

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2010)

Project Ref No	DAR 17-031
Project Title	Sustainability of leopard trophy hunting in Zimbabwe
Country(ies)	Zimbabwe, UK
UK Organisation	Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Oxford University
Collaborator(s)	Zambezi Society
Project Leader	<i>Andrew Loveridge</i>
Report date	28/10/2010
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	<i>HYR 1</i>
Project website	http://www.wildcru.org/research , http://www.zamsoc.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).

1) National leopard surveys. This aspect of the project aims to increase our understanding of leopard distribution and population viability across the country by surveying populations at selected sites. The method used (spoor transects) is only possible in the dry season which limits when surveys can be undertaken. We have undertaken two surveys (North and South Bubyee Conservancy) since the last report. These were undertaken by Mr M Mundy (employed by Zamsoc through the DI project) and Mr G. Nyoni (employed by WildCRU). Survey reports are currently being prepared and will be disseminated. We have not yet gained permission to access any of the National Parks managed areas (this difficulty has hampered our ability to undertake more surveys- see below under 'problems faced'). We also faced logistical difficulties as the vehicle we have available for these surveys broke down on a regular basis. We hope to replace this (see below)

2) Behavioural leopard study. An intensive study of leopard behavioural ecology in a hunted area has been started and has made excellent progress. WildCRU D.Phil. student Byron DuPreez is overseeing the project. So far we have radio-collared 6 leopards with state of the art GPS radio collars, we have another 9 collars ready for deployment. We are collecting extensive management and population data. The project is now fully equipped and we are confident that it will achieve our goal of gaining an understanding of trophy hunting on leopards population dynamics.

3) Trends in past management and utilisation. These data have been collated for the southern part of the country and this work is ongoing.

4) Management strategy devised. This aspect of the project is set for the final year, however efforts are being made to prime key people to ensure that this is fully supported and all stakeholders are willing and able to contribute.

5) Improved regional collaboration. We have been in frequent communication with three other researchers in Zimbabwe with interests in/ undertaking research on leopards. We aim to hold a workshop with these scientists in early 2011. A more extensive workshop including workers from the surrounding countries is planned and regional researchers have already been informed.

6) Training and capacity building. The major training output has been that Mr Edwin Makuwe (National Parks ecologist) has completed his course and received his diploma in International Wildlife conservation and management from Oxford University. Unfortunately due to administrative difficulties with the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (PWMA) none of the planned training of parks staff in survey methods has occurred. A workshop was planned for April 2010, but this did not receive permission to go ahead. We hope to resolve these problems soon (see below).

Dr Andrew Loveridge (Project Leader) was in Zimbabwe in July to hold meetings with project partners including Mrs Lynne Evans- (Zamsoc liaison officer), Dr H. Madzikanda (Head of scientific services- PWMA), Mr G. Pangeti (Chairman of the Board of PWMA). These meetings were to resolve a number of operational difficulties and were productive and have allowed the project to move forward.

As recommended in the review of the project's first annual report we have now made clear on the project websites that this is a Darwin initiative funded project. The Darwin initiative logo now appears on both sites. <http://www.wildcru.org/research> , <http://www.zamsoc.org/> . We will shortly launch a new section on the WildCRU site to provide updates on major activities.

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.

Since the last report there have been significant changes in the PWMA, with the appointment of a new Director General and significant staff changes, as well as changes in approach and attitudes to research. This has seriously hampered our progress. Our original agreements with PWMA (submitted with the original proposal) have required additional negotiation. We have been required to reapply for research permissions and these administrative processes have taken an exceptionally long time to conclude. While we have now received permission for this work it is too late in the fieldwork year to warrant payment of permit fees (we cannot undertake surveys in the wet season and would anyway have to reapply for the permit in January 2011 as these are issued on an annual basis).

Due to the above mentioned problems we have also relocated the intensive behavioural study from Hwange National Park- to Buby Valley Conservancy. This has not altered the focus of the work or its intended outcomes and we feel that the study is more secure and more likely to be successful at the new site. This move has strengthened rather than destabilized this aspect of the work.

We have taken steps to solve the various administrative problems the project is facing. Andrew Loveridge had very productive and encouraging meetings with senior PWMA officials in July 2010 and has received assurances of their support for this project. Lynne Evans and Zamsoc Operations Director, Mr Richard Maasdorp have also met with PWLA officials and received similar reassurance. Further meetings are planned for November 2010.

We have taken steps to minimise impacts on the whole project and feel that it is still possible to deliver on the project outcomes, though we should not underestimate the impact that further disruption to permissions may have. Given our recent meetings we are reasonably confident that things will move ahead more smoothly in the coming 6 months. Lack of permissions has impacted the number of sites we could survey this field season. Our planned training has also been delayed. We feel that with permissions in place we will be able to make up for these delays in future years of the project.

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

These issues have not been discussed as it was felt that we could adequately resolve these problems without any major changes to the project and its ultimate goals. Nevertheless we will monitor this situation closely and communicate any serious impacts or changes.

Discussed with LTS: **no/yes, in..... (month/yr)**

Formal change request submitted: **no/yes, in.....(month/yr)**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **no/yes in.....(month/yr)**

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No

If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

It is possible that we may request permission to use some unspent funds (approx £5 000 - £8 000) in the host country budget on a replacement survey vehicle. This will depend on expenditure in the later part of the year and also whether alternative funding can be found. We will approach LTS for permission should this option look like it might be realistic

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 LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.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: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**