

Darwin Scholarship Report for Dr Zelealem Tefera Ashenafi (EIDPS04)

Award held by Professor N Leader-Williams, Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), University of Kent, for 12 calendar months during 2003-2004.

Background

The purpose of this Scholarship was to assist a former Darwin Scholar, Zelealem Tefera Ashenafi. Ashenafi had worked previously on Darwin Initiative Award No 04/5132 held and managed by the Zoological Society of London, but run with scientific input from DICE. This Darwin Initiative project had focussed on a common property resource management regime that had successfully conserved much endemic highland biodiversity in the Guassa area of Menz in the Central Highlands of Ethiopia. Interestingly, the Guassa area also contained the world's second largest population of Ethiopian wolves, and the largest population of Ethiopian wolves remaining outside a formally protected area.

Subsequent to completion of the initial award, Dr Zelealem Tefera wrote up his PhD at DICE with co-supervision from the Zoological Society of London. The resulting PhD thesis represented an important piece of multidisciplinary research that saw Dr Ashenafi secure DICE's prize for the best research student of his year. Hence, the Scholarship was sought by DICE to provide Dr Ashenafi with the chance to take his work further by:

- writing a general management plan for the interesting and unique Guassa area that kept the local community in control of a community-managed conservation area; and
- preparing papers for publication from his PhD thesis.

Outputs

Management plan: work began, and considerable drafting was achieved on the Guassa General Management Plan, during the year that Dr Ashenafi held a Darwin Scholarship. It has taken a while since the Darwin Scholarship to reach a final draft of the plan, because of the stakeholder consultations necessary to ensure that the process and the plan were community led. A copy of the final draft of the Guassa General Management Plan, which is now ready for approval by the Regional Authorities, will be sent shortly.

The plan draws very heavily on the research carried out in the original Darwin Initiative project and subsequently written up in Dr Ashenafi's PhD, for which Darwin is appropriately credited. The subsequent community consultations, and consequent iterations of the Guassa General Management Plan to bring it to its final draft, were supported by the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Project and the Frankfurt Zoological Society (see below)

Scientific papers: two papers have been published from Dr Ashenafi's PhD as a result of work done during the year of the Darwin Scholarship. One on the ecology and behaviour of the Ethiopian wolf in the human dominated landscapes was published in the prestigious conservation journal *Animal Conservation*, and was the cover story of its issue. The second on the common property regime that has so successfully

conserved Guassa was published in the equally prestigious social science journal *Human Ecology*. Both papers are given their full citation below, as well as attached, and both acknowledge Darwin Initiative support.

Ashenafi, ZT, Coulson, TN, Sillero-Zubiri, C & Leader-Williams, N 2005. The behaviour and ecology of the Ethiopian wolf in a human-dominated landscape outside protected areas. *Animal Conservation*, 8, 113-121.

Ashenafi, ZT & Leader-Williams, N 2005. Indigenous common property resource management in the Central Highlands of Ethiopia. *Human Ecology*, 33, 539-563.

Two further manuscripts were also drafted in the scholarship year, one on rodent ecology and the other on how common property resource management system avoids over-use of resource. These have been polished subsequently and one is now on the point of submission. Once published, copies of these papers will be sent to the Darwin Initiative.

Subsequent Advancement

As a result of the initial Darwin Initiative project, Dr Ashenafi was the first Ethiopian working in the wildlife conservation sector to complete a PhD on a native species in his home country. The award of this Darwin Scholarship has allowed him to advance further in his career by becoming the first Ethiopian working in the wildlife conservation sector to publish a paper on a native species in his home country.

Likewise, the production of the Guassa General Management Plan will allow the community to continue to control this interesting and unusual area in a way that will offer further interesting contrasts with formally protected areas.

As a result of the quality of his work, Dr Ashenafi has moved from a local contract with the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Project, and became Project Leader of the Afro-alpine Ecosystem Conservation Project funded by Frankfurt Zoological Society in April 2005. In this position, Dr Ashenafi is not only working with an established international NGO, but he is on the FZS international employment scale, as is quite appropriate for an emerging conservation professional with international qualifications and publications.

Summary

The award of this Darwin Scholarship appears to have successfully cemented some of the outputs of the original Darwin Initiative award into international publications, with more likely to appear. Furthermore, the Darwin Scholarship has helped ensure the future of the Guassa area under community control. Likewise, the Darwin Scholarship has helped the advancement of Dr Ashenafi into an appropriate career structure as he continues to work to secure the conservation of his natural heritage in Ethiopia. On these various grounds, the award of this Darwin Scholarship can be considered as an evolving success.

N Leader-Williams