

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2013)

Project Ref No	19-007
Project Title	Developing Capacity for <i>in situ</i> conservation in Iraq
Country(ies)	Iraq
Lead Organisation	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Collaborator(s)	Nature Iraq, BirdLife International
Project Leader	Anthony Miller
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	October 31 st 2013 HYR2
Project website	

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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).

1.1 Provisional identification of Iraqi IPAs - GIS analysis of available data on Iraqi endemic and near endemic plants has been undertaken. The results of this are now being integrated into Nature Iraq's national assessment of KBAs (www.natureiraq.org/key-biodiversity-areas) due for publication 2014. We are also developing a number of peer reviewed publications with Nature Iraq (a paper on Pirmagroon Mountain as a model IPA and one on new techniques for botanical survey work)

1.2 Provisional Red Listing of Iraqi endemic and near endemic plants - This has been delayed by changes in staff at NI and the resulting lack of botanist working on the project in-country. Efforts to recruit and train a suitable new botanist have been slower than we would have liked. We have now identified an excellent candidate (Awara Muhamad) who has been working with us on recent fieldtrips.

1.3 Plant based data for Pirmagroon IPA - A major fieldtrip was completed in May (with another due in October). Around 550 species have been recorded for Pirmagroon, an increase on the 275 previously known. A checklist is being prepared.

2.1 Development and testing of interactive electronic tools - Initial example guides produced for mobile phones and discussed in the field, for birds and spiny composites. Photographic plant profiles continue to be collected for use in the plant identification guide, there are now around 1400 of these.

2.2 Development of manual of traditional land management practices near Pirmagroon - Bwar Khalid has continued to conduct interviews in the Pirmagroon area. We will extend this part of the project into the final year and to try and link this with more detailed studies of the effect of coppicing on biodiversity and implications for management undertaken by MSc students at RBGE, University of Sulaimani and NI staff.

2.3 Preliminary Red List Iraq's birds - Following from the Sharjah conference in February 2013 on 'Biodiversity Conservation in the Arabian Peninsula' a regional Red List of breeding birds has been completed. This conference was attended by both Mudhafar Salim (NI) and Richard Porter (BirdLife International) This has enabled us to draft both a global and regional IUCN bird Red List for Iraq and Pirmagroon.

2.4. Development of community level awareness through outreach in schools programme - During a visit to the UK by Amr Al Faham the new Iraqi project manager we discussed and planned

formalising and extending the impact of the activities developed during the schools outreach programme. This will be done by developing a toolkit of environmental activities for teachers which will be made available to schools nationally. All the activities will be developed and tested by the DI team working with schools in the Piramagroon area.

3.1. Development of courses and e-learning modules - Online course progressing well with good engagement by students and extremely positive feedback from them and the University. Due to meet with them again at the end of the course for a short field training course.

3.2 Annual training course in Iraq & delivery of ongoing learning and assessment - 5 students from the online course (and other institutes) have been involved in practical field training during project fieldwork. All students will participate in a field course at the end of the online course and advanced training course specifically for birders will be run at the same time.

4.1 Other Activities - Project details still being updated through NI website (www.natureiraq.org) as well as CMEPOrg twitter account.

2a. 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.

Issues with lack of in country botanical input mean that there have been some delays to this aspect of the project. We are addressing this issue in a number of ways designed to ensure that we catch up with this and that the outputs and legacy of the project are not impacted. This has been discussed with LTS.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

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

Yes No

3b. If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible through the formal Change Request process. However, it would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication now 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 through a Change Request.

Please send your **completed report 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**