

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	13/021
Project Title	Strengthening Capacity for Biodiversity Conservation in West Africa
Country(ies)	Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone
UK Organisation	BirdLife International
Collaborator(s)	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS), Guinée Ecologie (GE), Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL) and SOS-FORETS in Côte d'Ivoire
Report date	21 November 2006 (Reporting period = 1 April-30 September 2006)
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 3
Project website	n/a

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).

This report highlights progress made against the workplan in the 2005/2006 annual report which is slightly different from that in the original project document.

- The second project annual report for 2005/2006 was prepared and submitted in June 2006.
- Ghana organized the third training course in techniques of tropical biodiversity survey and identification with focus on birds, plants and mammals from 18 April to 03 May, 2006. The two-weeks training course took place in the Kakum National Park Conservation Area. Nine trainees (two of whom were women) from four organizations (the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, Ghana Wildlife Society and the West African Sub-regional Office of BirdLife International) took part in the training course. There was also a non national PhD student, from Cambridge University, England, who took advantage of the training course to acquire skills in bird identification.
- An introductory training session on the updated web-enabled version of the World Bird Data Base (WBDB) was organized in July during the meeting of BirdLife's Council for the Africa Partnership in Addis Ababa, which was attended by at least one representative from each of the five NGOs implementing the project. This is to be followed by a much more comprehensive workshop on the use of the revised WBDB to be organized in October in Nairobi.
- A second project steering committee meeting was held in July in Addis Ababa during the Council for the Africa Partnership meeting. The meeting reviewed progress of the project and discussed ideas for the content of a possible second phase of the project. Problems with delays in transfer of funds to NGOs were discussed and measures to mitigate them proposed, such as timely submission of disbursement requirements and pre-financing by NGOs.
- The report on the third national training course undertaken in Ghana has been produced. The trainer in plant identification could not take part in the training course due to a personal family issue that occurred at the last minute. Efforts to replace him at such short notice were unsuccessful, partly because of the limited number of experts in this field. The training therefore covered birds and mammals only. Four of the nine trainees who took part in this

training course had also benefited from the previous training courses. Their inclusion was based on recommendations from earlier courses that more training should be given to outstanding trainees who had been identified as potential trainers. As with the past training courses, the demand to participate in the training course was very high, indicating the continuous interest and value of them. The trainees were highly motivated and remained committed throughout the course. However, the first time-trainees lacked field experience which meant that progress was initially very slow. Difficult terrain restricted the survey area since most of it had to be covered on foot.

- Revised and updated IBA inventories for Liberia and Guinea have been produced. The Côte d'Ivoire inventory is in the final stages of completion and will be ready by the end of the project.
- In Liberia, participants from around the sites used for the training courses (SAPO National Park and Mount Nimba and Lake Piso Nature Reserve) are now periodically employed by the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) during field visit and surveys. However, such visits and surveys are rare and are usually of short duration. Although substantial funds and equipment have been acquired during the project these have not been sufficient to meet the demands of all the trainees. Consequently, some have therefore been unable to undertake any meaningful conservation activities either because they lack basic field equipment or lack means to travel to the field.
- The trainers and trainees in Sierra Leone have continued to improve their skills and knowledge thanks to a number of ongoing projects in the country that involve biodiversity surveys. Two of the trainers (Arnold Okoni-Williams and Alhaji Siaka) and four trainees were contracted as local consultants to undertake biodiversity surveys as part of the Environment Impact Assessment of the Bumbuna Hydro-electricity Dam on the Sula Mountain Forest Reserve. They were also involved in the Environment Impact Assessment for a rutile Mining company. Their involvement in these surveys has enabled them to improve their skills and to be trained in the use of other useful field equipment such as Clinometer, Laser rangefinder etc.
- The project has strengthened collaboration among the major stakeholders in Sierra Leone. This has been done through the sharing of information from the various surveys done during the training courses. The results from the surveys have been useful in updating information on the status of the reserves. Based on this information these sites (Western Area Peninsula Forest Reserve, Gola Forest Reserves, Kangari hills Forest Reserve, Loma-Tingi Complex, Outamba-Kilimi National Park, Kambui Hills Forest Reserve) are now receiving more attention from decision makers and have been included in the list of target sites for a Protected Area management project that is being developed in Sierra Leone by the World Bank.
- Two of the trainees in Ghana are pursuing postgraduate studies at the University of Cape Coast (MSc) and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (PhD). Another trainee has been employed as the Chief Technician of the Wildlife Department of the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resource of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. One of the trainees within Ghana Wildlife Society is taking part in an ongoing biodiversity survey that has been contracted to GWS by the Northern Savannah Biodiversity Conservation Project in Ghana.
- One of the MSc. students in Côte d'Ivoire has graduated. Her external supervisor was the International expert for birds in the project (Ron Demey) and her dissertation was on the avian population of the Azagny National Park (one of the sites used for training courses).
- In Ghana, the species list of 20 High Forest IBAs has been updated to conform to the taxonomy and sequence of Borrow and Demey (2001). Information on some sites which potentially qualify as IBAs has been put together and will be sent to the BirdLife Secretariat for verification and endorsement.
- Dissemination of project results and information continued during this reporting period through various means. 1,500 posters on threatened birds of the Upper Guinea Forest were

