

## **1 BASIC PROJECT DETAILS**

**Title:** Biodiversity Research Training for African Park Staff

**Contractor:** Earthwatch Europe

**Host country collaborating institute:** Southern African Wildlife College

**Grant Round:** 3

**Grant Value:** £137,181

## **2 PROJECT EXPENDITURE**

Total grant expenditure: £137,837

Breakdown of expenditure:

Staff costs

Rent, rates, etc.

Postage, telephone etc.

Travel and subsistence

Printing

Conferences etc.

Others (International Support Services)

Variations: Staff costs increase by 3% in the second and third years.

### **3 PROJECT BACKGROUND/RATIONALE**

#### **Why was the project needed?**

The Earthwatch Darwin Fellowships were designed to complement the training of the Southern African Wildlife College, identified by WWF-SA to be a conservation priority for the entire region. In particular, the Fellowships were designed to enhance the scientific capacity of National Park staff in the region, and to provide an international dimension to the training process.

Poor networking and lack of scientific know-how have been identified by WWF as problems facing protected area management. The programme aimed to provide support to a newly formed training institution through enhancing their training programmes, enhancing their range of training options and enabling them to provide international field placements on ongoing research projects to their target constituency.

#### **Conservation priorities in the host country**

After an investigation period of some two years by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature South Africa (WWF-SA) it was decided to promote and take responsibility for the establishment of a college for the training of senior rangers and wardens who would be capable of designing and implementing effective protected area management programmes in southern Africa. This was done in close co-operation with the interested and affected parties including national and provincial government departments, the National Parks Board, other conservation agencies, and the Southern African Development Community.

The partnership with Earthwatch adds to the capacity of the College to pursue four of its key strategies:

- provide relevant, high quality, informative and inspiring courses for protected area managers and other interested parties;
- strive for recognition as a regional rather than a national institution by working closely with other southern African training initiatives;
- provide hands on training courses that will complement and link into the spectrum of wildlife conservation training options available in southern Africa;
- use training as a vehicle for the exchange of ideas, information and expertise in order to promote co-operation between conservation organisations.

### **Obligations under the Biodiversity Convention**

Article 12 of the Convention on Biological Diversity states: *The contracting parties, taking into account the special needs of developing countries, shall establish and maintain programmes for scientific and technical education and training in measures for the identification, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and its components and provide support for such education and training for the specific needs of developing countries.* This project provided scientific training to enhance the abilities of natural resource managers to be able to capably support a scientific monitoring programme in their protected areas, and adequately train their staff to collect data for a comprehensive ecological management strategy for their protected areas.

### **End-user**

The project was designed so that the Southern African Wildlife College would offer Fellowships to previously disadvantaged middle-level protected area managers.

## **4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the project were:

1. to provide two-week field placements (Fellowships) on Earthwatch field research projects to 60 people over 3 years;
2. to recruit for the Fellowships from those who are undergoing training at the Southern African Wildlife College;
3. to brief each Fellow fully before joining the project;
4. to give each Fellow an intensive training in the methodologies and techniques of the research such as taxonomy, emphasising the close links between biodiversity research, conservation and park management;
5. to integrate such field placements within the course structure offered by the Southern African Wildlife College.

### **Were the project objectives revised**

No

### **Have the objectives been achieved**

Objectives 1, 3 and 4 have been fully achieved, and 2 and 5 have been partially achieved. 60 Fellowships were awarded over 3 years, though delays in course start-up at the College meant that they were not chosen from among those who were undergoing training at the College, but from the target constituency of the College.

The construction of the Wildlife College was delayed due to the funders, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, requesting approval from the office of Reconstruction and Development Programme, and the endorsement of the

Southern African Development Community, before approving the funding for the construction of the College.

Further delays followed. The appointment of staff to continue the development of the business and training aspects of the College was delayed; as well as the disruption following the untimely death of the first Director of the College, Dr Joe Venter. The Director's post then had to be readvertised and generally the new staff took some time to settle in and adjust to the requirements of developing a training College from the start. In addition the acquisition of bursary funding for courses to be presented at the College was delayed.

Compounding these delays was the fact that, by the time the fee structure was finalised for the courses, regional conservation bodies had allocated their budgets and there was consequently no budget for delegates to attend the first planned courses.

The first programme of short courses did not start until July 1997, and the certificate course until February 1998. Hence, whilst it was possible for the College to provide Earthwatch Darwin Fellowships to its target group, it was not able to integrate such field placements within the course structure.

## 5 PROJECT OUTPUTS

### **What output targets were specified**

- 6a 60 African National Park staff receiving research training
- 6b 2 weeks of 'on the job' training received by each trainee

These have been achieved. In the first two years four Fellowships were awarded to community conservationists from areas near the College. This is in keeping with the emphasis the College places on community conservation issues, both in its courses and its own management structure.

### **Additional outputs**

As detailed in section 4, due to delays at the College it was not possible for the College to integrate the Fellowships with its course structure. However, during this critical period, the Fellowships provided the College a unique opportunity to establish its profile despite the delays, and to reach out to disadvantaged park managers, scientific and training staff, thereby raising its own profile with the organisations who will nominate staff to attend training courses at the College.

