

DARWIN NEWS

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

Website updates

The re-designed Darwin website (<http://www.darwin.gov.uk>) was launched at the beginning of November. As well as a new look, the site features an extensive gallery of images supplied by Darwin projects, details on all Darwin projects since the launch of the Initiative in 1993, and a sitemap and search function to help navigate the more than 600 pages of information. Please send any newsworthy items for inclusion in the Projects News section, and more photos for the gallery are always welcome.

Frontpage news

Every month or so we will also be featuring a different project on the front page – short articles can be sent to the webmaster at any time!

Secretariat news

Darwin Workshops

Darwin Workshops were held in London on 12th October 2004 and 6th April 2005. Themes covered at the October workshop included: *The ecosystems approach for biodiversity conservation; Financing Conservation; The UK Overseas Territories; and Informing Policy*. Themes covered at the April workshop included: *Lessons, challenges and best practice arising from project partnerships; community partnerships for biodiversity conservation; Exit strategies; and Building capacity to support CBD information needs*. Speakers included Dr. Helida Oyieke from the National Museums of Kenya, who gave participants a valuable perspective on the Darwin Initiative from a host country's point of view.

Reports on the workshops proceedings, and slide shows of presentations given at the meetings are available from the website at

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

(Proceedings and presentations from the April workshop will be available in early May.)

Darwin Initiative: Seventh Report

The seventh annual report of the Darwin Initiative was published on 29th October, and can be downloaded from

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/darwin/7threport/index.htm>

Sixth Darwin Initiative Lecture

Professor Eric Chivian, MD, Director of Centre for Health and Global Environment, Harvard Medical School and Nobel Prize Winner, gave the 6th Darwin Initiative Lecture on “How Human Health Depends on Nature” on 27th October. A report and link to the full transcript are on the Defra website at

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/issues/2004/bio div-041028.htm>

Staff changes at Defra

Margaret Okot joined the Darwin Initiative Secretariat in December 2004, taking over the post previously occupied by Carrie Haloun. Margaret can be contacted on 0207 082 8430 Margaret.Okot@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Project news

Access to Genetic Resources, Benefit Sharing and Traditional Knowledge in Chile - final recommendations

Final recommendations from this project have been translated into English and made available from the FIELD website. More details are on the website at http://www.darwin.gov.uk/news/projects/access_gen.html

From the field

MID-TERM REVIEW IN FIJI

Project ref.: 11/022

The Darwin / BirdLife International project “Identifying sites of global biodiversity conservation importance for the Fiji BSAP” has just had a Mid-term Review. The project team was initially a bit intimidated at the prospect; while happy about overall project progress they were aware that it had evolved away somewhat from the original proposal. However, the review was very objective and looked at the bigger picture, so we need not have worried!



Our mid-term reviewer investigates forest conservation, local politics and eco-tourism
Credit: V. Masibalavu / BirdLife



The first Long-legged Warbler recorded on Viti Levu since 1894 generated huge international media interest
Credit: P. Pikacha / BirdLife

The reviewer was particularly impressed by the project’s ability to adapt the global methodology of BirdLife’s

Important Bird Area process to local conditions – a successful blend of top-down rigour and bottom-up practicality. The project’s adaptive management allowed it to exploit opportunities arising from close collaboration with all relevant national institutions. The national dissemination / communication strategy benefited from writing regular articles in Fijian for a magazine distributed to all indigenous villages. The project’s clearly targeted programme of fieldwork and scientific expertise enabled it to exploit opportunities for innovative local collaborations and international publicity of key discoveries. The greatest long-term impact was seen perhaps to be the national team leader’s participation in a separate conservation initiative. His independence, political authority as a local leader, and scientific skills acquired from the project training, enabled him to help negotiate past a deadlock between local landowners and external conservationists.

The project has, however, not reported well on many of these activities and outputs because they did not seem to the team to fit neatly into the Darwin reporting process. We are grateful to the reviewer for recognizing the importance of these additional outputs, and hope to capture them in our future reports.

