



Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Annual Report

1. Darwin Project Information

Project title	<i>Conservation Management of Peatland Biodiversity in Eastern Europe</i>
Country(ies)	<i>Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine,</i>
Contractor	<i>Peatland Biodiversity Consortium (Scotland)</i>
Project Reference No.	<i>162/07/038</i>
Grant Value	<i>£149,749</i>
Start/Finishing dates	<i>May 1998 / December 2001</i>
Reporting period	<i>01 April 2000 - 31 March 2001</i>

2. Project Background

Location and circumstances of the project

The project is based in Scotland and involves collaboration between six Scottish organisations representing the public, private and voluntary sectors which together comprise the Peatland Biodiversity Consortium. All of the Consortium members have hosted project activities but the principal administrative base is the University of Dundee. There have been collaborations with eight other organisations in Scotland and western Europe, and with approximately 50 government organisations, research institutes, universities and NGOs in 13 countries in central and eastern Europe (CEE).

The problem that the project aims to tackle

Natural peatlands are complex systems, rich in plant and animal diversity, which account for more than 50% of all terrestrial and freshwater wetlands. Their peat deposits have accumulated over thousands of years but can be extracted or converted to agricultural use over decades. As a result, the peatlands of western Europe are severely damaged. High quality peatland habitats have survived in central and eastern Europe (CEE) but are now under increasing pressure associated with rapid political and socio-economic change. The current situation imposes international demands on these countries to conserve biodiversity and at the same time restricts their capacity to address the problem, partly due to financial limitations but also due to gaps in expertise, lack of experience and restricted access to information.

3. Project Objectives

Purpose of the project

Scotland retains more of its original peatland resource than most other parts of western Europe, although this is significantly damaged; and the Consortium organisations collectively have a long and wide-ranging record of internationally excellent work in peatland ecology and conservation management. This project set out to use Scottish expertise to assist in enabling CEE countries to take cross-sectoral measures to conserve the biodiversity of their peatlands and thus to fulfil their obligations under the Biodiversity Convention (particularly in implementation of Articles 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13). At its core was to be a series of three training courses in Scotland for those people from the CEE countries who were best placed to apply the experience gained to the conservation of their own peatlands. The process was to be promoted further by assisting delegates to prepare proposals for follow-up workshops to address the most urgent peatland conservation problems in their own countries, and by offering financial support for these workshops.

Project objectives

- (1) to develop and deliver a tailored capacity-building training course for key individuals in peatland conservation management (e.g. policy-makers, scientists, managers, practitioners)
- (2) to demonstrate best practice in peatland conservation from scientific principles to practical applications
- (3) to establish lasting partnerships in conservation management between the UK and target countries and strengthen the existing international support network with in Europe
- (4) to raise awareness of the roles of both statutory controls and voluntary sector contributions in conservation and public awareness
- (5) to initiate teaching cascades within east European institutions, and promote transfer of technology, ideas and practice
- (6) to develop context-specific and internationally approved solutions to biodiversity management problems in eastern Europe
- (7) to advise and promote local, sustainable and robust peatland conservation management programmes
- (8) to continue and expand on this initial training and support programme in a proactive manner with institutions and organisations in eastern Europe

Modifications to the operational plan over the last year

The operational plan has been modified insofar as an exit strategy appropriate to the outcomes of the training programme has been finalised, and an extension to the period of the project has been agreed by the Darwin Secretariat in order to allow this to be completed.

4. Progress

Brief history of the project to the beginning of this reporting period

Darwin funding was finalised and staff appointed in May 1998. The first Scottish training course took place between 11th and 31st October 1998 and was attended by eleven delegates representing seven CEE countries. There were follow-up workshops in five of these countries during the period 12 March – 10 May 1999. Twenty delegates attended the second Scottish training course from 1st to 21st August 1999. Participants were drawn from eight CEE countries, including three not represented in 1998, and completion of three follow-up workshops was reported before 31 March 2000.

