

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2012)

Project Ref No	18-011
Project Title	Building a future for Haiti's unique vertebrates
Country	Haiti
UK Organisation	BirdLife International
Collaborators	Zoological Society London, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Société Audubon Haiti
Project Leader	David Wege
Report date	31 October 2012
Report No.	HYR 3
Project website	http://www.birdlife.org/haiti-threatened-vertebrates/

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).

Output 1. Evidence-base on distribution, population status, ecology and conservation requirements of globally threatened vertebrates and their habitats strengthened and disseminated.

Biological surveys during this period focused on the Massif de la Hotte, the most biologically diverse and important bioregion on the island of Hispaniola. The objectives of the surveys are to establish the scientific basis for the presence/absence of vertebrate species (e.g., birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals), determine the relative conservation value of montane habitats and document the science in support of conservation priorities. Expeditions conducted during this period included:

- 25 May – 4 June - Southern region of Macaya National Park in Pic Le Ciel, Pic Formond, Jumelle and Plaine Boeuf (Jean, A. 2012);
- 17 -21 June – Eastern Massif de la Hotte in Pic Tête Boeuf, Morne Bois Pagnol, Petites Cayemites and Grandes Cayemites (Hedges, 2012);
- 19 – 27 July – Northeast region of Macaya National Park in the Duchity (Ti Letan) and Camp Perrin (Venfèl) areas (Louis-Jean, E. & A. Jean, 2012a);
- 6-15 September – Northern region of Macaya National Park in Nan Pavillon (aka Béthanie).



Figure 1. Biological survey areas conducted May – September 2012. The yellow, blue and red polygons were surveyed exclusively by SAH field biologists. The green polygons were surveyed by SAH field biologists in collaboration with Penn State University.

These areas were inventoried following the methodology developed through this project by Durrell, ZSL and SAH in 2011 for bird, amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Several new species of *Eleutherodactylus* were discovered by Dr. Blair Hedges, particularly in the Bois Pagnol area, and captured for phylogenetic analyses from sites in Morne Bois Pagnol and Pic Tête Boeuf. A large number of reptile species, many of which are

endemic to the Cayemites where the invasive mongoose is not present, were also found. A number of threatened and restricted-range birds were recorded for the first time in the areas surveyed, including a flock of Hispaniola Parrots (*Amazona ventralis*) observed in Pic Formond area and the rare Western Chat Tanager (*Calyptophilus tertius*) and uncommon Hispaniolan Crossbill (*Loxia megalplaga*) in the Plaine Boeuf area. Pic Formond is in the core areas of Macaya National Park whereas Plaine Boeuf represents a highly fragmented transition zone between the highly populated Formond community and the park. The surveys conducted to assess local farmers' knowledge of the two endemic terrestrial mammals (*Plagiodontia aedium*, *Solenodon paradoxus*) revealed that many farmers have a general knowledge of the rodent, but a total lack of knowledge regarding the solenodon. The latter, a secretive

nocturnal insectivore, is much rarer than the rodent that visits farmers' fields regularly to feed on various food crops. A *Plagiodontia* was killed c.1 month prior to the May expedition, by a dog near Deglacis.

SAH acquired the ornithological data of Dennis Crouse, Jr., an American who surveyed birds throughout Haiti during 1998 – 2006. These data will supplement the data being acquired by SAH in the Important Bird Areas of Haiti, particularly in areas outside the Massif de la Hotte and Massif de la Selle. Due to the detail and depth of the data, including photos, the data will be an invaluable asset to the national biodiversity database that the Ministry of Environment (MDE) is intent on developing under the framework of the newly established Agence Nationale d'Aires Protégées (ANAP).

Output 2. Strengthened Haitian capacity for conserving and monitoring globally threatened vertebrates and their habitats.

SAH and ANAP have drafted an MOU to work together on both the national biodiversity database and mapping initiatives in support of the Système Nationale d'Aires Protégées (SNAP). This MOU is expected to be signed later in 2012 following the COP 11 to the Convention on Biological Diversity meetings convened in Hyderabad in October. The new director of ANAP, Martine E. Mathieu, is eager to engage the Ministry of Environment scientists to work alongside SAH personnel. The current minister, Dr. Jean V. Hilaire, is a member of SAH and is committed to a productive relationship that advances conservation policy and the effectiveness of ANAP. The recent launch of the World Bank GEF funding, supporting the development of Macaya National Park and its governance, is one area that SAH and this Darwin Initiative project is expected to play a greater role. Furthermore, an additional MOU between SAH and MDE is in progress with the assistance of GIZ (German Aid Agency) that will establish the framework for habitat restoration and reforestation initiatives by MDE through national, regional and local NGOs working in the environs of the two national parks in Massif de la Hotte (Macaya National Park) and Massif de la Selle (La Visite National Parks). SAH is expected to play an active role since it is the only NGO active in many areas of Macaya National Park.