DARWIN SCHOLAR EXPERIENCES UK BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH

One of the recipients of the first Darwin Scholarship Programme is already using the experience that he has gained during his time in the UK back in his home country. Mr. Anthony Mitchell is the chief GIS specialist at Coralina, the Colombian public body responsible for administering the environment and natural resources of the San Andres Archipelago in the western Caribbean. He was originally a Darwin Fellow on the 1998-2001 Darwin project (162/7/147), run jointly by Coralina and Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, and entitled “*Marine Habitat Mapping Development in San Andres Archipelago, Colombia*”. The San Andres Archipelago achieved UN MAB Biosphere Reserve status (<http://www.unesco.org/mab/br/focus/2002Aug/Seaflower.htm>) in 2000 and there is now much GEF investment in developing the marine protected area of the new Seaflower Biosphere Reserve.



Darwin Scholar, Mr. Anthony Mitchell (right), accompanying Dr James Mair on a side scan sonar mapping survey of the seabed in Loch Creran Special Area of Conservation.

Anthony Mitchell spent 10 months of his Darwin Scholarship in the UK (February to November 2004), based mainly at Heriot-Watt University, learning and developing new skills with experts in the University's Geomatics Unit. He worked on a great variety of research projects in the field and at different institutions. These included: assisting scientists at the National Museums of Scotland to map distributions of existing and new species of the polychaete genus, *Chaetozone*, in the North Atlantic (work which is now being published in a scientific journal); spending time at the Scottish Association for Marine Science's Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratories mapping trends in invasive marine species in the UK; helping Heriot-Watt University biologists map biogenic reefs in Loch Creran marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) using sonar techniques; and attending specialist

workshops in London and at Edinburgh University. He was also an important collaborator in producing biotope maps for shore and sub-littoral habitats from Shetland in the Sullom Voe marine SAC (Special Area of Conservation) survey recently carried out by Heriot-Watt University for SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage) – SNH being the equivalent agency in Scotland to Coralina in Colombia.

Colleagues in Coralina are happy (and relieved!) to have Anthony back with his new skills and ideas which he plans to put into practice in the work he now has to do on the archipelago's marine protected area. However, there is another aspect of his Darwin Scholarship still to take place in early 2005 and that is to visit workers on the Darwin project (162/12/021) in neighbouring Panama to exchange experience since the Panama Darwin project is mapping the marine environments of another Archipelago - Las Perlas Islands - prior to its imminent designation as one of Panama's newest Marine Protected Areas. Anthony has already been exchanging much knowledge with Jose Miguel Guevara, a Panamanian GIS specialist and currently a Darwin Fellow attending a MSc course at Heriot-Watt University. The intention is for the two of them, and colleagues from both Panama and Colombia, to maintain the exchange of experiences in their respective archipelago developments in biodiversity protection. For more information, Anthony can be contacted at: Anthony Mitchell <mitchui@rocketmail.com>.

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS: BAT CONSERVATION IN MADAGASCAR

Project ref.: 10/024

A Darwin Initiative funded project by the Universities of Aberdeen and Antananarivo ended in November 2004. The Madagascar Darwin Bat Team made a number of important contributions to conservation, including the discovery of a new endemic species (*Scotophilus tandrefana*), training and supervising 12 students from Malagasy universities in bat ecology/conservation projects, providing habitat and species management advice to national parks and a varied environmental education programme. Perhaps the single most significant achievement however, was to raise bats onto the conservation agenda in Madagascar. Conservation research priorities in Madagascar have consistently



Scotophilus tandrefana

excluded bats, despite their contribution to biodiversity, their ecological role and the threatened status of some species. Getting bats onto the conservation agenda took three years - keeping them there will required continued efforts.

The Universities of Aberdeen and Antananarivo identified the capacity-gap in Madagascar and the Darwin Initiative project built the capacity, encouraged the enthusiasm and developed the profile of the current bat team. The major output of our project is difficult to measure in terms of publications, or guide books, or seminars, because it is about the aspirations of a group of young Malagasy bat biologists who were given the taste of real-life conservation as part of the Madagascar Darwin Bat Team, and found that they liked it. Since the end of the Darwin Initiative funding the team has necessarily downsized but still consists of four full-time Malagasy project officers who remain very active in bat conservation.

