Tobago
UK Organisation	Oxford University
Collaborator(s)	National Herbarium, University of West Indies, Forestry Division, Asa Wright Nature Centre
Project Leader	Nick Brown, University of Oxford
Report date	31 st October 2007
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 3
Project website	http://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/?Caribbean

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).

1. We have now completed rapid botanical surveys at over 130 sites across the two islands. Voucher specimens of every species/morphospecies collected at every site, have been collected, dried and catalogued. All material from the first phase of survey work has been identified with the exception of a small number of very difficult groups for which we are seeking expert opinions. The team of eight Forestry Division staff seconded to the project have all completed training and are now qualified to carry out independent botanical survey work.
2. Staff at the National Herbarium of T&T have now taken high resolution photographs of over 4,000 herbarium specimens. A further 1,000 photographs were taken by Dr Harris during his last visit. In total this means that there are high resolution images of about one quarter of all collections in the herbarium. In Oxford the data from the herbarium labels on these specimens has been added to the BRAHMS database using paid student labour. Progress in photographing the T&T collection has been slower than anticipated as the Darwin project has placed many other significant demands on the very small T&T herbarium staff which they have not always been able to meet. Although we are concerned that the current slow rate of progress may mean that this aspect of our work is not completed by the end of the project we are anxious not to overload our project partners in T&T.
3. Dr David Rampersad, Business Development Director for UWI spent two one-week periods in Oxford in August and September working with Nick Brown in preparing detailed course specifications for four new taught courses at UWI. These are
 - (i) Diploma in Plant Diversity Conservation and Management
 - (ii) Bachelor's Module in Plant Diversity Conservation and Management
 - (iii) Master's Degree in Plant Diversity Conservation and Management
 - (iv) Training Module for teachers in HEIs for delivery of the BSc.

This has been submitted to the ACP-EU Cooperation Programme in Higher Education (EDULINK) for funding.

4. We have extracted (with permission and assistance from the author) over 3,000 Creole words that relate to plants or plant products from the Dictionary of English-Creole of Trinidad and Tobago by Lise Winer (in press, McGill-Queens University Press). These

will be incorporated into the BRAHMS database.

5. The Assistant Conservator of Forests, Mr Seepersad Ramnerine, visited Oxford from 4th October to 1st November funded by a Darwin Initiative Fellowship, to work on the analysis of 25 years of records from 170 permanent sample plots enumerated by Forestry Division. This includes the identities and growth measurements of over 48,000 trees. The paper records had never been digitised or analysed. A great deal of time was spent inputting, cleaning, correcting and processing the data. We are now in a position to start analysis and anticipate exciting results. We have provided training in PSP data management, calculation of basic stand statistics (basal area, growth, yield, mortality etc) ordination techniques, and have developed a new strategy for the permanent sample plot project.
6. Shobha Maharaj was offered a place at Oxford University to study for a D.Phil. from October 2007 but she was not successful in her application for a Clarendon Scholarship and was forced to withdraw. She was nominated for a Commonwealth Fellowship by UWI in order that she could come to the UK for a period of training and research, but the application was not successful. She has now offered a place to study at Oxford from October 2008 and has applied for a Commonwealth Scholarship. We anticipate that we will hear the outcome of this application shortly.

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.

1. UWI research assistant Ms Shobha Maharaj has had to take a period of one month off work in order to have an orthopaedic surgery on her wrists. She has a chronic problem which was exacerbated by repetitive strain from computer use at work. This means that we are approximately one month behind schedule with our planned field work.
2. The British Museum is in the process of implementing a new bar-coding system for herbarium specimens resulting in a suspension of all loans from September 2007. We were warned that this would happen and therefore Mrs Yasmin Comeau, Curator of the National Herbarium in T&T spent two weeks at the BM in July selecting and setting aside for borrowing 200 specimens that we needed in order to prepare botanical illustrations for the Conservation Checklist. Regrettably, our loan request was not processed by September. We have been told that this loan cannot now be issued until January 2008. We have written to the BM explaining our urgent need to borrow the material in view of our Darwin deadlines but this has not met with a positive response. As a consequence we now think that it will be difficult to complete preparation of the Conservation Checklist by the end of the project in July 2008.
3. As a consequence of the impressive and extensive upgrade of the National Herbarium under the Darwin Project, it has been chosen by RGB Kew as the venue for a two-week course in Herbarium Techniques for scientists from the southern Caribbean. Although we are delighted to see our project realising real benefits for the National Herbarium, the course has further added to the burden on the Curator, Mrs Yasmin Comeau, at a critical period for our project. As a consequence she was forced to ask Dr Hawthorne and Dr Harris to postpone a visit to work on specimen identification planned for November. This work will now take place in January 2008.

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

We are increasingly aware that the project is likely to over-run its scheduled end date. We will write directly to give details and propose a revised schedule.

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 email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**