

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.	14-025
Project Title	Developing integrated assessment of biodiversity in secondary forest in Belize
Country(ies)	Belize
UK Organisation	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Collaborator(s)	Natural History Museum UK, Belize Audubon Society, Wildtracks
Report date	October 31 st 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	1
Project website	http://www.ceh.ac.uk/sections/eaf/EAFBiodiversityassessmentinBelize.html

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 initiation meeting between CEH and the Belize partners took place in June. This was a very successful visit. It consisted of meetings between the partners (introductions were made to the Executive director of the Belize Audubon society, key management and field staff) field visits to all three study sites to visualise the structural context for the assessment techniques to be employed. Meetings were held with GIS specialists and data managers from the Meso-american barrier reef systems project and the Wildlife Conservation Society, to get an insight into the level of in-Country skills and data exchange. Introductions were made with the Forest Department of the Government of Belize. At the end of the visit an understanding of the work programme, actions required and how to progress were achieved. Methods to be employed include establishing a steering committee for the project work consisting of representatives from all partners and some external experts, establishing a web forum for communication and exchange of documents and establishing the project framework within Belize.

Websites: A website linked to CEH and a web forum for use by the project partners have been set up. We intend to set up an external website also.

In-Country co-ordination and Planning: There have been detailed discussions between Wildtracks and the senior staff and board of the Belize Audubon Society, to ensure the project's objectives, and those of the partners are fully met within the collaborative planning and outputs from the project.

Consultation/communication/networking: Since the initiation of the project in April, a series of meetings have been held with various biodiversity research and management stakeholders around the Country, to inform them of the concept and goals of the project, and to enlist support and input where appropriate. This enables cross-linkages with other researchers, to maximize synergies and extend the scope and legacy of the project – in developing a common approach, and enhanced data-sharing. Beyond the project partners, these meetings have extended to include research coordinators from the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Meso-American Barrier Reef System project, Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment, the Ya'axche Conservation Trust, the Bladen Management Consortium, the Belize Biodiversity Monitoring Working Group, the Forest Department of the Government of Belize, the Earthwatch Institute and independent researchers. These introductory meetings have laid the pathway for open communication and collaboration with interested stakeholders – lines of collaboration which are already resulting in beneficial extensions to the project, for example the WCS-funded addition of bat-surveys within the assessment. Internationally, an additional potential partnership is being established with the Wetlands Trust – for inclusion of the three research sites as the base for long-term monitoring of migratory birds. In the UK there have been meetings between the two

UK partners CEH and the Natural History museum. There has also been a meeting with the Geography Department at the University of Edinburgh who have many years experience of working in Belize. A presentation about the project was made to the Belize Research group in September held at the Institute of Commonwealth studies, London.

Staff appointment: The project researcher – a full-time position funded under the Belize Audubon Society by the Darwin Initiative Project- who will play a central role within the project, has been appointed. Ivis Chan demonstrated the long-term interest in biodiversity, field research and the desire to extend current skills in both fieldwork and GIS and started work at the beginning of October. The second-in-line candidate is very strong in GIS, but is not considered a fieldworker; preliminary explorations are being made to determine whether it might be feasible to involve him in the project on a part-time consulting basis.

Training: The primary field technician (Normando Mora) has been given training in map reading, the use of GPS, and basic field skills. Normando will act as a teaching assistant for the broader transference of these skills to the field staff of the Belize Audubon Society and students of the University of Belize and Corozal Junior College, who will be participating in the project.

Data collation: Currently we are focusing on planning the work schedule for the coming quarter, establishing the reliability of existing baseline data, gaps that need to be filled, and preparing the ground for the implementation of field surveys in early 2006.

Equipment: A modestly priced 4x4 project vehicle will be purchased imminently. A GIS computer for the project researcher is also currently being sourced, and should be in use by mid-November.

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.

There has been some delay in appointment of a full time research position at BAS. This has not affected the timetable as the first 6 month was very much about setting up, capacity building, establishing management structure and partnership building. In fact the timing has been very useful as now that we have successfully recruited, the researcher has been able to start with most things in place. It will affect the budget as it means that there is salary unspent from May to September (aside from recruitment costs). This is providential as the vehicle which has been sourced costs £2000 more than was originally allocated.

Full involvement of the University of Belize is behind schedule, however, positive progress has been made in overcoming the administrative delays that were encountered.

The poor state of the existing computer has made it necessary to bring forwards funds for one of the two computers previously budgeted for the second year (£1650).

The project leader was unable to participate in the initial visit due to poor health but this has not affected the project.

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

The movement of funds from the second year to the first for a computer was mentioned to the Darwin secretariat but they were unable to give a definite answer as they were unsure about their budgetary commitments at the time.

The transferral of £2000 from the staff salary to vehicle purchase has been approved.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat:	yes, in...Oct /05)
---	---------------------------

Changes to the project schedule/workplan:	no/ 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.**