

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2010)

Project Ref No	Project ref. 18-014
Project Title	Ecosystem-wide forest conservation in DRC using okapi as a flagship
Country(ies)	Democratic Republic of Congo
UK Organisation	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Collaborator(s)	<i>Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature</i> (ICCN), GIC, Cardiff University, WCS, FFI, Wasmoeth Foundation, FZS, Lukuru Foundation, ZSL Institute of Zoology, et al.
Project Leader	Noëlle Kümpel
Report date	31 October 2010
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 1
Project website	www.zsl.org/virunga

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).

Project establishment

Stuart Nixon, Okapi Project Manager/Field Coordinator, and Bryna Griffin, DRC Project Manager, arrived in DRC in Y1-Q2. Chrysostome Kambale Kaghoma was promoted to Project Officer after working on ZSL's Watalinga surveys and biomonitoring program, and Maglorie Kambale Vyalegerera was hired in mid-September as a Field Assistant for the biodiversity field team. Dave Stanton, a Cardiff University PhD student working with ZSL to analyse okapi genetics across the species range visited in September; he met with ICCN, WCS and GIC and trained local staff and partners on dung collection protocols. A vehicle and field equipment was purchased for the project. This equipment included 25 camera traps; ZSL will be testing the utility of camera traps as a survey method over the coming year.

Coordinating and training with partners

The technical group is communicating via email rather than holding a meeting; a technical document is being prepared by ZSL for distribution to the group. In mid-September, the team travelled to the RFO to meet with WCS, GIC and ICCN's site management regarding ZSL/okapi project activities, and to conduct a short refresher course for field staff of the various institutions. In addition, ZSL trained WCS field teams in the deployment of camera traps. The next major collaboration will be the surveying of the RFO, to be led by WCS with technical support and in-kind support of field personnel from ZSL. This is planned for Y1-Q3&4. ZSL also worked with GIC to review the findings of GIC's preliminary okapi dung degradation study and to make plans to collaborate on a larger study in Y1-Q4.

Field survey

The first baseline field survey was conducted in and adjacent to the south sector of Maiko National Park. ZSL provided field personnel for the ICCN/FFI led surveys with additional support from FZS and local community participants. The findings of these surveys, along with the existing data being compiled, suggest that okapi are rare and highly threatened by hunting. The upcoming surveys of RFO (Y1-Q3&4) and of the Virunga-Hoyo area (Y2-Q2) will provide additional data to begin to piece together the status of okapi throughout its range.

YR 1	Activity	Q1	Q2	Progress Update and Notes
1.1	Technical expert steering group formed and first meeting held	X		Steering group is using email to provide input rather than meet directly due to time constraints of group members. Collation of existing data from partners has begun.
1.2	Survey methodology for okapi and other flagships agreed by technical steering group and trialed in RFO alongside dung decay surveys	X		A strategy document, including data available, data needs, technical details and timeline is being prepared for distribution. A camera trap and field methods refresher course was held in Y1-Q2 for WCS and ZSL staff. Survey methods testing and a second, larger, joint WCS/ZSL training are planned for Y1-Q3. Dung decay study will be started in Y1-Q4 and likely continue for about 12 months.

