



DARWIN INITIATIVE

APPLICATION FOR DARWIN FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME 2007

Please read the Guidance Notes before completing this form. Give a full answer to each section; applications will be considered on the basis of information submitted on this form. Please note the additional information requirements (CVs and letters of support as detailed in the Guidance for Applicants). Whilst this form is to be submitted by the host institution the proposed Fellow should be fully involved in development of the proposal. Please keep to word limits as specified and do not use a font size smaller than Arial 11pt for main text, Arial 10pt for financials.

Submit by Friday 16 March 2007

1. Contact Details

<i>Ref. (Defra/ECTF only):</i>
Name and address of UK applicant organisation (results will be sent to the postal address provided here) Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Department of Zoology University of Oxford Tubney House, Abingdon Road, Tubney, Oxon, OX13 5QL. UK

2. Darwin Fellow. A one page CV must be enclosed.

Name and official address of proposed Darwin Fellow Laura Fasola, 540, Ricardo Gutierrez st., D.F.Sarmiento, B1707CAP Argentina
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3. Summary of proposed Fellowship (no more than 100 words)

The fellowship will aid Laura Fasola to further develop her scientific analytical and writing skills, network with experts in invasive species and carnivore conservation, to attend a major conference and workshop, and will guide preparation of her doctoral thesis. Her thesis has developed from the Darwin project "The endangered otter and the invasive mink in Patagonia", and the Fellowship will afford her the opportunity to work closely with Professor David Macdonald, the project's UK expert, and his team. The fellowship will last for one year commencing July 2007 and will be based at Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit.

4. Principals in Project. Please give the details of the individuals from the UK host organisations (and other institutions if relevant) who would be directly involved in supervising/working with the Darwin Fellow. A 1 page CV on each must be enclosed.

Details	Main UK expert	Other UK expert	Other UK expert	Other UK expert
Surname	Macdonald			
Forename(s)	David Whyte			
Post held	Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit			
Institution (if different to above)	Oxford University			
Department	Zoology			
Telephone				
Fax				
Email				

5. Describe briefly the aims, activities and achievements of the UK applicant organisation. (Large institutions please note that this should describe your unit or department) (150 words)

The mission of the **Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU)** is to achieve practical solutions to conservation problems through original scientific research. The WildCRU trains conservation scientists in conducting research and putting scientific knowledge into practice. The organization is involved in the implementation of many conservation projects and embraces the need to educate and involve a wider public to achieve lasting solutions. The cross-cutting research encompasses the fields of animal behaviour, ecology, physiology, biochemistry, parasitology, epidemiology and genetics, coupled with a strong involvement in social sciences including public health, environmental economics and development. The WildCRU has an exceptional record in training young conservation biologists from countries rich in biodiversity that have returned to use their acquired expertise in their native countries.

6. Describe briefly the aims, activities and achievements of the proposed Darwin Fellow's organisation. (Large institutions please note that this should describe your unit or department) (150 words)

PROFAUNA Organisation promotes research on conservation topics with the aim of becoming a nexus between scientists and institutions. **PROFAUNA** is devoted to both system and organism focused ecological research on environmental and wildlife management projects, conducting and supporting research into neotropical mammalian species of non-tropical ecosystems. **PROFAUNA** is greatly experienced in: designing protected areas; environmental management counseling; environmental education activities; postgraduate courses; maintenance of an assorted specialized library; supporting students and young graduates; interaction with international conservation organisations; publishing scientific works and the development of volunteer programs for scientific research.

7. Describe briefly the proposed Fellow's current role within their organisation and link to a Darwin project. (150)

Laura Fasola is part of the young researchers' staff of the PROFAUNA Organisation and is particularly involved in the Andean-Patagonian Forest Program, linked to the Darwin project "The endangered otter and the invasive mink in Patagonia" (Ref. 13016), which started in 2004. To date the main thrusts of Laura's work have been: (1) the problematic conservation of the southern river otter (*Lontra provocax*), an endangered otter in Patagonia, particularly addressing its present regional distribution and the factors related to its dispersal patterns at a watershed scale, and (2) the impact of an invasive predator and potential competitor, the American mink (*Mustela vison*), on the southern river otter. Within the Darwin project, Laura has held the post of field biologist and her dedication and ingenuity distinguished her so greatly that she has been accepted as a doctoral student in Argentina. She is currently preparing her thesis alongside her work with PROFAUNA.

