

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>

This is a bumper issue of the Darwin Initiative's newsletter due to a fantastic response to a request for articles on 'Training and Capacity Building'. This is obviously a subject with which many Darwin funded projects have had great success. We feature articles from projects that are able to demonstrate the long-term legacy as a result of Darwin Initiative funding. We also feature relative newcomers to the Darwin Initiative and their hopes for the future with regards to training and capacity building.

In addition to a new cohort of Darwin Initiative Fellows, the Darwin Initiative has also welcomed new faces to the Darwin Advisory Committee (DAC). Following applications from highly talented biodiversity specialists we can now announce the appointment of 5 new Darwin Advisory Committee members, two of whom are featured in this newsletter. The new members are Alistair Gammell (formerly of RSPB), Dr. Brendan Godley (Exeter University), Joanna Elliott (African Wildlife Foundation), Prof. Mary Gibby (RBGE) and Dr. Monique Simmonds (RBG Kew). We hope to feature the remaining new DAC members in future editions of the newsletter.

This quarter saw the close of Stage 1 applications for Main Projects. We received over 180 applications with a record 24 for work in the UK Overseas Territories. The DAC faced the difficult job of reducing this number for Stage 2 and all applicants should have received feedback letters by now. The deadline for applications to Stage 2 is 30th November which is also the closing date for all Post-Project applications. Details of the Scoping, Challenge fund and Fellowship application dates will be announced later in the year.

This quarter we are also pleased to announce the next Darwin Initiative Regional Workshop which is to be hosted in Brazil this year. Full details of funding support for delegates is available on the website (<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/>). Whilst financial support is restricted, other Darwin Initiative project staff are more than welcome.

The deadline for articles for the next newsletter is the 20th December. The theme of articles of the next newsletter is 'Communicating Biodiversity'.



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Alistair Gammell

OBE

In July this year, I retired from RSPB, having worked at Sandy for just over 40 years. Most of my career has been spent undertaking international work and for the past 15 years, I was the RSPB's International Director, responsible for projects undertaken with BirdLife Partners,

Governments and other NGOs in Europe, Africa, Asia and the UK Overseas Territories as well as for RSPB's work on international legislation. And of course some of the projects we undertook were supported by the Darwin Initiative, so I have practical experience of being a several times Darwin recipient.

Retirement didn't last long – one month - and from September this year, I have started working for The Pew Charitable Trusts to get the Chagos – a UK Overseas territory containing the largest coral atoll in the world - and its surrounding waters, designated as a large marine no-take reserve.

It is a privilege to have the chance to join the Darwin Advisory Committee. The Fund has already made an enormous difference to conservation in the world and I see it as my task to help this to continue and indeed to make it even more successful. For me winning projects have at least 3 components. Clear and achievable end objectives that are measurable in terms of a species' status being improved, local collaborators who really believe in the project and want it to succeed and finally a clear and realistic picture of how the gains achieved by the project are going to be maintained or better still built upon once the project funding has ceased. And we must not be frightened to look at projects five years after they have ended to see what the results have been – if we have got it right, they will be there, thriving and building on the work that the Darwin Initiative supported.

Joanna Elliot

After a decade in finance and management consulting, I have spent the past twenty years trying to help integrate biodiversity conservation into mainstream development practice. Based in Indonesia 1990-1994 I worked with the local umbrella environmental forum, WALHI, as well as WWF, The Nature Conservancy, the

World Bank, USAID and the Ministry of Forestry on a series of conservation economics and policy projects to strengthen the practice of economically sustainable conservation, with a specific focus on tropical forests.

Based in Kenya 1994-99 I worked with Kenya Wildlife Service and then with the African Wildlife Foundation focusing on the economics of landscape scale approaches to conservation. I then worked for DFID 1999-2006 as a Rural Livelihoods Advisor, overseeing a portfolio of biodiversity related work including the DFID Wildlife and Poverty Study in 2003 and acted as the DFID focal point for the Darwin Fund. I now work as Vice President for Program Design and Knowledge Management for the African Wildlife Foundation and a Visiting Fellow at the International Institute for Environment and Development, where my particular interest is the link between biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods.

I am looking forward to joining the Darwin Advisory Committee. The Darwin Fund is a vital source of funding for critically important work across the world, and has become more important as parallel sources of funding for applied biodiversity conservation research have diminished. In my experience the critical factors determining the success and impact of these projects are: the ideas, attitudes and experience of the project leaders, the identification of and role determined for southern partner organisations, the definition of the scope of the project and the underlying questions being tested, and the way in which learning is captured and shared.

