

# DARWIN NEWS

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*The Darwin Initiative draws on the wealth of biodiversity expertise in the UK to work with local partners in host countries to protect and enhance their biodiversity*

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## **M & E project news**

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### **Darwin Discussion Forum launched**

The first Darwin Discussion Forum has been launched, on the theme:

*Exploring best practices for Protected Area Management - providing conservation and societal benefits within and beyond park boundaries.*

Everyone is welcome to take part in this discussion. You can register and log on by following the link to the forum home page at

<http://www.darwin.gov.uk/forum>

### **Darwin Alumni email list**

Look out for announcements about this in the coming months. We will be setting up an email list for Darwin Alumni (members and associates of past and present Darwin projects). More information is available on the Darwin Networks page at

<http://www.darwin.gov.uk/networks.html>

from where you can register as a member of the Darwin Alumni Network to be kept up to date with developments.

### **Website revamp**

The Darwin website is set for a re-design over the coming weeks. Visit us often to be kept up to date with Darwin events, news, and other useful information. Each month, we plan to feature a different project on the home page. Project teams are invited to send in pictures for this spot!

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## **Secretariat news**

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### **New Pre-Project, Post-Project and Scholarship Funding Awards**

The full list of successful applications under the new funding schemes is available at

[http://www.darwin.gov.uk/news/new\\_schemes\\_awards.html](http://www.darwin.gov.uk/news/new_schemes_awards.html)

### **Successful round 12 projects**

The successful applications for round 12 funding were announced on 26th April.

Projects benefiting from this year's grant will contribute to biodiversity conservation and strengthening in-country partnerships in 21 countries. The full list of successful projects is available at

[http://www.darwin.gov.uk/news/round\\_12\\_announce.html](http://www.darwin.gov.uk/news/round_12_announce.html)

### **Round 12 Reserve Projects**

The Darwin Initiative is a competitive scheme and many high quality applications were received this year. On this basis, a reserve list of projects has been identified for review in July 2004. Further projects may be funded, should additional funds be available.

Applicants in this category have been notified but should contact Sarah Moon at Defra with any queries.

### **COP 7**

Three Darwin Projects presented their projects at a side event at COP 7. Dr David Blakesley, with colleagues from FORRU spoke of their project Education and training for restoring tropical forest biodiversity in Thailand. Fauna and Flora International hosted two projects. Dr Sheelagh O'Reilly presented Community-based Conservation of Hoang Lien Ecosystem in Vietnam and Research, Survey and Dr Yingyi Zhang showcased Biodiversity Planning on the Tibet Qinghai Plateau. It was an excellent opportunity to see what projects were achieving with the support of Darwin funding and to hear host country partners talk about their experiences with Darwin. The side event was hosted by Elliot Morley and very well received.

### **Staff changes at Defra**

There have been more than a few changes of staff within the Darwin Secretariat in the past year. Apologies to those of you who did not receive updated contact details. We can be contacted by email:

[firstname.surname@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:firstname.surname@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Sarah Moon – Darwin Advisory Committee liaison; Policy and Strategy Development.

Carrie Haloun – Management of financial claims and audit certificates. Liaison with project leaders.

Said Ahouiyek – Administration assistance for Darwin including organising publicity materials and financial claims.

### Chelsea Flower Show

Defra funded an exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show from 24 – 28 May 2004. It showcased the conservation work which had been achieved by the Eden Foundation and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew through their Darwin Initiative Projects. The exhibit was awarded the Silver Lindley Award for Lifelong Learning in the Garden.

The exhibit entitled 'Treasured Islands: Promoting the projects, the plants and the people working to protect them' provided a visual exploration of the conservation work on two island archipelagos, Seychelles and the British Virgin Islands (a UK Overseas Territory in the Caribbean). It was designed to show how collaboration between people worldwide can safeguard unique and vulnerable island plants and landscapes.