8. Provide a concept note on the Darwin Fellowship. This should include:

- a clear outline of the aim and objectives of the Fellowship
- the programme of work, including key milestones through the duration of the Fellowship and their timing
- the role of the UK applicant organisation, and others where relevant (including contacts)
- where appropriate, how the Fellowship will contribute towards sustainable development or sustainable livelihoods

During her work within the Darwin initiative Project (Ref 13016) Laura Fasola so distinguished herself in terms of dedication, gifted field work and scientific ingenuity that Dr Cassini, Director of PROFAUNA, identified her as a future core member of the influential Argentinian NGO. Similarly, she was accepted as a doctoral student at the University of Buenos Aires. The main objective of this fellowship is therefore to allow Laura Fasola to expand her repertoire of skills, necessary in high-level conservation biology projects, by working with Professor David Macdonald and the expert team at Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU). This will then benefit the future work of PROFAUNA and the continuation of South American conservation work.

Specifically, the first aim of Laura's work within the Fellowship will be an evaluation of contrasting cases of mink (and other carnivore) introductions, factors affecting their trajectory and the success of attempts to control them. Laura will bring to Oxford much of the data gathered during the Darwin project, to discuss and analyse them in contact with WildCRU members experienced in comparable work. At the WildCRU there is an international team researching the impact of invasive American mink on their prey and other mustelid guild-members. This expertise sits within a wider framework of experts working on invasive species and human-carnivore conflict. Directed by Professor Macdonald, the WildCRU team will assist Laura in developing analyses of comparisons in introduction histories from countries ranging from the UK to Belarus, in terms of: causes; timing; prey availability; environmental characteristics and management decisions. This work will help her prepare her doctoral thesis for submission, will underpin planning for a future major conservation project that PROFAUNA is preparing for Tierra del Fuego and hopefully be used to inform management and policy decisions in Argentina.

The second scientific output will be to learn GIS skills that enable Laura to develop generalisations about the likely spread of American mink throughout the southern cone of South America. It is intended to use these GIS-based explorations to consider the likely impact of this invasive species, of attempts to control it, and of climate change on these processes.

A third aim will be to expand Laura's field skills through collaboration with other experienced field biologists with expertise related to her research. This will include WildCRU staff working on the restoration of mink prey, on the distribution of crustacean prey (a crucial factor emerging from project 13016), and conflict between otters and river managers.

A further fundamental aim is to provide Laura with many essential networking opportunities and the potential to foster beneficial collaborations for South American conservation. Currently, through the WildCRU, Laura has developed contacts with conservation biologists in Chile and hopes to develop collaborations there. During the time of the proposed Fellowship WildCRU will host a large international conference on felid conservation followed by a meeting of the IUCN specialist group. Laura will be involved in these meetings and WildCRU will find sponsorship for her attendance fees. Additionally Professor Macdonald is a member of several UK working parties (e.g. DEFRA's Biodiversity Research Advisory Group) focusing on invasive species. He will arrange for Laura to meet the participants of these groups and, as possible, to visit their institutions (e.g. CEH, JNCC, Natural England) to develop her understanding of both science and policy issues.

A further output from the Fellowship is that Laura will use her library researches and networking to prepare material for a forthcoming workshop to be hosted by PROFAUNA in Tierra del Fuego. This workshop will lay foundations for a major project on invasive species in the Southern Cone, and create opportunities for future DI partnerships. During her Fellowship Laura will attend this workshop, and an airfare is costed for this purpose. PROFAUNA hopes that, with the experience gained as a Darwin Fellow, Laura will be able to join their staff and take a major role in developing the Tierra del Fuego programme.

Studying with the WildCRU will invaluablely benefit the Fellow's professional growth. Laura will have access to an incredible bibliographic resource, partake in seminars and be party to meetings on a variety of topics in conservation biology.

Laura's participation in Project 13016 has given her a growing profile amongst conservation biologists concerned with mink and otters in South America. She is thus well placed to become an ambassador for the Darwin Initiative when she returns from her proposed Fellowship. Whilst in the UK she will in turn be an ambassador for PROFAUNA and Argentinian conservationists as she networks on their behalf within the UK.

The fellowship duration is estimated for one year, commencing in July 2007.

It has been possible to secure offer of matching funds from the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species that will contribute £3000 to support Laura Fasola's stay in the UK if she secures the Fellowship.