Botanical Training and Capacity Building in Nepal

Project ref: 12-030

Mark Watson & Colin Pendry
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Nepal is part of the globally significant Sino-Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot, but conservation and sustainable development are hindered because it is neither easy to name plants nor get access to information about their biology and uses. A comprehensive Flora provides this and is a priority for Government of Nepal, but local capacity for plant taxonomy is limited and help is needed. A big step forward was made during RBGE's three-year Darwin Initiative (DI) project Building Capacity for Plant Biodiversity, Inventory and Conservation in Nepal (12-030), completed in 2006. Biodiversity research requires a skilled workforce, using the right tools, working in facilities with reliable reference collections. Building capacity in all these areas is way beyond

Three years on we have been very encouraged to see many signs of a lasting legacy. Most notable is the personal development of many of our trainees. Almost all of those from the Government and Tribhuvan University have since been promoted and are undertaking biodiversity assessment projects of their own, including one who has set up a regional herbarium. Several trainees are contributing further

accounts for the Flora, and others have been successful in securing international funding to document plants and their uses in National Parks. We are proud that five of our trainees are now studying for PhDs, three at institutions beyond Nepal. Anjana Giri is studying in Austria and Bhaskar Adhikari is nearing the end of his PhD in Edinburgh. Bhaskar is funded by the Royal

Horticultural Society, University of Edinburgh and RBGE to research the genus *Berberis* in Nepal. He has joined our recent expeditions and undertaken fieldwork on his own working in remote areas of Nepal.

Changes in the DI Fellowship enabled a successful application to fund another of our high fliers, Ram Poudel (EIDPS015), to attend RBGE's highly respected MSc course in plant taxonomy and biodiversity. Ram's Fellowship features in a past Darwin News (Issue 12), and he has just started PhD research at Kunming Institute of Botany (China) working on Himalayan Yews, jointly supervised by RBGE staff and funded by the Chinese Academy of Science. Recently Lokesh Shakya (EIDPS021) started a one-year study visit with us funded by a second DI Fellowship to complete his documentation of all 400 orchid species in Nepal. Sangeeta Rajbhandari is undertaking PhD research on the

the scope of a single DI project, so our focus was on increasing skill levels, expertise and experience through intensive hands-on training events in Nepal and the UK. Sixteen Nepalese botanists participated on the workshops, fieldwork expeditions and study visits to the UK. At the time this was hailed a success by partners and external reviewers, but what of the long term benefits - the legacy?

genus *Begonia* in Nepal, and is on a one-year study visit at RBGE to incorporate DNA data into her work (part funded by the Macintyre and Sibbald Trusts). Finally Sheetal Vaidya has just begun her PhD on *Anaphalis*, a genus prominent in the Himalayas and Umesh Koirala is researching his PhD on the ecology of Terai aquatic macrophytes.

The short UK study visits during the DI project had unexpected benefits and a far reaching legacy. Working with researchers and collections in UK herbaria opened trainee's eyes to possibilities back in Nepal. The curation of the collections is much improved and a programme of digitisation

has now started in the National Herbarium. Although the DI project significantly improved the capacity for biodiversity research in Nepal, it must be followed up with sustained efforts which build on this solid foundation. The further training at MSc and PhD levels, and extended study visits have made significant impact in taking this forwards and extending the legacy, and we will seek to continue these. With hindsight, it would have been worthwhile to also include on the UK study visit, senior staff from the institutes. If they had had the same first hand experiences as their staff then changes in working practices would have been much faster and more extensive and the overall legacy still greater.

Darwin People - Samuel Mutisya

Samuel Mutisya was one of four fellows selected from applicants to the 16th round of Darwin Initiative funding in 2009. Samuel Mutisya has previously been working as an ecologist for the OI Pejeta Conservancy in Laikipia, Kenya. The Darwin Initiative Fellowship will support Samuel to study for an MSc in Conservation Biology at the Durrell Institute for Conservation Ecology (DICE), University of Kent from October 2009. The Darwin Fellowship will provide Samuel with postgraduate training so that he can in future work within OI Pejeta's management team, sustain and develop the programme of human-elephant conflict alleviation and management initiated by local partners in Laikipia, and supported by Darwin project 15-040.

