Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2012)

Project Ref No	18002
Project Title	Enhancing taxonomic capacity to underpin tropical biodiversity conservation (SE Asia)
Country(ies)	Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia
UK Organisation	Harrison Institute
Collaborator(s)	Prince of Songkla University, Thailand; Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia; University of Laos, Lao PDR
Project Leader	Dr Paul Bates
Report date	22 October, 2012
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR3
Project website	http://www.harrison- institute.org/research/CRM_R3_Darwin_taxonomic%20network.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).

Progress in the first six months of the second year followed the timetable as laid out in Section 18 of the application form.

- Training programmes in field, museum and laboratory techniques continued
- The 4 PhD students worked on their research topics (batsx3; birdsx1) in conjunction with their in-country and international supervisors; 3 MSc students carried on their research and a fourth student submitted her MSc for examination
- 3 PhD students and 3 MSc students took part in a SE Asian bat research and conservation workshop organised by the Prince of Songkla University and the Harrison Institute which took place in Hat Yai, Thailand
- 2 PhD students took part in an international workshop on bat taxonomy and echolocation organised by the Harrison Institute in India
- Presentations about the Darwin project were made at meetings and workshops in UK, Asia and Africa
- 1 PhD student secured funding for a three month study visit to the UK in 2013
- A project involving staff and students of Prince of Songkla University to promote taxonomic research in amphibians in peninsular Thailand was initiated
- The research collections of the Prince of Songkla University, Royal University of Phnom Penh and the National University of Laos were all enhanced
- Further publications were submitted on various aspects of mammal taxonomy
- The digital library of taxonomic research papers and books was further enhanced
- A MoU was initiated between the Harrison Institute, Prince of Songkla University, Texas

Tech University and LIPI to promote UK, USA, SE Asian collaborative research on bats

• The Asian Taxonomic Network was further enhanced with new members from SE Asia and Europe and North America

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.

There are no notable problems or unexpected developments in this particular project. However, there is some disappointment at the change of direction in the Darwin Initiative, which has considerably undermined morale within the project team.

Project members feel (rightly or wrongly) that it downplays the importance of scientific capacity building and the role of specialist biodiversity knowledge. They also feel that it will potentially see the demise of grass-roots development in the biodiversity sciences except where they can be shown to have immediate economic impact. Emphasis appears to focus on short-term development issues at the expense of longer term scientific input. This is the perception of the team. It is certainly the end of capacity building projects such as this one, which have put together teams from two continents (Asia [SE and South] and Africa [Southern]) and many countries; that have invigorated a whole new generation of young biodiversity scientists and led to cultural and scientific exchanges between a host of different nations – all of this achieved on a very small budget and with countless hours of unpaid work from everyone. It seems a shame.

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

I suspect that this is not applicable

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?

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?

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 <u>planned</u> modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should <u>not</u> be discussed in this report but raised with LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at <u>Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</u>. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. <u>Please state your project reference number in the header</u> of your email message eg Subject: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report