More information from these web pages:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/issues/2004/Chelsea04-250404.asp>

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2004/chelsea-010504.htm>

<http://www.kew.org/education/kewatchelsea.html>



### Watch this Space

A date for your diaries 27 October 2004 is when the next Darwin Lecture will take place. Dr Eric Chivian, Director of the Centre for Health and the Global Environment. The topic for the lecture will be 'Health and Biodiversity'. More information will become available shortly

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## **Biodiversity news**

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### COP 7: Governments set rigorous targets for reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010

The Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held from 9 to 20 February 2004 at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Documents and press releases from this meeting are available from

<http://www.biodiv.org/meetings/cop-07/docs.aspx>

<http://www.biodiv.org/meetings/cop-07/press/default.asp>

### International Biodiversity Day

This year's theme for the IBD, held on May 21st, was "*Food, Water and Health for All*". Information about the events that took place worldwide is available from the CBD website at

<http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/outreach/awareness/biodiv-day-2004.asp>

### Publication of UK Government WSSD delivery plans

"*Beyond Johannesburg - delivering our international biodiversity commitments*" was published by Defra on 24th May. This spells out UK plans to meet the 2010 conservation targets set at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, Johannesburg 2002. More information is available at:

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/eac-wssd/progress.htm>

## CBD Forest Portal

The CBD has launched a website offering a range of resources related to the expanded work programme on forest biological diversity. This includes a database of best

practices, and a monthly focus on a particular topic. The portal web page is at

<http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/areas/forest/portal/home.shtml>

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## From the field

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### **HUEMUL ECOLOGY RESEARCH FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING, SOUTHERN CHILE**

#### **Final Conference and Workshop Darwin-CONAF**

This project, which began in 2000, involved the participation of the Forest Research Agency, Raleigh International, The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, Corporación Nacional Forestal and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.



The public and scientific dissemination at local and national levels constitutes important components of this Darwin project. As one of its final activities, the project undertook a Conference to present the results obtained during this research. The workshop involved around 50 participants from different countries (Chile, UK, Argentina, Uruguay, Canada, and US) and it was held in Cochrane, XI Region, between the 20th and 24th of October 2003. The main results were presented by Dr. Robin Gill from the UK Forest Research, Dr. Dennis Aldridge from CONAF XI Region, Cristián Saucedo, project co-ordinator from CONAF, Chile, and Dr. Susana González, Citogenetic Division, IIBCE, Uruguay and Chairman of the IUCN/ SSC Deer Specialist group.

In addition other researchers from Chile, Argentina, and the UK presented other talks. The sessions covered a wide range of topics including: Handling & Capture, Health Status and Diet studies, Interactions between Huemul & Man, Genetics and Distribution (past & present), and Huemul Conservation in Protected Areas. The conference was widely covered by local and national media.

As a direct result of the workshops, the Huemul National Conservation Plan was discussed and updated in the light of project results, and actions and priorities reassessed. It was decided to develop the plan into a more active programme with the nomination of a follow-up committee. They will be responsible for the facilitation of activities for the Huemul Action Plan. The first committee meeting was held in November 2003 (Santiago) involving representatives from CONAF (Forest Service of Chile), SAG (Agricultural Service of Chile), universities, researchers and NGO's. The next committee meeting is planned for April 2004.





The abstracts and contents of the presentations held at the conference are available in English and Spanish on a CD-ROM produced by the organising committee. For more information please contact Dennis Aldridge [aldridge@conaf.cl](mailto:aldridge@conaf.cl) at CONAF XI Region.

If you are interested in obtaining additional information on Huemul deer, please visit the new web page produced during the project: <http://www.salvemosalhuemul.cl>

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### **BELARUS SCIENTIST RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR HIS DEDICATION TO BIRD CONSERVATION**

The future of mainland Europe's rarest songbird, the aquatic warbler, is looking brighter as a result of the work of a Belarusian scientist, Dr Alexander Kozulin, Conservation Director of Achnova Ptushak Belarusi (APB) who has been awarded the prestigious Marsh Award [1] for Bird Conservation.

The aquatic warbler is a star species for Belarus. It features on the republic's national postage stamps and is the emblem of APB, the BirdLife International partner for Belarus, which has as one of its priorities furthering the conservation of this little striped brown bird. In the last century, most wetlands where the aquatic warbler was breeding were drained, and it is now a globally threatened species. However, recent conservation work, led by Dr Kozulin, offers a brighter future as a result of very successful and ongoing efforts to save the fen mires of Belarus, which are the main breeding grounds of the aquatic warbler.

The aquatic warbler passes through many countries across Europe and is an occasional visitor to southern England on its way to its wintering grounds in Africa. These countries (including Senegal) are signatories to a Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan setting out an ambitious research and conservation programme for the species. Belarus, for example, is going to restore 40,000 hectares of drained peatland habitat.

The RSPB has instigated and funded much of the current research and conservation work for the aquatic warbler, and has been working with many partners, including the Darwin Initiative, to support the work of Dr. Kozulin.

**DEFRA and the Darwin Initiative are key supporters of Aquatic Warbler work:**

- The Darwin Initiative has funded two large projects in Belarus, which build upon each other: The first one “Management Planning for Conservation of Fen Mire Biodiversity in Belarus” (1999-2002) was granted 136,000 GBP, the second one “Implementing Urgent Conservation Actions in Mesotrophic Fen Mires in Belarus” (2003-2006) was granted 110,000 GBP. These projects focus on three fen mires, which together hold about 50% of the world population of Aquatic Warbler. The management plans and their implementation will eliminate threats to the population and optimise conditions for the species, hopefully, raising its world population by 20%!
- DEFRA through its Environment for Europe Fund (budget line for NIS countries) has only recently granted 20,000 GBP to APB and the Institute of Zoology for a three year project (2004-2006) in Belarus that has the aim to identify and describe in detail all IBAs of the country in order to include them into the National Scheme for new protected areas
- Through CMS, DEFRA on its own initiative now provides 15,000 GBP towards RSPB research on Aquatic Warbler wintering grounds in Africa. Based on the latest technology of stable isotope analysis RSPB tries to determine the wintering grounds of the species in Western Africa. The field work (done by RSPB staff in cooperation with African BL partners) takes place at the moment (Jan-March 2004).

[1] The Marsh Christian Trust was established in 1981 with the aim of providing long-term core funding to selected charities and for the last 22 years has been making modest grants to a broad spectrum of registered charities. The Marsh Award Scheme has emanated from the Trust's desire to acknowledge individuals and sometimes groups of people for their dedicated commitment in their chosen field. The Scheme was formed in 1987; there are now 14 Marsh Awards in existence run in association with many partner charities

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**THE DARWIN FIELD STATION, THE GAMBIA**

The focus of The Gambia project is the Darwin Field Station for biodiversity research, training and education. It overlooks a beautiful freshwater pool containing crocodiles and many spectacular birds. The field station is surrounded by gallery forest and located in Abuko Nature Reserve, the very first protected area to be established in The Gambia in 1968. The field station will provide a focus for biodiversity research in The Gambia, and training courses for a broad spectrum of people including government and NGO personnel to enable them to effectively assess and monitor the country's biodiversity. The centre will also provide information and materials for local schools and tourists.



On the whole West Africa is very poorly studied with regard to its biodiversity and falls well behind its eastern and southern counterparts. The Gambia, which is the smallest country in West Africa is very rich in biodiversity but very little is known about it. There is also a distinct lack of Gambian biodiversity expertise and materials for people to learn about biodiversity locally. The Darwin Field

Station will have facilities for international researchers to come and help address the paucity of ecological data.

The project is a joint venture between the University of Warwick and a Gambian NGO Makasutu Wildlife Trust. The project will also enable Makasutu Wildlife Trust to produce a series of books and design and maintain a website and photographic database about The Gambia's flora and fauna. The first of the books on the common butterflies of The Gambia was published in January 2004. For more information and copies of the butterfly guide please contact Dr Linda Barnett/Mr. Craig Emms at [drumohq@qanet.gm](mailto:drumohq@qanet.gm) or Dr Susan Barker at [s.barker@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:s.barker@warwick.ac.uk)

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### THE LAND CRAB, COLOMBIA

The black land crab, *Gecarcinus ruricola*, is a symbol of cultural identity to the islanders of the San Andres archipelago in the Caribbean, as well as being an important supply of protein. Two years into this project Darwin researchers are realizing just how important this marvelous species is. The link between crab and human has been celebrated in many stories and songs, passed down through generations. With the help of Darwin researchers this link has been worked into the local educational curricula. The production of a crab lore booklet and crab festivals also help to promote and celebrate this unusual relationship.



Annually in April/May, the crab moves from inland forests to the sea to spawn., The young return inland after two perilous weeks in the ocean. The terrestrial return path is treacherous as the island road must be crossed and there are many catchers ready to exploit their high value meat. A wonderful event to witness, this mass migration is being studied to ascertain the effects of catching and roadkill on

existing population levels. The reproductive behaviour of the crab is also being examined.

With one year remaining and one mass migration left to study, the project team will be presenting a paper at the International Environmental Congress of the Caribbean in Colombia in May 2004 (CONCARIBE), summarizing the results so far, but in particular celebrating the level of involvement of local communities in San Andres, which ranges from entertaining anecdotes to local university students involved in terraculture studies to the direct participation of catchers in scientific surveys. The project has received a positive reaction from across the community in San Andres.



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