

# Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2011)

<b>Project Ref No</b>	17-005
<b>Project Title</b>	Darwin Marine Biodiversity Action Plan for Gabon
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Gabon
<b>UK Organisation</b>	University of Exeter ( <b>UoE</b> )
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	Ministry of Forestry, Water, Fisheries & Agriculture ( <b>MEFEP</b> ; Fisheries Directorate) Agence National des Parcs Nationaux ( <b>ANPN</b> ) Partenariat pour les Tortues Marines du Gabon ( <b>PTMG</b> ) SEATURTLE.org ( <b>ST.org</b> ) Wildlife Conservation Society ( <b>WCS</b> )
<b>Project Leader</b>	Dr Brendan J. Godley and Dr. Annette C. Broderick
<b>Report date</b>	31 October 2010
<b>Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website</b>	<a href="http://www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/gabon/">http://www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/gabon/</a>

**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 continue to progress well against our schedule on all key aspects.

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

#### ***1.1 Workshops***

We completed the first three of four workshops ahead of schedule. The Fisheries Observer workshop has finally been scheduled for November 2011, in order to maximise its utility through obtaining the best training team and recruiting promising trainees from Gabon and neighbouring countries.

#### ***1.2 Darwin Graduate Trainee***

A further host country graduate trainee (Mesmin Wada) from the 'General Direction of Fisheries and Aquaculture' was identified for support and has started an MSc in Oceanography at the Université Aix Marseille II, France. His university fees and majority of subsistence money being covered by the Darwin Project.

#### ***1.3 Darwin Project Officer***

The Darwin Field Officers (Innocent Ikoubou, Armando Villarubia [Corisco Bay]) and clerical support (Heaven Deribe [Libreville]) progress with in-country research and awareness raising activities. Providing continuity and a local presence when UK staff are away from the host country.

#### ***1.4 Conference attendance by Darwin staff***

Armando Villarubia, Dr Catherine McClellan (UoE) and Dr Angela Formia (WCS) attended the 31<sup>st</sup> International Sea Turtle Symposium in the USA in April 2011. Research work from Corisco Bay was presented during the main Symposium and also at the well-attended African regional

meeting held at the same location just prior to the Symposium. To increase regional impact of the DI project, Jesus Mba Mba from Equatorial Guinea was also part sponsored to attend the Symposium.

DI postdoctoral fellows (Dr Formia and Dr Matthew Witt [UoE]) also attended the 'South Atlantic Sea Turtle Network' meeting in Namibia where they discussed issues relating to the conservation of marine turtles from Gabon in a regional context.

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

### ***2.1 Geographic Information System (GIS) databases***

Databases continue to be populated with the latest research data as it is received, including habitat and species data.

### ***2.2 VMS data analysis***

Data are analysed, ready for presentation and be utilised by competent authorities in Gabon.

### ***2.3 Fisheries observer programme***

As previously indicated, involvement of experts from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the US Government, has broadened the scope of this programme and has necessitated delaying the initial training. All facets of the programme are now in place and the training workshop is scheduled for November 2011 and will involve participants from neighbouring countries as well as those from Gabon, thus building capacity at a more holistic regional-level rather than being country-specific.

### ***2.4 Marine vertebrate monitoring***

Marine turtle and marine mammal survey work continued in Gabon and the neighbouring countries of Equatorial Guinea and Congo. Dr McClellan revisited the Corisco Bay team in Cap Esterias to build on previous capacity building and training in surveying techniques and Tim Collins (WCS) continued shore-based survey training for cetacean observations and strandings recording.

### ***2.5 Scientific papers***

With the following publication we have surpassed the predicted number of scientific publications acknowledging support of the Darwin Initiative:

Maxwell SM, Breed GA, Nickel BA, Makanga-Bahouna J, Pemo-Makaya E, Parnell RJ, Formia A, Ngouessono S, Godley BJ, Costa DP, Witt MJ, Coyne MS (2011) Using satellite tracking to optimize protection of long-lived marine species: olive ridley sea turtle conservation in central Africa. PLoSOne 6:10

The above outputs received media attention both in the UK and internationally.

### ***2.6 Darwin Conference***

As scheduled, this will be a focus of later efforts, bringing together the various strands of research, data analysis and capacity building into a high impact event as a culmination of the project's activities.

### ***2.7 Marine Biodiversity Action Plan***

Work continues to provide data upon which the MBAP will be drafted and to train skilled

technicians and officers that will ensure a vital legacy to the DI project.

### **Output 3. Increased awareness of the marine environment**

#### **3.1 Website established**

The project website is well established and includes all published literature generated by the DI project and electronic versions of the project newsletters

#### **3.2 Production of Darwin Newsletters**

Two of the four Darwin Newsletters have now been published and distributed in the host country. The third newsletter is currently being edited ready for production and dissemination.

#### **3.3 Press releases in Gabon and the UK**

A UK/International press release and presentation of research findings relating to the Maxwell et al paper resulted in media outputs including the Discovery News website.

#### **3.4 Darwin Seminars for key stakeholders**

Throughout September and October, Darwin Project staff have been extensively involved with provision of technical advice to Gabonese partners on aerial and boat-based study methods for cetaceans and turtles as part of monitoring efforts associated with a major seismic campaign being undertaken off Mayumba National Park. Additionally PI Godley has delivered Darwin seminars to University of Lund, CEFAS, Swedish National Academy.

### **Output 4. Project Monitoring**

#### **4.1 Darwin reporting**

This half year report produced on time continues to show our successful progress towards meeting the projects goals.

#### **4.2 Steering group meetings**

There have been regular meetings, largely focussed on the large undertaking of setting up a professional at-sea fisheries observer programme.

## **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 repeat rescheduling of the Fisheries Observer Workshop from March/April 2011 to November 2011. This will not impact the project budgeting or any other aspect of the activity timetable but has facilitated provisioning a workshop of greater scope and benefit to the region.

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

No changes have been made to the original agreement in this reporting period.

**Discussed with LTS:** no

**Formal change request submitted:** no

**Received confirmation of change acceptance** no

**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 carryforward 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](mailto: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**