

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

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.
Report date	April 2006-September 2006
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR #2
Project website	

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project

Key accomplishments during the period April-September 2006 were as follows:

1. Biological surveys completed and priority sites selected and mapped.

Biological surveys were completed in two more key areas during this period, namely Barangay Anibawan in Aluyon and Sitio Litid, Barangay Lipata in Panukulan. Full technical reports on these surveys are being prepared and will be summarised in future reports. A preliminary 'marine resource assessment' was completed in September by four scientists from the UK NGO, Coral Cay Conservation (CCC), assisted by PIBCFI personnel. This project was prompted by recommendations arising from earlier surveys, and involved rapid assessments of coral cover, and coral and fish diversity, in 12 discrete sites in coral reefs fringing Polillo and Burdeos Municipalities. Results indicate that over-fishing, especially cyanide and dynamite fishing, remains a serious problem in most areas, though areas of good to excellent reef cover, and high species diversity and abundance were confirmed in fish sanctuaries established and managed by local communities in some areas. Findings and recommendations arising from this project and the earlier surveys will now be used to develop new project funding proposals intended to extend these surveys, conduct awareness campaigns and assist implementation of relevant conservation management interventions in selected, highest priority areas. On-going research on the Gray's Monitor Lizard (*Varanus olivaceus*) or butaan is now focused on this species' role in the dispersal of *Pandanus*, *Canarium*, *Grewia* and *Gnetum* seeds, and their subsequent survival. Mapping data on the distribution of over 2000 juvenile and adult trees is now being analysed to produce models of seed dispersal, secondary dispersal, germination and survivorship for different species. Monitoring of populations of *Varanus olivaceus* is being conducted in the Sibulan Watershed Reserve (one of the projects priority sites) and in neighbouring areas that have been partially cleared. Landsat mapping of the entire area region, which also completed during this period, revealed that the Polillo Archipelago has about 19% remaining forest cover.

2. At least six top-priority areas agreed by a process of consultation with local communities, authorities and other key stakeholders.

Biologically surveys, resource mapping and ground validation and have now been completed in eight (8) selected priority sites, i.e. 'Local Conservation Areas (LCAs)', in the Municipalities of Polillo, Burdeos and Panukulan. Resource mapping was conducted in Barangays Aluyon, Anibawan, and Carlagan in Burdeos; Barangays Lipata and Bonbon in Panukulan; and Barangays Atulayan and Pamatdan in Polillo; all of these being additional to the Macnit-Lumpag LCA barangays visited previously. Ground validation surveys were also carried to verify the extent of remaining forest and other habitats, and to confirm local resource uses reported during earlier Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) and/or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in each site. The latter activities also served to clarify existing tenurial arrangements and to generate requisite data on the socio-economic status of communities in and around each of the proposed LCAs. These data will be taken into account in designing appropriate management systems for these areas, and will also assist PIBCFI in developing other interventions beyond the three-year timeline of this project. Indicative boundaries for all of these areas were also produced, refined and agreed in consultations with local stakeholders; the latter also assisting the formulation of the requisite technical descriptions of each area. Mapping of the thereby agreed boundaries revealed the total area covered by the LCAs in these 3 municipalities is 7,410 ha, of which 3,039 ha are still forested; that the largest of these areas, Kalawakan Forest Block in Burdeos and Panukulan, is 3,901ha of which at least 1,198 ha are still-forested, and the smallest, Mt. Lumimpad in Burdeos, is 98 ha, of which at least 37 ha are still-forested. The legal and institutional framework for the formal establishment of these LCAs, most of which are important watersheds, has also been prepared to enable the declaration of each area via LGU ordinances.

3. Management strategies and operational plans developed and agreed for the protected sites.

Management planning activities including consultations and planning workshops will be initiated early in the next Quarter; the planning framework guiding this exercise has been prepared and agreed with the relevant LGUs.

