

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Conservation biology and Genetics of the Western Lowland Gorilla in Gabon
Country	Wales, UK; Gabon
Organisation	University of Wales, Cardiff
Project Ref. No.	08/044
Report date	April 2002 - Oct 31, 2002

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Genetic analysis of gorilla populations: During the course of this year, DNA has been extracted and sequenced from the pan-African gorilla hair sample set and from faeces collected throughout Gabon. All faecal material has been stored at CIRMF and DNA extractions have been carried out on site. Initial results have already formed the basis for a study that we have submitted to the Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B. When complete, the recently accumulated data set will be the largest survey of genetic variation in wild gorillas. The microsatellite analysis of the Pan-African sample set is the first study of nuclear genetic variation in natural populations.

Technology transfer, outreach and conservation education: The Darwin research counterpart Mireille Johnson and one of the faculty members in the Department of Biology at USTM (Christiane Atteke) both spent a 2 month training period in Cardiff with the Darwin research Associate, Nicola Anthony. Mireille attended a conference held by the Society for Conservation Biology at Canterbury University, Kent whereas Christiane attended the annual Darwin meeting in London. The Darwin research associate also presented work at meetings in the U.K., Germany and the U.S. A book chapter on the use of non-invasive samples in primatology co-written by Darwin personnel is currently in press and the project leader has presented elements of the Darwin-generated data in four seminars. The conservation biology curriculum was developed from a second year to third year level, in line with departmental plans to integrate conservation biology into the university curriculum at the licence level. This course development was carried out with three USTM faculty (Patrick Mickala, Christiane Atteke and Daniel Obame). A CD of course contents was produced and distributed. Five USTM faculty members participated in a 3-day workshop on practical exercises for students in the field and the 3 named faculty also participated in a 2-month training course at CIRMF in basic molecular biology techniques. Patrick and Christiane co-instructed a one-day introduction in conservation biology to natural resource students at the Ecole National des Eaux et Forêts (ENEF), Cap Esterias, Libreville.

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 effect the budget and timetable of project activities. Have any of these issues been discussed with the Department and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement? Owing to a major strike at the university, which began in October 2001 and continued to the end of the 2001/2 academic session, it proved impossible to teach a conservation biology course in 2002 to students at USTM. However, as the aim of the third and final year of the Darwin Initiative in Gabon was to transfer course materials to USTM faculty, much of the time of the Darwin research associate and project leader was spent working intensively on course contents with the three named biology faculty.

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures. Due to the unanticipated expense of non-invasive genetic studies and late arrival of some samples, more money has been required for research than was originally anticipated. Teaching funds were used for faculty training programs.