

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	162/14/034
Project Title	A biodiversity conservation training programme for the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve
Country(ies)	Argentina
UK Organisation	Eden Project
Collaborator(s)	University of Misiones, Instituto de Botanica Darwinion, Ministry of Ecology, UNDP, Guarani people, Fundacion Vida Silvestre, CEIBA, Ecological Investigation Laboratory Las Yungas, National University of Tucuman
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Project website	www.edenproject.com/foundation/darwin-initiative.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).

During the last 6 months progress has been good.

The biological research station is now fully functioning and is an absolute joy. It is being well-used by the project partners, however we now need to widen the net and encourage more visiting researchers and eco-tourists. Most encouraging is that the provincial government released considerable funds for its completion.

The first ethnobotanical training course has been completed using the new facilities of the Marcio Ayres Biological Station in the heart of Yabotí. A full report of the course and its outputs will be published but according to students and lecturers alike it was a great success. It was attended by 19 students from 7 Latin American countries. Prof Ghillean Prance was leader of the 6 strong faculty. The course was jointly funded by the provincial government,

The Darwinion Institute continue with their comprehensive survey of Misiones plants and the creation of the Iris database. The Darwin Initiative funding continues to support their field surveys and collection, herbarium work and database entry. Their 24,000 collections have registered 3,200 species for the province of Misiones.

Following field visits by Dr Peter Whitbread-Abrutat, Prof Prance and Daniel Ryan a more complete view of the restoration needs of the forest have been identified. The situation is more complex than envisaged with the now dead and drying bamboo being a primary factor in a new restoration challenge – forest fires. This is allied to the prior knowledge of soil compaction, bamboo intrusion, clear-felled areas and degraded, expired tobacco fields. However, Dr Whitbread-Abrutat is using this new knowledge to design experimental plots in conjunction with a wider circle of local scientists and forest engineers. These will be initiated as soon as possible. The focus is likely to lead to field plots that not only demonstrate good restoration techniques but, importantly, provide better and more sustainable livelihood opportunities for the local people. Including; selective logging, non forest timber products and tourism opportunities. There is an aim to run a collaborative workshop early next year to assess the progress of this

work and continue the now wider partnership.

Another member of the Argentinean project team has been identified to undertake the excellent RBG Kew training course in botanical conservation techniques. This is scheduled for summer 2007.

Dr Mario DiBittetti and his new network of young scientists (CEIBA) continue to research the fauna of Yabotí and publish the results vigorously. The project funds 2 scholarships for researchers within this network.

Numerous articles relating to the work of the project have appeared in recent publications including Plant Talk (Apr 2006) and the Eden Friends magazine.

The aerial survey that is needed quite urgently is still stumbling. But this is somewhat out of the hands of the project and in the hands of the Misiones Government. They have assured the project that they are buying the new necessary equipment to conduct the survey very promptly and will act immediately. However, we have survey photographs from last year and the visuals paint a stark picture. However, the images are standard high definition photographs and do not allow for the intricate mapping that the new survey tools will offer the project.

The project continues to pay the scholarship of 1 Guaraní (Rosalino Duarte) to graduate high school. On completion he wants to join the Ranger School, which will be a huge step.

The project also continues to support doctoral student Hector Keller. His work is progressing as expected and he hopes to complete his doctorate before the end of 2007.

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.

Although not entirely unexpected it is somewhat of a surprise the Misiones Government has supported the idea of creating a biodiversity research centre for Misiones forests. This institution will provide a core facility for the ongoing research and legacy of the project. Importantly, because of the project frame and its government affiliation it is hoped that forest policy can be directed from research outputs. The creation of this centre is very much a product of the Darwin Initiative involvement in Misiones.

Further beneficial developments are the 100% recent increase (to 96) in park guards, and establishment of further guard stations throughout Yabotí. This is a very positive move for forest protection and again is largely a product of the Darwin Initiative project. Very recently a further 50 new jobs were also announced by the Governor of the province.

A 500 hectare forest fire has damaged a large portion of forest. Although very sad, this provides an ideal site for experimental field plots and forest repopulation research.

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

The issue of underspend in the first year was put down in writing at the end of the first year. However, there has been no reply to this question.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in...04/06..... (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 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.**