

# 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>

Welcome to the Darwin Initiative's April newsletter, a time of new beginnings. The successful applicants for Main and Post project funding were announced in February and we would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you and congratulate you on your success. February also saw the closing date for the Scoping and Fellowship awards and, as for the Main and Post projects, the applications were of an incredibly high standard. The results of these are expected to be announced shortly.

There is a new Project Leader workshop taking place in London on 21st May. This is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the Darwin Initiative and will provide you with a greater understanding of what is required throughout the duration of your project. The workshop would also be extremely valuable to finance administrators and they are very welcome to come along. Details of the workshop can be found on the Darwin website and we encourage you to attend this informative day.

This issue of the Darwin Newsletter looks at legacies and lessons learnt from established projects. We

have articles from projects detailing their successes and the resultant lessons learnt from delivering these projects in challenging circumstances. Everyone involved in the Darwin Initiative will no doubt be aware that working in our target countries, whilst immensely rewarding, is rarely smooth and requires an extra set of skills as demonstrated by the projects featured in this quarter's newsletter.

The Darwin Initiative has been receiving a lot of positive publicity recently. This demonstrates how much excellent work is being done in the field and how much impact the Darwin Initiative is having on conservation in general. We feature an article from a project in Mozambique which featured in the Guardian and another project that was visited by the Rt Hon Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for Defra.

Some of you may be aware that there is now an image upload facility on the Darwin website and you are encouraged to make full use of this. The uploaded images can be used in publicity materials for Darwin and projects will be fully credited.

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# Hilary Benn visits Darwin project in Kenya

Project ref: 16-006  
David Harper  
University of Leicester

Mr Benn introduced by Sarah Higgins (LNRA) to Sereh Mungiti (Nature Kenya)  
Photo © CBCF

The Minister responsible for the Darwin Initiative, Mr Hilary Benn, was in Nairobi, Kenya to attend the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Earlier this year he took some time out of his busy schedule to visit Leicester University's Darwin project, 'Local action for global impact - community-based biodiversity conservation films' at the CBCF Kenya office at Naivasha, to view a presentation arranged for him.

The Minister heard presentations and viewed films from several partners in the programme, including Lake Bogoria National Reserve, the African Conservation Centre, Nature Kenya and Friends of Kimanogop. He heard how this project had evolved out of an earlier project on conservation of lesser flamingos and soda lakes at Bogoria, through use of film for spreading good ideas of community development and arresting erosion. He watched the original

film showcasing a song written and performed by a Tanzanian school that is now the project's 'signature tune' - Maji ni Uhai (Water is Life). Mr Benn also heard about the project's achievements during its first 15 months: CBCF has trained 40 young Kenyans and Tanzanians in filmmaking and editing, producing over 50 short films in the process, which are now being shown and evaluated in schools in 5 locations in the two countries. Each country now has a master library of digital films and footage, amounting to many hours, available to these trainees and other

bona fide conservation film makers, for incorporating into new films.

Mr Benn was well briefed about the Darwin Initiative and asked searching questions about how the project would be sustained after Darwin money had finished. Several of the individuals there were very well placed to answer him - some have already used their training to gain internships with environmental NGOs who see the benefits of community films, while others have been promoted by their current employers because of their new skills.

Ben Please filming a Masaai Women's Welcoming ceremony  
Photo © CBCF

# Darwin project discovers virgin rainforest in Mozambique

Project ref: 15-036  
Paul Smith & Julian Bayliss  
RBG Kew

Mabu Camp  
Photo © RBG Kew/JB

To find a large geographical area that has not been thoroughly investigated for its biodiversity is a very special, rare and exciting occurrence for conservation biologists. Through the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew (RBG Kew) Darwin Initiative's project 'Monitoring and Managing Biodiversity Loss in South-East Africa's Montane Ecosystems' this is exactly what happened.

Mozambique is a country that has been inaccessible for many years owing to its independence struggle, shortly followed by a civil war. Together, these lasted for over 15 years, leaving many areas depopulated and with a long term threat in remote parts from land mines. Since the war ended, the southern half of Mozambique has seen considerable growth in comparison to northern areas and, as a result, the north still harbours significant areas of natural wilderness. Many parts of northern Mozambique have simply not been investigated before and potentially hold numerous biological secrets. Of particular interest are the high altitude areas over 1500 metres supporting a high diversity of flora and fauna and largely overlooked in the past.

