

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Identifying sites of global biodiversity conservation importance for the Fiji BSAP
Country	Fiji
Organisation	BirdLife International
Project Ref. No.	162/11/022
Report date	Reporting period = 1 April-1 October 2003 Report written 25 November 2003

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

The Project Steering Committee endorsed the following objectives for the period April-September 2003, presented here as the No. outputs achieved / No. outputs planned for each activity:

No. Sites Visited = 8/6; no. days in the field = 34/30; no. people trained on fieldwork = 27/20; No. days indoor training = 3/8; no. awareness presentations = 6/4; no. media releases in newspapers = 4/4; on radio = 2/3; on TV = 1/3. The awareness presentations included hosting a major national BSAP workshop, in which the NBSAP action matrix was revised and updated. From this, we conclude that the fieldwork, training during fieldwork and awareness presentations are ahead of schedule; but we need to improve our indoor training and media coverage.

The baseline schedule in the original proposal included continuation of earlier outputs through this period, and the following three new outputs:

Posters / Communication materials – owing to the cost-price purchase of pre-existing, very suitable posters and books already produced by the BirdLife Affiliate for Fiji (Dr Dick Watling) and a shortage of suitable technical capacity, production of a poster has been postponed until it seems more necessary. A series of national stamps featuring Fiji's threatened birds was produced.

Newsletter – as the Project Manager was out of Fiji from May-September, this has been postponed until December/January when it can include a summary of the year's activities.

Students trained – all suitable post-graduate students have received two periods of training in the field (and one in the classroom) during the University/BirdLife PABITRA field courses. We are still in discussion with the Biology Dept about providing input to the undergraduate courses. The nominated Masters student returned from his 2-month training course in September; has since undertaken a number of training and practice exercises and is due to start his fieldwork in December.

. This is well behind schedule but we are exerting maximum pressure to ensure that it is completed before the project finishes.

Other novel activities include initiation of a new database on Fijian birds aimed at non-technical audiences, and the completion of a report on gender issues.

Co-finance for the project was finally received from September 2003, enabling the Project Manager to be based full-time in Fiji and an Office manager to be employed. This should enable the project to catch up on slipping targets.

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 Project Assistant (=Database Officer) proved to be unsuitable for the job and resigned in May. (However, we are pleased that he is continuing to work in conservation in Fiji and is much happier in his new role with the Wildlife Conservation Society.) He was replaced by a new Project Assistant, Timoci Gaunivina. Finding qualified staff has been, and looks set to continue to be, a major limiting factor for this project and any terrestrial conservation work in Fiji. Providing the necessary training for Tim has slightly set-back the schedule.

The project has been managing with only about 60% of the Project Manager's time (Guy Dutson) due to the lack of co-finance. This has slowed the achievement of several outputs for which the Fijian staff need technical assistance.

The absence of the Project Manager for some of the time and the delays caused by the need to provide training for Tim has been greatly offset by the recruitment of three highly-qualified (PhD plus years of field experience) volunteers from RSPB, the BirdLife Partner in the UK. Attracting these volunteers was a major success, and we are extremely grateful to them for volunteering their time and their commitment.

The other major limiting factor has been the lack of a vehicle (and the high costs of rental). From December this will change when the co-financing from the European Commission becomes available. The securing of this grant, which totals €1.2 million, over four countries and four years, will also enable a full-time Office Manager to be employed, who will spend significant time assisting the Darwin employees.

A revised schedule for the next 6 months will be agreed by the Project Steering Committee in December. The project will copy this to the Darwin Initiative for their comments.

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

The feedback received on the Annual Report from April 2003 included the suggestion that we revise our log-frame. As the Project Steering Committee has taken the decision to continue oversight of the project without extensive reference to the log-frame, we do not feel that this revision is a priority given our limited resources, but would like to discuss this more fully with the relevant Darwin advisors.

By means of background on this point it is worth reporting that the BirdLife Secretariat staff find Logical Frameworks to be a very valuable tool for communicating with sophisticated organisations in the developed world - such as the Darwin Initiative - particularly on issues of project management. However, the very tight use of language and the strictures of planning logic are both so alien to many in the developing world that it fails as a tool in its purpose of sharing and widening the process of better project development and management. Indeed, it can be counter-productive and leave collaborators remote from the management process¹. Whilst there is the option of investment in training in the use of such tools for Partners - and BirdLife Secretariat staff do do so in certain instances - we are careful to do this in the context of progressive training where the skills will be utilised by staff of Partner organisations in the right context and as part of the programme of work planned in the short to medium term. We feel that such training would currently be the wrong investment. As noted above, we seek feedback from

¹ A lengthy debate on this topic at the World Parks Congress in Durban in September 2003 reached the same conclusion.

Darwin advisors on this issue.

We would be grateful for some guidance from Darwin about how much detail to include in these reports. Please let us know if you want us to write more or include attachments. Would you like a set of Fijian bird stamps?

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