

# DARWIN NEWS

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Newsletter of the UK Darwin Initiative

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

In this edition of the Darwin Newsletter we are looking at the theme of Partnerships, which was the topic for the recent workshop in Tanzania. Partnerships are an extremely important aspect of the Darwin Initiative and crucial for biodiversity in general. We take a look at some successful projects that are utilising partnerships to enable valuable conservation to take place.

The last few months have been an exciting time for the Darwin Initiative as this summer saw the call go out for the round 16 of funding. The quality of applications this year has been extraordinarily high, as commented on by David Macdonald, chairman of the Darwin Advisory Committee:

"I have been immensely impressed with the applications that we have received this year for the

Darwin Initiative. They have been of an extremely high quality and I would like to thank everyone who has applied for the hard work that has conspicuously been dedicated to these proposals. We all benefit from the high calibre of Darwin projects as this high quality inevitably adds to the reputation of the Initiative, even though the excellent standard makes even more difficult the decisions faced by the Advisory Committee. The announcement of the successful applicants will be at the end of January and I wish you all the best of luck with your applications."

Once again we are featuring one of the Darwin Initiative Fellows who describes her extremely valuable work and how the Initiative has



## DARWIN200

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

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

helped her further her work. We are also featuring profiles from 2 people crucial to the running of the Darwin Initiative, Karen Laurenson who has just been confirmed on the Darwin Advisory Committee for a further 3 years, and Helen Beech from ECTF who has been supporting many of you through the application process.

## Contents

Round 16 applications (p. 1)

Tanzania workshop (p. 2)

Linking biodiversity and farming communities in Transylvania (p. 3)

Nepal National Rhino Count – 2008 (p. 5)

Building capacity for conservation of a critically endangered flagship species (Kenya) (p. 6)

Conservation of Microfungi: a voice for unprotected and vulnerable organisms (p. 6)

Darwin Fellow – Inez Campbell (p. 8)

Darwin People – Karen Laurenson (p. 9)

Darwin People – Helen Beech (p. 10)

## DI Workshop - Tanzania

On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, the Darwin Initiative held a regional workshop in Arusha, Tanzania. These workshops have until now been held primarily in the UK and have been attended by UK Project Leaders and visiting staff but this workshop was an opportunity for regional partners to attend. It was an exciting opportunity for teams to present their work surrounding the focus theme which, for this workshop, was Partnerships and share their experiences under the Darwin Initiative. It was additionally an opportunity to create stronger links between Darwin projects that are working in similar geographical areas or using similar tools and methods.

The theme is particularly pertinent given the remit of the Darwin Initiative to fund collaborative projects which draw on UK biodiversity expertise. To date 198 UK institutions have been involved in setting up collaborative projects. They range from large institutions in the UK like the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and WWF UK to academic institutions to NGOs, to CBOs to private sector organisations. The 759 partners in developing countries come from government departments, universities, non-governmental organisations, scientists, policy makers, forestry workers, lawyers, teachers, or local communities and people.

28 delegates attended the workshop from 12 projects with participants coming from Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria and the UK with some never

having left their country of origin before. Also attending the workshop was Sarah Nelson from the Darwin Secretariat at Defra, Karen Laurenson from the Darwin Advisory Committee, Lesley Brown and Alex Forbes from ECTF and Lawrence Way from JNCC. Delegates included project staff, project trainees, a Darwin fellow and project partners which allowed for an informed discussion.

During the morning and early afternoon sessions, staff from 7 projects shared with the group the work their projects have been carrying out including experiences under the Darwin Initiative of forming partnerships, networks and collaborations. These presentations were used as a basis in the parallel sessions facilitated in the afternoon which centered around 'What makes a good partnership?' A number of recommendations were made by the group as to what are priority issues with respect to partnerships and how they could be better supported by the Darwin Initiative. It was an incredibly rewarding and informative day to meet with so many projects and hear their views. These recommendations will be taken to the next UK workshop to act as a discussion point with UK project leaders.

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Lesley Brown

Darwin Initiative Project Manager, ECTF

### CONTACT DETAILS

Darwin News editor

Helen Beech

Email: [darwin-applications@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:darwin-applications@ltsi.co.uk)

Full contact details for the Darwin Secretariat and the ECTF Monitoring and Evaluation Programme are available on the Darwin website.

