

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2010)

Project Ref No	18-009
Project Title	Saving the Madagascar Pochard: the world's most endangered duck
Country(ies)	Madagascar
UK Organisation	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
Collaborator(s)	Durrell – Madagascar, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, The Peregrine Fund, Asity Madagascar and Le Ministère de L'Environnement et Forêts (Government of Madagascar).
Project Leader	H Glyn Young
Report date	29 th October 2010
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR1
Project website	In preparation

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 has started very well. The partnership established in 2009 was strengthened through a signed MoU with the Government of Madagascar (signed July 2010). A Project management team has been formed and lines of communication between and within partner organisations developed. Planning meetings have been held at Slimbridge (WWT HQ) and, monthly, between in-country partners in Antananarivo. Monthly reports have been circulated since April and a Project website using the proposed project title *MIARO FOTSY MASO* is in preparation. The restoration project has featured regularly in local and international media and will be included in a forthcoming BBC series *Miracle Babies*.

Twenty two pochards reared in 2009 continue to thrive (at Ampijoroa) and a site for the Pochard Conservation Breeding Centre (PCBC) has been chosen by the partners at Anjingo on the road east of Antsohihy in Sofia, north west Madagascar. Contacts with all local, regional and national authorities have been established through Site Supervisor, Felix Razafindrajao and regular meetings initiated in Antsohihy and Bealanana. Floriot Randrianarimangason has been hired as avicultural manager and received training in Jersey and UK in July and August. Technical support for the captive birds from Durrell (Jersey), WWT and Mauritian Wildlife Foundation has been maintained throughout the year. The first-year birds did not attempt to breed in 2010. A team including representatives of all partners and national and local officials visited the Anjingo site in September to begin designing the facility and meet local people.

An in-country research programme is being designed by WWT and Durrell and further funding has been received to develop both local (PhD level) and overseas (post-doctorate) studentships. These positions will be advertised in the near future. Blood samples have been collected from all the captive birds and sent to Europe for analysis by Mike Bruford at Cardiff University to assess genetic diversity of captive founders and to recommend future pairings.

Asity Madagascar are developing a CEPA programme and recruiting full time field personnel. The Peregrine Fund presence at Bemenevika remains and this organisation continues to press for the establishment of a protected area in a difficult political climate in Madagascar.

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.

Following threats (to staff) from local 'bandits' at Antsohihy in December 2009 the captive pochards were transferred to the Chelonian Breeding Centre at Ampijoroa (Ankarafantsika National Park) outside of the region of Sofia. This move was made with the full understanding, advice and co-operation of the local, regional and national authorities in Madagascar including the gendarmerie who provided personnel. A theme which we did not fully understand before was that the moving of the pochards outside of the Region would become such a high profile political platform for local parties in opposition to the government. Sadly, the status of the critically endangered endemic, and previously ignored, species is not a consideration in this conflict. The end result is that the current regional government is quite keen to see the birds returned as soon as possible to avoid losing the next election! They did ask if we could even just start some small scale construction to show that we are beginning the process to move the birds back; for example placing a sign at the Anjingo site, building a guardien's hut, or even putting up a gate.

The threats from 'bandits' at Antsohihy have reportedly disappeared but the political situation remains uncertain with local opposition parties using the pochard as a weapon against central government control. The Project team has been advised locally that until at least some pochards return to Sofia it is unlikely that permission to collect further birds from Lake Bemenevika will be granted. For this reason we have decided to postpone collection of further eggs from Year 1 (2010-2011) to Year 2 (2011-2012) following planned construction of the PCBC and return of the captive birds in early 2011. The Project will request that money allocated in Year 1 for the collection of birds will be transferred to Year 2.

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

Application to transfer funds Y1 to Y2 submitted 28th October 2010.

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

Formal change request submitted: **Yes, in October 2010**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **no/yes in.....(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 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: £39,264

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**