

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	E1 DPO 1
Project Title	Land snails as models for biodiversity assessment in Sri Lanka
Country	Sri Lanka
UK Organisation	The Natural History Museum, London
Collaborator(s)	Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources, Sri Lanka
Report date	17.12.2004 for April to September 2004
Report No.	2

- 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).**

Hasantha Sanjeeva made a significant contribution to the development of our interactive CD-ROM and received extensive training on image preparation and computerisation. We now have two part-time volunteers working with us on this project objective.

Status of molluscan research papers:

1. Naggs, F. 2004. *Lack of local information allows invasion of slug and snail pests in Sri Lanka*. Case study 30 published online at: www.bionet-intl.org/case_studies. Now selected for inclusion in the *Taxonomy: targeting invasives* booklet, as "a case study judged to highlight the critical role of taxonomy clearly and powerfully" launched at the World Conservation Congress, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2004. Published by BioNET-INTERNATIONAL in association with the Global Invasive Species Programme and the Invasive Species Specialist Group of IUCN-SSC.
2. Naggs, F, Raheem, D, Ranawana, K., and Mapatuna, Y. In Press. The Darwin Initiative project on Sri Lankan land snails: patterns of diversity in Sri Lankan forests. *Raffles Bulletin of Zoology, Special Supplement: Biodiversity in Sri Lanka*.
3. Raheem, D., and Naggs, F. Submitted July 2004. The Sri Lankan endemic semi-slug *Ratnadvipia* (Limacoidea: Ariophantidae) and a new species from southwestern Sri Lanka. Accepted for publication in *Systematics and Biodiversity* subject to minor changes.
4. Wade, C., Mordan, P.B., and Naggs, F. Submitted April 2004. Evolutionary relationships among the Pulmonate land snails and slugs (Pulmonata, Stylommatophora). Accepted *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* subject to changes.
5. Naggs, F. and Raheem, D. (Submitted November 2004). Sri Lankan snail diversity: faunal origins and future prospects. Accepted for publication in the *Records of the Western Australian Museum Special Supplement* subject to minor changes. Abstract published in: Wells, F. Editor 2004. *Molluscan megadiversity: sea, land and freshwater*. Pages 103-104. World Congress of Malacology, Perth, Western Australia.

Paper based on collaborative support with other systematic groups:

Bossuyt, F., Meegagaskumbura, M., Beenaerts, N., Gower, D.J., Pethiyagoda, R., Roelants, K., Mannaert, A., Wilkinson, M., Bahir, M.M., Manamendra-Arachchi, K., Ng, P.K.L., Schneider, C.J., Oommen, O.V., and Milinkovitch, M.C. October 2004. Local endemism within the Western Ghats-Sri Lanka biodiversity hotspot. *Science* **306**: 479-481.

Presentation at international meeting:

International Malacological Congress Perth, Western Australia July 11th –16th, 2004. Invited presentation by Fred Naggs: Sri Lankan snail diversity: faunal origins and future prospects.

Presentation at IUCN Sri Lanka meeting:

National workshop on current status of invertebrate fauna in Sri Lanka held in Colombo on 5th August 2004. Organised by Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources in collaboration with IUCN, The World Conservation Union, funded by Protected Area Management & Wildlife Conservation Project. Invited presentation titled: The current status of and future prospects for Sri Lankan landsnails by F. Naggs.

Press coverage in Sri Lanka:

Front page notice and leading 1¼ page article in Life Style Supplement, the *Sunday Island* – a leading national newspaper.

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.**Political events in Sri Lanka and our future strategy**

The elections held in Sri Lanka on 2nd April 2004 resulted in the incumbent United National Party (UNP) losing the election to an alliance called the United Peoples' Freedom Alliance (UPFA). The change in government was unexpected because the UNP held a parliamentary majority and an expected 3-year term of office. However, the President exercised her executive powers to dissolve parliament and call national elections. Apart from enacting nationalistic legislation to satisfy what is widely perceived as the extremist Sinhala Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) partner in the Alliance, government legislative processes have come to a standstill. Although establishment of the National Biodiversity Authority and Rainforest & Biodiversity Institute had cross party support prior to the election no progress has been made on establishing the National Biodiversity Act. The current administration is divided and unstable and there are no active advocates of the Bill remaining in government to see it through Parliament. As both the Minister at the Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources and his Biodiversity Adviser, Rohan Pethiyagoda, were replaced following the election we do not have partners in the current administration. Government officials were unable/unwilling to meet Fred Naggs on his July visit to Sri Lanka (appointments were made but cancelled at short notice). Acting on the advice of Rohan Pethiyagoda we will not be attempting to pursue a biodiversity programme with the current administration independently of Rohan Pethiyagoda's own efforts to restore biodiversity to the political agenda.

In the light of these events we have had to modify our strategy. Our partnership in Sri Lanka is now with the Wildlife Heritage Trust, which is headed by Rohan Pethiyagoda. We are pressing ahead and broadening the taxonomic coverage in Sri Lanka by supporting groups at the Natural History Museum in London that are working on other taxa and have supported collaboration with other overseas groups working on the Sri Lankan biota. However, we

recognise that the lack of support from the current administration is a significant setback in furthering biodiversity work in Sri Lanka and we do not have the official contacts that facilitated the issuing of permits in the past.

We also recognise that Sri Lanka is likely to remain politically unstable for the foreseeable future and are currently pursuing a new initiative to establish a regional centre of expertise and resources in a country that has a more stable political record. Linked to the current project we have established a robust relationship with Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand and consider that the way forward will be to develop regional capacity at Chulalongkorn University. Our future plans are to work with partners in other countries in the region without being too vulnerable to political upheaval or constrained by political measures in individual countries. Although Thailand has its own political problems these have been of a different order of magnitude to those of many of its neighbours.

Visit of Hasantha Sanjeewa

The arrival of Hasantha Sanjeewa was delayed for almost one month because our application for his work permit was only allowed after going through the appeal mechanism. There was additional expenditure resulting from this but we expect to keep within overall budget.

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

Political situation in Sri Lanka reported

Advice sought on work permit application

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: yes, in April 2004

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no major change on current project

3. 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 the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**