

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report
(due 31 October 2010)

Project Ref No	17-005
Project Title	Darwin Marine Biodiversity Action Plan for Gabon
Country(ies)	Gabon
UK Organisation	University of Exeter
Collaborator(s)	Ministry of Forestry, Water, Fisheries & Agriculture (MEFEP ; Fisheries Directorate) Agence National des Parcs Nationaux (ANPN) Partenariat pour les Tortues Marines du Gabon (PTMG) SEATURTLE.org (ST.org) Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Project Leader	Dr Brendan J. Godley and Dr. Annette C. Broderick
Report date	31 October 2010
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR1
Project website	http://www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/gabon/

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).

Progress in carrying out project activities (1-4)

We are progressing well against our schedule on all key outputs.

Output 1. Partners trained in monitoring, research and database use

1.1 Workshops

We completed the first three workshops in the first 6 month reporting period, putting us ahead of schedule. Although we intended to have completed the Fisheries Observer workshop by the end of the first year of the project, this has had to be rescheduled (see below).

1.2 Darwin Graduate Trainee identified

The host country Darwin graduate trainee (Franck Mbebe) was identified by MEFEP and released for study. At the request of project partners he has begun his Fisheries GIS studies in France and he will be supported by the Darwin Project. This support includes an offer of a placement at the University of Exeter, working on Gabon Fisheries data under supervision of UK Darwin staff.

An additional MSc candidate from Mayumba National Park (Quevain Makaya) has been identified and has been awarded a full fees scholarship by University of Exeter and has secured additional support from oil companies in Gabon. He will carry out MSc studies in UK beginning Oct 2011.

Further, Dr Formia (WCS) and Dr McClellan (UoE) supervised a graduate-level thesis of ENEF student (Lionnel Ndoulouha) based on the satellite tracking work in Corisco Bay.

1.3 Darwin Project Officer identified

As detailed in the April annual report, the project partners felt that these resources would be better spent on a number of key field assistant posts in addition to some administrative support. This has continued for the last reporting period.

Darwin Field Officer (Corisco Bay) Innocent Ikoubou
Darwin Field Officer (Corisco Bay) Armando Villarubia
Darwin Clerical Assistant (Libreville) Heaven Deribe
Darwin Field Officer (Nesting Beaches) Floriane Cardiec

Darwin Field Officer (Nesting Beaches) Joan Ikoum Ngossa

Darwin Field Officer (Nesting Beaches) Didier Agambouet

This has allowed the project to continue to build momentum while UK staff are away from the host country.

1.4 Conference attendance by Darwin staff

Project staff attended the International Sea Turtle Society Symposium in Goa, April 2010 where they presented data on offshore density estimation of leatherback sea turtles during the leatherback breeding season and contributed to a workshop on satellite telemetry techniques for marine vertebrates and participated in the African regional meeting. It is planned for one of the key Darwin fieldworkers in Corisco Bay to attend ISTS in April 2011 to present findings of the green turtle satellite tracking work already underway

Output 2. Increased knowledge of the marine biodiversity of Gabon to inform decision makers

2.1 Geographic Information System (GIS) database

The GIS database is being populated by all data as they are received, including habitats and species data.

2.2 VMS data analysis

This work has continued.

2.3 Fisheries observer programme

As a result of additional support from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the US Government, a much larger scale marine observer training programme is planned. This collaboration results from the lack of capacity for any kind of fishery observer work, not just marine vertebrate bycatch as the project had initially envisioned. The workshop was scheduled for Autumn 2010, however it has now been rescheduled for Spring 2011 to allow further resources to be confirmed.

2.4 Marine vertebrate monitoring

Marine turtle and marine mammal survey work has continued throughout the period. Additional satellite tracking deployments are planned on green turtles in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea for Oct/Nov 2010, including tracking green turtles from the population found inland in the mangrove forest near Libreville, many miles from the sea.

2.5 Scientific papers

The second, third and fourth project papers acknowledging Darwin support have been published :

Godley BJ, Barbosa C, Bruford M, Broderick AC, Catry P, Coyne MS, Formia, Hays GC, Witt MJ (2010) Unravelling migratory connectivity in marine turtles using multiple methods. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 47: 769–778

Tomás J, Godley BJ, Castroviejo J, Raga JA (2010) Bioko: critically important nesting habitat for sea turtles of West Africa. *Biodiversity and Conservation*. 19:2699–2714

Witt MJ, Åkesson S, Broderick AC, Coyne MS, Ellick J, Formia A, Hays GC, Luschi P, Stroud S, Godley BJ (2010) Assessing accuracy and utility of satellite tracking data using Argos-linked Fastloc GPS. *Animal Behaviour* 80: 571-581

A fourth has been submitted and is in second review with the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*

Witt MJ, Eric Augowet Bonguno, Annette C. Broderick, Michael S. Coyne, Angela Formia, Gil Avery MOUNGUENGUI MOUNGUENGUI, Carine Moussounda, Monique NSafou Solange Nougessono, Richard J. Parnell, Guy-Philippe Sounguet, Sebastian Verhage and Brendan J. Godley (**in review**) Tracking leatherback turtles from the world's largest rookery: assessing threats across the South Atlantic

2.6 Darwin conference

This will be a focus of later efforts when the projects findings and initiatives are further advanced.

2.7 Marine Biodiversity Action Plan

All current work is focussed on underpinning the drafting of this MBAP.

Output 3. Increased awareness of the marine environment

3.1 Website established

The website continues to develop.

3.2 Production of Darwin Newsletters

A newsletter is planned for the next reporting period.

3.3 Press releases in Gabon and UK.

One major press release was issued over the last 6 months covering "Turtle day" activities in Cap Esterias, Gabon which involved raising awareness of the plight of sea turtles to local and national residents. The activities were reported in the national press (*Gabon Matin*). Additional significant media activity in Gabon, UK and potential South America is expected when the leatherback turtle tracking manuscript (in review) is completed.

3.3 Darwin Seminars for key stakeholders

These will appear later in the project but to date, through introductory meetings, the first Darwin Workshop and supporting media have continued to raise the project profile.

Output 4. Project monitoring

4.1 Darwin reporting

This first 6 monthly report demonstrates our continued progress to date, now 12 months into the funded period.

4.2 Steering Group meetings

In May 2010, Dr. Godley visited Gabon to participate in the 2nd steering group meetings and further elaborated the work plan for the rest of the reporting year. An additional meeting is planned during Dr. Witt's field visit in Dec 2010/Jan 2011.

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 only unexpected development over the last 6 months of the project was the rescheduling of the Fisheries Observer Workshop from November 2010 to March/April 2011. This will not impact the project budgeting or any other aspect of the activity timetable.

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

The only changes made have been regarding the no cost, changes to UK personnel. Fortuitous additional external funding, the funds for UoE Darwin Fellow Dr. Matthew Witt were able to redeployed to include a part-time technical assistant / researcher (Alan Rees; who has recently carried out a field visit spanning the end of this reporting period) and an expert cetacean researcher (Tim Collins) who has been carrying out marine mammal surveys in Congo and Gabon.

Discussed with LTS: **no/yes, in...May/2010..... (month/yr)**

Formal change request submitted: **no /yes, in...May/2010.....(month/yr)**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **no /yes in...June/2010...(month/yr)**

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No

If yes, and you wish to request a carry forward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £

4. 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 LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.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: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**