Summary of progress over the last year

Timetable milestones achieved during the period 01 April 2000 to 31 March 2001 (deviations from the agreed baseline timetable are described in *italic* type):

- Five further 1999/2000 workshops in Belarus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia and Slovakia completed
- Reports on all (eight) 1999/2000 workshops received
- All agreed workshop funding transferred to host organisations
- Domestic arrangements for 2000 UK course completed
- 25 delegates attended a three-week course, 13th August – 2nd September 2000; *the target was for 13-20 delegates to attend a 2-3 week course in October*
- Final version of Training Pack assembled and distributed to delegates
- Programmes agreed for eleven 2000/2001 Workshops in Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Ukraine; *the target was 15 workshops for the Programme as a whole and 13 were already complete so that the projected total number of follow-up workshops was 24 (9 over target) at this stage*
- Contracts and funding arrangements for all 2000/2001 workshops agreed; *deadline for completion of workshops was brought forward from April to 31st January 2001*
- Contracts exchanged and funding released for ten 2000/2001 workshops completed during the period 18th October 2000 to 31st January 2001

Additional activities included:

- One representative attended and contributed to the Polish workshop (BAAC travel funding)
- Project leader sponsored by Wetlands International to attend meeting in the Czech Republic to initiate links between PBP and the Central European Peatland Project

Account of training work during the last year

Selection criteria for participants

Invitations to nominate candidates to participate in the 2000/2001 phase of the Programme were distributed to 96 individuals attached to organisations working in peatland conservation in the 13 target CEE countries. Sixty candidates submitted application forms endorsed by nominating organisations. 25 trainees were selected by the project's steering committee on the basis of five criteria:

- (a) candidate's current work in peatland conservation
- (b) reasons for wishing to participate in the Programme
- (c) quality of outline plan for follow-up workshop
- (d) ability in English language
- (e) balanced representation of countries (for this course and for the Programme as a whole)

Training methodologies

The course timetable and 'skeleton' of the Training Pack were submitted to ECTF in October 2000. Five wide-ranging themes were covered and material was presented in two classroom formats (as lectures and workshops) and in the field. Written and verbal guidance on the formats was provided. Delegates were introduced to each other, to the University environment and to the idea of working together by exploring the various facilities available to them in small mixed-nationality groups. Their peatland interests were presented in posters they had prepared beforehand; these formed the focus of a reception for course contributors, sponsors and press on the first evening and remained on display throughout the course. The essentials of peatland ecosystem function were presented in a series of lectures with the addition of an impromptu requested presentation on the application of hydrological theory to real management problems, which formed an effective link to the consideration of peatland management techniques in the field that followed. Thereafter, emphasis on workshop sessions was increased so that by the time delegates prepared their own workshop plans they understood the approach required. Workshop proposals were prepared by single-nationality groups with support from one "Scottish mentor" shared between 2-3 groups. Part of the final week of the course was spent considering the whole story of afforestation and conservation of the Flow Country peatlands, which was interpreted by delegates as a sobering lesson in pitfalls to be avoided.

Results

Programmes were developed for the following workshops in CEE countries:

Country (No. participants) Dates	Workshop title and purpose
Slovenia (20) 18-19 October 2000	<u>Ljubljansko barje – the protection and educational opportunities of its peatlands</u> To involve the Ljubljana Botanical Garden in active management of peatland sites in Ljubljansko barje; and to increase the involvement of the Botanical Garden in public education about the importance of such sites
Slovakia (46) 21-22 October 2000	<u>Conservation and management of peatlands in Slovakia: conservation and wise use of the peatlands of Horna Orava Region</u> To establish an institutional framework (platform) for enabling the active involvement of stakeholders in the process of preparing a comprehensive trans-border “Peatland Action Plan for the Orava River Basin”.
Estonia (20-30) 26-27 October 2000	<u>“Mires in Estonian school programme” – supplementary materials and possibilities. A training course for teachers</u> To increase Estonian schoolteachers’ knowledge about peatlands; to provide relevant teaching materials and the approved on-going training course “The Contemporary “Toolkit” for Introducing Mires in Estonian Schools”
Czech Rep. (47) 31 Oct – 01 Nov 2000	<u>Perspectives of peatland protection in the Czech Republic</u> To update the National Programme for Protection of Peatland Biodiversity in the Czech Republic proposed by PBP in 1999
Poland (26) November 2000	<u>Review and development of peatland management planning in Poland</u> To develop skills of the participants for creating more effective management plans in peatland nature reserves, national parks and NGO nature reserves
Latvia (24) 15-17 Nov 2000	<u>Towards long-term sustainable development of Teici Nature Reserve and surrounding wetlands</u> Establishment of the Consultative Board of Teici Nature Reserve and Surrounding Areas to ensure long-term sustainable development of Teici Nature Reserve and surrounding wetlands.
Bulgaria (31) 27-29 Nov 2000	<u>Mires of Bulgaria: biodiversity, conservation and management</u> To develop proposals for conservation of key Bulgarian peatland areas which urgently need protection
Russia (100) 22-25 January 2001	<u>National strategic action plan for peatland conservation</u> To promote the conservation and sustainable use of peatland biodiversity in the Russian Federation
Belarus (25) 29-30 January 2001	<u>Assessment, protection and sustainable use of the transboundary peatlands of Belarus (based on the example of cultural and natural heritage “Avgustovskaya Puscha”)</u> To develop concrete proposals for protection and management of the “Avgustovskaja Puscha”, a transboundary territory shared by Belarus, Poland and Lithuania
Ukraine <i>Planned for January 2001</i>	<u>Protected peatlands in Ukraine: problems and solutions for nature conservation and restoration</u> To identify problems concerning (especially protected) peatlands in Ukraine and to discuss solutions to these problems, drawing special attention to setting a national action plan for peatland conservation

