

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	162/13/016
Project Title	Endangered otter and invasive mink in Patagonia
Country(ies)	Argentina
UK Organisation	University of Oxford
Collaborator(s)	PROFAUNA, University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and the Argentine Government's Administración de Parques Nacionales (APN)
Report date	31 st October 2006
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR3
Project website	www.wildcru.org/research/darwininitiative.htm www.profauna.org.ar/huillin.htm

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).

The main activities agreed for the period April-December 2006 were: training students, writing and submitting papers for publication in peer-reviewed journals, submitting papers for presentation at international conferences, organising a workshop, and making press releases.

Training students

This objective is almost complete. The most recent recruit to the project is Lic. Emilce Gallo, a young biologist working for the National Park Administration and collaborating with us on organising the next workshop. The students (undergraduates and graduates) and biologists trained during the project are:

1. Juan Muzio (student) conducted a one year project monitoring the mink population of Moreno Lake, Nahuel Huapi National Park (48 weeks).
2. Leonardo A. Di Franco (student) helped with data processing using GIS (Geographic Information System) (24 weeks).
3. Cecilia Gozzi (student) collaborated on a diet study based on scat analysis (32 weeks).
4. Laura Fasola (biologist) worked on all aspects of the study on the regional and local distribution and diet of both species, and on the conservation of otters and impact of mink (96 weeks).
5. Marcelo Bello (student) helped with the field campaigns and preliminary data processing (32 weeks).
6. Verónica Benítez (student) helped with data processing and project organisation (24 weeks).
7. Leonardo Leggieri (student) helped with the field campaigns (24 weeks).
8. Benjamín Ramirez (student) conducted molecular work for 18 months, acquiring important skills in using different techniques (72 weeks).
9. Nancy C. Castaneda (biologist) collaborated on developing the molecular techniques (48 weeks).
10. Emilce Gallo (biologist) is assisting in the organisation of the forthcoming stakeholder workshop in Tierra del Fuego (24 weeks).

Papers for peer-reviewed journals

We have finished drafts of six manuscripts, one of which has already been submitted for publication. The others are currently being circulated among the authors for final comments.

1. Centrón D, Ramirez B, Fasola L, Macdonald D, Schiavini A, Cassini MH. Genetic diversity in the South American river otter (*Lontra provocax*) in Argentina. Submitted to *Journal of Heredity*.
2. Fasola L, Chéhebar C, Macdonald D, Centrón D, Schiavini A, Porro G, Cassini MH. Distribution of southern river otters (*Lontra provocax*) in Argentinean Patagonia. To be submitted to *Biological*

Conservation.

3. Fasola L, Chéhebar C, Muzio J, Macdonald D, Porro G, Cassini MH. Invasion of North American mink into Argentinean Patagonia: the degree of expansion and impact on native prey. To be submitted to *Journal of Applied Ecology*.
4. Cassini MH, Fasola L, Aued B, Chéhebar C, Macdonald D. The distribution of macro-crustaceans in Argentinean Patagonia: multiple-scale analysis of the role of resource availability in wildlife distribution. To be submitted to *Oecologia*.
5. Fasola L, Chéhebar C, Macdonald D, Porro G, Cassini MH. Coexistence of North American mink and South American river otters in Patagonia. To be submitted to *Oikos*.
6. Fasola L, Gozzi AC, Malmierca L, Chéhebar C, Macdonald D, Cassini MH. Diet of the southern river otter in Argentinean Patagonia. To be submitted to *Oryx*.

Conference papers

We have already presented two papers at scientific meetings and plan to present five more during 2007.

1. Gozzi AC, Fasola L, Malmierca L, Calvi M, Gallo, E, Cassini MH. Composición de la dieta del Huillín (*Lontra provocax*) en Bahía Lapataia, Tierra del Fuego. XII *Reunión Argentina de Ecología*. Córdoba, Córdoba, 22-25 August 2006.
2. Fasola L, DiFranco L, Macdonald D, Cassini MH. Routes and speed of dispersal of an endangered otter (*Lontra provocax*) in Patagonia. *BES Annual Meeting*. 5-7 September 2006, University of Oxford, Oxford, Reino Unido.

Organisation of a workshop to finalise the action plan and to train National Park wardens

We are organising a workshop in Tierra del Fuego on the 1-2 March 2007, with 35 stakeholders, including wardens, researchers, landowners, National Park administrators, other local administrators of wildlife organisations and protected areas, and Chilean colleagues. The aim of the workshop is to: (1) finalise the action plan for otter conservation and mink control in southern Patagonia; and (2) train National Park wardens to carry out this work. Around 30% of the wardens will attend the workshop (it will not be feasible for all wardens to be away from their work simultaneously), and the remainder will be trained via the internet and using printed materials.

Making press releases

We are developing a first draft of the action plan. This will be completed and distributed to workshop participants by December 2006, and the plan will be discussed and finalised at the workshop. Once the draft plan is complete we will make a series of co-ordinated press releases to disseminate project results and our proposed strategy for the future conservation management of the area.

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.

None.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement? Not applicable.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

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.

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.**