

Darwin ECTF M&E Programme: Review of Annual Report from Darwin project

(To be completed with reference to the Reviewing Guidance Notes for ECTF – it is expected that this report will be 3-4 pages in length)

Basic Project Details

<i>Project Ref Number</i>	15/012
<i>Project Title</i>	Protecting Key South African Biodiversity Sites through Community-based Conservation
<i>Country(ies)</i>	South Africa
<i>UK Contract Holder Institution</i>	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
<i>UK Partner Institution(s)</i>	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
<i>Host country Partner Institution(s)</i>	Birdlife South Africa (BLSA)
<i>Darwin Grant Value</i>	£169,077
<i>Start/End dates of Project</i>	1 July, 2006 to 30 June 2009
<i>Reporting period (1 Apr 200x to 31 Mar 200y) and annual report number (1,2,3..)</i>	1 April, 2007 to 31 March, 2008 Annual Report number 2
<i>Project Leader Name</i>	Paul Buckley
<i>Project website</i>	http://www.birdlife.co.za/index.php?p[Gcms_nodes][Gcms_nodesUID]=ccb18029b28e2f6bc62d6c4b3cec84do
<i>Review date</i>	24/06/08

1. Project Summary

This project focuses on four threatened high priority biodiversity sites in South Africa that have particularly important bird life. The project aims to develop local management of these sites and has a dual approach of raising awareness among local people and institutions about the importance of conservation and secondly, developing income generation activities aimed at providing incentives for local people to support the project activities.

The outputs of the project are:

- Local site support groups in place at each site to establish a firm basis for project sustainability;
- Training and capacity-building programme for national and local stakeholders implemented;
- Participatory plans for conservation monitoring and action in place and under implementation at each site;
- Marketing-focused initiatives at each site are generating economic benefits for local people and assisting sustainability;
- National networking and experience sharing has stimulated action at additional high priority biodiversity sites;
- Awareness of conservation needs and values enhanced.

2. Comments and Queries for Project Leader

It is obvious from reading this report that a lot of work and effort has gone into this project over the past two years. However, few tangible and measurable impacts on both livelihood and biodiversity are available and a lot of the work (irrespective of the mountainous amount of ground work performed) still seems to lie ahead. The authors have acknowledged this and are hoping to start observing some tangible impacts in year 3.

There is therefore still an overall feeling of uncertainty associated with all four sites, despite the many advances and efforts reported here. These are mostly linked to the ongoing challenge of engaging government officials. Also the efforts put in by the manager and site coordinators needs to cascade down better to the local community.

In Soweto, the underperforming, and later replaced, site coordinator seems to explain the delays and many future successes at this site seem to be linked to the JCP programme. This said, the local environmental club seems to support many activities and the Soweto site has currently the best response from schools.

Wakkerstroom seems to have been very successful in terms of partner cooperation, but the announcement of Delta Mining Corporation interest in mining in the region will no doubt add further complications to any site management. The reed cutting activities in the area are, as noted by the authors, a tangible impact on both livelihood and biodiversity.

In Cata, the acceptance of the site manager to the area has delayed progress at this site. The Pecan nut initiative bodes well, though the reviewer also sees potential for conflict between the Cape Parrot and local farmers if both are going to be relying on the Pecan nuts.

Work at the fourth site, Ongoye, is still at a very early stage, and is reported for the first time to the Darwin Initiative in this report.

All the ground work done to date and the networking performed at local, national and international level will no doubt prove useful in the long run.

The success in securing external financing for this project is evidence that the partners are looking to invest in these locations in the long term.

3. Partnerships

The communication between the two main partners seems to remain excellent. In addition, a lot of effort has been put towards engaging with other local, national and international partners.

They acknowledge to have encountered certain difficulties in building relationships at the different sites.

4. Summary of progress

4.1. Implementation of activities

There seem to have been substantive ground work to prepare the way for subsequent activities. The team seems to have worked hard to complete activities planned for year 2 amongst the rapid and frequent changes and strikes. Some delays are still noted.

4.2. Progress towards Outputs

There is progress towards achieving the six outputs, though an element of uncertainty remains as to whether these will be achieved at all four sites within the time frame of this Darwin Initiative project.

4.3. Progress towards Purpose

As above

5. Communication and Dissemination

The project team has been effective at raising awareness of the project through numerous dissemination events and attendance at several local, national and international meetings.

Each site offers its own challenges and opportunities. The manager and site coordinators have had a steep learning curve with regards to community based conservation in four distinctive sites. Amongst other things, they have had to at first get accepted by some of the communities, work with some illiterate people and work around teachers' strikes. Many challenges still lie ahead, but continued communication and dissemination at all levels will no doubt help achieving their goals.

6. Sustainability, Impact and Legacy

Sustainability:

The commitment of RSPB and BSLA to support activities after the project ends combined with the success to date in achieving co-funding bodes well for the future financial support.

Biodiversity Impact:

The four sites selected are of recognised biodiversity importance by BLSA and RSPB. However, the overall outcome of this project will not principally focus on the assessment of the biodiversity at these sites. It will rather set up sustainable use of the habitats, greater legal protection and show a more favourable attitude to conservation which will in turn help to protect the biodiversity.

Legacy:

If the project can successfully establish a locally supported and managed viable conservation approach, this will indeed leave a valuable legacy for others to learn from.

7. General assessment

It is obvious from reading this report that a lot of work and effort has gone into this project over the past two years. However, rapid and frequent changes to the situation on the ground have meant that few tangible and measurable impacts on both livelihood and biodiversity are available. Most of the work (irrespective of the mountainous amount of ground work and networking performed) still seems to lie ahead. The authors have acknowledged this and are hoping to start observing some tangible impacts in year 3.

The reviewer wishes you a successful continuation with your project(s). We look forward to reading your next report.