Mount Mulanje in neighbouring southern Malawi, is the second highest mountain in southern Africa, rising to over 3000 metres and situated on the border in full view of similar mountains in Mozambique. In contrast

Namuli Hills  
Photo © RBG Kew/AMcRob

to the unexplored mountains of Mozambique, Mulanje has received considerable biological attention. Since the discovery of the Mulanje cedar (*Widdringtonia whytei*) in 1888, it has constantly been visited by experts in virtually all fields of biology. With this in mind, an idea was conceived in 2005 to develop a trans-frontier project to investigate the degree of similarity in biodiversity between these mountains, using Mount Mulanje as a base line.

At this time, RBG Kew were working on Mount Mulanje through their Millennium Seed Bank Project and took the lead in developing a Darwin Initiative project. The Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (a World Bank–GEF Trust Fund) acted as a regional host in Malawi, whilst in Mozambique the main partner was the Mozambique Agricultural Research Institute (IIAM), which houses the National Herbarium and is responsible for investigating soil and forest resources. Additional partners were BirdLife International, based in the UK, which promotes bird conservation worldwide and the Forestry Research Institute of Malawi.

The Darwin Initiative is very well suited towards promoting conservation biology in developing countries due to its particular emphasis on capacity building and the training of host country scientists. It is essential to create a knowledge-base and awareness of the value of biodiversity within countries such as Mozambique and Malawi and this is especially important in the case of Mozambique where large areas of natural wilderness still remain. A series of expeditions were organised over the course of three years; all but one were to northern Mozambique. During each expedition, an international scientific team representing the project partners converged

on the selected sites over the course of several weeks. Plant taxonomy, habitat characterisation techniques, biodiversity assessment, and the classification of remotely sensed images were undertaken as part of the training programme. The teams were also rewarded with incredible sights of natural beauty.

The results have exceeded the project's greatest expectations. To date, there have been numerous discoveries of new species. Currently we are dealing with 6 new species of vascular plants, 8 new species of butterfly, 3 new species of snake, 2 new species of chameleon, 2 potential new species of bat and a range of small mammals that need further investigation. The

greatest find, however, came from Mt. Mabu in the form of potentially the largest tract of mid-altitude forest in southern Africa. Further to these results, funding is being secured by IIAM to address the conservation of Mt. Namuli, Mozambique's second highest mountain.

This Darwin Initiative project has set the standard for future work in these areas (and others) in northern Mozambique. It has demonstrated that there are still large, unexplored areas left in this world and, with the appropriate guidance through the expert staff at IIAM, we will demonstrate to policy makers the need for further conservation efforts in the montane ecosystems of northern Mozambique. For more information, see the full article in the [Guardian](#)

## Fiji's Community Protected Areas provide a model for other Pacific nations

Project ref: 15-019  
James Millet  
Birdlife International

A conservation initiative on the beautiful and remote Natewa Peninsula in Fiji is being used as a demonstration project for community conservation to train conservationists from other Pacific Island countries.

The project, to develop a community managed protected area, was initiated in 2005, after the peninsula (on the northern Fijian Island of Vanua Levu) was identified as the Natewa and Tunaloa Important Bird Area (IBA). This IBA contains untouched old growth forest and is home to the subspecies *Kleinschmidti* of the endemic Silktail, *Lamprolia victoriae* (Near Threatened), Shy Ground-dove, *Gallicolumba stairi* and Black-throated Shrikebill, *Clytorhynchus nigrogularis* (both vulnerable) and many other Fijian endemics.

In 2005, a Site Support Group made up of landowning clans was formed and agreed to protect their forest from degrading activities, including commercial logging and agriculture.

A workshop was held between 24 – 26 February 2009 in Navetau Village on the Natewa Peninsula. The meeting was attended by over 30 local people and, during the meeting, 11 landowning clans or mataqali agreed to sustainably manage over 6000ha of land for ten years.

Male Orange Dove, Nabogiono, south Taveuni  
Photo © Paddy Ryan

They also agreed an interim management plan.

"This is a really exciting grassroots initiative", said Tuverea Tuamoto, Conservation Officer with the Birdlife Fiji Programme. "The landowners are taking the initiative by developing the protected area, and we are working in partnership with government departments to support them".

The workshop was also a training course for conservationists from other Pacific islands. Participants

from Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (SCO, BirdLife in New Caledonia), the New Caledonian community conservation initiative Dayu Biik, the Provincial Government of New Caledonia's South Province (Province Sud), and La Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie (MANU, BirdLife in French Polynesia) attended lectures and took part in the community workshops.

James Millett, Senior Technical Advisor with the Birdlife International Pacific Partnership, explained: "Working with communities is central to every conservation project in Fiji and Fijian conservationists are well practiced at traditional protocols, as well as the modern social tools for assessing community needs, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal. However, community conservation is just starting out in some other Pacific countries and territories". He added,

"Our partners have been very enthusiastic over this workshop and have been impressed by the knowledge and skills of young Fijian conservationists and equally impressed by the commitment of landowners to manage forest sustainably. The best way to appreciate how important it is for communities and traditional landowners to lead conservation projects is to see a Site Support Group at work."

The Darwin Initiative has been funding the development of conservation groups and community based protected areas at several important forest sites in Fiji. The training of regional conservationists was supported by the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation.

## The first UNESCO natural World Heritage Site in Central Asia - promoted by a Darwin Project

Project ref: 14-061  
Michael Brombacher  
RSPB

The recently completed Darwin project, 'Important Bird Area conservation and capacity building in Central Asia', has produced a number of long-lasting legacies for conservation in the three project countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Of great importance is the nomination of two of the most outstanding Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the region (the Naurzum and the Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserves) as a clustered UNESCO World Heritage Site which was approved in mid-2008. Since the start of the Darwin project in 2005 the two project partners (the RSPB and the ACBK) have substantially supported the government of Kazakhstan with the completion of the nomination dossier, which supports the evaluation process of the sites by IUCN – the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The designation is the first for a natural World Heritage Site in Central Asia and will be beneficial to conservation efforts for these two territories. Since its start in 2005, the project has completed the inventory priority sites for conservation using the BirdLife International Important Bird Area (IBA) approach. 219 IBAs of global importance have been identified and documented, covering almost 21 million hectares (approaching the size of Great Britain!).

The high-quality inventory publications have been

printed in Russian and English language versions and launched at the BirdLife Global Partnership meeting held in Buenos Aires last autumn. About 40% of the sites are currently unprotected. As a first success, the protection regime of several IBAs has been improved by the government of Kazakhstan in 2009 and, by 2010, new Protected Areas designations are scheduled based on the IBA inventory.

A second important pillar of the project was capacity building among the next generation of conservationists

Photo © ACBK/Maxim Koshkin

Student clubs  
Photo © ACBK/Ivan Zuban

– a generation which was almost non-existent in the three project countries, as well as in many other post-Soviet countries since their independence in 1992. To overcome this dramatic situation by the end of 2008, a total of 14 student wildlife conservation clubs have been established in cooperation with universities throughout Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The network of clubs regularly involves more than 200 students in training and practical conservation work. The clubs have been equipped with basic field and office equipment (largely through additional grants) and the students take part in a special training programme which has been developed by the RSPB and the national project partners. The student clubs are part of the non-governmental conservation network of the national partners which will be maintained and supported by them in future. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan students already conduct site monitoring, conservation and education activities and most of ACBK's new employees are recruited from this network. This success story can be an important lesson learnt for partners/countries/projects.

## Bees, biodiversity and forest livelihoods

Project ref: 15-001  
Janet Seeley  
University of East Anglia

Photo © Nicola Bradbear/Bees for Development

The Nilgiris, or Blue mountains, in southern India were the first internationally designated Biosphere Reserve in India, established in 1986. A unique project, examining the interdependencies between bees, biodiversity and forest livelihoods in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) in the Western Ghats of South India, is drawing to a close in May 2009.

The indigenous bees of this mountainous reserve play an important role in local livelihoods, where hunting honey from wild nesting *Apis dorsata* bees is part of the culture. However:

- The population size and distribution of these *Apis dorsata* bees was unknown;
- The bees' role in pollination and the maintenance of forest biodiversity had not been studied.

This project is endeavouring to combine scientific data about the status of indigenous bees and their ecology, with participatory livelihoods analysis. The research funded by the Darwin Initiative is being implemented by the Indian NGO, the Keystone Foundation, working in partnership with local indigenous communities and

Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu Forest Departments, together with three UK-based organisations: the School of International Development, University of East Anglia; Bees for Development; and The Centre for Agri-Environmental Research, University of Reading.

The Nilgiris mountains lie at the junction of the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats, or Sahyadris, the two prominent mountain ranges that run almost parallel to the coastlines of peninsular India. The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is an area of 5,520 km<sup>2</sup> within the states of Karnataka (1527 km<sup>2</sup>), Kerala (1455 km<sup>2</sup>), and Tamil Nadu (2538 km<sup>2</sup>). The Mudumalai National Park, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park and Silent Valley National Park are protected areas within this reserve, which also includes zones open to forestry and tourism. Because of its geographic isolation, the Western Ghats within which the NBR is located is one of the richest centres of endemism in India. Of the

Photo © Nicola Bradbear/Bees for Development

4,000 species of flowering plants found in the Western Ghats, 1,500 species are endemic. This high level of diversity and endemism in the Western Ghats has given it the status of one of the world's biodiversity 'hot spots'. This biodiversity hotspot is home to 132 species of flowering plants that are endemic to the NBR.

In forests of this area, people harvest honey from the huge combs of *Apis dorsata*. Here, these bees are most often found nesting on cliff faces. This means that the honey hunters face precarious work, using ropes and ladders made from forest vines to climb down the cliffs, harvest honey from the combs that are often under ledges and pulley the empty and full honey containers up and down the cliffs. The number of these *Apis dorsata* colonies is unknown. They are migratory species, yet their routes and migratory patterns are not known, at least to modern science. The communities that have depended upon honey hunting for many generations know much about these bees and this project seeks to learn from them.

There are 36 indigenous communities living in the NBR and, of these, about fourteen have been assessed as traditionally involved with the collection of honey. Twelve of the fourteen indigenous communities have been classified as hunter-gatherers and it is these communities that are particularly active in honey collection. The other two communities, Todas and Paniyans, are respectively pastoralists and agriculturalists. The total population of indigenous communities is estimated to be 200,000.

The Project is generating:

- New scientific knowledge of honey bees and stingless bees of Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve;
- New knowledge about people's livelihoods and the economic value and social role of bees within these livelihoods;
- Improved staff skills within participating organisations in India: a specialist research unit within Keystone, field centres within local communities, and public service skills within State Forest Departments;
- Improved professional skills amongst project partners concerning research design, information systems, livelihoods analysis, and governance, Convention on Biodiversity implementation, as well as generic skills in survey, design, and bee and pollination science;
- In-country workshops, media reports, working with opinion formers and policy makers, to enable the value of bees for biodiversity to become more widely understood and appreciated.

In addition, a 'Biodiversity and Livelihoods' conference was held on the 26th-28th March 2009. This three day conference included a range of papers by national and international academics and policy makers on different aspects of the topic both in the Nilgiris and more broadly in India. We also presented a range of findings from the project as posters and a limited number of oral presentations.

Photo © Nicola Bradbear/Bees for Development

## Distinguished award for Darwin Student - Benson Okita

Kenya's President, Mwai Kibaki, conferred the Moran of the order of the Burning Spear award to Benson Okita on 12th December 2008. The Moran of the order of the Burning Spear award (MBS) is one of the highest National awards a civilian in the Kenya Government can receive in recognition of distinguished performance and service in various capacities. The award was presented to Ben during Kenya's annual Independence Day (Jamuhuri day) celebrations in recognition of his outstanding service in rhino conservation and national development.

Benson Okita was the Kenyan Project Coordinator for the recent project 'Building capacity for conservation of a critically endangered flagship species' (12-004). He states that he will be forever grateful for the training he received at DICE, University of Kent, which was made possible by, amongst others, the Darwin Initiative through the Zoological Society of London. The other major supporters of Benson include: US-FWS; AWF-Charlotte fellowship; Save the Rhino International; USAID and KWS. The training Benson received as part of his MSc degree in Conservation biology enhanced his skills for better performance in rhino conservation. Ben passed his degree with Distinction.

Benson says, 'It was very gratifying to see our conservation efforts formally recognized and rewarded by the Kenyan Government and the Head of State. However, what's

most gratifying is to see black rhino numbers gradually increase and hopefully they will rise to unexpected levels!'

