

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2008)

Project Ref. No.	640/15/015
Project Title	Tools and training for fern conservation and monitoring, El Salvador
Country(ies)	El Salvador
UK Organisation	The Natural History Museum (NHM)
Collaborator(s)	Jardín Botánico La Laguna (LAGU), Ministerio del Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (MARN), Salva Natura
Project Leader	Sandra Knapp
Report date	5 November 2008
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 3
Project website	Not applicable

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).

In April 2008, the second training course was undertaken. There was great interest and demand for the course, and places were allocated to 11 people who came largely from the academic and government sectors. Key NHM project participant Maria Peña-Chocarro had pregnancy-related medical problems (and subsequently has been on maternity leave since late July 2008) and was unable to travel, so the course was taught by Sandra Knapp and Jorge Monterrosa with the assistance of international fern experts Professor Harald Schneider and Dr. Jovita Yesilyurt (both NHM). This meant that the level of training in fern taxonomy and identification was at a slightly higher level than for the previous course, but as we had planned this course to be for more academically oriented participants this worked very well. Although we had planned (beyond project objectives) to hold an additional training course at a more advanced level, this was not possible due to staff changes at the NHM and LAGU; and to the need to stick closely to other project milestones and objectives. This possibility will be explored in 2009 in conjunction with the field guide launch and the final workshop. It is extremely gratifying that participants from both the training courses are in constant contact with staff at LAGU and have been instrumental in bringing interesting distribution records etc. to the attention of project staff.

During the last reporting period there have been two meetings of the conservation network, in April (with NHM staff) and August. As reported in the Annual Report a smaller group has been meeting regularly (on about a monthly basis, but more informally) to draw up a solid and lasting mission for the group to continue beyond the project and to come up with both short and long term objectives.

The field collecting trips have been scaled down during this part of the project, but attention has been paid to the taking of photographs for the guide for key taxa and to collecting voucher specimens to represent the diversity of ferns in El Salvador. Photographs and collection are now complete for all of the fern taxa in El Salvador; images have been processed at the Natural History Museum and Jardín Botánico La Laguna and are currently with the book designers. Descriptions have been written for all taxa by Monterrosa, Peña-Chocarro and Knapp, distribution maps prepared and photographs taken for all but a few of the taxa (photographs of the missing species are being requested from colleagues in order that the guide be as complete as possible). The complete draft field guide is now (October 2008) with the printers/designers and final corrections will be taken in hopefully before the start of 2009.

Monterrosa attended the meeting of the “Red de Herbarios Mesoamericanos” (Mesoamerican Herbarium Network, a very effective international network of all botanical institutions in the Mesoamerican and Caribbean regions) in La Havana, Cuba in June 2008 and presented a poster about the project and

preliminary results. Numerous useful contacts were made with other biodiversity and fern workers from the Mesoamerican (including the Caribbean) region, which will be developed over future years to extend the project results regionally.

Due to the complex installation of a new institutional database at the Natural History Museum (K-Emu), the programmed databasing of BM ferns has been delayed until K-Emu up and running; we have begun to enter this data into the NHM system, but are slightly behind in this aspect of the project, but will catch up in the next few months. Due to the maternity leave of Peña-Chocarro, this aspect of the project is delayed, but upon her return in early 2009 this will pick up again.

As stated in the annual reports, we decided to integrate format for fern monitoring (monitoring data sheet) with the recently published MARN monitoring scheme. This has been discussed at network meetings and considerable progress has been made; during the training course a designated contact point in the Ministry was made and over the last few months the development of the website and monitoring are being undertaken in concert. An improved monitoring sheet format was tested at during the second training course and further modifications are being made.

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.

We are experiencing no real problems, other than there are a lot of fern species in El Salvador! This amazing diversity will not impede the project, and in fact have made it more prominent on both national and international scales. The training courses have been very successful and have sparked a great deal of interest in ferns in El Salvador. The final field guide is on track for publication in early 2009, slightly later than originally planned, but still in time to achieve the funds necessary to support the first scholarship competition.

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

No changes to original agreement, except minor transfers of funds between categories.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (June 2007)

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?

No outstanding issues.

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**