

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	162/12/011
Project Title	Information incentives for CBD implementation in private reserves in Argentina and Paraguay
Country(ies)	Argentina, Paraguay
UK Organisation	The Natural History Museum
Collaborator(s)	Fundación Habitat y Desarrollo (Argentina); Guyra Paraguay, Fundación Moisés Bertoni (Paraguay)
Report date	31 October 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website	http://www.habitatydesarrollo.org.ar/

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) 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).

In mid April (15 April-15 July) the 3 Darwin Fellows came to the UK for three months for training at the NHM. During their stay they concentrated on the following tasks:

1. Identification of specimens collected over the course of the project so far
2. Preparation of labels and arranged the specimens for mounting (the BM set) and also organised the duplicate sets for distribution.
3. Entry into the project database all the photographs and data from the project so far pertaining to plants.
4. Intensive revision of species to be included, and technical terminology to be used.
5. Revision of literature and preparation of chapter on vegetation for the planned Manual del Bajo Chaco (a new output from the project suggested and spearheaded by the NGO partners).
6. Design of materials for workshops in the next year of the project.
7. Training in GIS, research skills and herbarium skills (database design, curation skills and collection management) in the Botany Department of the NHM.

An interview was given to the Argentine national newspaper La Nación after the “Business and Biodiversity” event highlighting the project in March – although not strictly in this half year, it represents one of the milestones achieved.

Compilation and organization of data for birds continued whilst the Fellows were in London working with the plant component. Although no specific visits to the participating properties were conducted during this period, two raptor and waterbird censuses were conducted along the road bordering the estancias Ñ and Vanguardia (as part of the Neotropical Waterbird Census). Work was also initiated on the descriptions for the bird guides, and a practical field guide for the 50 most common birds of the Humid Chaco was created. A total of 1000 copies were printed, and 500 of these were distributed during the workshops held in both host countries during September (see below).

Illustrations for field guides in progress with Paraguayan artist; gaps in photography identified and beginning to be filled.

The project was presented informally at the International Botanical Congress in Vienna (rather than at AIBS) in July, and at the meetings of the IUCN Cono Sur network.

Field guides preliminary formats finalized for use in workshops; database fields continue to be populated by Fellows working in London and in host countries.

SK visited Paraguay and Argentina in September 2005 for 3 weeks; the first workshops for local people were held in both countries (Asunción, Paraguay; Formosa, Argentina). The workshops were well-attended (ca. 40-50 people at each), but were held in a different format than originally planned in the project proposal (see below, already discussed and agreed with Darwin Secretariat). Total training in workshops; ca. 28 people weeks. One result of the workshop was an up-to-date list of property owners interested in conservation prepared by the FMB partners.

Training in biodiversity policy and identification techniques was given to 11 young people from local communities near the Tapyta Reserve for 2.5 days by SK (ca. 4 people weeks of training).

One press release in each of the host countries resulted in a wave of media interest during the workshops: in Paraguay 3 radio interviews, 1 television show and 2 newspaper articles; and in Argentina 6 radio interviews and 5 newspaper articles about the project and its objectives and progress. Project information has also been disseminated via the websites of partners (Guyra, FHD), IABIN, BirdLife International and the Secretaría Nacional de Turismo (Paraguay).

Potential properties for future participation identified based on interest from land-owners at the workshops; list and contacts being drawn up in collaboration with all participants.

Minimal plant field work undertaken during this reporting period – the botanists were in London receiving training; a short visit was undertaken while SK was in Paraguay to obtain photographs. Botanical work mainly consisted of preparation for workshops (September and November).

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 affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The continuing ban on export of scientific specimens from Paraguay (see Annual Report, and response to Annual Report) has meant that all of the identifications could not be done at the NHM as planned. An initial batch of approximately 700 Paraguayan specimens was sent before the ban; these (plus all material collected in Argentina) were worked on by the DI fellows in London. In order to identify the rest of the material collected, we have worked intensively in each of the host-countries to identify the specimens, but the lack of literature resources has made this somewhat difficult. Guyra-Paraguay has been actively involved at high levels in the government in order to sort this out; they have been drafting the changed legislation for the Secretaria del Ambiente (SEAM, copy available on request) and have been assured of the success of the new regulations. I have every confidence that this will be sorted out and the specimens will be exported before the project ends, but this means that the identification of many of them will have to wait until after the project ends. This will not affect the primary outputs of the project, the field guides to trees and birds, but will mean the database of all collections made will be less complete at project end. Additional impacts on the project may be that more visits will be made by UK staff to Paraguay in order to examine the specimens and identify them there, this will eat into the travel budget if the ban is not lifted before the project ends. If the ban is not lifted we will be unable to properly distribute the duplicate specimens as specified.

In planning the September workshops with the NGO partners it became apparent that the format in which we had proposed them would not work given the reality of the Chaco situation (especially now, the region is suffering intense drought and hardship). We had intended having two workshops of 10 days with 20 people attending each – this proved impossible for the September workshops and will not be possible in the future. We will be discussing this with the DI Secretariat over the next months. However, in order to achieve our milestone of local training we will need to think this through again. The September workshops were two days long and were attended by ca. 50 people each; they combined elements of identification and training with discussion of biodiversity conservation. Attendees were critically important stakeholders in conservation on private lands – land-owners, members of the Sociedad Rural, local politicians, national politicians and members of other local and regional NGOs working in this topic. In order to achieve our target 29 people weeks of training for local people (i.e. people living and working the region, the humid Chaco), we will need to run more, shorter courses. This may have some implications for budgeting and travel, but with two more such course planned within the next few months, is unlikely to substantially affect the outcomes (but the timing of this will be affected). This change of workshop format

has been discussed and agreed with the DI Secretariat and pragmatic solutions to this unexpected twist in operations found.

On an extremely positive front, the GIS elements of the project have resulted in a baseline for ecoregional planning in Paraguay and Argentina, through interchange and collaboration with other regional projects such as the Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Planificación Ecoregional del Gran Chaco Americano and the Proyecto Pastizales (financed by the World Bank). This involvement has led to members of the project team developing habitat classifications for the region that are strengthened by the field work of the DI project itself. The Paraguayan Government has included the DI project as part of its implementation of the CBD, and the project is beginning to serve as a model for ecoregional work in the Cono Sur – both in terms of collaborative frameworks and in the selection of sites and methods of working (e.g. Pastizales project funded by the World Bank).

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed and agreed with Secretariat via e-mail; appointment made for November when SK is back from travel to China for Royal Society.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (October 2005)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

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

No issues to raise; although I continue to be slightly concerned that our reviewer is not focusing on what we said we were going to do, but rather on what he/she thinks we ought to be doing! These issues were thoroughly discussed with the host country partners during the workshops this September; our joint reply to issues raised in the review is attached. This has also been discussed informally with the DI Secretariat.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**