

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	13025
Project Title	Pioneering Community-Based Conservation Sites in the Polillo Islands
Country(ies)	Philippines
UK Organisation	Fauna and Flora International
Collaborator(s)	Polillo Islands Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, Inc. (PIBCFI)
Report date	April – September 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 1
Project website	

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 project is being implemented largely as planned (see project implementation table) and as a collaborative endeavour between FFI and the 'Polillo Islands Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (PIBCFI)'. A Filipino project manager and other key personnel were recruited upon approval of the proposal and other technical assistants and consultants added during the early implementation phases. Strategy development and planning meetings were organised to develop a detailed project roll out/implementation plan, as well as individual work plans for each programme personnel and consultant.

Based on the project timeframe formulated during the strategic planning workshop, an initial short-list of ten terrestrial priority sites (i.e. selected on basis of both overall biological importance - including presence of key populations of various threatened endemic species - as well as being representative of various key habitat types) were drawn-up to include sites in each of the 5 municipalities. For reasons of both relatively accessibility and existing good relations with relevant local government authorities, initial priority was given to the Municipalities of Polillo and Burdeos, where formal presentations of the proposed project were enthusiastically received by all relevant officials and due support and assistance assured.

Field/biodiversity surveys of the first 2 priority sites (Macnit and Sibulan Watershed) were initiated by PIBCFI personnel and PESP Forest Wardens towards the end of the first quarter and continued through the second quarter, when selected, highly experienced GIS, protected area development, habitat restoration/reforestation and local community consultants were recruited to assist mapping, development of protected area management and restoration plans, and 'participatory rapid appraisals (PRAs)'; the latter to assess socio-economic profiles of key communities and other stakeholders living near, and within, each selected priority site. Relevant reports and other outputs from these activities are still in preparation, but are expected to comprise the most comprehensive and detailed, yet astute and realistic, surveys of their kind ever conducted in this region. For example, the PRAs will include a community resource map drawn-up by these communities, along with a historical timeline, a community seasonal calendar, and livelihood matrices focusing on forestry, agriculture, and fisheries. Parallel with the PRA, the GIS-mapping team are also validating the extent of forest cover in each area through habitat mapping via GPS readings.

By capitalising on the 'Polillo Teacher's Training Course' convened in 2002 with funding assistance from the North of England Zoological Society (NEZS, Chester Zoo), the project has been working closely with local teachers to assist awareness-raising in other key stakeholders via a school-led Information Education and Communication (IEC) and outreach program aimed at awareness raising amongst both students and local communities of the importance of the forest, biodiversity and the Polillo Islands' many

endemic taxa. To these ends, a 'Technical Working Group (TWG)' composed of local teachers and volunteers for a school-based/led IEC program has been constituted to review and evaluate all available instructional materials, manuals, textbooks and syllabi to determine appropriate materials and modes of delivery of awareness materials. Several hundreds of copies of the first two new posters featuring Polillo threatened and endemic species were also produced and distributed, and project personnel have given numerous invited lectures and seminars on the biodiversity of the Polillo Islands to various schools, LGU staff and other socio-civic groups. Work on the production of the Polillo Biodiversity Conservation Handbook is also continuing, whilst ideas for an innovative and interactive electronic (CD/DVD) version are also being explored with a view to additional project funding proposals being developed for this purpose.

Continued good progress re. related studies on the endangered Gray's monitor lizard (*Varanus olivaceus*) have concentrated on populations in and around Sibulan Watershed with a view to:
a) measurement of population size and structure using infra-red triggered camera traps; b) identification of key tree resources from faecal deposits and camera traps; and c) identification of habitat patches likely to be destroyed in the near future if current (and mostly illegal) logging and agricultural expansion continue. Additional funding for this project was secured from a BP Conservation Project award to the project leader, Daniel Bennett, to investigate the distribution of frugivorous monitors throughout the Philippines, which has also allowed full-time employment of two field assistants on Polillo. The first ever documentary on the ecology, behaviour and conservation of *V. olivaceus* in the Sibulan Watershed Reserve was also completed by Steel Spyda (UK) and scheduled for world-wide release in November 2005 via Discovery/Animal Planet.

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.

Preliminary results from the PRAs in 4 Polillo barangays concluded that there was a disappointingly low level of awareness pertaining to biodiversity conservation related issues in these communities, despite diverse IEC activities consequent upon the continued activities of the Polillo Ecology Stewardship Project (PESP) since 1998. Various mechanisms are being explored to address this problem, including the aforementioned TWG, which will (amongst other things) promote the establishment of school-based tree nurseries and tree planting activities.

The Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR, Government of the Philippines) is mandated to designate and implement protected areas projects. It is generally protective of this mandate, whilst operating within a governmental system that is (generally speaking) not only inordinately bureaucratic, but more-or-less unmindful of the Philippines' global priority status in biodiversity conservation terms. As such, conservation issues are also bedevilled by low (oftentimes non-existent) political priority and (oftentimes) other conflicting development agenda (e.g. mining claims). The project, the main thrust of this project in aiming to both facilitate and escalate the creation of a new, and representative, network of protected areas (i.e. municipal reserves), based on both need and sound science, which would be practically impossible to enable via the DENR. In other words, the 'municipal reserve' route is the only practicable way to go, but it would be better still if the LGUs and the DENR were to agree co-management arrangements, which we therefore also actively exploring (from both vantages) with a view to capitalising on local LGUs commitments (and generally far more responsive mechanisms re. site action, legislation and resource mobilisation), whilst also recognising the DENR's statutory mandate and technical expertise. .

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

N/A

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?

Various budget line amendments (including proposed personnel/changes aimed at benefiting increased local counterpart involvement/contributions) already raised with Darwin, some of which have been approved and others are pending.

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.**