Through raising the profile of bat conservation we have received a number of invitations to use the expertise of the team. This coming April, all of the four Malagasy members of the Chiroptera sub-group in the IUCN/Global Mammal Assessment workshop were project staff during the recent Darwin Initiative funded project. We have also been invited to conduct bat surveys in candidate protected areas and to run conservation education projects to conserve important bat roosts. This is good evidence that Madagascar needs a permanent bat conservation team and we are now in the process of changing the status of the organisation from a UK-based project to a national Malagasy NGO.

KENYAN 'GOOD WOOD' CARVINGS CARRY THE FSC-LOGO

Project ref.: 11/004

After six years of hard work, 'Good Wood' carvings produced from farm-grown neem (*Azadirachta indica*) can now be FSC certified.

FSC certification of 'Good Wood' carvings contributes to the conservation of threatened East African forests and helps improve livelihoods for poor farmers living on the coast of Kenya. The woodcarving industry in Kenya supports up to 60,000 carvers and their dependants and generates an income of over US\$10 million per year, but has contributed to the decline of threatened hardwoods and the degradation of the globally important East African coastal forests. FSC certification is being used as a tool to promote responsible wood consumption within the Kenyan woodcarving industry by potentially offering new market opportunities.

The pilot co-operative of the Akamba Handicraft Society (c. 3000 carvers) and the newly set-up Coast Tree Product Company have been awarded the FSC Chain of Custody certificate by the FSC accredited certifier Soil Association - Woodmark. The certified neem wood is sourced through the newly formed Coast Farm Forestry Association, which has been certified under a FSC Group certification. 576 farmers have so far joined the group, which is set to grow to over 1000 farmers. These small farmers are growing neem on their farms and sell the certified logs to Akamba to produce certified carvings. This has opened up a totally new income source to coastal farmers, 60% of which live below the poverty line.



Wood carver
(picture: Susanne Schmitt)



Maingi and Kevin explaining certification to farmers
(picture: Robert Hoeft)

Apart from consolidating the current work WWF-EARPO is now intending to apply the lessons learnt from this project to other woodcarving enterprises in Kenya and the East African Coastal Forest Ecoregion (EACF), especially Tanzania. The EACF programme (starting from FY06) has as a component sustainable woodcarving and farm forestry.

One major UK importer of African crafts and carvings (BESMO) is already waiting to import the first shipment of certified carvings; this company is selling through retailers such as Debenhams and House of Fraser.

The success is due to the dedication of my Kenyan colleagues, first and foremost, David Maingi of WWF-EARPO, Severinus Jembe & Anthony Githito of CFCU, David Bright of the Market Access Team of Oxfam GB, and colleagues of Oxfam Kenya and their partners Kwetu and Kenya Gatsby Trust. Thanks are also due to my colleagues Dr Tony Cunningham and Dr Robert Hoeft who started the work on Kenyan woodcarving in the mid-1990s.

This project has been managed under the People and Plants Programme of the International Plants Conservation Unit (www.peopleplants.org) and has for the past 3 years been almost exclusively funded by the Darwin Initiative.

TWO ARTISTIC EVENTS SUPPORTED BY SAIGA CONSERVATION PROJECT

Project ref.: 12/028



“Saiga” by Bulgun Badma-Garyaeva, aged 10

Our project on saiga antelopes has a strong dissemination element, working both at the local and international levels. At the local level this past year has seen a flurry of newspaper articles and public awareness events, particularly in the small southern Russian republic of Kalmykia. One of the most successful of these was a children’s art competition, which attracted more than 100 entries from all over the Republic, but particularly from the districts where saigas can still be found.

Internationally, the project provided data and background information to the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, November 2004, which passed a motion expressing concern about the continued poaching of the saiga, and urging range states and NGOs to collaborate to conserve the species. A similar motion was passed at the CITES Conference of the Parties in October 2004.