A series of working groups were launched by ANAP to include the major donors and government agencies involved in the protected area management. SAH is participating in the committees to define methodologies and strategies for broad areas of intervention: zoning (including park boundaries), biological inventories and capacity building among social groups that live in and around the protected areas. Other institutions included in the ANAP working groups are donor agencies (e.g., UNDP, GIZ), government of Haiti agencies (e.g., SNAP) and environmental NGOs (e.g., AHDEN, FS, FM). It is expected that the working groups will become advisory groups to the Ministry of Environment for protected area development and management.

Output 3. Skills in conservation biology, planning, advocacy and management are strengthened in local partner organisations and more widely in Haiti.

One of the SAH field staff (Enold Louis-Jean) attended Durrell's Endangered Species Management Graduate Certificate (DESMAN) – a 12-week course (accredited by the University of Kent) designed to equip conservationists with the skills needed to manage species recovery. This ran from February through April 2012.

SAH conducted a training course in the Cayes area during 4-6 July with the objective of strengthening local community capacity to conserve the native vertebrates and their habitats in Massif de la Hotte (Louis-Jean, E. & A. Jean, 2012b). The 3-day workshop was led by Enold Louis-Jean (utilizing skills learnt on the DESMAN course) and Anderson Jean and included 11 participants from Formond (3), Rendel (3), Duchity (2), Cayes (2) and Torbeck (1). Several subject areas were covered on the course including biodiversity conservation, research and monitoring methods, identification of threats to biodiversity, general bird identification, bird migration, endemic and threatened avifauna, and invasive species problems. Three institutions were involved in the workshop: Fondation Macaya (Rendel), SAH, and YOUTH (Duchity).

This training was part of the *Réseaux Locaux d'Informations en Environnement* (RELIE) strategy that SAH is establishing in local communities representing areas of high biodiversity. During each survey, members of the local communities assist SAH in the biological surveys as well as follow-up work to collect new data regarding threatened species that represent the core focus of the RELIE network.

SAH recruited two new field assistants to expand its capacity in conducting biological surveys, prepare training modules, process data and facilitate better communication with local residents. These assistants have volunteered their services during the last two years and are familiar with survey methods, training and community organization in the remote areas where SAH operates.

Output 4. Awareness of status and conservation needs of globally threatened Haitian vertebrates substantially improved at local, national and international levels.

The 2013 calendar, highlighting the vertebrate diversity of Haiti and their habitats, was completed and translated in three languages (English, French, Haitian Creole). The Darwin Initiative through the efforts of BirdLife and SAH are major sponsors of the calendar in an effort to increase awareness of the rich biodiversity heritage of Haiti. The calendar is expected to be distributed to the public through the extension efforts of SAH, bookstores and Ministry of Environment. The calendar was a collaborative effort between SAH, BirdLife, Penn State University, UNDP, and Conservation International and included the photography of many of Hispaniola's most accomplished photographers.

A Conservation summit was held at the Philadelphia Zoo that reviewed biological expedition results and conservation efforts (as implemented through this Darwin Initiative project in collaboration with Penn State University, Philadelphia Zoo, Société Audubon Haïti, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund).

A news story about the project was published on the Rainforest Alliance website Eco-Index (where a project profile is maintained). The story has been shared with more than 3,000 newsletter subscribers.

English: <http://ecoindex.wordpress.com/2012/08/28/rising-to-the-challenge-of-conserving-haitis-unique-species/>

Spanish: <http://ecoindexsp.wordpress.com/2012/08/28/haiti-lucha-por-conservar-sus-especies-unicas/>

References

- Hedges, S. B. 2012. Bwa Panyòl poster. Penn State University, University Park. folio.
- Jean, A. 2012. *Rapport d'inventaire des vertébrés du Parc National Macaya*. 3 p.
- Louis-Jean, E. & A. Jean, 2012a. *Expédition scientifique dans le versant nord du Massif de la Hotte*. Société Audubon Haïti, Port-au-Prince. 3 p.
- Louis-Jean, E. & A. Jean, 2012b. *Atelier de renforcement des capacités pour la conservation des vertébrés*. Société Audubon Haïti, Port-au-Prince. 2 p.
- Société Audubon Haiti. 2011. *Survey of Massif de la Hotte Vertebrates Field Manual*. 23 p.

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.

Haiti continues to represent a challenging and fast changing environment in which to work. Adaptive management is required on a weekly basis as the political and capacity situations evolve. A full project review will be done to detail exactly what will be delivered by the end of the project, and any necessary changes to the logframe will be discussed with LTS in the coming month.

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

N/A

Discussed with LTS: N/A (month/yr)

Formal change request submitted: N/A (month/yr)

Received confirmation of change acceptance: N/A (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.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

N/A

Estimated carry-forward request: £ 0

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**