

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	15/005
Project Title	Conservation of the Mangrove Finch <i>Cactospiza heliobates</i>
Country(ies)	Ecuador
UK Organisation	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
Collaborator(s)	Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF), Galápagos National Park (GNP)
Project Leader	Hywel Glyn Young
Report date	16 th October 2007
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR2
Project website	<i>Not yet available</i>

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).

Field Manager Birgit Fessl has been in Galápagos since October 2006 and has been instrumental in undertaking significant fieldwork at Mangrove Finch sites on Isabela during the first half of Year 2. Visits were to Playa Tortuga Negra and Caleta Black on March 26th-April 24th, 7th – 13th May, and 20th -26th September.

Mangrove Finches bred well during the period January-April and field visits in Year 2 achieved GPS point sampling and physical marking of nest sites, assessment of late breeding activity and further collection of reproductive data. Some more transects were opened for a better coverage of the sites for observation and rat control. Rainfall data was also gathered from automatic rainfall devices installed at finch sites by Hernan Vargas during DI Project 12018 (Climate change and conservation of Galápagos bird species).

Birgit concentrated field effort on further trapping of invasive mammals notably rats and has collected information and advice from bird conservation projects in other areas of the world. Advice from Geoff Hilton on rat control in Montserrat (DI Project 14027: Enabling the people of Montserrat to conserve the Centre Hills).

Contact was made with the group of Simon Goodman at the laboratory in Santa Cruz (DI Project 12017: Building capacity and determining disease threats to endemic Galapagos fauna) in order to integrate investigations into secondary impacts of the parasite *Philornis*.

Construction of aviaries at Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS), Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz, has begun with designs and management protocols agreed by GNP. The first phase of the captive programme will be a trial using the closely related Woodpecker Finch *Cactospiza pallida*. This species will be used to ensure that husbandry practices are sufficiently tested and personnel trained before the second phase (captive propagation and/or headstarting of Mangrove Finches at a site on Isabela) is begun. Aviary space and staff expertise may be used to start a similar trial with mockingbirds as part of the Floreana Mockingbird *Mimus trifasciatus* restoration programme.

Birgit Fessl attended the Overseas Meeting for Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust staff from this organisation's projects worldwide held in Jersey in July 2007. Presentations were made on the Mangrove Finch Project and the potential of links with mockingbird conservation in the Galápagos was discussed and well received.

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.

The Project has had long-running difficulties with identification and recruitment of students as included in the original application. No student was available during Year 1 but Abraham David Loaiza was recruited in the first part of Year 2 and will work directly with the Field Manager.

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

The student problem was discussed and money may be rolled over after project ends (2009) if a suitable student is still in place at this date.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: **yes, in March 2007** and verbally in June 2007

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: **yes** **in 2009....(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 email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**