“Take care of the Steppe” by Nadezhda Gorayeva, age 14.

A film crew from Marathon Productions accompanied the project team on our expeditions last year, filming

our work measuring newborns in Kazakhstan and observing the rut in Kalmykia. The resulting film, "Aline and the saigas" was a finalist at the 15th International Wildlife Film Festival" held in Albert, France, on 18th-20th March 2005. The film received a jury commendation in the "Prix de la Publique" category, for being among the top three most popular films at the festival as voted by the public. The film was shown on Canal+, a French network, in December 2004. For more details about the film, visit

<http://www.marathon.fr/detailcat.php?IDFICHE=313&CODELANGUE=UK&IDCAT=9> for.

EXTENSIVE SAMPLING UNCOVERS NEW SPECIES IN AMAZONIA

Project ref.: 12/014

UK and Brazilian based PI's from the Darwin project "Biodiversity and functional value of Amazonian primary, secondary and plantation forests" have completed the first year of fieldwork in the Jari region of Amazonian Brazil (see photo). Within this time the lead PI's have overseen the sampling of 12 of the planned 17 faunal groups, while taxonomists in the Museu Goeldi in Belem are already



The primary forest of the Jari region



The nymphalid butterfly *Nessaea obrina* resting on a *Bellucia* leaf

making some surprising finds, including new species of spider

(only the second from the family Drymusidae to be recorded in Brazil) and a likely new species of leaf litter frog of the genus *Eleutherodactylus*. This region had never been extensively sampled before, and high levels of beta diversity make it especially rich for some species groups, such as *Nymphalidae* butterflies (see photo of *Nessaea obrina*), and Scarabaeinae dung beetles.

The spread of plantation forests and native second growth across the tropics also has important implications for local communities, and the project is also examining the sustainable livelihood values of these habitats, examining how local hunters utilise different habitats for game and other non-forest timber products. Initial results indicate that native second growth may be an important habitat, acting as a refuge for game animals, while people tend to hunt most in plantations where there is higher visibility and high number of terrestrial browsers such as brocket deer. Faunal sampling will continue up until the end of July 2005.

FIRST EVER BIRD RINGING PROGRAM IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Project ref.: 12/023

The Darwin Initiative Project to assess the coastal biodiversity of Anegada, BVI has launched a new bird ringing program that will serve all of the BVI. UK Project staff from the University of Exeter in Cornwall in addition to Dr Stuart Sharp, University of Sheffield and Dr Geoff Hilton RSPB, hosted a workshop instructing staff from the local biodiversity organisations and members of the Anegada community in the art of catching, identifying and ringing birds. The workshop started out with three days at the Marine Science Center at the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College and involved practical and classroom sessions before relocating to Anegada for another two days of intensive bird banding.

The project will be continually monitoring and ringing birds on Anegada until the end of the Darwin Initiative Project in April 2006 and it is expected that the bird ringing scheme will be expanded in the future to incorporate the rest of the British Virgin Islands, particularly those islands with globally important breeding seabird colonies.

This article was featured as a front page item on the Darwin website. The illustrated article is available in full at

<http://www.darwin.gov.uk/news/projects/anegada.html>

FOREST MANAGEMENT FOR MEDICINAL PLANTS IN PERU

Project ref.: 13/015

The aim of the project is to develop a management plan for sustainable use of the forest for the production of medicinal plants in collaboration with indigenous forest-dwelling communities. The project's strength lies with the communities who are highly motivated to commercialize herbal medicines originating from their forests in order to improve their livelihoods, whilst at the same time preserve the biodiversity of natural populations of the plant species. Species are being selected this month, and a workshop on participatory forest inventory in early April will focus on methods for forest enumeration, and train locals to establish and evaluate monitoring plots within the forest. The methods being taught in this workshop have been developed previously in India and Nepal on a DFID funded project. Local knowledge of medicinal plants and harvesting regimes has been recorded so that future generations may benefit from it.



Discussing medicinal plants in a garden

(Credit: Sarah Gillett)

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