4. Local personnel trained in site management and monitoring, and essential management resources provided.

The project has also now completed the 'Institutional Capacity Assessments (ICAs)' of LGUs and other stakeholders in the Municipalities of Polillo, Panukulan and Burdeos. The ICAs confirmed the existing, and generally low, level of knowledge and experience amongst these LGUs in natural resource management, especially as this relates to biodiversity conservation and protected areas, and highlighted corresponding inadequacies in personnel and financial allocations needed to resolve these problems. For example, none of these LGUs have any practical experience in forest/watershed protection, nor were they familiar with the relevant national legislation pertaining to the design and implementation of protected area management plans. The project responded to these needs by adding a series of 'Basic Ecology and Environmental Laws Orientation (BEELO)' workshops to the existing work plan. The first BEELO was conducted in the second quarter and involved more than 170 participants from each of these three municipalities. Although primarily intended to increase awareness and understanding of natural resource management strategies amongst barangay officials, it also provided an excellent opportunity for these and other local stakeholders to identify actions needed to be taken by them to further the development of this project and other address other environmental issues and concerns. Further BEELO's involving higher-ranking officials, will be conducted in the 3rd Quarter, followed by a region-wide workshop in the 4th Qtr.

5. Essential habitat and species restoration/ recovery, enforcement, and other management interventions initiated in the protected sites.

'Habitat Restoration Training Workshops' were conducted in each of the above-mentioned three municipalities on Polillo Island, involving approximately 60 participants from key barangay communities, POs, LGUs and NGOs. The main purpose of these workshops was to: a) provide basic technical information on habitat restoration and the range of techniques involved (e.g. assisted natural regeneration, reforestation, control of introduced species and reintroduction or restocking of threatened species); and b) formulate action plans for the development of a comprehensive restoration programme in line with other components of the Darwin Project., including the establishment of mixed native species tree nurseries in selected locations across the island. During these workshops the Mayors of both Panukulan and Polillo Municipalities committed municipal funding to assist implementation of agreed activities/action plans.

6. Heightened awareness and understanding among local communities and government of the need to conserve biodiversity in Polillo and the wider Philippines.

The project also carried out numerous lectures and PowerPoint presentations in schools, local government offices and community and health centres in Burdeos and Polillo Municipalities. Most importantly, results and recommendations from the biodiversity and other surveys were formally presented at especially convened sessions of each of the three municipal councils, locally referred to as '*Sangguniang Bayan*'. IEC materials were also distributed, and other awareness raising activities conducted, in all local communities during the conduct of the biological and ground verification surveys, PRAs/FGDs, and other site-based activities. The aforementioned CCC project also included several information seminars with relevant barangay and municipal officials, and illustrated talks presented in a school and college to promote coral reef awareness and appreciation among local youth. Following repeated delays and disappointingly slow progress in the development of the proposed 'Polillo Biodiversity Conservation Handbook', this project was re-organised at the beginning of Year 3, and a new lead author recruited to complete an revised and expanded version, with additional co-financing from the North of England Zoological Society's 'Education' and 'Conservation & Research' Departments. The revised version will include both an interactive and introductory sections outlining major biodiversity conservation issues in the Philippines (which can then be recycled to produced similar handbooks for other key conservation regions in this country); thereby also putting the later and more detailed sections on Polillo biodiversity and conservation into their proper and wider context. To these ends, the new Project Leader, Madeleine Bottrill, (who completed her UEA masters degree thesis research (on 'The effects of habitat fragmentation on microchiropteran bats on Polillo' in 2004), revisited Polillo in the second Qtr to obtain relevant data, reports and other materials, etc. It is expected that the first draft of the new handbook will be completed for peer review later this year.

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 or timetable of project activities.

The ICA findings prompted the organisation of the aforementioned BEELO workshops, one of which has already been conducted and two more are planned in the 3rd and 4th Qtrs. Whilst it is now clear that that these workshops are essential to the purposes of the projects, this need was not anticipated in the original project design, work plan or budget. Similarly, the CCC survey was also not included in the original project proposal, work plan or budget; nor were the additional costs of producing the handbook. However, since the added costs for the latter item are mostly consequent upon proposed enhancements, these will be met from co-financing secured for this purpose. Similarly, the CCC survey also constituted a considerable and originally unexpected additional cost, but seemed

too good an opportunity to miss, especially as CCC covered their own personnel and most equipment costs.	
Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement? No, because we felt we could accommodate the additional BEELO and CCC survey costs from savings made in other areas; thereby greatly benefiting this project.	
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? None.	

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. See attached response.

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.**