

DARWIN NEWS

Issue 12
September 2008



Newsletter of the UK Darwin Initiative

Promoting biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of resources • <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk>

In this issue we are introducing a new focus on the most important part of the Darwin Initiative - its people. We have profiles of two Darwin Fellows, who describe their work with the Initiative, and how the experience they gain will benefit themselves and the wider conservation community in their home countries. And we have profiles of two of the most important figures in the

Initiative - Eilidh Young, whose work makes her familiar to all projects, and Professor David Macdonald, who provides leadership and direction to the Initiative in his role as Chair of the Darwin Advisory Committee.

We will continue to feature the people who make the Darwin Initiative such a success in future issues.



DARWIN200

The Darwin Initiative is proud to be associated with the Darwin200 celebrations.

To find out more, visit
<http://www.darwin200.org>

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Information for authors

Darwin News is published quarterly. Suggestions for articles can be submitted to the editor at any time (see contact details). In the first instance, only titles should be sent. Articles will then be commissioned for specific issues.

vessels, and loss of food and habitat have further reduced numbers.

In many parts of the world, the last 10-20 years has seen a dramatic growth in whale and dolphin related tourism, with

whale and dolphin watching being worth tens of millions of dollars to local economies. One aim of the new Pakistan Whale and Dolphin Society will be to encourage ethical and sustainable

whale and dolphin watching in Pakistan. For more details about joining the Society, e-mail pakistanwhaleanddolphin@gmail.com

Darwin Initiative team with spinner dolphins on boat off Pakistan Coast. Photo: M Gore



FURTHER INFORMATION

Twelve of the about 20 species of Cetaceans believed to occur in Pakistan have been confirmed by the Darwin Initiative Project team "Cetacean Conservation Pakistan".

Organisations represented on the Cetacean Conservation Pakistan's Project's Advisory Panel, which supports establishment of the Society, are:

Balochistan Forestry Department
 Centre for Excellence in Marine Biology, Karachi University
 International Union for the Conservation of Nature & Natural Resources (IUCN)
 Pakistan Navy

Pakistan Wetlands Programme
 Marine Fisheries Department, Karachi
 Marine Resource Centre and Reference Collection, Karachi University
 National Institute for Oceanography
 Sindh Wildlife Department
 University of London Marine Biological Station, Millport
 World Wide Fund for Nature – Pakistan
 Zoology Department, Karachi University
 Zoological Survey Department

Capacity building for biodiversity studies of freshwater insects in Argentina

Stephen J. Brooks and Julieta Massafferro
Project ref.: 15-025

Natural History Museum

The Nahuel Huapi National Park (NHNP) in northern Patagonia, Argentina, contains part of the Valdivian Rainforest, the largest temperate rainforest in South America. This biodiversity hotspot has recently been

EBPB, situated in the heart of the Andean forest near Bariloche, was built by Universidad del Comahue in 2005 but was not fully functional. We have now equipped the field station with 12 microscopes, PCs, multimedia equipment and furniture, which was transported to the station with the help of the national park authority (APN). Several international and national workshops have already taken place in the field station. The field station also functions as an interpretive centre, promoting the value and sustainable use of wetlands to visitors to the park.

Another important achievement of the project has been the development of a network of people working together on biodiversity issues. We have trained students, park rangers, fishermen, teachers and other members of the public on sampling, identification and collection techniques to get them involved in biodiversity and conservation topics. We now have an enthusiastic team of people working closely

together, assisting the specialists and training more volunteers. We have received invaluable cooperation from the park rangers and the NHNP team. They have provided not only logistic support but also have great

Teaching primary school children in Bariloche about the wonders of freshwater insects



included among the most threatened eco-regions in the world by the Global 2000 initiative, launched by WWF and the World Bank.

Our project is a collaboration between scientists at the Natural History Museum, London, and Argentinean specialists and conservationists interested in wetland insects. The target is to deliver, by the end of 2009, an infrastructure for the study and interpretation of wetlands in NHNP, identification guides, and a database of freshwater insects. The species distribution data will be linked to a vegetation classification using GIS and digital imaging to model freshwater insect data spatially and create a biodiversity database, the first of its kind in Patagonia.

One aim of our project is to create a centre for the study and interpretation of wetlands at the biological station in Puerto Blest (EBPB). The

Sampling freshwater insects in Nahel Huapi National Park



commitment towards environmental issues and are now participating in our biomonitoring program in NHNP.