The OI Pejeta Conservancy has the largest breeding population of black rhinos in Kenya and supports other endangered large mammals (including cheetahs and Grevy's Zebra). Its aims are to conserve wildlife and to generate income, mainly from through wildlife tourism for reinvestment in conservation and community development. For the past three years, Samuel has been collaborating directly with Cambridge

University through the Darwin Initiative project Building Capacity to Alleviate Human-Elephant Conflict in North Kenya (15-040). Samuel's work has involved coordinating the monitoring of endangered mammals and vegetation within the conservancy, monitoring elephants that break the conservancy's perimeter fence and raid crops on the neighbouring small-scale farms.

A number of initiatives to strengthen local capacity to manage human-elephant conflict in Laikipia have been initiated with the support from Darwin Project 15-040. The most important work has probably been to support the Laikipia Wildlife Forum and other local partners in the management of the newly-constructed West Laikipia Fence, which on completion will be 163 km in length. The OI Pejeta Conservancy is playing a key role in making this fence effective by providing technical expertise for its maintenance and the management of consistent fence breaking elephants. Samuel will be well placed to contribute to the success of this work when he has completed his fellowship. The management of human-elephant conflict is vitally important for the thousands of small-scale farmers that will depend on the West Laikipia Fence to secure their livelihoods.

Protecting Key South African Biodiversity Sites through Community-based Conservation

Project ref: 15-012

Dr Chris Magin (RSPB) and Daniel Marnewick
(Birdlife South Africa)

RSPB has been working since 2006 with BirdLife South Africa to build the capacities of communities to conserve four critical biodiversity sites: the Soweto and Wakkerstroom wetlands, and the Ongoye and Cata Forests. The project aims to link livelihood improvement of impoverished communities with sustainable natural resource use, capacity building and grassroots conservation action. As this Darwin project funding is drawing to an end, we can finally reflect on the successes of a very intensive project.

Linking livelihoods with conservation meant that training needed to be diverse. At each site, project-appointed community site managers were trained in socio-economic assessments, participatory rural appraisals, media and fundraising and project management. The community beneficiaries were trained in site monitoring, environmental education, site management planning, policy and advocacy, bird guiding and business and financial management.

Overall this has amounted to 228 weeks of training of some 1,500 community members.

The most successful of these sites has been the magnificent Wakkerstroom wetland and surrounding grassland, home to countless mammals, insects and birds, none more important than the globally threatened White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi* and Blue Crane *Grus paradisea*. The sleepy little town of Wakkerstroom, four hours drive from Johannesburg, has grown into a bustling tourism village, with visitors attracted by the rich bird life, cultural heritage and scenic beauty of the area.

Unfortunately the area has also been plagued by numerous inequalities resulting from South Africa's apartheid past, resulting in benefits from tourism and the wetland being skewed towards the wealthier community members. The impoverished community has battled for equal access to resources and economic benefits. This Darwin project was able to start building the capacity and skills of these 'poorer' members of the community and showcase some successful projects, demonstrating the wetland's ability to benefit all. Once the community at large started

realizing the successes we were having, many racial and cultural walls began to crumble. Capacity building though is about more than just training. It also includes supporting the trainees to use their new found skills and giving them the necessary resources to get started. We supplied community-based enterprises with the necessary financial management tools such as ledgers and bank accounts, and assisted them with the first purchase of goods to begin production. Woodworkers were supplied with chainsaws to cut down exotic trees for carving and handicrafts; artisans producing ornate beadwork were given beads, wire and pliers; and an irrigation scheme was installed for a cooperative vegetable farm. Meanwhile, resource user groups were assisted to develop constitutions for their cooperatives or associations,

Manager said “*For the community of Wakkerstroom to benefit from bird tourism, it is important that they align their activities to the needs of the birders*”. Muzi Makhubu, a self-taught wood carver, is a clear example of this. He was producing wooden statues in his back yard to try to eke a living. The project gave Muzi additional skills training in wood carving and developing a business plan, and provided the necessary equipment. It also contracted Muzi to carve four live size Grey Crowned Cranes (see photo 1) to use as decoys to attract wintering cranes to the wetland for birdwatchers. Muzi says “*I never thought that carving could be linked to tourism and bird conservation, but this is evidence that it can*”. With the project’s help Muzi is now negotiating with commercial farmers to cut down their alien invasive trees for wood and sell them similar crane decoys, whilst his wooden art work has become a sought-after souvenir by visitors to Wakkerstroom.

