

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Marine Turtle Conservation and Ecotourism on Trinidad's North Coast
Country	Trinidad, West Indies
Organisation	University of Glasgow
Project Ref. No.	162/10/026
Report date	31/0ct/03

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

The project progress over the last 6 months has adhered to the baseline timetable successfully. The researcher has continued with the data collection on the beaches (with bumper number of turtles this year) and has gained additional results for specific ecological experiments being carried out.

Two pilot ecotourist groups were brought out to Trinidad (adult group in April and school group in July), both of which were a success. The groups interacted with the local guides, actively participated in the ongoing turtle research, and learned about the biodiversity on the north coast. Questionnaires were filled in by both the locals and ecotourists, which are currently being analysed.

A turtle biology and conservation education course was delivered within the local secondary and primary schools in an attempt to raise awareness in the younger generations. This was greeted with enthusiasm and strengthened the local youth group's involvement in the project.

A conference involving all the stakeholders for turtle conservation in Trinidad was organised and held in August where the researcher presented a preliminary report on the Darwin project. Several of the local NGO groups working on turtle conservation also gave presentations, along with the government Wildlife Section. Many interesting points were raised and it is hoped that there will be more collaboration between the groups in the future. The Darwin researcher is currently writing the report on the conference, which will be circulated among the participants.

Since return from the field, the researcher gave a talk to the British Chelonia Group at Chester Zoo, which was well received. An abstract for a talk has also been submitted to the 24th Annual International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation and Biology being held in Costa Rica in February. We are awaiting conformation of acceptance.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will effect the budget and timetable of project activities. Have any of these issues been discussed with the Department and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

An important recent development, which may have a profound effect on the project is that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago announced in September 2003 that the roads ending at Matelot (east) and Blanchisseuse (west) along the north coast are to be joined with a view to building an "ecotourist highway" (perhaps a contradiction in terms!). It was also discovered that a large amount of work had already begun on the west side. This area encompasses the 4 main beaches on which the Darwin research

is based and the ecotourism aspect of the project is heavily reliant on the fact that it is rich in biodiversity and remote. Small scale ecotourism with measured carrying capacity and non-intrusive methods is sustainable. Building a road along the coast through pristine rainforest and opening the area up to loggers and developers puts this project concept into jeopardy. It is clear also that the local communities are strongly against the building of the road.

The Impact on the project budget and timetable is negligible; however there could be a serious affect on the future of the project, therefore affecting the legacy left behind and exit strategy. This is a relatively new development and therefore we are still trying to gather information on the topic. Discussions with the Wildlife Section and local NGO's are currently ongoing. Even at this early stage is it felt that it could be valuable to draft an additional report to the government on the affects that the road could have on the area and how the local people feel about it. No changes have been made to the original agreement.

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

When is a suitable time to apply for the post-project funding?

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Project Manager, Email: stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk