

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.	13032
Project Title	Addressing a threat to Caribbean amphibians: capacity building in Dominica
Country(ies)	Commonwealth of Dominica
UK Organisation	Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London
Collaborator(s)	Veterinary Services Division, Government of Dominica (VSD) Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division, Government of Dominica (FWD) Flora and Fauna International (FFI) Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (DWCT) North of England Zoological Society (Chester Zoo)
Report date	October 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	1
Project website	www.mountainchicken.org

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).

Memoranda of Understanding were signed between the Zoological Society of London and the Government of Dominica and between the ZSL and Fauna and Flora International. MoUs with the DWCT and Chester Zoo will be signed in due course. The involvement of these two organisations is due to begin in the second year of the project, but meetings have taken place with the relevant personnel from these organisations and all parties are fully committed to the project.

Educational leaflets on chytridiomycosis and preventing its spread were jointly designed by the ZSL, the VSD and the FWD. Ten thousand leaflets have been printed in Dominica and these are being distributed widely across the island, including to hunters and school children. In addition, twenty educational posters have been produced and these are being prominently displayed in places such as arrivals halls in the country's two airports and at disembarkation points for cruise ships.

We have developed a good working relationship with the national hunters' association and educational programmes in schools, amongst others. These contacts have been used to develop a network of volunteers to detect sick or dead amphibians.

A two-week workshop on amphibian population monitoring and diagnostic sampling was held from 24th September to 7th October 2005 when training in amphibian identification and population monitoring was given by Dr Frank Clarke (FFI) and training in amphibian disease identification and diagnostic sampling was given by Ms Becki Lawson (ZSL). Detailed workshop notes and a certificate of attendance were provided for each of the FWD staff in receipt of this training. During the workshop, amphibian monitoring transects for lowland and upland species were identified and monitoring and surveillance training was given to FWD staff. Originally, we had planned for monitoring to be monthly, but the logistics better-fit a 2-monthly programme. This has now been adopted in order to maximise FWD staff compliance.

The VSD has demolished a pre-existing (dilapidated) building and constructed a new laboratory for the project's molecular diagnostic laboratory. This work, shortage of building materials and unfavourable weather conditions, have delayed the opening and equipping of the new laboratory by a short period (we anticipate up to a four-month delay). However, most of the laboratory equipment has now been purchased in the UK or in Dominica, and some of the UK-purchased equipment has been shipped across to Dominica.

The project web site was launched in July 2005. It is regularly updated with progress reports of the project and information about the threat of chytridiomycosis to amphibian fauna.

The National Bank of Dominica has the mountain chicken on their company logo. A representative of the bank contacted FWD staff in early 2005 with an interest in providing financial support towards production of educational materials (e.g. leaflets, posters) related to the project. During the visit in October 2005, FWD staff, VSD staff and Becki Lawson met with a representative of the bank to discuss the possibilities for corporate sponsorship over the course of the project and into the future. The bank has since been in contact with VSD staff and their sponsorship of the production of further posters is currently being discussed.

The Government Information Service is the Dominican national television channel. In order to raise the profile of the project, and educate the public of how they can assist with conservation of the mountain chicken, and Dominica's other amphibians, two television programmes have been produced to date. In April 2005, Andrew Cunningham, Becki Lawson and Eric Hypolite were interviewed at the time of the launch of the project. In October 2005, Becki Lawson, Reginald Thomas, Eric Hypolite, Jon Bielby (ZSL) and Frank Clarke were interviewed in a two-part programme. The Darwin Initiative was mentioned several times and acknowledged for funding the project during each television programme.

The Times, a weekly newspaper produced in Dominica included an article (03/10/05) in their Environment section on the Darwin-funded project. This newspaper is widely read across Dominica.

In the UK, a report on the launch of the project was included in the Institute of Zoology's May 2005 Newsletter. A link to this article is available from the News section of the project website (www.mountainchicken.org).

The delay to the opening of the laboratory has also delayed the initiation of chytridiomycosis diagnostics on Dominica. However, diagnostic material is currently being collected in readiness for the opening of the laboratory. The VSD staff member has been identified for training in molecular diagnostic techniques and she will be visiting the Institute of Zoology, London in the New Year for training in anticipation of the opening of the laboratory.

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.

No notable problems have arisen since the project began.

One notable and unexpected development has occurred: Dr. John Collin MacIntyre, the project partner in the Veterinary Services Division, retired as Chief Veterinary Officer and was appointed as Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environment in May 2005. Dr. Reginald Thomas has taken over as Chief Veterinary Officer, and he is now the project partner in the VSD. These developments are all to the benefit of the project.

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

No	
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?

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.**