Wood-carver Muzi
Makhubu: Hansco Banda

The project’s work with other resource users of the Wakkerstroom wetland, e.g. the reed harvesters, has resulted in the mitigation of threats to the wetland, such as annual, unplanned burning. The reed cutters were involved in developing a sustainable use management plan for the removal of reeds, and were given training and skills to develop a small business selling reed fences to local residents. As a result of this group having a say in the management of the resource, and being

and management plans to ensure sustainable use.

To date, the Wakkerstroom project has supported seven community-based enterprises, which have 44 direct beneficiaries and 250 indirect beneficiaries (family members). These activities have earned more than £7,500 since their inception. For people living off 60 pence a day, this is a significant increase in household income.

Hansco Banda, the Wakkerstroom Project Site

given the skills to earn money from the resource, the wetland has not been burnt in the last two years.

The results of this project are very encouraging and have developed a solid foundation for further work. Essential skills and capacity have been developed on the ground, but it would be premature to withdraw from the communities and sites now. The RSPB and BirdLife South Africa are therefore currently trying to secure further funding to continue and consolidate its existing success.

From trainee to trainer: tackling bushmeat in Madagascar

Project Ref: 17-006

Richard Jenkins (Madagasikara Voakajy)

Capacity is not built in a day. Very often it is not built by a single project. Capacity needs to be nurtured and supported, with individuals' confidence increasing as they face emerging challenges which allow them to develop their capabilities and become more independent. A series of Darwin Initiative grants supporting vertebrate conservation in Madagascar have allowed Julie Razafimanahaka to make the journey from student trainee to trainer. She is now host-country coordinator for a Darwin-funded project tackling the urgent issue of bushmeat hunting in this biodiversity hotspot.

British Ecological Society. These allowed her to conduct her Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies and establish a research project on the endemic leaf-nosed bats in eastern and southern Madagascar.

A key moment in Julie's professional development was winning a Darwin Initiative fellowship to study for an MSc in Applied Ecology and Conservation at the University of East Anglia in the UK. Julie says *"My MSc was really good as I learnt so much from the lecturers who have a very different approach to teaching than I had experienced in Madagascar. We were encouraged to use the library and to teach ourselves more, which is a useful skill for the workplace"*. Crucially, she was able to return to her post at Madagasikara Voakajy, as agreed, in September 2008 when she took up a new position as manager of the 'Sustainability and Outreach Programme'.

This was well timed, as it coincided with the early stages of Madagasikara Voakajy's drive to tackle the bushmeat issue. Julie is now host-country coordinator for a joint project between Madagasikara Voakajy and Bangor University. She is leading a five-person team as well as coordinating all student and staff training for the organisation. She is now also supervising diploma students from the University of Antananarivo. 'I'm reminded of 2003 when I first introduced myself to Darwin Initiative project staff in the hope of obtaining some training and capacity building, and wishing to become a project leader in the future'.

Julie's first contact with the Darwin Initiative was in 2003 as a student trainee on a bat conservation project through the University of Aberdeen. She learned the basics about bat fieldwork and biology and obtained her diploma from the University of Antananarivo in 2004. Identified early on as a potential leader by Darwin Initiative project staff, Julie worked on the follow-up project funded by the Darwin Initiative that created a Malagasy biodiversity conservation organisation called Madagasikara Voakajy and became responsible for their environmental education projects. With the support of Madagasikara Voakajy she has successfully applied for a number of awards, including a WWF scholarship and an overseas bursary from the

Bushmeat studies abound from sub-Saharan Africa but there have been remarkably few from Madagascar. However evidence from the initial studies which Madagasikara Voakajy have carried out suggest that hunting may pose a threat to some threatened species and that wild meat contributes significantly to rural livelihoods where alternative animal protein sources are limited. The new Darwin Initiative project combines the experience of Madagasikara Voakajy staff with the expertise of British scientists from Bangor University to quantify the pressure on threatened species while investigating opportunities

for sustainably management of game species. With Julie leading by example, it will combine science, community involvement and student training to help the Malagasy government address this important issue which is currently moving up the political agenda. *“This project gives me the opportunity to put into practice the skills I have learnt. At the end of this project, I hope the students, staff and community members I’ll be working with, will be leading on new projects for the conservation of Malagasy biodiversity while sustainably using it”.*

Assessing the Impact of Exotic Salmonids on Chilean waters

Project Ref: 15-020

Dr Carlos Garcia de Leaniz (University of Wales)

Students attended our workshops in some numbers and received updated information from national and international expert on the threats posed by exotic fish species, and the use of various tools for studying the origin and impacts of exotic fish escapes. Practical ‘hands-on’ sessions were scheduled at the end of our last two workshops. Here students were taught to use software for monitoring and assigning fish escapes, and learned through dissection and scale reading how to identify recent escapees from naturalized fish.

