

## Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report October 2012

**Project Ref No:** 19-007  
**Project Title:** Building capacity for *in-situ* conservation in Iraq  
**Country(ies):** Iraq  
**UK Organisation:** Centre for Middle Eastern Plants, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh  
**Collaborator(s):** Azzam Alwash, CEO: Nature Iraq  
Richard Porter, Advisor: BirdLife International  
**Project Leader:** Anthony Miller, Director: Centre for Middle Eastern Plants  
**Report date:** 31 October 2012  
**Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)** HYR1  
**Project website:** Not available

### **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).**

In June 2012, staff from the Centre for Middle Eastern Plants and BirdLife International travelled to Kurdistan to take part in discussions with Nature Iraq regarding the details of how the work plan would proceed, and to establish a more detailed timescale. As part of this trip, a 3-day plant red listing course was presented to staff from Nature Iraq and the University of Sulaimani (including a bird red list example), to fulfil the first part of the training requirement in Protected Areas to build in-house capacity in Iraq. Further training in Protected Area designation will occur through the online course, and discussions are under way for a bird red listing and protected area workshop to complement the Red Listing workshop held in 2012.

In September 2012, two staff from Nature Iraq visited the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for two weeks, in order to participate in a range of learning exercises related to the project. One staff member, specifically responsible for coordinating outreach to local schools in Pirmagroon, attended sessions set up with the education department at RBGE observing and interacting with children of junior and senior school age ranges, as well as similar outreach programmes at the RSPB Vane Farm centre. The second staff member, specifically responsible for developing the manual of traditional land management at Pirmagroon, attended sessions arranged on Participatory Rural Appraisal by Dr Oonagh O'Brien (Institute for International Health & Development, Queen Margaret University) and involved both theoretical and practical role play sessions using volunteers at RBGE. Both staff members generated ideas for their work in Kurdistan, and formalized these in work plans.

As a result of this training, schools outreach in Pirmagroon has developed to the stage where a tree banding project has started (<http://www.natureiraq.org/site/en/node/423>) and a teachers 'Open Day' is scheduled for early November, where teachers from local schools will visit the Nature Iraq Eco Camp to hear about proposed projects, ask questions, and sign up for specific outreach programmes. This session will be attended by Tony Miller (Director, Centre for Middle Eastern Plants) and the local authority Head of Education along side Nature Iraq staff. Initial meetings with local village elders have started as part of the acquisition of data on traditional land management practices. To date, responses to the goals of the project have been very positive, with elders supporting the project, giving information about the social structure of land management, and making contacts with shepherds, the forest police, and elders in other villages. Data collection will begin early in 2013.

Considerable development of online courses has been undertaken. Initial discussions about the course content resulted in the production of a course flyer (attached), detailing the broad outline of the course on offer. During early November 2012, Tony Miller will visit the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Sulaimani to further discuss this arrangement, and also to demonstrate the RBGE online learning portal, PropaGate Learning. The Centre for Middle Eastern Plants will have a unique homepage on this portal. Discussions with RBGE, BirdLife International, Nature Iraq and the University of Sulaimani are ongoing regarding course validation and certification. Course modules have been developed and adapted from CMEP prior experience in running a similar course in Kabul as part of a British Council 'Development Partnerships in Higher Education' project. Additional modules are being developed by both BirdLife International and Nature Iraq.

Checklists of plants and birds are now available for Piramagroon Mountain in Kurdistan. The bird list is at an advanced stage, with less detail currently available for plants. The development of interactive mobile applications for identification and surveying work, using these checklists as baseline data, is also underway. Draft versions of these have been trialled in several different areas by CMEP staff. We expect working versions to be available for testing at the start of the field season at Piramagroon in 2013.

An additional sub-project has started as a result of the collaboration between CMEP and Nature Iraq. Lecturers in Public Relations, Queen Margaret University contacted us about running an exercise for their undergraduate research students, and they decided they would like to focus on nature conservation and ecotourism in Iraq. Students visited RBGE, where Tony Miller gave a presentation, and guided tour around the 'Nature of Iraq' exhibition, and received a Q&A session designed to assist them gather information for their projects. One aspect of this work will generate ecotourism material based around the Nature Iraq Eco Camp in the Iraq Marshes, while the other intends to produce layouts for a short film presentation designed to raise awareness of conservation issues with decision makers in Iraq and internationally.

**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.**

No project-specific website has been established. Nature Iraq have a webpage which includes brief details about the project ([http://www.natureiraq.org/site/en/ni\\_projects\\_current](http://www.natureiraq.org/site/en/ni_projects_current)). A specific webpage will be hosted on the CMEP website: however, this website was infected with a malicious virus, and has only recently been re-instated. Some remedial work is required, which is scheduled to happen by the end of November. No impact on budgets, timetables or project activities is expected to arise from this issue.

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

Nothing discussed with LTS International

**Discussed with LTS:** No

**Formal change request submitted:** No

**Received confirmation of change acceptance:**

**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?**

No issues to raise

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto: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**