

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 2007-September 2007
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR #3
Project website	www.philbiodiversity.org/polillo

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

Key accomplishments during this reporting period (April to September 2007) are presented below based on project outputs.

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

Additional bio-physical surveys, mapping and socio-economic, cultural and institutional assessments were conducted in the two outlying island municipalities of Patnanungan and Jomalig during this reporting period; thereby extending the coverage of the project throughout the Polillo Group of Islands. Existing forest cover on Patnanungan and Jomalig based on maps produced using remote, digitally processed remotely images was also validated during ground and faunal surveys. These studies confirmed that the remaining forests in Patnanungan are entirely composed of lowland dipterocarp forests. Forest patches in the north still contain some large timber stands and dense undergrowth, though most others are residual owing to past commercial logging and small-scale timber poaching for local needs. The rapid faunal assessment recorded a total of 32 bird species on Patnanungan, including the 'critically endangered' Philippine cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) and the undoubtedly even more threatened Polillo blue-naped parrot (*Tanygnathus lucionensis hybridus*). Jomalig has extensive grasslands and marshes – the latter constituting the only such habitat in the Polillos, and which continue to support important populations of Philippine mallard (*Anas luzonica*) and a variety of other waterfowl, plovers, snipes, sandpipers and other waders. Socio-economic, cultural and institutional assessments on these islands were conducted via key informant interviews and focus group discussions to determine the socio-economic and cultural variables influencing biodiversity conservation issues in these areas. Although hunting of wildlife had been reduced significantly in recent years, the seeming dependence of these two municipalities on local forest timber and the conversion of important habitats to other land uses, particularly agriculture, will be addressed as matters of particular urgency, along with the underlying needs of enhancing local conservation awareness and strengthening resource management capacities of relevant local governments and communities.

Related activities also include important and original research on Gray's monitor (*Varanus olivaceus*) in Sibulan Watershed on Polillo Island, especially its role in the survival and dispersal of *Pandanus*, *Canarium*, *Grewia* and *Gnetum* seeds; and monitoring the small remaining, but nonetheless globally important, population of Philippine cockatoos on Patnanungan Island; each of which projects is being conducted in close collaboration with the world authorities on these species.

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

Four sites in Burdeos and two in Panukulan, totalling 7,117.71 has, have now been officially gazetted as 'Local Conservation Areas (LCAs) or 'Municipal Reserves' by local government ordinances. In effect this means, this project has already achieved its primary objective, despite the many unforeseen obstacles and additional requirements encountered during the earlier implementation phases. Moreover, another four sites in Polillo Municipality are now in the final stage of declaration, and we are more than hopeful that several more priority sites will be declared in due course in the Municipalities of Patnanungan and Jomalig. If (hopefully when), this is achieved the project will not only have: a) considerably exceeded its original objectives; but also: b) introduced the concept of LCA as an alternative modality to the existing resource management systems in the Philippines; c) enabled the establishment of the first ever network of meaningful (and meaningfully protected) 'protected areas', identified on the basis of both biological importance and 'representativeness'; d) duly agreed and implemented these activities in close collaboration with all key local stakeholders; and, perhaps most importantly: e) established diverse, innovative and potentially important mechanisms that may be equally well applied elsewhere in the country. In adopting the Philippines' Local Government Code of 1991 as the main policy framework, this project also required and enabled the provision of substantive technical assistance to local governmental authorities in the drafting of ordinances for the declaration of these sites and facilitating salient legislation processes and approvals. The ordinances declaring these LCAs also include diverse, innovative and practical provisions aimed at ensuring their effective and efficient management, including the creation of local management bodies and establishment of local financing mechanisms. To these ends the Municipal Governments of Panukulan and Burdeos have initially allocated PhpP100,000.00 (c. (US\$2,270) and Php200,000.00 (\$4,450), respectively, for the management of these areas.

STOP PRESS: Two additional sites identified and proposed by the project team have just been agreed for declaration as LCAs by the local governments of Patnanungan and Jomalig!

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

Initial management strategies and operational plans for sites identified and declared as LCAs have already been formulated last year and are now being implemented in Polillo, Burdeos and Panukulan. These strategies involve resource protection, monitoring and law enforcement; habitat restoration; development and implementation of conservation policies; and awareness building on biodiversity. These operational plans were formulated as outputs of the different trainings and workshops initiated by the project last year. The project also participated in the Legislative and Executive Agenda (ELA) priority setting of Burdeos, Polillo and Panukulan to ensure that local governments prioritize and implement conservation actions. In coordination with the Municipal Government of Polillo, the project prepared a watershed management proposal amounting to PhP 300,000.00 (c. \$6,800), which was submitted to the provincial government for approval. Similarly, discussions with the Polillo Water District were initiated for possible collaboration in the watershed management of Polillo. As a matter of strategy, however, the formal management planning for each LCA will necessarily be undertaken during the last four months of the project since these require prior approval of the LCA ordinances.