In addition to the workshops, extensive field training has been provided to 13 students and volunteers, both from Chile and overseas, resulting in 10 theses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Through our project, students have been able to appreciate the beautiful landscapes of southern Chile, but also to study – and learn to mitigate – the process of biological invasions in situ.

Three international workshops have been organized within the framework of the Darwin Initiative “Reducing the Impact of Exotic Aquaculture on Chilean Aquatic Biodiversity” (www.biodiversity.cl), and these have been popular with students and stakeholders, fulfilling important training and outreach components. We met all major stakeholders at the beginning of the project in 2007(15-020), when a proud Chilean salmon industry (based on exotic species) was still operating under the paradigm of unlimited growth, solely regulated by market forces. We saw them again at the end of 2009 when the industry had been decimated by the outbreak of the deadly ISA virus, several massive escapes of invasive salmonids had occurred, and a Code of Best Practices was badly needed.

Darwin People - Eric Blencowe

How did you get involved in the Darwin Initiative?

I was appointed to the post of Head of the International Biodiversity Policy Unit at Defra, which covers both the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Darwin Initiative. It also looks after our biodiversity interests in the UK's Overseas Territories.

What did you do before you worked on Darwin?

After leaving university in Manchester I started working in town and country planning. Realising fairly early on that my interests lay elsewhere I swiftly moved across to what was then known as the Wildlife Division in the, then, Department of the Environment. With short breaks in other thematic areas I have largely stayed within this discrete area of work. Having said that, the work has taken me to Bonn, where in the 1990s I spent three years establishing the first permanent secretariat for the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (coining it EUROBATS), and setting up European Bat Night, which still runs annually across the continent.

After a brief spell back in the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions in the late 1990s, where I was responsible for UK Government interests in the World Conservation Union (IUCN), I took on the job of Private Secretary to the

Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, Dr Klaus Töpfer, a former Environment Minister of Germany. This role gave me a fascinating insight into the workings of international environmental governance right at their very core. It involved an enormous amount of travelling to the US and across the world,

for meetings, visits, and World Environment Day, which for me was the most memorable occasion as it involved a three-day visit to Cuba, where I met Fidel Castro!

After that I returned to the UK to the renamed Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), sponsoring the Environment Agency, before returning finally to my chosen field of biodiversity, back in Bristol.

What do you enjoy about working on the Darwin Initiative?

I enjoy my work with biodiversity immensely, both in developing countries and in our own Overseas Territories. My greatest source of pride has to be working with the Darwin Initiative, and seeing how much its legacy is changing things for the better, in those countries where it counts most.

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.

Building University Capacity to Train and Support Cambodian Conservationists

Project ref: EIDPO028
Dr Jenny Daltry (Fauna & Flora International)

communities.

This innovative Darwin Initiative project, led by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) in partnership with the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Harrison Institute and the Government of Cambodia, is creating a new generation of conservation trainers and technicians to address the skills gap and meet the country's environmental needs (14-037). Activities began in earnest in 2005, with the launch of a Master of Science course in Biodiversity Conservation, the first higher degree course in Cambodia. The new curriculum was initially designed with assistance from university lecturers and conservation professionals from the UK and around the world. These are gradually being replaced by trained Cambodian lecturers.

More than 120 students have enrolled in the MSc course to date, receiving advanced training in such subjects as 'Community-based natural resource management', 'Species conservation', 'Environmental impact assessment', 'Project management' and 'Fund-raising'. Many of the students are already 'in service' employees of government departments and NGOs, and thus well-placed to immediately apply their new knowledge and skills to their work.

The Darwin project staff and students, along with other FFI initiatives in Cambodia, are also addressing the pressing need for reliable

Cambodia is biologically one of the richest yet least-known nations in the world. It forms an important part of the Indo-Burma Hotspot and holds many of the best remaining forests and wetlands in Southeast Asia, with countless endemic and globally threatened species. Following the mass persecution of educators and scientists, and the systematic destruction of almost all written materials during the Pol Pot regime, Cambodia's ability to manage its natural heritage has been severely hampered by a chronic lack of both skilled people and biological information.