Currently Benson is a sandwich PhD student under the supervision of Prof. Herbert Prins in the Production Ecology and Resource Conservation at Wageningen University, Netherlands. He aims to begin his research in August and it will of course be on black rhinos in Kenya.

Ben Okuku  
Photo © KWS

## Darwin Fellow, Anne Marie Ndong Obiang, supports bushmeat conservation in Gabon

Project ref: 12-002  
Fellowship ref: EIDPS018  
University of Stirling

In 2003, the Darwin Initiative awarded money for a project ('Capacity Building for Managing and Monitoring the Bushmeat Trade in Gabon') to manage and monitor the burgeoning bushmeat trade. Gabon is almost all forested and traditionally its rural population has used bushmeat as its staple protein.

By 2000, the general 'bushmeat crisis' that was evident across most of Africa, was also affecting Gabon. The relatively recent wealth of the country, combined with its small population, means that modern Gabon has a highly urbanised population with a very small tradition of agriculture, especially in domestic meat production. As rural areas urbanise and nomadic villages become larger and more sedentary, the areas around villages are becoming intensively harvested and depleted of wildlife. Most older, rural people believe that the numbers of the larger wildlife species (apes, elephants buffalo) have declined by more than half in the last 20 years and

returns from hunting are low. Poor people in provincial small towns, where both domestic meat and bushmeat are transported in and are expensive, are even worse off. The bushmeat crisis has increased in proportions beyond that of wildlife conservation and it is affecting human food security.

The Darwin project was part of a larger Wildlife Department initiative, inaugurated in 2000. The aim was to develop a twin-horned approach to bushmeat management: sustainable rural harvests which ensure long term food and economic security for the rural populations and protection of vulnerable wildlife communities in managed forestry and protected areas. Since the project ended, the Wildlife Department has continued working on the issue. In 2007, they held a meeting (prepared in 2006 with Darwin funds) to initiate cross-ministerial participation in managing the issue. The opening up of wildlife management is critical to this approach, requiring the participation of local communities, the police and local authorities, not just the wildlife rangers. It also requires the participation of the ministries of Finance, Interior, Agriculture, Culture, Justice, Defence and Environment to fully ensure that appropriate governance can happen.

In 2007, following the meeting that established the inter-ministerial network for bushmeat management, the Wildlife Department liaison officer Anne Marie Ndong Obiang won a Darwin Fellowship to study Ecology and English at the University of East Anglia. She returned to Gabon in 2008 and took up her old Wildlife Department post, with prime responsibility for bushmeat issues. In March 2009, the original Project Leader, Dr Kate Abernethy of Stirling University, in collaboration with Anne Marie Ndong Obiang, completed a report gathering all the research and technical information available from nearly 10 years of studying the bushmeat trade in Gabon. These technical documents will underpin a meeting of the inter-ministerial network in the next three months with the hope of ratifying a national strategy for bushmeat management in Gabon. These will then allow practical measures on the ground to begin working towards better wildlife protection and long term sustainability for rural livelihoods.

The crucial lesson that was learnt from this project is that

Photo © Malcolm Starkey, 2007

policy reform and validation of legislation and national strategies are hard to achieve in 3 years. The rhythm of political reform, and the necessary bureaucratic steps to validate documents at this level, means that the process is one of 2 to 3 years. For a project to gather and analyse information in order to construct or guide the policies, the 3 years is clearly not enough. The Fellowship allowed the project two very useful things;

- 1) To keep up the momentum in political lobbying to use the results of the main project;
- 2) To expand knowledge of the work to the international arena, allowing Anne Marie to represent the Wildlife Department at English-speaking venues and for international pressure for reform to be translated for the Wildlife Department.

Although Gabon is now on a very positive track, the legal and political reforms needed to make real headway in this area have still not been finalised. In order for Darwin projects to be effective, the way in which the initial push delivered by a main project can be carried forward into policy must be carefully planned.

## Information for Authors

Darwin News is published quarterly. Suggestions for articles can be submitted any time. In the first instance only titles should be sent. Articles will then be commissioned for specific issues.

If you would like to publicise any events such as workshops, you can also submit this information and it will be posted on the Darwin newsletter information page.