## 6 PROJECT OPERATION

### Training projects

Earthwatch Darwin Fellows were selected by the College from their target constituency, and they joined ongoing field research projects. The following projects were used:

- botanical inventory in South West Cameroon. The Fellows worked with Dr Martin Cheek of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in undertaking a botanical inventory of the forests in south-west Cameroon. Specimens were collected using Kew standard presses and techniques, and Fellows were also given the opportunity to work on the databases used for creating detailed digitalised maps of the distribution of species of conservation importance;
- research into ecology of the Nile crocodile in Natal. Working alongside the Natal Parks Board, this project undertook research observing the behaviour, assessing the population size and evaluating the diet of the Nile crocodile in the St Lucia wetlands in South Africa;
- research into freshwater lake ecology of Lake Naivasha, Kenya. Fellows undertook field tasks such as operation of electronic light meters for measurement of light and oxygen concentration, the collection of both plankton and bottom-dwelling animals, and the recording of plant species in quadrats in shallow water. Observation, identification and counting of bird and mammal species took place at the lake and in the adjoining Hell's Gate National Park. Samples were analysed in laboratory, and evening lectures were given;
- research into black lemur behaviour and conservation, Madagascar. Working alongside Dr Josephine Andrews, University College, London, Fellows took part in monitoring the size and composition of, and collect basic ecological/behavioural data from, black lemur groups in Lokobe Forest

Reserve and in converted forest on Nosy Be island. Fellows also monitored the development and effects of tourism through comparison of lemur groups in disturbed and undisturbed sites, and visitor surveys.

- botanical survey in Kenya's Taita Hills, led by botanists from the National Museums of Kenya, aiming to obtain botanical information in the foothills of the Taita Hills, and information on the use of the flora by local communities. Orientation lectures and demonstrations at the East African Herbarium preceded the field work which includes spotting material, recording data, collecting, tagging and pressing and preparing specimens.
- behavioural and ecological data collection on black rhino in Zimbabwe's Sinamatella Intensive Protection Zone, led by Dr Sky Alibhai of the University of London. Working with national park staff in Hwange, Fellows take part in gathering data on distribution and range of the black rhino, undertaking tasks such as observation of rhino behaviour, photography and use of GPS/navigation, and data compilation.



## 7 PROJECT IMPACT

The Fellowships enabled a large number of aspiring protected area managers, trainee technicians and in one case a training officer, to expand their understanding of the role of scientific studies in the ecological management of protected areas. In addition, they assist the participants to implement practical ecological monitoring programmes which will provide the data to guide sound management practice in these areas.

The training provided was on-the-job training, designed to enhance participants' capacity to undertake current responsibilities. The majority will therefore have returned to existing employment as intended. A full listing of their current positions appears in Section 10.

### **Wider impacts**

*Good collaboration between Earthwatch and the Southern African Wildlife College has been achieved, though this has been difficult to maintain throughout the period of the contract. The College is now under its fourth Director (including an Acting Director) during the period of the contract. This has placed a burden on the College's administrative-level staff, which has been handled extremely well. Earthwatch and the College are continuing to work together on further Fellowships, following the same pattern which has been established during the course of the contract.*

*Pan-African networking has been encouraged, through the use of other funding to bring conservation professionals from relevant backgrounds from outside southern Africa to the project placements.*

*Private sector involvement has been achieved, through the continuation of Fellowship funding by Mitsubishi. Mitsubishi have agreed to fund Earthwatch Fellowships in South Africa, and to let the College choose Fellows from those undergoing training at the College.*

*The profile of the Southern African Wildlife College has been established, despite problems which delayed the start of the College's courses. The College was able to provide Fellowships to its target constituency before the physical structure of the College was complete.*

## **8 SUSTAINABILITY**

The project was fully funded.

### **Was the Darwin project a catalyst?**

During the three years of Darwin funding, in-kind contributions were not sought for this programme. Funding has been sought in order to continue the programme beyond the duration of the contract. To this end the Darwin funding has acted as a catalyst in attracting corporate sponsorship from Mitsubishi, who are expected to fund 2 Fellows in 1998, which the partners are seeking to increase for next year.

## **9 OUTCOMES IN THE ABSENCE OF DARWIN FUNDING**

Without Darwin funding this project would not have proceeded. The beneficiaries of this project would therefore not have received Fellowships, and the College would not have been able to offer training for the first three years.

## **10 KEY POINTS**

### **Key Success Factors**

Earthwatch has been able to provide 60 Fellowships through the Southern African Wildlife College. It has established the Fellowships as a training tool for protected area managers, and established a partnership between Earthwatch and SAWC which will continue beyond the duration of the contract with private sector funding.

### **Main problems**

The main problem encountered during this project has been the delay at the College. This has led to two main drawbacks:

- the College has not had a cohort of resident students at the College to select from, and thus has not been as closely involved with selection as would be desirable. Selection has therefore been referred to regional parks boards. While this has allowed the College to become established as a training provider with these institutions, it has meant selection has been passed to those who have not been so familiar with the programme. Efforts made by Earthwatch and the College to ascertain the ideal project/Fellow match, and the accumulated benefits of experience were therefore dissipated.
- the College was not able to incorporate the Fellowships into the College's residential courses, as these were not running.

### **Key Lessons**

The delays in the College's establishment were unavoidable, and beyond the scope of this project to correct. Other lessons learned were in matching the Fellows closely to the disciplines of the projects. As the training benefits for park staff were better understood, SAWC was able to make recommendations to

regional parks boards in order to match Fellows much more closely with projects. Key lessons include:

- Decentralising selection, forced on the project by delays at the College, means that control can be lost over the briefing process, and the selection of the most suitable candidates.
- When selecting projects for field placements the immediate relationship between the research and the Fellow's daily work needs to be evident.
- Teams from too many South African ethnic backgrounds can be hard to manage, and the teams which mixed most successfully had a minority of South Africans within an international team.
- The importance of remaining flexible in the face of problems - this meant that the partners were able to continue running a successful programme, despite problems affecting the original strategy.
- Written reporting skills of some of the less well qualified park staff were weak, and alternative forms of feedback are necessary to overcome this.

The experience of the project does not imply a need to review arrangements for developing and managing projects funded by the Darwin Initiative.

## **11 PROJECT CONTACTS**

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