This has worrying repercussions, because Cambodian biodiversity faces escalating pressures from a variety of threats, including major new extractive industries. For example, while environmental impact assessments are required by law for all new developments, too few nationals possess the necessary qualifications or experience to undertake these properly. As a result, many major projects such as mines, hydropower dams and logging concessions are being authorised without any real forethought of what impact they will have on the environment or local

peer-reviewed scientific journal - the Cambodian Journal of Natural History - in 2008. The journal is free and encourages Cambodians and visiting scientists to publish research on any topic that will further understanding and management of Cambodia's biodiversity. Novice authors benefit from the journal's voluntary network of expert advisors from Cambridge, Harvard

information. For example, Neang Thy, a Ministry of Environment officer, spent two years developing the first field guide to Cambodia's amphibians, with guidance from FFI mentors, and raised the number of known species in Cambodia from nine to more than sixty. Dozens of original research projects have been conducted throughout the country with support from this project, ranging from baseline species inventories to assessments of national laws and development policies.

To further understand Cambodia's little-known biodiversity, the Darwin project has established the first national herbarium and zoological reference collection in purpose-built, climate-controlled rooms at the university. These collections are an important step in reversing the historical pattern of all biological material from Cambodia being lodged in western institutions, where few Cambodians scholars can afford to access them. With several hundred specimens catalogued to date, the new national collections are freely accessible and will be especially valuable in future systematic studies and development of much-needed identification guides.

To disseminate the growing knowledge, the Darwin project launched Cambodia's first

and other universities across the world.

The Darwin project, with the support of Darwin Post Project funding (EIDPO28), is presently establishing a Centre for Biodiversity Conservation within the RUPP to consolidate these many achievements and provide a permanent national hub for training, original conservation research, information dissemination and inter-agency collaboration. Talented graduates from the MSc course are being offered placements at the centre, as the first, full-time scientists in Cambodia, with unprecedented opportunities to support their country's conservation management efforts.

While there is still more to be done, the Darwin project has truly achieved its goal of creating a new generation of skilled and highly motivated Cambodian conservationists, who are benefiting from host of new resources and a rapidly-growing network of peers, trainers and affiliated scientists.

The project team is grateful to the Darwin Initiative for its vital support since 2005. This work has also been generously assisted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and, since 2009, the Macarthur Foundation.

The Waria Valley Community Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme

Project ref: 15-041
Peter Raines
Coral Cay Conservation

After three years of hard work and long hours of many volunteers and participants, the Coral Cay Conservation and Darwin Initiative's Waria Valley community-based conservation project in Papua New Guinea (PNG), has successfully concluded. The local NGO and community actors included Bris Kanda, The Forest Research Institute, Papua New Guinea University of Technology, and The Village Development Trust, in addition to Coral Cay Conservation, the Darwin Initiative and Jacqueline Fisher Associates of the UK. From its inception in 2006, the Waria Valley Conservation Project (WVCP) helped to implement a number of livelihood projects. Developing a sense of ownership for members of the local community was seen as vital for this project's success, therefore free handouts of materials were seen as de-motivational and were purposefully avoided during the project.

The many engaging and imaginative alternative livelihood projects implemented by volunteers included: building chicken houses for people to raise their own chickens for food, a tree nursery for reforestation, training people in pond construction for sustainable fishing and helping the St. John's women's group with baking and sewing projects, which would provide uniforms for local elementary schools. All of these activities greatly help to reduce the locals' dependency on the rainforest, therefore contributing to its conservation, while giving local communities the skills and knowledge needed to improve their standard of living in a way that best suits them.

According to research leader, Dr. Craig Turner, *"the project has passed several of the initial tests and*

achieved successes on many fronts, in research, education, training and livelihoods." Additionally, chief scientist Jeff Dawson remarked that, *"the ultimate success of any such project ... is down to the local community, and without their support throughout my time there, the achievements we made would not have been possible."*

All of the hard work by these groups, the local community and volunteers has led to the development of an environmental management plan for the future. Part of this plan aims to have the Waria Valley Conservation Project registered as a local NGO, which will ensure the continued conservation success of the work ignited by CCC, The Darwin Initiative, JFA and most importantly the people of the Waria Valley.

In addition to the alternative livelihood projects, this project also included the first ever rainforest surveys to be conducted in the Waria Valley, resulting in the identification of over 221 species of birds, bats, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. In the upcoming months and years, the information gathered will be analysed and habitat /species maps can be developed for measured and effective community led conservation management in the area.