1.3	Standardised baseline surveys, carried out for approximately three months each in at least five sites	X	X	The first baseline surveys took place in the south of Maiko NP in Y1-Q2 in collaboration with FFI and FZS. The FFI report for this work has recently been completed. WCS and ZSL will conduct surveys in the Okapi Faunal Reserve in Y1-Q3&4. Camera trap methods will be tested as part of these surveys.
1.7	PhD student participates in initial survey methodology meeting, and accompanies field teams to collect faecal samples, training up ZSL and GIC staff members to ensure standard process is followed	X		PhD student, Dave Stanton, conducted scoping visit to DRC in Y1-Q2. He visited the RFO where he trained ZSL and WCS staff on dung collection protocol.
2.1	ICCN rangers, monitoring officers and community-based field staff trained in biomonitoring theory and methods at WCS training centre in RFO, through classroom-based lessons and field training in Epulu area	X		Full funding for this component is pending. Formal training course for ICCN rangers and selected community participants is expected to take place in Y1-Q4 or Y2-Q1, depending on time availability of the training centre, participants and trainers.
2.2	ICCN monitoring officers and community-based team leaders trained in data management, analysis and reporting	X		Full funding for this component is pending. See Section 2 for details.
2.4	M'buti trackers trained in CyberTracker icon-based data collection (for forest surveys)	X		Full funding for this component is pending. See Section 2 for details.
2.5	Community assistants selected and trained in CyberTracker and participatory socio-economic data collection via structured and semi-structured interviews and focus groups		X	Full funding for this component is pending. See Section 2 for details.
3.2	Outboard engine and pirogue purchased	X		By request of ICCN-Virunga National Park, we will delay this activity until late Y1 or early Y2.
3.3	Monthly patrols by ICCN rangers up Semliki river in Watalinga forest of Virunga NP	X	X	By request of ICCN-Virunga National Park, we will delay this activity until late Y1 or early Y2.
3.4	Biomonitoring data collection and analysis protocols (including database) and training modules for okapi and other wildlife developed, with initial input and subsequent oversight by technical steering group	X	X	ZSL is developing protocols and data management system to be trialed in the RFO surveys (Y1-Q3&4). Dave Stanton is completing dung collection protocol and instructional materials; other training documents will be produced for the training course (activity 2.1).
3.8	Regular (at least twice-yearly) radio broadcasts and newspaper articles on okapi/forest conservation across DRC and in Virunga-Hoyo region		X	This activity has not yet started.

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 project has encountered several small delays over the first 6 months. Due to availability of project staff and match funding, the project started in earnest in Q2 rather than Q1. However, we have made significant progress in Q2 such that we are not off track in most regards.

The activities envisioned for Virunga NP and Mt Hoyo Reserve have faced two delays. First, match funding committed by the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) has not yet been received. The grant has been approved by the CBFF but is now seriously delayed due to unexpected bureaucracy within the African Development Bank (AfDB), the implementer of the CBFF. Therefore, we have not been able to begin activities in those sites, including ICCN management support, surveys or bio-monitoring. Second, the security in this region of eastern DRC has been in flux since the middle of 2010. Instability in the Virunga-Hoyo region has meant that both sites are operating at a minimal level and management teams are focused on stabilisation rather than bio-monitoring. In addition, Virunga NP site management is undergoing restructuring that has resulted in staff turnover and the commencement of recruitment and training of a new guard force. At present, security is improving and the new Virunga guards are expected to be in place in a matter of months. Therefore, we expect that surveys in the region will be possible in mid-2011 (Y2-Q2). We expect we will have the necessary match funding at that point as well.

Overall, we do not believe the delays outlined above will have a substantial impact on the project as a whole. The core project activities supported by the Darwin Initiative to develop a range-wide okapi conservation assessment are well on track and will progress greatly over the next six months. Our DRC team has years of experience working in this region and has planned for flexibility and is able to develop alternative timelines as needed.

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

No, no discussions have been held nor have changes to the agreement been made.

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

Formal change request submitted: No yes, in..... (month/yr)

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: £

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

We have no other issues to mention at this time.

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**

HY Darwin Report, 31 October 2010: ZSL project 18-014
'Ecosystem-wide forest conservation in DRC using okapi as a flagship'



Stuart Nixon (ZSL, previously FFI), Rob Muir (FZS), Paulin Ngobobo (ICCN, Director of Maiko NP) and Fidele Amisini (FZS/ICCN) plan surveys around Maiko National Park



Field survey team crossing a river near Maiko National Park during July 2010 surveys



Okapi skin confiscated by ICCN near Maiko National Park in 2010



ZSL field staff Maglorie and Chrysostome organise field equipment purchased using Darwin Initiative grant



ZSL Landcruiser purchased using Darwin Initiative grant, muddy from the drive to Okapi Faunal Reserve (DI logo to be added asap!)



ZSL leads a training on camera trap deployment with WCS and GIC

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Stuart shows the team the motion sensor capabilities of the camera traps



New ZSL/Cardiff University PhD student, Dave Stanton, demonstrates okapi dung sample collection methods to ZSL, WCS and GIC team



WCS, GIC and ZSL staff review camera trap set up



Kaghoma explains how to collect data on the camera trap position during set up and deployment



A family of buffalo captured by a camera trap during the short ZSL/WCS training session, September 2010



A pair of guineafowl captured by a camera trap during the short ZSL/WCS training session, September 2010