

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	14/054
Project Title	Training the next generation of Papua New Guinean conservation biologists
Country(ies)	Papua New Guinea
UK Organisation	University of Sussex and Natural History Museum
Collaborator(s)	Prof. V. Novotny, Dr. A. Mack, Prof. A. Vogler
Report date	31 October
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2 (for period 1 April to 30 September 2007)
Project website	http://waterbeetles.info/Darwin/DarwinHTMLs/DarwinBackground.html

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).

Staff changes:

After successfully completing a Masters degree at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, Mr Katayo Sagata returned to WCS-PNG in July 2007 to resume his initial role on the Darwin project. His role was filled by Ms Miriam Supuma in the year that he was away. Former co-directors, Dr Andrew Mack and Dr Debra Wright left WCS in May 2007. At present, Mr Banak Gamui and Ms Miriam Supuma are acting co directors of the PNG program.

Departure of the first student cohort:

All three students based at WCS have departed on their new careers. They all presented their research work at the Society of Conservation Biology-Australasia region inaugural conference in Sydney, Australia in July. Mr Enock Kaledimimo successfully defended his thesis in July and has now embarked upon a Masters degree at the University of St Louis, Missouri on a WCS International Scholarship. Ms Eunice Dus also defended her thesis in July and has now left to study for a Masters degree at James Cook University, Australia, on an Endeavour Post Graduate Scholarship offered by the Australian Government. Ms Kore Tau will defend her thesis early next year. She took part in a 6 week training course (July-August) in Borneo conducted by the Centre for Tropical Forest Studies (CTFS) in conjunction with Harvard University. She plans to leave for a Masters course in the USA in June 2008, having successfully secured a WCS International Scholarship

Of the students based at BRC, Leontine Baje completed work on her insect samples, including c.20 days working at the National Insect Collection in Port Moresby. She is now doing the data analysis and the writing her thesis. Her data on host specificity of typhlocybine sap-sucking insects from tropical trees suggest extreme host specificity (most species feed only on a single tree species). Unfortunately Kanawi Chamillou dropped out of the programme, due to family problems (he is married with a baby, and his family lives in Port Moresby) before finishing his project.

New student research projects:

The two students based at WCS have now embarked on their fieldwork. Miss Samoa Asigau is investigating small mammal (especially rodent) populations in habitat fragments caused by shifting agriculture. She will compare rodent diversity and abundance in food gardens with adjacent forests. Aileen Sagolo is investigating the spatial distribution of animals hunted by the Sokamin people in the Sepik area of Papua New Guinea. GPS fixes of forest hamlets and their

hunting grounds will be used to test for overlap in hunting areas, which would have important implications for commonly hunted wildlife. Fieldwork for both projects commenced in mid-August and will run until early November.

The two students based at BRC are continuing to collect their field data. Kipiro Damas has spent 4 weeks surveying plants in his Wanang study plots, as well as 4 weeks in the Forest research Institute Herbarium in Lae. He organised two one-day field trips for BRC parataxonomists, teaching them the basics of plant identification. He was also trained for 3 weeks by Mr. Tim Whitfeld, a botany PhD student from the University of Minnesota (UM), both at BRC and Lae Herbarium, and for one week by Dr George Weiblen (UM) at BRC and in the field. His field work is nearly complete. Francesca Dem continues to accumulate data on host specificity of leafhoppers, working with two village assistants in the field for 3 days a week, and based at BRC for 2 days a week. The field and laboratory work is progressing well.

BRC has advertised for a new Honours position, received 16 applications, interviewed 8 of them and enrolled Mr. Toko Pagi as a new Honours student, due to start in January 2008.

Training:

Students based at BRC received training from the following visiting scientists:

- Vojtech Novotny, Petr Klimes (Czech Academy of Sciences): numerous short presentations on entomology and statistics
- George Weiblen (University of Minnesota): 1 week training in plant ecology and floristics
- Scott Miller (Smithsonian Institution, Washington): 2 days training in entomology
- Jan Leps (University of South Bohemia): 1 week training in community ecology and botany

The planned training course by Dr Michael Balke and Dr Michael Monaghan has been moved to the first 14 days in December, and Michael Balke will again be in PNG for 3-4 weeks in February 2008. Michael Balke and Michael Monaghan have compiled lectures on practical issues of DNA guided systematics and tissue storage for a course scheduled at WCS early December, as well as materials for the second aquatic entomology workshop at BRC.

PNG National Aquatic Insect Survey & Reference Collection:

This is being organised again by Katayo Sagata, after returning from successfully finishing his MSc studies in New Zealand. Fieldwork has continued in Madang and Central Provinces and Michael Balke has processed the samples. The first 50 "wet" samples will be repatriated in 70% Ethanol this December. About 3000 specimens were sent to experts for identification, mainly bugs, water beetles and mayflies. Another c.2500 diving beetles were dry mounted and labelled, and are under study. About a third of these will be repatriated to PNG in early 2008.

Website (regularly updated):

waterbeetles.info/Darwin/DarwinHTMLs/DarwinNews2007_1.html

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.

PNG Local Co-ordinator (Darren Bito)

Darren Bito has now left BRC to embark upon a PhD programme in Australia. This will be on tropical forest insect communities, so directly related to our Darwin project. We have encouraged him in his search for a PhD placement in order to further his career because we are confident that he will ultimately return to Papua New Guinea and take up a prominent position in the biodiversity conservation sector. We therefore regard this development as an investment in the future and therefore very much in harmony with the overall objectives of our project with its title of 'training the next generation of Papua New Guinean conservation biologists'.

Darren's departure now leaves us with a substantial gap to fill. We are actively recruiting for his replacement but have not yet actually located anyone suitable. It may be that there is simply

no-one of the necessary calibre available, in which case we will have to think of an alternative strategy to continue the component of the student training that he covered.

UK Project co-ordinator:

Dr Frank Clarke was employed from January 2007 as the UK Project Co-ordinator, based in PNG. He commenced his duties at WCS with a view to moving to BRC at some later date. Dr Clarke assisted with WCS training courses and advised the resident Darwin students in the initial stages of designing their projects. He was making plans to travel to BRC to organize a training course in May, but contracted a persistent eye infection that did not respond to treatment available in PNG. He returned to the UK to seek medical attention in May, but he submitted his resignation in mid-July.

Approximately two months of salary remains in this part of the budget. After discussion, the partners concluded that such a contract would be too short to expect someone to travel to PNG. Reluctantly therefore, we have decided to abandon the idea of continuing this post. Instead, the remaining funds will be directed into extending the number and length of training visits by UK experts to PNG.

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

Yes

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: ~~no~~/yes, in September 2007 (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?

No

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.**