Building the Capacity of Indigenous Conservationists

Through its Darwin Initiative awards for Malaysia and Mexico,

Dr Gary Martin (Global Diversity Foundation)

the Global Diversity Foundation (GDF) and its academic, government and NGO partners offer diverse training opportunities for indigenous people involved in community conservation and collaborative management initiatives.

Over the course of eight years – funded by a series of two Darwin projects (13-009, 17-030) and one post-project (EIDP020) – GDF has been working in partnership with Sabah Parks and Partners of Community Organisations (PACOS) to develop the skills of 21 Dusun indigenous researchers in four communities along the Papar River valley, which borders the Crocker Range Park in Sabah, Malaysia. The community contingent of our Resource Catchment Assessment Team, comprising young to middle-aged men and women, has become

Initiative project (17-018) in partnership with the National Forestry

Commission, GeoConservación and the National Polytechnic Institutes' Interdisciplinary Research Center for Integrated Regional Development. It focuses on capacity building for Chinantec people involved in community conservation of cloud and lowland tropical forests in Oaxaca, Mexico. The local researchers supported by the project are part of the technical team of another partner, the Regional Committee for Chinantla Alta Natural Resources (CORENCHI), a community-based organization created by six Chinantec communities of northern Oaxaca in 2005. CORENCHI, along with village authorities, has been responsible for setting aside 27,564 hectares of community conserved areas, and for obtaining over £1.7 million in payments for environmental services from the Mexican National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR).

proficient in diverse conservation research approaches, ranging from monitoring of hunting activities to creating participatory 3-dimensional models of their lands. They are also experienced in conducting social research, including techniques such as livelihood surveys, demographics and open interviewing about resource use. Our current Darwin project, which started in August 2009, allows us to extend this training to four additional communities in the upper Papar River valley and another in the southeast of the Park.

In April 2009, GDF launched its Mexican Darwin

As part of this project, eight community researchers are expanding skills they learned during previous training workshops on participatory video, plant collecting, legal frameworks for conservation, scientific and community tourism and sustainability of non-timber forest products. They are gaining practical experience in managing biological stations and cultural museums established in their communities and in developing participatory biodiversity registers that identify biological resources of subsistence and potential commercial value. Much of the capacity building supported by our Darwin Initiative projects take place in the

target communities, but some specialised training is conducted in urban venues. For example, in September 2009 four of the Sabah community researchers attended an introductory workshop in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah's capital, on biodiversity and GIS. Conducted by Shahir Shamsir and Muhammad Al-Hadi of the Bioinformatics Research Group of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, the workshop demonstrated online mapping tools, biodiversity databases and GIS software programs.

specific conservation goals. The Dusun Resource Catchment Assessment Team is contributing to the nomination of Crocker Range Park as Sabah's first biosphere reserve by mapping community use zones and documenting local agricultural, fishing, gathering and hunting activities. The CORENCHI team in Mexico is preparing community conserved area management plans, which are essential to gaining consensus on the use of landscapes and resources as well as maintaining certification by the Mexican National Natural Protected Areas Commission (CONANP).

An important aspect of both projects is building community awareness of best practices by working with external researchers from academia, government and NGOs. Following principles established by the CBD, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Code of Ethics of the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE), the communities require free, prior and informed consent for any outside research conducted on local knowledge, landscapes and

resources. This includes negotiating community research agreements signed by project partners and conducting periodic community participatory evaluations of the progress of each study. Inspired by the work of Natural Justice (www.naturaljustice.org.za) on community biocultural diversity protocols in Kenya, India and South Africa, GDF will work with the community researchers to develop similar documents in Oaxaca and Sabah.

In May 2010, we will have the unique opportunity to bring together representatives of Chinantec and Dusun communities during a workshop and session on community conservation held in conjunction with the XIIth ISE Congress in Tofino, Canada. Together with indigenous participants from other regions, they will discuss progress in establishing Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, Indigenous Conservation Territories and Tribal Parks worldwide.

In Mexico, the community researchers will continue their learning process by participating in community-based workshops given by teams of Mexican and UK specialists, followed by supervised work experience. Specific workshops on community mapping and participatory GIS will enhance CORENCHI's ability to zone the conserved area and provide signs for all boundaries, roads and paths. Specialists in environmental education will provide training for residents on transmitting local ecological knowledge and sharing it with visitors. Workshops on ethnoecology and social science methods will build the capacity of community researchers to conduct floristic and faunal inventories, livelihood analyses and resource management studies. Sessions on nature tourism will aim to improve the infrastructure – such as the cabins being built in each community – and prepare the communities as a whole to receive visitors in areas of public access.