- 9. Legacy. Provide information on how the Darwin Fellow will utilise, promote and disseminate the benefits of the Fellowship on return to his/her home country. Will a strategy be developed during the Fellowship to ensure this is achieved? (200 words)**

Due to her previous participation and exemplary work in the Darwin initiative Project (Ref 13016) Laura Fasola has been identified as an ideal future member of the Argentinian NGO, PROFAUNA. Within PROFAUNA, it is hoped she will become an essential part of the upcoming programme in Tierra del Fuego. The benefits of skills acquired during the Fellowship will therefore have long-term advantages for conservation in her home country. Additionally, Laura is personally committed to a future career as a conservationist in Argentina and the WildCRU experience will provide her with a strong foundation for this, with exposure to project planning, management and execution – skills transferable to her organisation and colleagues in Argentina.

During the Fellowship period Laura will partake in a workshop on invasive species, to be hosted by PROFAUNA, in Tierra del Fuego. She will also be a part of the International Felid Conference to be hosted by WildCRU in September 2007, enabling her to meet other conservation biologists working in South America and initiate future collaborations. Furthermore, Laura's work will be disseminated through the successful completion, and publication, of her doctoral thesis, due for submission in Argentina in 2008.

10. How will the Fellowship assist the Fellow's organisation and/or local communities and/or home country in working towards the objectives (or implementation) of the Convention on Biological Diversity? References to the Convention should be specific, for example, by referring to articles, cross-cutting or thematic issues¹. (200 words)

Argentina is party to the 1992 Convention of Biological Diversity. The proposed Fellow's thesis is associated with the Darwin Initiative project (Ref. 13016) aiming to help Argentina fulfil its obligations through: 1) working with and training local people related to native fauna conservation (e.g. National Park wardens), and 2) providing an action plan on 'umbrella' species of the freshwater environments of Patagonian forests and a control plan for invasive species. As a whole the project supports the implementation of CBD Articles: 5 (Co-operation – 5%), 7 (Identification and monitoring - 5%), 8 (In-situ conservation – 20%), 8h (Alien species – 15%), 12 (Research and training – 10%), 13 (Public education and awareness – 5%), 17 (Exchange of information – 5%) and 18 (Technical and scientific co-operation – 5%), with particular emphasis on the Inland Waters Biodiversity (15%) and Protected Areas (15%) themes.

The project involves people from two countries working together to seek the best conservation strategies for Patagonian vertebrate conservation (reference articles 5 and 17). In addition to supporting the project's articles and themes, the fellowship would provide a beneficial route for additional collaboration between the parties, further developing the knowledge and tools necessary for conserving marine and coastal biodiversity and initiating a permanent regional conservation programme. In addition, the WildCRU is creating a conduit to enable Laura to develop collaborations between Argentina and Chile.

11. What collaboration has there been with the Darwin Fellow to date in developing the proposal, and what collaboration is planned for the duration of the Fellowship? Where relevant, describe any consultation or collaboration by the proposed Fellow within his/her own country. (200 words)

¹ Refer to the Guidance Notes for Applicants for further information

Professor Macdonald, PROFAUNA and the proposed Fellow have worked together through the Darwin project (Ref. 13016) since it began in 2004. It is because of her outstanding dedication to the DI project that Laura has been singled out by PROFAUNA, and proposed for the Fellowship. Laura has been fully engaged in the development of this fellowship proposal, which reflects her own interests and aspirations.

For the duration of the fellowship the Laura will be based with Professor Macdonald's unit, the WildCRU, at Tubney House in Oxford, and take an active role in the units, and Oxford University's, activities. Laura will be maintaining relations with PROFAUNA throughout her stay, in particular by contributing to a workshop run by PROFAUNA in Tierra del Fuego at the end of 2007.

The Fellow is committed to her continued involvement in creating a legacy from the Darwin project and using it to develop a future programme, including further hoped for DI involvement. It is important that following the Fellowship, PROFAUNA is in a position to employ Laura. The thesis which Laura is currently undertaking will represent a major development in her career and indeed an important element of the legacy of the Darwin project.

12. Provide details of the Darwin Initiative project (including the reference number) that the proposed Fellow was associated with, including his/her role in that project and any ongoing involvement. (200 words)

Reference: 13016, round 12, Country: Argentina dates: 01/07/2004 to 30/06/2007.

The purpose of the project is to protect the vertebrate biodiversity of Argentina's Andean-Patagonian region by reducing the impact of invasive American mink and by facilitating the range expansion of endangered native otters in National Parks.

The project is currently going through its final stages.