### 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.

# Linking biodiversity and farming communities in Transylvania

ADEPT Foundation

John Akeroyd and Nat Page  
Project ref: 15-008

ADEPT (Agricultural Development and Environmental Protection in Transylvania), a Darwin Initiative project (15-008) co-funded by Orange Romania, works to conserve some of Romania's best High Nature Value (HNV) farm grassland. The project area, in

But these small-scale farming communities and their grasslands face an uncertain future. The drive for increased competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Romania is pushing grassland management towards abandonment or intensification, both of which will

practical village-based projects such as encouraging farmers' markets, providing village-scale food processing facilities, teaching and training farming families to add value to their farm products through good marketing, and school education programmes. Examples of success include:

Hay-making near the village of Viscri. The flower-rich hay-meadows near villages are a rare survival. Some mechanisation is the way forward for a viable economy. Photo: Min Wood

## Natura 2000 Designation

On the basis of data gathered under the aegis of the project, the Government of Romania designated the area as a Natura 2000 Site of [European] Community Interest (SCI). When combined with the overlapping Special Protection Area (SPA) for avifauna, Târnava Mare is the largest Natura 2000 site in Romania outside the Carpathian Mountains, exceptional for the fact that it is a farmed, semi-natural landscape.

Natura 2000 makes local people eligible for special grants and funding, especially for maintaining traditional management of High Nature Value grasslands. In 2007, 190 small farmers, managing some 2,000 ha of wildflower-rich hay-meadow, received over €150,000 from EU grants for good management under a pilot scheme organized by ADEPT and the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture. In 2008, 80% of the area's 5,000 farmers signed up for future agri-environment schemes, in contrast to an average 30% in other areas, as a result of awareness-raising by the ADEPT team and assistance with the complex paperwork.

the Târnava Mare Plateau ('Saxon Villages area') of Transylvania, comprises 85,000 ha of mixed grassland habitats and extensive old-growth woodland, with 35 small villages and some 21,000 inhabitants.

This plant- and animal-rich landscape was created by peasant farmers over hundreds of years, and its survival depends on continued traditional management – and upon making biodiversity-friendly management an economically viable proposition for local people.

destroy the biodiversity of the area.

The task of the ADEPT Project is to link grassland conservation directly to improved local incomes and a more secure future for young farmers, so that agriculture protects the unique ecological and cultural landscape as well as acting as a motor for sustainable community regeneration. ADEPT's programme combines biodiversity field surveys, working with colleagues from the Universities of Cluj, Sibiu and Târgu-Mures, with

## Awareness raising leading to increased tourist interest

A significant problem is low public interest in the ecological and cultural value of the area, and appreciation of the potential economic benefits of conservation. In addition to financing school classes and summer camps for schoolchildren, ADEPT has opened a visitor centre. The centre is working to distribute information and publications (including our 2006 publication in English and Romanian, "*The Historic Countryside of the Saxon Villages of Southern Transylvania*"), to raise awareness of biodiversity and related issues among local people and visitors. The erection of signs at the village entrances with tourism and heritage symbols has been largely responsible for an increase in visitors to the villages from c.300 in 2006 to c.5,000 in 2008. Our work in the area has also generated high-level international interest, including from The Prince of Wales who visited the project in May 2008. Most importantly, it has generated local support since biodiversity conservation has been shown, in practice, to be generating local prosperity and incomes.

### Local incomes

The project promotes development of small-scale rural enterprises, including quality

Hungarian Clover (*Trifolium pannonicum*), Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), a typical combination in the hay-meadows area. Lady's Bedstraw is being used as a dye-plant, and as a natural rennet in the development of local cheese varieties, to give additional income to traditional farmers. Photo: Fergus Kinmoth

food production, village crafts and rural tourism that contribute to a sustainable diversified rural economy. The wildflower-rich grasslands themselves attract visitors and add value to a 'brand image' for traditional food products and other goods and services. In 2008 rural tourism and sales of local products brought €100,000 into the area. A particular success is a range of jams prepared in farm kitchens from orchard, garden and wild fruits, including blackberries, strawberries, rose-hips and cornelian cherries – providing a direct link between commerce and biodiversity. ADEPT has helped with marketing and branding but the income goes directly to farming families.

The project has shown farmers that High Nature Value grassland and biodiversity yield definite economic benefits, whether as agri-environment grants or commercial income. HNV grassland is central to added-value food production – meat, cheese, honey, jams and medicinal and culinary herbs. This is beginning to counter the threats to the grasslands posed by the lack of profitability in traditional farming and emigration of experienced farmers, which had created pressures either to abandon marginal land or intensify farming, eroding biodiversity and causing environmental deterioration.

# Nepal National Rhino Count – 2008

Richard Kock and Rajan Amin  
Project Ref: 16-009

The Greater One-Horned rhinoceros in Nepal is severely threatened. The population has been reduced by about 30 percent since 2000 and the extinction of rhino from 2 of the 3 remaining rhino protected areas is a very real possibility. The GOH rhino is a symbol of Nepal's wildlife and an indicator of the current status of the protected areas in the Terai (Bengal tiger and other wildlife species are also declining).

As part of the Darwin Initiative project: "Crisis to biological management – rhinoceros, grassland and public engagement-Nepal", ZSL along with local project partners Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and WWF conducted a National Rhino Count during March in Bardia National Park and Chitwan National Park with the following main objectives:

- To determine the status and distribution of greater one-horned rhinos in and around Bardia NP and Chitwan NP.
- To assess the level of poaching threat on the rhino populations (in combination with intelligence data).
- To use the census information to develop and implement an effective strategy for the security, monitoring and meta-population management of the remaining rhinos in Bardia NP, Chitwan NP and Shuklaphanta WR.
- To standardise an improved methodology and technology providing best possible estimates and

Map of *Mikania micrantha* cover in Chitwan National Park

allowing subsequent comparisons.

- In addition, to obtain valuable information on the distribution and abundance of the primary invasive alien plant species *Mikania micrantha* which is now a major threat to the remaining rhino habitat in Chitwan NP. It is estimated that the risk of rhino being poached is up to 10 times more likely when the rhino are foraging outside the park and this invasive alien is likely to be a major driver for animals to leave the protected area.

A team of about 50 elephants and over 200 people including trained observers were involved in the operation throughout March. The national census confirmed a rhino population (*in situ* and *ex situ*) of 437 in Nepal (Chitwan NP – 408, Bardia NP – 22, Shuklaphanta WLR – 5 and Central Zoo – 2) with an *in situ* population of 434 animals. Important information on the primary invasive was also obtained for the next phase of the invasive plant species control work.

Rhino census in Nepal. Photo © ZSL/Andrew Gell

## Building capacity for conservation of a critically endangered flagship species (Kenya)

Rajan Amin  
Project Ref: 12-004

Institute of Zoology

Black rhino in Kenya. Photo © ZSL/KWS

On the 2nd October 2008, BBC One News broadcast the story of the translocation of a number of Kenyan black rhino and ran an associated BBC News Online story. The translocation of the rhinos from a fenced sanctuary into a free-ranging intensive protection zone – a milestone in the rhino's conservation strategy – was part of an exciting Darwin Initiative project (ref: 12-004) entitled 'Building capacity for conservation of a critically endangered flagship species (Kenya)', which provides support to the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) to conserve and bolster black rhino populations and their habitats in Kenya. The project was led by Dr Rajan Amin from the Institute of Zoology, who worked closely with

KWS on the translocation. We would like to thank the BBC for running this article to highlight the plight of this incredible animal and to demonstrate the inspiring work that is being done through the Darwin Initiative. You can revisit the rhino's big move at the BBC's news website:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7649043.stm>

## Conservation of Microfungi: a voice for unprotected and vulnerable organisms

BioNET International

This project is a partnership between microfungal experts and institutions in the UK, Argentina, Ukraine, South Africa, Cuba, India and Armenia amongst others. The purpose of this project is to initiate a global movement for conservation of microfungi. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you not about the project itself, but to alert you to three enormous and inter-linked websites which have been developed on the way to achieving the project's objectives. These websites are a wonderful new resource for anyone working with biodiversity, conservation or ecology, and that includes botanists and zoologists: animals and plants are associated with fungi, and their lives often depend on the relationship they have with these fascinating organisms.