Difficulties encountered during the year

- The workshop in Ukraine did not take place as planned due to contractual difficulties. Following a model that had been successful in 1998, UNDP was to administer finances and to support publication of proceedings. However, the contract with UNDP was never finalised and their support was eventually withdrawn. Following consultation with the Darwin Secretariat and the alumni involved, it is hoped that this workshop will be held in June 2001 with assistance from another UK project in the Ukraine.
- Insufficient staff resources prevented timely evaluation of outputs from the CEE workshops. However, when this was eventually completed in May 2001 the results indicated reasonable agreement between targets and achievements and a need to pursue outputs from only 4 (16%) of the 24 planned workshops. Apart from “Ukraine 2001” (see above), it has now been established that all workshops commissioned have taken place.
- Bureaucratic delays in issue of an invitation by a Russian Ministry prevented acquisition of a visa in time to allow the project leader to take up an invitation from WWF to attend the Russian workshop and thus, also, to be at the workshop in Belarus. However, these activities were additional to the basic objectives of the project.

Enhancements to project design

Changes to methods

The meeting of the Steering Committee meeting on 17 December 1999 considered members’ collective impressions of the 1999 Scottish course together with verbal and written (Appendix 1) feedback from delegates, and as a result various adjustments to approach, content and organisation were actioned. Unfortunately, feedback from ECTF was not received until the second half of December 2000, 3.5 months after the end of the final Scottish course, so that this could not be taken into account in course planning.

The main changes implemented were:

- “Planting” of additional “articulate questioners” within the group to stimulate discussion. Since Committee experience of the CEE situation is limited, the existing Austrian contributor and a senior Russian contact were enlisted to help in this respect during parts of the course. When course applications were considered, it was decided to create an extra full place for an applicant who appeared (and later proved) to be an ideal candidate for this role.
- The new interactive session in 1999 had been successful in stimulating delegate participation in identifying their own problems and positive ways of tackling them. However, delegates still tended to design their own meetings as conferences where information flow was principally from presenters to recipients. Therefore, additional parts of the course syllabus were presented in workshop format, and a specialist consultant was engaged to conduct a session that focused specifically on workshop processes.

- Description of the effects of grazing of Scottish bogs by sheep, considered irrelevant by delegates to their own situations, was felt by the committee to be justifiable as a management issue for Scotland but that increased effort should be made to draw parallels with e.g. grazing of fens in CEE countries. This was developed into a new Ecosystem Function topic entitled “mires as cultural landscapes”.
- A presentation from WWF Russia on potential sources of funding for projects in CEE countries was added.
- Instead of what had proved to be a long and tedious session of verbal presentations on the peatland conservation situations in delegates’ own countries, this material was prepared beforehand in poster format and displayed in the room used for coffee breaks. This freed a full day for interactive work.
- The design of the application form for workshop grants was changed; the order in which the information was requested was reversed and a number of explanatory notes added.
- Closer support was offered during preparation of workshop proposals and this reduced (but did not eliminate) the need for re-writing after evaluation of the proposals by the steering committee.
- Availability of accommodation in Sutherland dictated that the long field excursion should take place in the third, rather than the second week of the course. This had the advantage that workshop proposals could be considered by evaluators over several days, but may have contributed to the observation that the “knitting” of the 1999 group that occurred during the field excursion was much less complete in 2000.
- In order to avoid recurrence of problems with equipment provided in the lecture rooms, for which maintenance was not normally required during the University vacation, a formal arrangement for technical support was instigated.