In October 2008 our Darwin Initiative project will sponsor a symposium within the XII Argentinean Congress of Entomology. It will be a good opportunity to communicate our results and discuss our aspirations with scientists working in other biodiversity hotspots in Argentina and neighbouring countries. This is essential for the conservation of the region's biodiversity.

A course organised and taught by Darwin Initiative partners for sport fishermen and National Park Rangers about freshwater insects, their ecology and how they can be used in biomonitoring



Darwin Fellow Julie Hanta Razafimanahaka

I was an undergraduate trainee on a Darwin project (10-024) 'Conservation and Management of Malagasy microchiroptera and their habitats in Madagascar' in 2003/04 and obtained a degree in Water and Forestry at the University of Antananarivo. Afterwards, I became a staff member on a Darwin post-project grant (EIDP10) 'Bat Conservation in Madagascar' which saw the creation of a new Malagasy biodiversity organization called Madagasikara Voakajy. My responsibilities included the management of our bat database, the environmental education project and the study of the largest insectivorous bat of Madagascar (*Hipposideros commersoni*). Since

September 2007, I have been taking the MSc course in Applied Ecology and Conservation at the University of East Anglia (Norwich, UK) as a Darwin Fellow (EIDPS19). This course is composed of a six-month taught programme and a six months field research project. The taught programme (September 2007 to March 2008) consisted of useful research skills, ecological census techniques, data analysis etc. From April to July, I conducted a 10 weeks field project on the Mauritius cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina typica*), to assess the feasibility of a re-introduction of this species from the West to the East coast of the island.

and to as many people as I can, including the Tropical Biology Association alumni group, and the students I will be working with. I hope to develop research focused on culture, conservation



The Mauritius cuckoo-shrike. photo: Dennis Hansen



This involved an assessment and a comparison of the habitats between the current range of the species and the proposed reintroduction sites, on which my dissertation was focused. I am currently preparing for a viva in September. When I go back to Madagascar, I will return to my work with Madagasikara Voakajy. Through all the projects I will be involved with, I will apply the skills I have recently learned and will transfer them to my colleagues

and education that will aim to (i) understand the importance of local traditions in the conservation policy in Madagascar, (ii) investigate the impacts of traditional and modern practices on the species concerned, and (iii) develop an environmental education plan that can improve the traditional practices. I am particularly interested in the bush meat trade in the South and Western part of the country.

Darwin Fellow Ram C. Poudel

Ram Poudel is a botanist who trained at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. He is a Darwin Fellow associated with the project "Building Capacity for Plant Biodiversity Inventory and Conservation in Nepal" (12-030) run by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh (RBGE). As part of his Fellowship, he is undertaking the MSc course "Biodiversity and Taxonomy of Plants", run jointly by RBGE and the University of

Threatened Species and Habitats in the Kanchenjunga - Singhalila Ridge, Eastern Nepal (2006-2007) (funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, USA).

From September 2007, with the support of his Darwin Fellowship, Mr. Poudel is taking the MSc course on plant biodiversity at Edinburgh University. This very intensive course is helping him to build further skills and knowledge of the latest progress in plant phylogeny,

Himalayas: one, two, three or four species?". Molecular sequencing of plant samples collected from botanical gardens in Scotland (Benmore, Dawyck and RBGE), scanning electron microscopy of leaves, and morphometrics of herbarium specimens deposited at Tokyo University, the British Museum, and RBGE will be used to resolve the taxonomy of the species under consideration. This project is intended to



Edinburgh.

Ram has been involved in writing accounts of plant groups for the flora of Nepal, and he has worked with community based *in situ* conservation projects in Nepal. As project coordinator and project associate he successfully managed a community based medicinal plant conservation project (2005-2006) in Rasuwa (funded by Plantlife International, UK) and Plant Biodiversity Inventory, Identification of Hotspots and Conservation Strategies for

techniques of herbarium management, and molecular research methods. A two week field visit to the tropical evergreen forest of Belize (Central America) provided experience of plant ecology, interaction with different components of biodiversity, and practise with field based plant identification techniques

Building on the knowledge gained during the course, Ram is now engaged in a summer project "*Rhododendron campanulata/wallichii* complex of the

develop a clear taxonomy of the subsection Campanulata of genus *Rhododendron* of the Himalayas.

By supporting Ram to undertake the MSc course at RBGE, the Darwin Initiative Fellowship helped him learn about the latest advances in plant biodiversity management. The knowledge gained during the Fellowship will help him conduct various scientific studies, and has also prepared him to undertake practical conservation projects at local and national levels in Nepal.

Darwin People - David Macdonald



Images from several Darwin projects run by the WildCRU.