Laura previously held a field biologist post within the project, and more recently was involved as a graduate student. During the project she has carried out diet analyses to describe and to test temporal and spatial variations on species diet, analyzed temporal variations in the expansion of otters and explored evidence for competition between mink and otters. Importantly Laura discovered the crucial role of crustaceans in explaining the distribution of the endangered Southern River Otter. Laura was a central character in this project, and the legacy of the project will be central to the planned development of her future career in Argentina with Profauna. During the time she is at WildCRU we expect her to prepare all of the scientific publications from her thesis for publication (the thesis will be submitted to the University of Buenos Aires before the end of 2008).

13. Duration of the Fellowship: what are the intended start and finish dates?

1st July 2007 – 31st June 2008

14. Where will the Darwin Fellow be based? Please be specific with organisational details and dates (where more than one location). (200 words)

For the entire period (July 2007 – June 2008) the Fellow will be based with the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at Oxford University (excluding visits to other UK centres and a workshop in Tierra del Fuego):

WildCRU, Zoology Department, University of Oxford, Tubney House, Abingdon Road, Tubney, Oxon OX13 5QL, United Kingdom.

15. Financial Aspects. Please use UK Government Financial Years ie April 2007 – March 2008 etc)

Fellow payment				
	07/08	08/09	2007/08	2008/09
London: £1200/month	Number of months		£	£
UK (outside London): £1000/month	9	3	£	
Overseas location £ /month*	Number of months		£	£
Host Organisations' costs				
	07/08	08/09	2007/08	2008/09
UK: £300/month	Number of months		£	£
Overseas location: £ /month*	Number of months			£
A. Total Fellow & Host Organisation Costs			£	£

Actual travel costs (Return journey to Fellowship location)		
	2007/08	2008/09
Return airfare. <i>Details</i> Return flight from Buenos Aires to London	£	£
Travel to/from airports. <i>Details</i> Public transport from Heathrow to Oxford	£	£
Visas etc. <i>Details</i>	£	£
B. Total Fellowship Travel Costs (Actual costs up to £2000 will be paid)	£	£

Actual travel costs 'Additional Travel'		
Specify purpose. Maximum £500 within country of Fellowship location, £1500 for international travel.		
	2007/08	2008/09
Airfares <i>Details</i> Return flights : Heathrow to Tierra del Fuego Return flights : Heathrow - Aberdeen		£
Subsistence <i>Details (including number of days)</i> B&B in Tierra del Fuego (Defra's Argentinean rates £80.50 per day for 7 days) Residual travel within country (Defra's Argentinean rates £24.31 per day for 6 days) Travel within the UK to Universities and institutions for meetings <i>Contact Defra for rates</i>	£ £ £	
Travel to/from airports. <i>Details</i>	£	£

* Figures available from Margaret Okot on 0207 082 8430

Visas etc. <i>Details</i>	£	£
C. Total (Other travel) costs	£	

D. ACADEMIC FEES	2007/08	2008/09
<i>Details</i>	£	£

TOTAL FELLOWSHIP COSTS (A + B + C + D)	£	
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16. Other sources of funding: provide details and amounts

If the application is successful then the PTES has offered matching fees to cover two months of the Fellowship, including the monthly stipend , the bench fees , a sum for miscellaneous expenses . Furthermore, the fellowship would span the time when WildCRU will be hosting a major international conference on felid conservation, attended by 300 international experts on carnivore conservation, and will arrange for Laura's full participation.

FCO NOTIFICATION

Please check the box if you think that there are sensitivities that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will need to be aware of should they want to publicise details of the Darwin Fellowship and the resultant work in the UK or the Darwin Fellow's home country


CERTIFICATION

I certify that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, the statements made by us in this application are true and the information provided is correct. I am aware that this application form will form the basis of the project schedule should this application be successful.

I enclose CVs for project principals and letters of support as requested in the Guidance Notes.

Name (block capitals)	PROF. DAVID MACDONALD
Position in the organisation	DIRECTOR, WILDLIFE, DEP. OF ZOOLOGY

Signed



Date:



Please return completed form to The Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forests (ECTF) by 16 March 2007 (to arrive by midnight) by email to darwin-applications@ectf-ed.org.uk. A hard copy of the full application should also be sent to ECTF, Darwin Applications Unit, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, Edinburgh EH26 OPH and should be postmarked 16 March 2007.


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Name (block capitals)	Barbara Murray
Position in the organisation	Deputy Head Research Services Science Area Office University of Oxford

Signed



Date:

12.3.07

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