All of the websites can be found on the Cybertruffle server. The name Cybertruffle was chosen

because it projects a positive image: truffles are objects of great value associated in the public mind with chocolate, clever dogs, good living, gourmet meals and rarity, while the cyber prefix makes the name unusual, good-humoured and gently amusing. The home page for the server is <http://www.cybertruffle.org.uk>, and the home page for the current project is <http://www.cybertruffle.org.uk/darwin-microfungi>.

Two of the websites provide interfaces with the Cybertruffle databases, collectively containing well over 1 million records. One connects to the Taxonomic & Nomenclatural Database (<http://www.cybertruffle.org.uk/cybernome>). The user specifies

David Minter  
Project ref: 16-008

name of the desired organism, and information about that organism is displayed, including its taxonomic position, and hyperlinks to other sites providing further data. The other connects to the Biological Records Database (<http://www.cybertruffle.org.uk/robitalia>). This gives the user access to information about fungi from different countries, with the option to refine the search to a specific part of the country or to a specific associated organism. In many

Ukrainian). Versions in Arabic, Armenian and Hindi are in preparation.

The third website, Cyberliber (<http://www.cybertruffle.org.uk/cyberliber>), provides a digital library for people working with fungi. The lack of literature in many areas of the world is a major impediment to biodiversity research, particularly in Africa, Asia and South America. The Cyberliber website attempts to address that problem for the



ascomycete found only on fallen leaves of holly, was  
ed fewer than five times in the whole of the 20th

cases, dynamic distribution maps are also available, and you can hover the cursor over individual points to display information about the relevant record.

These websites are special for three reasons. Firstly, they prioritize the fungi: there are very few resources available on the internet giving such information about fungi. Secondly, they are enormously powerful in their ability to present ecological associations: because observations of fungi usually include information about the animal or plant with which the fungus is associated, the Cybertruffle databases routinely supply detailed information about all of the fungi known to be associated with a particular animal or plant. Thirdly, each website is currently seamlessly provided in ten languages (Chinese, English, French, Georgian, German, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and

fungi. Two types of information are provided. The first is simply lists of bibliographic references. With about 60,000 such references available, the user can easily see what literature exists and, being in a browsable form, serendipitous discoveries are encouraged. The second type of information takes the form of scanned images of individual pages of scientific literature.

The information on these websites will be in intense use by this project's team in delivering the objectives we must achieve to make our work successful. Other Darwin Initiative project leaders are asked to promote these websites in the countries where they work, and are cordially invited to visit and use the websites themselves, to add a fungal dimension to their projects.

## Darwin Fellow – Inez Campbell

### Former Darwin Fellow participates in Darwin 200 and moves to PhD studies

Inez participated on two Darwin Initiative projects in Panama (12-021 and EIDPO017) and received funding from these projects to pursue a Master's degree. The funding allowed her to complete a Master's in Marine Resource Development and Protection at Heriot-Watt University, Scotland. After graduation she continued working both with another programme of the DI and back at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute as manager of a marine education facility ([http://striweb.si.edu/darwin\\_initiative/](http://striweb.si.edu/darwin_initiative/)). She applied for a Panamanian Government Scholarship, and has just been granted one to pursue her PhD studies at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, on Marine Biology with specialization in Marine Mammals. In a case study for a part of her research, she will be studying the ecology of migrating whales and a local population of cetaceans in her home country of Panama where there are important nursery grounds and migration corridors in the Eastern Pacific.

Recently she participated in the Monitoring and Communicating Biodiversity course held by the Field Studies Council under their Darwin Scholarship Programme

between 8<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> August. This is a prestigious scholarship programme organised by one of the leading biodiversity education organisations in the UK, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin. This scholarship programme is part of the official Darwin 200 celebrations and global competition for the 35 available places was intense.

The Darwin Scholarship brought together 28 young scientists from 21 countries around the world. The aim of the Darwin 200 Scholarship Programme was to develop "better naturalists" in the spirit of Darwin's love of nature and observing the natural world. The Scholarship focused on three areas: skills of observation and identification; skills of recording biodiversity; and skills of communicating biodiversity to different target groups.

While participating in the workshop, each participant had to give a presentation about their work in terms of conservation, and it was interesting to find out that among the 28 participants, four had participated in a Darwin Initiative project also. For example, Sean Mendonca from Guyana had

worked on the North Rupunini Adaptive Management Plan (EIDPO016); Gyanpriya Maharaj of Guyana had worked on 'Biodiversity and Sustainable Development of Butterfly Production (15-013) and, Delaram Ashayeri of Iran on 'Quantification and Elimination of Threats to the Caspian Seal' (15-024).

