

# Darwin Initiative

## Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

<b>Project Ref. No.</b>	14-027
<b>Project Title</b>	Enabling the people of Montserrat to conserve the Centre Hills
<b>Country(ies)</b>	UK, Montserrat
<b>UK Organisation</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and Environment, Montserrat National Trust, Montserrat Tourist Board, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Royal Botanical Gardens Kew
<b>Report date</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2005
<b>Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)</b>	Half Year Report 1
<b>Project website</b>	

### **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 started on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 and is on schedule with the baseline timetable. After induction at the RSPB and receiving training in biodiversity action planning on the British Virgin Islands, the project manager is established at the National Trust on Montserrat. A local project counterpart and two fieldworkers have been recruited. All the project partners have signed up to a memorandum of collaboration and a Montserrat Centre Hills e-group is now active. Project Steering Committee meetings were held in June and September to finalise the project workplan and activities.

The following progress has been made for each of the project objectives:

#### **1. Knowledge of the ecology and socio-economic use of the forest is available to guide management of the Centre Hills**

- The biological assessment has begun and is completed for birds, insects, bats, and the wet season survey of amphibians, reptiles and invasive rat species. The purpose is to compile an inventory of the fauna and flora of the Centre Hills, map spatial patterns of biodiversity and the abundance and distribution of key species. Initial results indicate:
  - All 10 species of bat known to have occurred on Montserrat were captured, including an endangered species not recorded for over 20 years and an endemic sub-species, thought to be extinct.
  - Rats were found to occur in many areas of the Centre Hills, even at the highest altitudes.
  - Amphibians appear to be more abundant in the eastern and southern regions of the Centre Hills.
  - 27 species of bird are recorded in the Centre Hills to date. 10 are restricted ranges species (Lesser Antilles) of which 2 are globally threatened, Montserrat Oriole (CR), and Forest Thrush (VU).

#### **2. Participatory plan is produced for the Centre Hills**

- In consultation with key stakeholders on Montserrat and in the UK, the plan for the consultation process and socioeconomic assessment was prepared during October

**3. Technical and professional skills to conserve, manage and restore the Centre Hills are strengthened in Montserrat**

- Claude Gerald (Director of Agriculture) visited RSPB in July to participate in the recruitment process for the project manager and to discuss the economic valuation for the Centre Hills
- Calvin Fenton and James Daly (Forest Rangers) gave a presentation about the research conducted on the Montserrat Oriole and the Darwin project and participated in workshops at the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds conference in Guadeloupe (August 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005)

**4. Significant progress is made towards establishing the Centre Hills as Montserrat's first Protected Area**

- The PM is awaiting copies of relevant legislation from the Attorney General's Office to commence the review of legislation.

**5. Appreciation of the Centre Hills forest and an awareness of its value is increased locally and internationally**

- The Governor's office hosted the launch of the Darwin project on Montserrat, to which 50 people and the media were invited
- 3 articles in the Montserrat Reporter (June/August/September), 1 article in the BirdLife Caribbean newsletter (August). Radio interviews were held in June, following the launch of the project and in September with the arrival of the project manager

**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.**

The biological assessment will take longer than originally planned so fieldwork will now be completed by next March. This is still in time for the management plan workshop, which will take place in September 2006.

Instead of recruiting a part time forest ecologist to advise on the research of ecological processes in the Centre Hills the project has agreed instead to draw on the expertise provided by the project collaborators, led by Dr Geoff Hilton, RSPB. It will enhance project activities as the funding allocated for 2005 – 2006 will be used to support a GIS specialist at RBG Kew to prepare a habitat map for the Centre Hills.

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

**No. However, there is no change to the original agreement.**

**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? No**