

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Aztecs and Axolotls: Integrating Tourism and Conservation at Xochimilco, Mexico City
Country	Mexico
Organisation	Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology
Project Ref. No.	162/11/018
Report date	8/11/2002

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Despite the fact that the project was held up by a delay in receiving formal approval and funding, the first 6 months have been highly successful. Drs Bride, Griffiths, and Newing visited Xochimilco in June and were able to present the project to UAM staff and other Mexican agencies, and conduct interviews for, and select, the MSc "Darwin Fellow". The student (Alejandro Mendez) arrived at DICE in September 2002 and is now undertaking the taught component of his studies and working alongside the project team in developing his dissertation research. Dr Bride stayed on to conduct the first of the two scheduled workshops *Conservation Education Assessment/Community Appraisal* (20-22 June 2002). This involved 25 participants, including 17 undergraduate students, 2 members of the local community, 2 staff members from Chapultepec Zoo, Dr Graue of UAM, and two staff members from the Indiana Axolotl Colony. The workshop was highly successful in achieving its objective of producing a strategy for the subsequent activities of the "investigator" team, and appeared to be fully engaged in and thoroughly enjoyed by all participants. Of 19 evaluation forms returned, 17 scored the workshop 5 out of 5, and 2 scored it 4 out of 5. Subsequent to the workshop, a team of five students were selected from twelve applicants, and this team is presently employed part-time in gathering data in the field. The team is also undergoing online training in questionnaire design and application and will be conducting a visitor survey during December and January.

The second workshop, *Amphibian Biology and Conservation Techniques*, will take place in January 2003, and will be extended to include training in captive breeding techniques (see section 2 below).

As to additional outputs:

- a fact sheet has been drafted and is awaiting comments from staff at Chapultepec Zoo. Sponsorship to enable its publication in large quantities (the zoo has 5 million visits a year) is being sought.
- a website is presently being designed.

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?

The delay in announcing the grant meant that it was not possible to organise the Amphibian Biology and Conservation Techniques at the scheduled time. However, this has now been rescheduled for January 2003.

We are happy to report that the project already has been instrumental in levering in a substantial amount of matching resources. These will pay for the complete redevelopment of the existing captive breeding facilities at CIBAC (the Xochimilco site owned by Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana). This funding is provided by the Indiana State University Axolotl Colony (which has come on board as a partner for this purpose, and which, to date, has provided staff support to the value of US\$3,500), and by UAM itself (which has put up US\$6,800 for the buildings and equipment). The new breeding facility will boost the value of the planned on-site interpretation activities and materials, and will provide axolotls and embryos for the purposes of reintroduction and outreach education (particularly in local schools). The effect that this development will have on the Darwin project, will be to complement and value-add the project activities.

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

None

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