Inez felt that the main outcome of the workshop was the issue of communicating biodiversity. At her work there are a group of naturalist guides, so she presented to them the activities and presentations she had received from the UK with the purpose of updating them in communication skills of nature and the environment.

## Darwin People – Karen Laurenson

### **What did you do before you became a member of the Darwin Advisory Committee (DAC)?**

Having been brought up on family stories of life and wildlife overseas, I originally trained as a vet, before following a PhD programme studying cheetah ecology in Tanzania. I then combined both of these areas of expertise and did further research on the epidemiology and control of wildlife diseases, both in the UK and Ethiopia, finally becoming a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh. For more than 10 years I have worked to try and reduce the threat that rabies and other canid disease such as canine distemper pose to the persistence of the endangered Ethiopia wolf, with the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme. This has involved both applied research and direct intervention during outbreaks.

### **What else do you do?**

I am now a Programme Manager with a small team of the Africa Regional Office of Frankfurt Zoological Society, an international NGO with some 70 projects across the globe. Originally working out of the Serengeti National park in Tanzania, but now based in Scotland, I set up and manage the FZS Ethiopian Country Programme, I am involved in the organisation's strategic development, provide protected area and ecosystem planning expertise to a number of FZS projects in Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe and am also currently working on improving FZS project and programme evaluation. This work often involves considerable travel, not only to direct workshops in challenging hot and dusty one-horse towns, but also allows the privilege of visiting some of the last wilderness areas in Africa and coming face to face with some exceptional and rare biodiversity.

### **What do you enjoy about DAC?**

I really enjoy learning about exciting, innovative projects that are being put forward for funding, and reading about success stories in the field. This also helps to improve the work of my own organisation, and expands my knowledge and expertise. Meeting other DAC members from diverse backgrounds is also stimulating, as is learning about some of the machinations of government! More recently, it was inspiring to meet some of the local Darwin

field project leaders, as these are the champions for conservation on which all efforts depend. More frustrating elements include ploughing through scores of applications and trying to be fair with appropriate consideration and time for all of them, as well as the sense of sadness after Sift meetings, when we know we have had to turn down good projects that are clearly worthy of funding. That said, I am looking forward to another 3 years on the committee and beginning to see the projects that we previously assessed, come to maturity.

## Darwin People – Helen Beech

### **How did you get involved in the Darwin Initiative?**

I started working for the Darwin Initiative in June 2008. My role is to administer the financial aspects of Darwin projects and also the applications process. It was an exciting time to join the team as it was just before the call went out for the round 16 of funding. This means that I will be involved in the whole process for new projects, and I am looking forward to seeing which ones go through and then working with them over the next few years.

### **What else do you do?**

I am employed by LTS International who are a natural resource consultancy company, with 35 years of experience in supporting sustainable development around the world. My work consists of overseeing the administration of the finances through processing claims and updating the financial records, working closely with Project Leaders and Defra to ensure this process runs smoothly. I also work with my colleague Eilidh Young on the Darwin applications. The other aspect of my job is to manage the Darwin newsletter which involves collecting articles and liaising with a variety of people involved in the Darwin Initiative.

### **What did you do before you worked on Darwin?**

Before I joined LTS I worked as a project administrator for one of the Barnardo's residential units in Edinburgh. I was responsible for the administrative side of the project, in particular the project's budget and, most importantly for the children, their pocket money! It was great to be working for such a worthwhile organisation and I am still in contact with the children and social workers through art workshops that I have facilitated with them. I have done a variety of volunteer work around the world, largely focusing on art-based 'development', most recently this has been in South Africa and Mexico. I also worked for an environmental organisation in Australia gathering public support to change government legislation. All of this work has provided me with valuable experience for my current position.

### **What do you enjoy about working on the Darwin Initiative?**

I enjoy being part of the valuable work being done around the world as part of the Darwin Initiative. I enjoy being able to give advice to project leaders about their applications and hearing about the work that they are planning. It has been a huge learning curve being involved in this round of funding and I am enjoying learning about all the different aspects of the Darwin Initiative.