Indicators for measuring achievements

- Evaluation of workshop reports against contract criteria was undertaken by steering committee members and indicated reasonable correspondence with the objectives set in most cases (see also “Difficulties” above).
- As in previous years, feedback was obtained from delegates at the end of the Scottish course (Appendix 1).
- “End of programme” questionnaires were distributed to all alumni and their nominating organisations in early 2001 (Appendices 2, 3). These focused on impact and legacy issues including networking, and responses were generally positive although they varied between countries. It was especially encouraging to hear from one of the 1999 delegates that he had used communication skills acquired in Scotland to negotiate a change in Polish legislation favouring peatland conservation.

Exit strategy

At the outset of the project, four exit strategies that were not mutually exclusive were envisaged: (a) to publish the refined and up-dated course material as a Darwin book for use in other locations; (b) to obtain sponsorship to convene a returning conference of all participants; (c) to continue targeting eastern Europe if further need could be

demonstrated; (d) to target other areas e.g. SE Asia. The Steering Committee began to develop the appropriate exit strategy in March 1999, and the following actions were instigated during 2000:

- Input of alumni to formulation of the exit strategy canvassed at the Millennium Wetlands Event, by mail and at the end of the 2000 Scottish training course.
- Editorial sub-committee established to formulate objectives for a Darwin PBP publication, culminating in production of an outline (Appendix 4) and first draft with substantial contributions from alumni
- Discussion initiated with Wetlands International on the possibility of linking the exit strategy of the Darwin programme to their continuing Central European Peatland Project (CEPP), culminating in planning of a joint CEPP and Darwin PBP Returners' conference in Parnu, Estonia, 17th to 22nd April 2001. All alumni invited and approximately 40 Darwin delegates expected to attend.

Timetable (workplan) for the next reporting period

<i>Task</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Completion</i>
Pursue outstanding items related to workshops	May	July
Review of remaining workshop reports against contract criteria	May	August
Explore possibility of Ukraine workshop in 2001	May	August
Editing PBP book	June	September
Printing and publication of book	September	December
Preparation of final report	November	December

5. Partnerships

Collaboration occurred in nomination of participants by organisations in CEE countries and their provision of facilities for follow-up workshops. The only problem encountered was in securing a second input from UNDP Kyiv (see above); several organisations reacted very positively to collaboration (Appendix 3).

New links has been established with the Wetlands International Central European Peatland Project (CEPP) and CABI in the UK; outcomes are the joint PBP/CEPP conference in Estonia and collaboration with CABI in implementation of the Ukraine workshop. The latter link was established at Darwin seminars.

6. Impact and Sustainability

Project profile in CEE countries: efforts to promote the work

- One representative of the Consortium visited Romania (BAAC and local funding) in order to raise the profile of the Darwin programme in that country.
- Publicity associated with workshops

Evidence for increased interest and capacity for biodiversity resulting from the project

- Three alumni are now represent their countries in formulating a regional peatland conservation strategy for central Europe
- Feedback (Appendices 2, 3) indicates different levels of capacity and networking in different countries.

Exit strategies

The objectives of the returners' conference are to review progress in CEE peatland biodiversity conservation during the Darwin programme, to identify un-met needs and possible ways to address these, and to cement the network that has been established.

The Darwin book will record the mechanism and outcomes of the programme (Appendix 4).

Table 1. Project Outputs (According to Standard Output Measures)

Code No.	Quantity	Description
6A	25	Nationalities of trainees: Belarus (4) ; Bulgaria (1) ; Czech Republic (1) ; Estonia (1) ; Latvia (2) ; Poland (2) ; Romania (1) ; Russia (5) ; Slovakia (3) ; Slovenia (1) ; Ukraine (4) All delegates attended a full-time course lasting for 3 weeks, involving lectures, workshops and field excursions in Scotland.
6B	75	25 x 3 person-weeks of training provided.
7	1	Third version of Training Pack
8	2 approx.	One member of steering committee invited to Romania to publicise the project; another member contributed to the Darwin workshop in Poland.
14A	15	Workshops organised to cascade training and address national problems in CEE countries, some 2 days some 3 days long, involving at least 530 people in total
14B	530	
15D	2	Press releases from Dundee University Press Office on 11 August 2000 and Scottish Natural Heritage Golspie on 23 August 2000.
16A	2	The function of newsletters was served by web sites based at Stirling University (Scottish course and the Programme in general), and in Estonia (returners' conference planned for April 2001)
17B		Dissemination networks of the Darwin PBP and the International Mire Conservation Group enhanced Others?
23		Consortium organisations: donations of staff time, office and teaching accommodation, staff travel to committee meetings
23		Hilary to Romania
23		British Airways: return travel to Romania for one person, to Poland for one person
23		Additional lecturers (in kind) from St Andrews University, Vienna University, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, H.A.P. Ingram
23		CEE country organisations: donations of staff time, office and teaching accommodation, staff travel to workshop

Deviations from initial Project Outputs Schedule

- Achievements are compared with targets in Section 4
- Additional output 8: visits to CEE countries were not envisaged when the project was designed. All visits were by invitation and based on external funding.
- Additional output 14: Workshops in CEE countries were originally placed in category 6. Current guidance states that workshops of less than 3 days' duration should be placed in category 14, and in the absence of the specific advice requested at the last annual monitoring exercise, this instruction is followed here since some of the workshops lasted for only 2 days. However, it is stressed that these workshops are central to the work of the project and serve a much more significant purpose than mere "dissemination".
- Omitted outputs 15, 18, 19: No information available on press releases, TV and radio coverage in eastern Europe.
- Omitted outputs 15C/D: articles in UK press/magazines/newsletters no longer appear in the guidance for category 15
- Omitted outputs 18B/D, 19B/D: no radio or TV coverage in the UK achieved this year; there was a radio interview in 1998 and it is difficult to offer an appealing new story about repeat courses

Table 2: Publications

Type * (e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (title, author, year)	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. contact address, website)	Cost £
Book	Stanová, V. (ed.) (2000) <i>Rašeliniská Slovenska</i> (<i>Peatlands of Slovakia</i>). 194 pp. (Slovakian with English summaries).	DAPHNE-Inštitút aplikovanej ekologie, Bratislava.	ISBN 80-96 7471-9- 3 Stanova	
Book	Szurdoki, E. (ed.) (2000) <i>Peat Habitats in</i> <i>Hungary: Science,</i> <i>Protection and</i> <i>Protection Technology.</i> 184 pp. (Hungarian with English abstracts).	Budapest – Gömörzölös – Miskolc.	ISBN 963 00 5536 8 Szurdoki	
Booklet	<i>Improvement of</i> <i>Peatland Conservation</i> <i>in Ukraine. Proceedings</i> <i>of the Ukrainian</i> <i>workshop of the Darwin</i> <i>Initiative (1999) 72 pp.</i> (Ukrainian with English summaries)	Kiev.	631.615:338.24 Parchuk	
Book	(The collection of articles of workshop in Russia) (2000)	Tula	Volkova	

7. Project Expenditure

Table 3: Project expenditure during the reporting period

Item	Budget	Expenditure
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The information necessary to allocate expenditure to these budget heads is not currently available. There have been no significant changes in the pattern of disbursement of funds from that given in the original project schedule.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons

- Quantitative evaluation of the Programme is in terms of number of countries reached, number of delegates visiting Scotland, number of follow-up workshops conducted and number of people attending follow-up workshops.
- The CEE perspective on achievements is indicated by the results of the various questionnaire surveys (Appendices 2, 3).
- One of the lessons learned is that the Programme should not continue in its present form, since the expertise of the CEE peatland community has moved on and the capacity of the Consortium to continue to deliver the Scottish course is questionable. Therefore, lessons will not be incorporated in the future of this particular project. Other lessons will no doubt emerge as editing of “The Book” proceeds.

9. Author(s) / Date

Olivia Bragg / 31 May 2001