In both Malaysia and Mexico, the training and capacity building is oriented towards the achievement of

Professor Simon Thirgood

It is with great regret that we report the death of Professor Simon Thirgood of the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute on Sunday 30th August, when the building he was in collapsed during a sudden storm. Simon was in Ethiopia setting up the project “Building natural resource monitoring capacity in Ethiopia’s key Afro-montane ecosystems” (17-007), a project to build community capacity conserving and monitoring biodiversity funded by the Darwin Initiative.

The project’s aim is to build the human and institutional capacity of protected area management authorities and community members to monitor community-based natural resource management in four key afro-montane areas – two national parks and two community-managed protected areas.

Ethiopia’s highlands harbour globally significant biodiversity including flagship species such as the mountain nyala and Ethiopian wolf, all of which are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Critically Endangered or Endangered as well as other endemic plant, amphibian and bird species. The highlands are some of the last intact afro-montane ecosystems in Ethiopia, as well as vital water towers supplying arid and semi-arid areas in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Egypt.

97% of the original habitat has been lost to human agriculture, grazing and unsustainable natural

resource use. With resource-dependent local communities rapidly growing, unsustainable resource use continues to threaten conservation and human well-being in these already impoverished areas. In order to implement biodiversity conservation and sustainability, local authorities, local communities and international non-governmental organisations are working towards Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM).

In addition to the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, the University of Aberdeen, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources, Oromia Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau, Amhara Parks Development and Protection Authority, Bale Mountains National Park, Simien Mountains National Park, Guassa Community Conservation Area, Abune Yoseph Community Conservation Area, the local NGO Forum for the Environment and the International NGO Frankfurt Zoological Society are involved in the project.

Simon was born in Liberia on 6th December 1962, and brought up in Vancouver, Canada, where his father, was a Professor of Forestry Policy. At an early age Simon developed insights into the relationships between the natural, social and economic sciences for sustainable land management, which he would deploy with distinction in later years.

In 1980, he came to Scotland to read Zoology at Aberdeen and after graduating Simon worked off-shore, to earn enough money to be able to afford to volunteer as a research assistant at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (ITE) Banchory. Simon later seized the opportunity to broaden his experience into conservation biology, at Birdlife International where he worked on the Putting Biodiversity on the Map project.

In 1992, he returned to Scotland to work for the Game Conservancy Trust and it was during this employment that Simon worked alongside Karen Laurenson, a veterinary epidemiologist. Karen had

maintained research links with projects in Africa and, as their friendship grew, they explored together a number of issues, including the threat of Ethiopian wolves becoming extinct from rabies transmitted by domestic dogs. Simon moved to a Research Fellowship at the Centre for Conservation Science but within a couple of years an opportunity arose to share their common commitment to conservation in Africa; when they both worked for the Frankfurt Zoological Society, based in the Serengeti National Park. Although, the Serengeti is an ecologist's heaven, it has its challenges for rearing a young family. As their children approached school age, Simon was open to being head-hunted to the post of Head of Ecology at the Macaulay Institute in Aberdeen which he joined in 2004.

While Simon was a natural leader, he was an equally great collaborator. He was an inspiring role model, and unusually generous with his time spent helping early career researchers, who appreciated his directness, enthusiasm and 'get up and go'. An outstanding field ecologist, Simon was highly principled, energetic, articulate,

engagingly amusing and highly intelligent, and caring passionately about wildlife, society and, most of all, his friends and family. Simon is survived by his wife Karen, their two young daughters, Pippa and Katie.

If you would like to contribute to a lasting legacy in Simon's memory, his family have been raising money to create scholarships to allow children, living in the Bale Mountains of Ethiopia and who could not otherwise afford it, to attend secondary school. This will give them the education and opportunity they need to pursue livelihoods that are not dependant on the unsustainable use of the forest and other natural resources of this exceptionally important area for international wildlife conservation. Donations are being channeled through Born Free Foundation, supporters of the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Project.

If you would like to contribute please do so through the following website where GiftAid can be reclaimed by UK taxpayers: <http://www.justgiving.com/Simon-Thirgood>

An obituary for Simon is available here <http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/ProfThirgood/>

Darwin Calendar

- 26 October Darwin Lecture - Natural History Museum, London
- 18 November Darwin Initiative Regional Workshop 2009, Brazil
- 30 November Closing date for Stage 2 and Post Project applications