

DARWIN INITIATIVE PROJECT

MONITORING AND MANAGING BIODIVERSITY LOSS IN SOUTH-EAST AFRICA'S MONTANE ECOSYSTEMS

Inception Meeting, Wakehurst Place, 7-8 August 2006

The inception meeting of the above Darwin project took place at the Kew Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place, West Sussex on 7th and 8th August 2006.

Present:- Susana Baena (GIS Specialist, Herbarium, RBG Kew), Julian Bayliss (Project Field Coordinator), Lincoln Fishpool (Site Support Groups programme, BirdLife International, Cambridge), Tim Harris (Botanist, Herbarium, RBG Kew), Samira Izidine (LMA Herbarium, Instituto de Investigação Agronómica de Moçambique (IIAM), Maputo), Camila da Sousa (Forestry Research, IIAM, Maputo), Jorge Francisco (GIS Specialist, IIAM, Maputo), Paul Smith (Head, Millennium Seed Bank and Darwin Project Leader), Jonathan Timberlake (Editor Flora Zambesiaca, Herbarium, RBG Kew and Darwin Project Scientific Coordinator) [Chair & minutes].

1. After brief introductions, Jonathan Timberlake outlined the fundamental objectives of the project, as below:

- To enhance the capacity of the Mozambique research authorities, particularly IIAM, to assess the conservation status of important biodiversity areas and to influence land use planning and development decisions.
- To do this by focussing on discrete areas known to be under threat, i.e. montane massifs, and on rare, threatened and endemic species. These are the focal points of conservation attention, rather than processes.
- We intend to try and identify plant and bird species of interest, determine population status and threats, and place these in context. From there we can develop either species action plans or, perhaps more usefully, site action plans, one for each massif.
- We also intend to map each massif out in detail, get this information into a GIS format, and determine the extent and changes in forest and grassland cover. This will be done through the use of historical records, historical air photos, satellite imagery, among others. From there we should attempt to determine what these findings mean for biodiversity conservation.
- All this information has to be presented in a format and in forums where it can have maximum conservation impact.

2. Paul Smith outlined the main purpose of Darwin projects and what they are meant to achieve. He also indicated how the MSB / Kew have been handling numerous Darwin grants they have received in recent years, with particular reference to reporting and finance.

3. Julian Bayliss gave a detailed presentation on the Mt Mulanje Conservation Trust, for which he has worked for the last 2 years - what it is, how it has been set up, and what it is hoping to achieve. MMCT is now a project partner. Particular attention was given to the development of Ecological Monitoring Programmes, a major activity of the present project, and aspects of MMCT activities on which the Darwin project hopes to build.

Following this, he gave an additional presentation on what is known on the five proposed project sites in northern Mozambique, each of which is a montane archipelago above 1500 m altitude, based on his reconnaissance visits earlier this year and in 2005.

- Mt Namuli - 800 m plateau with high point of 2412 m. Human population around, especially in south, is c.7000. Contains moist forest (Ukalini, 1300 ha) and little-disturbed plateau grassland (Mureta). Many other areas have been fairly heavily settled. It is known to contain significant biodiversity of interest, including endemic or near-endemic species. Visited by Bayliss and others in 2005 and 2006. Birding expeditions in 1998 and 2001.
- Mt Mabu area of c.10,000 ha, highest point 1710 m. Surrounded on southern side by old tea plantations (c.2000 ha) from Cha Madal, now overgrown. Vegetation types include: woodland, moist forest at c.1000 m (around 7000 ha extent), bare rock faces and grassland. Human population pressure is surprisingly low. Hunting, not cutting is main human activity. Gin traps a likely hazard. The extent of apparently little-disturbed moist forest is large and is likely to support significant biodiversity of conservation interest. Visited by Bayliss and others in 2006.
- Mt Chipirone - a single isolated peak of 2054 m, with c.2000 ha of forest/woodland around. No grassland, only rocky outcrops. Visited by Bayliss and others in December 2005, with a subsequent paper on birds written for publication. Also bird records from Benson in 1950.
- Mt Inago - not visited and accessibility not known. Highest point 1600 m.
- Mt Cucuteia - not visited and accessibility not known. Highest point 1500 m.

4. Lincoln Fishpool gave a brief account of BirdLife International, pointing out that the ornithological input into the present Darwin project is really to be coordinated by the BirdLife African Partnership out of Nairobi. Lincoln is only acting as a UK focal point for logistical reasons. Hazell Thompson of BLAP Nairobi is fully apprised of the details.

5. Camila Sousa gave a brief account of the newly-restructured Instituto de Investigação Agronómica de Moçambique, its staffing, capabilities, the provincial stations and their involvement in the project, the move to decentralisation with many staff being posted to the provinces, and the support for this project from the Director and Deputy Director as representing the way the Institute wishes to develop.

6. Discussions were held on various aspects of project implementation, modalities, rationale for choice of study areas, dates for trips, and workshop objectives. Major points are given below.

7. Field trips

- Each field trip will be around 14 days, of which 10 is likely to be in the field at the project site.
- The first trip should be changed from Mt Namuli (as given in ProDoc) to Mt Chipirone, which should be an easier trip logistically and organisationally in which to sort out teething problems. If there is sufficient time (more than 4 days) after completing Chipirone, the expedition will move on to Mt Mabu for a reconnaissance of forest areas. This trip will take place from 22 November to 6 December, starting and finishing at Mulanje in Malawi.
- The second trip, around June 2007 (dates to be decided), will be to Mt Namuli, which is the largest and potentially the most interesting massif biologically.
- IIAM will be able to provide 1 or 2 vehicles. There will be IIAM participation from research stations in Nampula and Manica.
- Additional persons from Mozambique or elsewhere may be able to participate in the expeditions if alternative funding is available for them, and increased numbers do not create logistical or administrative problems or additional costs.
- BirdLife participants are likely to be Carlos Bento (UEM Museum) and one other from Nairobi. The budget will be looked at to see if these costs can be supported.

8. Workshops

- Immediately prior to the first Chipirone trip, there will be a plant identification workshop, run by Tim Harris (RBG Kew), held at MMCT Mulanje for 6 participants from Mozambique and 3 from Malawi. Julian will book hotel accommodation at Mulanje for nights 19-21 Nov. MMCT can provide workshop facilities.
- Julian Bayliss will visit IIAM for a few days around October 2006 to look at and discuss the GIS system there.
- The proposed Ecological Monitoring Programme workshop, originally planned for December 2007 in Maputo, should place much emphasis on basic GIS skills to ensure a number of IIAM staff are familiar with this technology. The workshop may be brought forward to August-September – this is still to be decided by Susana Baena and IIAM. It will be run by Susana Baena.

9. Equipment & Materials

- Julian would investigate purchase of basic camping equipment (tents, utensils). The equipment will be kept safely at MMCT between expeditions. Participants to provide their own bedding.

- The possibilities of purchasing a second-hand satellite phone were discussed. Later MSB said it would purchase one which can be used on each trip.
- Requirements for satellite imagery and software were discussed. Budgetary limitations were understood.
- IIAM, using project funds, would purchase any additional topographic maps required, and any available B/W air photos for the study areas (probably 1960 and 1972 only).

10. Administration

- Responsibilities were outlined. Julian Bayliss is responsible for all organization and logistics for expeditions and workshops in Mozambique or Malawi, as well as some aspects of GIS work. He will lead the 5 expeditions, and will also ensure regular and effective communication between all project partners. Jonathan Timberlake is responsible for overall scientific output, coordinating the various Kew inputs, and ensuring the project attains its objectives. Paul Smith will be responsible for regular reporting to Darwin and retain overall budgetary control. Other participants will be responsible for implementation in their selected fields and for delivery of required outputs.
- An MoU needs to be developed between Kew and IIAM. This will be done by Paul Smith in conjunction with Jonathan, once expedition and workshop budgets have been recalculated. There is already an MoU between MMCT and Kew covering, among other things, terms of Julian's employment.
- Once the IIAM-Kew MoU is in place, IIAM will open up an account to receive project funds on an imprest basis for costs borne in Mozambique.