produced and have been widely distributed by NGOs during this period. The poster was presented at the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) workshop organized in April, in Sierra Leone, to review five years of CEPF investment in the Upper Guinea Forests of West Africa (one of the 25 global biodiversity 'hotspots' identified by Conservation International). CEPF investment in the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem commenced in December 2000 with the approval of the Ecosystem Profile and an allocation of \$4.3 million to be spent over five years. In December 2001 an additional \$1.9 million was allocated to this hotspot, making a total of \$6.2 million over five years. The April workshop was attended by all five NGOs implementing this project since each had benefited from the CEPF grant. During the annual wildlife week in Sierra Leone a seminar was organized at which results from the project's surveys were presented and a press release was distributed. A number of scientific articles are being prepared by students in Côte d'Ivoire for publication. The publicity campaigns associated with the training courses in Côte d'Ivoire have resulted in the establishment of two Site Support Groups, at Dassioko and Bingerville adjacent to Banco National Park. Another group is in the final stages of establishment at Marahoué National Park.

- Three countries (Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia) organized publicity campaigns and associated activities to celebrate World Migratory Bird day. Sierra Leone secured USD 1000 from BirdLife International to support their activities.
- In Sierra Leone, CSSL trained 20 nationals in wetland survey, conservation and management techniques with funds (Euros 8,000) secured from Wetlands International.

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.

In Ghana, the trainer in plant identification could not take part in the third training course due to a personal family issue that occurred at the last minute. Efforts to replace him at such short notice were unsuccessful, partly because of the limited number of experts in this field. The training therefore covered birds and mammals only. Although this will reduce the number of national trainees in plant identification, it does not have an overall effect on the project budget and timetable of activities.

The annual audit had to be postponed because NGOs were unable to submit documentary justification on time. This can be partly explained by the general difficulties in obtaining documentation for expenditure from remote locations in Africa, where the field training courses occurred and where most of the expenses were incurred. However, it is stated in the contract that NGOs are 'to retain copies of all vouchers, receipts and other financial records (including computer records) relating to expenditure of project funds, to keep all such records for a minimum period of three years after the end of the project, and to provide these to BirdLife or to Darwin Initiative if required'. Going forward the project management team acknowledges that they need to emphasise this point much more strongly and also monitor compliance more rigorously. The problem has been further compounded because requests for the documentary evidence were not made until the end of the year. It has been decided that henceforth documentary evidence will be requested from NGOs at 6 monthly intervals, as part of the reporting requirements. While regrettable, the delay in the audit will have had little impact on the core activity of the project.

Another issue of concern is the repeated delay in the submission of material necessary for the preparation of these reports by some participating NGOs. The main reason given for this is regional communication difficulties. Mechanisms to mitigate this henceforth, such as even earlier and more frequent reminders to NGOs, are to be tried.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?	
Yes. Darwin has been informed of the delays and has agreed that one audit to cover the two years be done, since the project ends next year.	
Discussed with the DI Secretariat:	no/yes, in..... (month/yr)
Changes to the project schedule/workplan:	no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

<p>3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p> <p>The project team will like to know if there has been a decision with regard to the request for a second phase expressed in the last annual report. The project evaluator thought a second phase would be useful but should focus on application rather than capacity building.</p>
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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.**