Professor David Macdonald is the Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) at Oxford University. Since 2004 he has served as Chair of the Darwin Advisory Council (DAC).

The DAC provides Defra with guidance and expert knowledge on biodiversity issues and on the practicalities of project work. It also advises on applications, as well as on the broader aims and objectives that underpin the Darwin Initiative.

Since 1995, David has led five Darwin projects and also two post-projects, mostly focussing on big cats and on aquatic carnivores, in Eastern Europe, South America and Africa.

David set up the WildCRU in 1986, the first research unit dedicated to biological conservation in the UK. Since then the WildCRU has grown until now it comprises an inter-disciplinary team of over 50 conservationists.

David's research interests have ranged broadly over the fields of wildlife conservation and management, but his primary focus has been on mammals in general and carnivores in particular. He has worked on meerkats in the Kalahari, mink in Belarus, capybaras in Venezuela, crab-eating foxes in Brazil, proboscis monkeys in Borneo, and jackals in Israel, amongst others, and studied creatures in the UK ranging from badgers to wood mice!

His work has been recognised by awards including the Dawkins Prize for Conservation and Animal Welfare in 2005, the American Society of Mammalogists' Merriam Prize for research in mammalogy in 2006, and in 2007 The Mammal Society of Great Britain's equivalent medal. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal



Society of Edinburgh in March 2008.

David is committed to outreach to a wide public. His books have twice won the Natural World Natural History Author of the Year Award, and been best sellers (e.g The Velvet Claw), and the third edition of his Encyclopaedia of Mammals was published by OUP in 2006. BBC Wildlife nominated him as amongst the top 10 living conservationists in 2007. Of his TV documentaries, The Night of the Fox was BAFTA finalist for Best Documentary of the Year, Meerkats United won a Special Award from WildScreen, and the 7-part BBC1 series Velvet Claw was broadcast around the world.

David is committed to translating evidence into policy. He currently serves on the Board of Natural England and is Chair of its Science Advisory Committee, and he is a Trustee of WWF-UK, as well as being Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Darwin Initiative. He also is, or has been, Vice President of the Wildlife Trusts, the Zoological Society of London and the RSPCA, and is a Trustee of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. For 25 years he was the founding Chairman of the IUCN/SSC Canid Specialist Group.

Darwin People - Eilidh Young

How did you get involved with the Darwin Initiative?

In 2004 I was asked to take on the administration of the applications for funding. This involves liaising between ECTF colleagues, Defra staff and the Darwin Advisory Committee (DAC) to ensure that the information required for the DAC decision-making meetings was available on time and also to ensure that applicants received feedback from the committee. For the first couple of years I saw applications move through the different stages, but passed them on when they became fully functional Darwin projects. In 2006 I was delighted to be asked to manage the administration for Darwin projects as well, which meant that I could follow the whole story from application through to completed project and also keep up the contacts I have made with various individuals over the years.



What else do you do?

I am employed by LTS International, a natural resources consultancy which manages the Darwin contract on behalf of ECTF and which has been supporting sustainable development for the past 35 years. I work full-time on DI work and co-ordinate the various elements of work that we provide to Defra including project reviews (annual and final reviews; mid-term reviews of current projects; evaluations of closed projects; thematic evaluations), workshops and provision of information to the website and to Defra. I have recently been joined by Helen Beech who will be handling financial administration and the applications process.

What did you do before you worked on Darwin?

I was with LTS for 5 years before becoming involved with Darwin, beginning as PA to the Directors then becoming Office Manager, but also covering business development support (so I understand what it's like trying to get an application ready and out the door on time).

Before LTS, I worked in London for the BBC (sadly not the Natural History Unit or Documentaries) supporting directors dealing with policy management, research and development and customer service – work which included co-ordination of inputs from multinational companies, internal staff and external consultants. I saw the first ever live BBC digital television transmission (but still don't understand how it works).

What do you enjoy about working on the Darwin Initiative?

I enjoy the challenge of keeping track of all the different elements of the work – it is quite varied and you can never foresee some of the questions that may come in!

At Applications stage, there are always some new words to look up to help me work out what the project may be about – Latin names, scientific terms and technical phrases specific to areas of work I'm not familiar with – they all get me Googling to find out more.

Project annual and final reports stretch my brain – my scientific background is university Geography and what I have picked up on through support to LTS projects - but I enjoy reading about the variety of work that Darwin covers. I particularly enjoy reports that are clear, logical and provide evidence of what is being done – all in simple English and with a few clear pictures!