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

The project continues to provide capacity building to communities and local officials in the management of important conservation sites in collaboration with local governments and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The project also sponsored a para-legal training on environment and natural resources management, which was organised for the benefit of at least 80 local officials and members of *Bantay Kalikasan* (forest wardens) in Panukulan and Burdeos, most or all of whom are expected to be as formally 'deputised' as 'Environment and Natural Resources Officers (ENROs)' and/or 'Wildlife Enforcement Officers (WEOs)'. This training therefore provided orientation on applicable laws and regulations on environment and natural resources, strategies and methodologies in enforcing these laws, monitoring and identification of illegal activities, and preparation of documentation for the filing of cases in appropriate courts against suspected offenders. Local governments of Panukulan and Burdeos provided counterpart funds amounting to PhP70,000 (\$1,590) and PhP50,000 (\$1,135), respectively, for these trainings. During the training exercises, participants prepared action plans in executing actual resource protection and law enforcement in the different areas covered by LCAs. The project is now assisting the participants of the training in securing and complying the requirements for deputation, which shall be submitted to DENR for approval. The project further provided training on ENR laws and regulations to the members of the Philippine National Police in Burdeos, Polillo and Panukulan.

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

A total of 10 barangays in Burdeos, Panukulan and Polillo are now implementing pilot habitat and species restoration with funding support provided by local governments. Several strategies were identified and developed for this purpose, which included: i) protecting the remaining habitats from destructive human activities; ii) initiating enhancement planting of native species in inadequately stocked forest areas; and iii) planting of native species in open and degraded habitats. The *Bantay Kalikasan* organised in at least 10 barangays of Burdeos, Polillo and Panukulan are implementing the habitat protection while the different barangay councils are initiating habitat restoration activities with funding support from local governments. Regular patrolling and meetings amongst the members of the *Bantay Kalikasan* were also initiated. The project is providing technical assistance and support in the establishment of habitat restoration areas and, in collaboration with the Southern Luzon State University and with the funding support from the Municipal Government of Polillo, is developing a pilot nursery and habitat restoration site using indigenous species. *Bantay Kalikasan* members are also now actively implementing resource protection and law enforcement activities in various different barangays, with several apprehensions involving illegal forest activities have been enacted in recent months. All such monitoring and law enforcement activities are directly coordinated with barangay and municipal officials, Philippine National Police and local DENR personnel (see annex 1 for specific cases acted by the project).

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

Seminars and orientation on the biodiversity importance of the Polillos in all barangays covering LCAs were conducted during the reporting period. This is to ensure that the declaration and management of LCAs is acceptable to local officials and communities and to gain support for the protection and conservation of these areas. As a result, barangay councils where these LCAs are located issued resolutions endorsing the establishment and declaration of LCAs. In addition, the project's Local Area Coordinators (LACs) conducted meetings in the different barangays to explain the need to form community based resource protection groups (*Bantay Kalikasan*) and to establish and maintain habitat restoration areas, which have been successfully implemented, with funding support provided by salient LGUs. Since there were new local officials elected during the May 14, 2007 elections, project orientations were also repeated in Polillo, Burdeos and Panukulan, as well as being initiated amongst the newly elected officials of Jomalig and Patnanungan. Other conservation awareness activities implemented by the project during this reporting period are listed in Annex 2.

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 most notable concern during this reporting period was the results of the local government elections on 14 May, wherein the majority of the former (and generally very supportive) senior officials in Polillo, Burdeos and Panukulan lost their seats and it was feared that the newly elected officials might be far less interested and/or supportive, especially during their first terms. In the event, however, these fears proved to be groundless inasmuch as the new administrations have proved equally, if not more supportive; albeit that these circumstances also imposed severe additional demands on project resources owing to the need for many repeat presentations, workshops and trainings.

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

The issue was reported to, but not discussed with, the Darwin Secretariat since it centred on project operations at site level.

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? Notwithstanding the generally good progress, it is undoubtedly the case that the relevant legal and administrative processes invoked by this project proved considerably more cumbersome and time-consuming than originally anticipated. Despite this circumstance, we strongly believe that this project will (and in some ways already has) greatly exceed its original outputs and expectations, but, and owing to these circumstances, it is unlikely that the greater potential of this project can be fully realised and enacted within the original time frame. We are therefore extremely concerned that the requisite level of activity and momentum may not be sustainable following the conclusion of this project in January 2008, unless and until additional funding support can be secured. If this can be achieved, we are also hopeful that the LCA reserve network can be expanded to embrace other important terrestrial sites and fully confident that it could be extended to include a similar and complementary network of new coastal and marine reserves.	

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.**