



Darwin Initiative/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2019)

Project reference	23-014 ref 3206
Project title	Improving livestock management for economic-environmental stability in Mesoamerica's Mosquitia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nicaragua, Honduras
Lead organisation	Wildlife Conservation Society
Partner(s)	National University of Honduras
Project leader	John Polisar
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	1 April 2019 – 30 September 2019 HYR4
Project website/blog/social media etc.	No specific project website

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).

In the last 6 months, we have continued to advance important collaborations with Indigenous partners to help support sustainable livelihoods and build capacity, while continuing to protect biodiversity and conserving the ecosystems they inhabit. During this period, we have continued to make significant progress, adapt to the various situations, and build on the momentum created during the project's foundation. The Nicaragua component has proceeded according to the baseline timetable. Despite the political turbulence of mid-2018, field crews were adaptable and switched from field work to data reduction and analysis. We are headed into the final half of the last year with almost all field expectations to date met. The last six months in Nicaragua have been primarily dedicated to data management and activities.

The Honduran component experienced multiple delays since the project initiation (see 2a. below and parallel change request form). That said, in June 2019, a nine-person technical team from the National University of Agriculture conducted animal health tests, delivered veterinary training, and mapped the farms of 97 project participants in the two biosphere reserves. The team met with 31 farming families (9 women, 28 men) in Wampusirpe, 20 farmers (all men) in Kurpha, 16 farmers (all men) in Tukrun, 9 farmers in Nueva Esperanza (men), and 15 farmers, 5 of which were women in Krausirpe, for a total of 97 people, 14% of whom were women.

Biological Evaluations of Project Impacts:

In the next phase in both countries, we aim to conclude our evaluation of project impacts on bird distribution and abundance by analysing data from mist-nets and point counts from sample 2, as well as comparing between baseline and sample 2 within and across both countries.

In both countries, the camera traps used to evaluate project impacts on mammals were set before AR3, but collected afterwards. In Nicaragua, 24 camera trap stations were installed between February 24 and April 24 and subsequently removed between August 3-September 16. This represented an increase from 15 stations in 2017 to 24 stations during 2019, all using consistent sampling design and data collection protocols. In Honduras, we removed the 22 installed camera traps in June 2019. Nicaragua is the central repository for biological data, and standardization and reduction are already underway. We have conducted preliminary analyses of avian and mammalian indicator species along anthropogenic gradients in Nicaragua, with

draft manuscripts in progress. We will analyse baseline and year 3 contrasts, and ultimately can combine the Darwin camera trap data set with core-to-community edge camera trap data for both countries for peer-reviewed publications that include project impacts.

Presentations and Branding:

John Polisar (project lead) included portions of the Darwin-supported work (images and conservation tools) in jaguar conservation-focused presentations delivered at the IUCN Latin America and Caribbean Protected Area Congress in Lima, Peru in October. These include the following: 1) a 30-minute presentation on jaguar conservation tools during a Polisar moderated 2-hour expert panel composed of UNDP, Panthera, WCS, WWF, and two government representatives (Mexico and Costa Rica); 2) a 30-minute keynote speech; 3) a 15-minute presentation that was part of a symposium on Biological Connectivity. Conservation personnel from a dozen countries participated in these three events.

Secondary impacts of Darwin Project first six months Year 4:

While we have worked with the Miskitu and Mayangna Indigenous Territories in Nicaragua's Bosawas Biosphere Reserve for over a decade, this project has been a huge boost in our ability to work on sustainable livelihoods, strengthen local capacity for project execution and conduct biological sampling in the gradients of human activities near communities. Our increased presence in the territories facilitated very impactful territorial patrols in June that were facilitated through the Darwin support and commitments, although executed with other leveraged funds.

This Darwin project introduced WCS to the area known as Patuca Media in the Honduran Moskitia, including eastern portions of the Rio Platano and Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserves, facilitated relationships that flourished, and enabled us to increase core staff in Honduras. During the last six months, WCS Honduras staff have signed an MOU with the Miskitu Territorial Council of Patuca Media, BAKINASTA, in order to increase long-term impacts, facilitate tangential conservation initiatives (e.g. integrated cacao agroforestry and conservation, territorial patrols, control of illegal wildlife trade, and more) and assist this project's execution in the final six months.

The above described WCS-Indigenous collaborations make sustained impacts likely in both countries. We also have leveraged additional support from US Fish and Wildlife Service's Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation (ABC) fund, administered through the American Bird Conservancy, to advance objectives complementary to the Darwin project. Furthermore, we have obtained additional support for territorial reconnaissance and patrols and the impacts will continue beyond the life of this project.

Next Steps: As we head into the final five months, priorities include the following:

- 1) Annual meetings in the major communities to assess performance of improved production methods and conservation agreements, and evaluate changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to large cats (both countries);
- 2) Repeat surveys (socio-economic/conservation/natural resource use/human-wildlife coexistence/livelihoods) to evaluate impacts, especially specific outputs defining changes in livestock management and associated improved security/productivity (both countries);
- 3) Individual visits to production systems to assess performance and challenges (both countries and in particular Honduras, as we have two years of records in Nicaragua);
- 4) Create exchange visits where groups of farmers visit model systems initiated by the project (within both countries);
- 5) Final analyses of socio-economic and biological evaluations examining impacts of project activities on economic and environmental indicators (bi-national within and across both countries);
- 6) Engagement by 40% females was a stated goal at project outset. Nicaragua reached that in Years 2-3. In Honduras we will continue to try to consciously compensate for low frequencies of females among the ranks of project participants and beneficiaries in early

parts of the project and increase participation by women before the project closes March 31, 2020.

- 7) An analysis of rates of deforestation in the project area 2017-2020 and a comparison of that with rates the preceding 10 years.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt 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.

Despite our best effort and fluid communications with the Honduras National University of Agriculture and close work with their financial management personnel and even the Director of its Administration to move things forward, the pathways to move sub-grant funds through their system and to the field entailed considerable delays, including up to seven months. As a result, we have decided to complete the last five months of the project with WCS mechanisms and staff. We are submitting a change request form at the same time as this report, explaining why we did not renew agreements with the University and why we hope to manage the Honduras funds for the final five months directly, with the National University of Agriculture no longer responsible for field execution.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: Yes/No- submitting change request form

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No – submitting change request form

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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