

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	EIDPo6/11-018
Project Title	Flying the flagship: delivering the axolotl action plan at Xochimilco, Mexico
Country(ies)	Mexico, UK
UK Organisation	Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology
Collaborator(s)	Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco (UAM), Mexico. Centro de Investigaciones Biologicas y Acuicolas de Cuemanco (CIBAC) Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Instituto de Biología Comision Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO - the National Commission for the Knowledge and use of Biodiversity), Mexico.
Report date	30/10/05
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 1
Project website	http://www.kent.ac.uk/anthropology/dice/research/axolotl.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).

The primary timetable elements for the first six months were:

July 2005: Appointment of Darwin Initiative Axolotl Research Group Fellow (UNAM - under the supervision of Dr Zambrano);

July 2005: Initiation of student training (n=2) in axolotl population assessment; spatial distribution and GIS methods; trophic ecology; interactions with alien species; fish eradication methods and/or impact of pollutants (UNAM, UAM-X, PEX with DICE input);

September 2005: 'Workshop 1: training the trainers' (9 days – DICE and Mexican project team);

In terms of the research these have already been met and surpassed, with a considerable amount of in-situ and ex-situ scientific research is now underway. As laid down in the timetable Dr. Zambrano of UNAM has appointed the Darwin Initiative Axolotl Research Group Fellow (Elsa Valiente Riveros – MSc student) who is studying the effects of carp and tilapia distributions on the *Ambystoma mexicanum* population in Xochimilco. Four other researchers have also been awarded stipends; Sandra Evangelina Martinez Renteria - who is studying interactions between the axolotl and exotic species *Cyprinus carpio* and *Oreochromis niloticus* under laboratory controlled conditions; Marín Martínez Alma Itzel - who is looking at the behaviour of *Ambystoma mexicanum* in selecting plants for egg laying under laboratory conditions; Victoria Contreras - researching the distribution of axolotls in the channel system of Xochimilco; and Bustamante Castellanos Eduardo Martín (and others) - who are studying the fish resource *Oreochromis niloticus* in Xochimilco

Some of the research has already been presented at the following national and international meetings: Shallow Lakes Meeting, Belgium July 2005, II Congreso de la Sociedad Mexicana de Limnología at October 2005. The data are being integrated to provide a population analysis based on matrix models to understand the situation of the axolotl in Xochimilco channels and its probabilities of survival and extinction over the next 20 years. A journal manuscript on this subject is expected to be submitted by the end of the year.

