

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	14-009
Project Title	Biodiversity monitoring in forest ecosystems in Bale Mountains National Park, Ethiopia
Country(ies)	Ethiopia
UK Organisation	University of Aberdeen
Collaborator(s)	Bale Mountains National Park (Oromia Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development) and Wildlife Conservation Department (Addis Ababa)
Report date	31 October 2006
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	2
Project website	www.abdn.ac.uk/~soi637/BaleWebsite/Home.htm

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 two key milestones for the reporting period were 1) for August 2006, field protocols defined and 2) for June 2006, field-based training completed. We reported on the second milestone in the annual report submitted at the end of March 2006 and so will only address this in Appendix One (response to reviewers comments of annual report). Four of the activity milestones are also relevant to this reporting period. Three are within the research outputs: 1) Collate historical data on forest cover in the park, including satellite data, conduct spatial and landscape analyses on forest cover and forest cover change; 2) Develop and implement protocols for sampling vascular plants, birds, mammals, ecosystem and landscape structure and function; develop database structure; and 3) Conduct PRA in at least two settlement areas within the park to determine needs and priorities for community awareness programme. One of the report outputs is also relevant, i.e., to develop educational materials for communities about protected areas and impacts of grazing, fire and forest clearance. 2 Posters produced. We have made progress against each of these milestones however more work remains to be done.

Community Work - Rather than proceed with a second set of PRAs with different communities as planned for the period, we have found it important to move more slowly and carefully in defining our activities here. This is because the park and Oromia Bureau initiated a revision of the General Management Plan (GMP) for the park in 2006 which includes a component for Community Outreach. The development of the GMP is a participatory process, and the park is involving communities in and near the park in various ways, principally through information sharing but also through remarking and negotiating park boundaries. We believe that we can best support the park by ensuring that any contribution to community awareness creation by our project is set within the framework laid out by the GMP. Consequently, we have not yet produced educational materials or posters for promoting community awareness. As of October 2006, the draft of this component was still unavailable (expected in Nov 2006). After consultation with park senior staff in April and June, we have agreed to focus on an objective of documenting the traditional rules for accessing forest resources that were identified in our PRA activities in March 2006. One of the park experts, Mr Mohammednur Jemal has agreed to lead this effort, it is scheduled for Dec 2006-March 2007.

Field Protocols - In relation to the field protocols, we have a working draft for vascular plant monitoring (Appendix 2), birds (Appendix 3) and mammals. All of this has taken longer than expected because of the need to ensure that our approach to monitoring is consistent with the GMP (in this case

the Ecological Management component), but is also related to the complexity that we encountered in the forest. The forest is much more open and structurally diverse than we had anticipated at the time of writing the proposal. These structural features are in part due to human disturbance in the forest (i.e., agricultural clearing, grazing and permanent and temporary settlements, recent and historical), and in part, are probably due to natural variability in soil conditions. The diversity of structure means that we have required additional data in order to stratify the forest and establish appropriate sampling designs. To this end we have collected GPS locations of the majority of permanent settlements in the forest and are working to create a GIS and map that includes settlements and main trail systems. We have consulted satellite images and done some reconnaissance visits through parts of the forest. These observations are supporting decisions about sampling designs. We are working with our project partner, Addisu Assefa and a local bird expert, Anteneh Shimelis to collect baseline data on the forest bird communities and to trial and evaluate bird monitoring protocols (Appendix 3); this work was initiated in October 2006. The mammal monitoring protocols are scheduled to be trialled in November and December 2006 and established of the permanent plots for monitoring vascular plants is scheduled to start in January 2007. We are supporting a preliminary study of the Bale monkey in January 2007, with the collaboration and support of WCD (Appendix 4)

The landscape structure and function protocols have not been defined, however, the research required to support their definition has been initiated and is expected to be completed in Feb 2007. The structural diversity of the forest, overlain by the altitudinal gradient covered by the forest, makes our landscape analysis of forest cover change very challenging. We are collaborating with Addis Ababa University (Prof Dagnachew Legesse, Earth Sciences, Dr Zerihun, Botany) to complete an analysis of satellite data (1986 and 2000 Landsat images) and the Ethiopian Mapping Authority (Mr. Degello) for an analysis of the available aerial photographs. We expect this work to be completed in April 2007.

Database structure – we have been discussing the needs here in relation to the broader planning that is going on for the GMP, particularly the component on Ecological Management. Our contribution to the collection and analysis of settlement data in the park has been useful here. In November 2006 the Frankfurt Zoological Society is supported a training workshop for Senior Park staff on monitoring large vertebrates; our project coordinator will participate in this. Also we have a training workshop (Appendix 5) scheduled for January 2007 on monitoring and data management which will provide a structured opportunity for us to develop the database with the park experts (i.e., senior staff).

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.

Two significant developments have occurred during this period. The first, as referred to above, is the development of a new General Management Plan for the park. The GMP will set out a philosophy for ecological management of the park which will have implications for how a monitoring programme for biodiversity should be structured. Fortunately, our project coordinator is part of the working group for this component of the GMP and the PI has provided input, therefore our original concept for the monitoring programme is still relevant and appropriate. The main impact is that we have proceeded more slowly in developing protocols to allow for the consultation and discussion that is required when developing a GMP with a variety of different stakeholders. Another impact of the GMP development relates to park staffing issues, specifically being dealt with in the Park Operations component of the GMP. The draft version of this component points out the need for external support in research and monitoring in the park, in the short to medium term, given the staffing and financial constraints within which the park operates. A third impact relates to the philosophy of human resource use within the park. The Community Outreach component of the GMP is likely to provide guidance on how local people are to be included in park management and how their activities and impacts are to be managed and monitored. At this point in time, the draft of this component is unavailable, therefore we are unclear about how we can best support the intentions of the GMP in terms of raising awareness of conservation issues amongst the communities. Therefore, this development again has slowed our activities and also encouraged us to pursue further research on the traditional rules of access rather than proceed directly with the development of educational materials.

The second main development is that a new Park Warden was appointed by the Oromia Bureau in June 2006; therefore, our main project partner, Mr Addisu Assefa, who was the acting warden, has now

returned to his post of Park Biologist. The new warden, Mr. Berahanu Gilcha, is from the Oromia region, has a degree in Forestry from Wondo Genet College of Forestry, and has experience in teaching Agriculture. He is relatively new to protected area management and has spent the first few months in post becoming acquainted with the park and on-going projects therein. Our Project Coordinator met Mr Berahanu in June and July and briefed him on our project. We had a more formal meeting with Mr Berahanu and the park senior staff when the PI (Pinard) was in Bale in October 2006. It is possible that Mr Berahanu will assign a different member of the senior staff to serve as our main counterpart once he reviews the workloads of his staff. At this point in time there are no significant impacts on the project that would affect the budget or timetable of activities.

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

We have yet to discuss these issues with the secretariat as they have only recently become clear (Oct 2006) and the implications for the timetable, activities and budget are still unclear. The PI plans to discuss these with the Secretariat in Nov/Dec once the implications are more clear.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no

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. (APPENDIX 3)

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 Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.** "Darwin Projects" <Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk>