



Darwin Fellowship - Final Report

(Submit within 2 months of Fellowship completion, max 6 pages.)

Darwin Project Ref No.	EIDPS10
Darwin Project Title	Completion of Darwin Initiative Fellowship: Mike Anthony Kiragu Mwangi
Name of Darwin Fellow	Mike Anthony Kiragu Mwangi
UK Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and University of East Anglia (UEA)
Your Organisation(s)	Nature Kenya – the East Africa Natural History Society
Your role within your Organisation	Conservation Programme Officer
Start/end date of Fellowship	1 st September 2005 – 30 th September 2006
Location	University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK plus field locations
Darwin Fellowship funding (£)	£
Type of work (e.g. research, training, other, please specify)	Research and training
Main contact in UK Organisation	Paul Buckley, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Author(s), date	Mike Mwangi, Paul Buckley 30 th November 2006

Background

- **Briefly describe your involvement in the Darwin project before the start of your fellowship.**

I was involved in the project titled *Kenya's Important Bird Areas: improving monitoring, management and conservation action* and working for Nature Kenya the Birdlife Partner in Kenya as a Conservation Programme Officer. Main roles in the project were:

- Provide supervision and technical support, as requested by the Conservation Programme Manager, to other conservation programme staff and volunteers involved in the project

- Assist to develop, source funds for and co-ordinate fieldwork for surveys at little-known IBAs-
 - Help to develop and implement the monitoring programme for IBAs in Kenya-
 - Assist, through technical support and co-ordination, with work to broaden the taxonomic scope of Nature Kenya's priority-setting. Help to develop and deliver site-focused conservation education programmes-
 - Help to organise, and provide technical input to, short training courses for volunteers, site-support groups and Government-representatives.
 - Support the operations of Nature Kenya's Policy and Legislation Working Group, and help to develop Nature Kenya's position and relevant policy issues, especially in accordance with articles of the CBD
 - Assist to establish, maintain, enhance and involve an active network of Nature Kenya members, conservation groups, Government and non-Government institutions including District Development Committees and local authorities) at around IBAs-
 - Assist in producing material for the media to publicise Nature Kenya's Conservation Programmes;- represent Nature Kenya when required at national and international meetings and conservation forums, and advocate Nature Kenya's conservation concerns
 - Support the Executive Director and Conservation Programme Manager to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of Nature Kenya's projects and programmes, and ensure donor requirements for reporting and accounting are met.
- **Describe aim and objectives of the Fellowship, and programme of work**
 The aim of the Fellowship was to improve my ability to implement conservation programmes of Nature Kenya the BirdLife partner in Kenya and have greater capacity to work within the BirdLife International partnership
 The following objectives were envisioned:
 - improving the links between science and application, especially in relation to the sound science basis of management plans and ensuring their more effective integration
 - improving information management, making it more accessible and understandable
 - improving the ability to analyse data and turn into usable information
- **Briefly describe the roles of the UK and Fellow's institutions**
 - The RSPB – UK BirdLife International partner has continued to provide logistical support and mentoring throughout the Fellow's time in the UK. The RSPB jointly supervised and co-funding the Fellow's research project providing the dissertation for the M.Sc.
 - The University of East Anglia, Norwich hosted the M.Sc. and associated tutorials, mentoring and research supervision. The Fellow has stayed in close contact with Nature Kenya over the period of the Fellowship and provided each other with useful information and logistical assistance.
 - BirdLife International has provided a basis for the Fellow to further enhance his experiences in conservation activities through an internship programme hosted at the Secretariat in the Science Policy and Information department in Cambridge after the time spent at UEA for the M.Sc. programme

Achievements

- **Summarise the work undertaken during your fellowship. What were the main activities undertaken. Highlight any work undertaken but not originally planned and explain why this happened. Highlight any problems encountered and how they were overcome.**
 - 14th September 2005 to 30th September 2006 based at University of East Anglia, Norwich participated in the taught courses on the Masters of Applied Ecology and Conservation. The M.Sc. course required students to take up degree course that totalled 180 credits with 100 credits from taught courses while the remaining 80 credits from a research project.
 - The eight taught courses are delivered by the Schools of Biological Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Development Studies.
 - 14th to 22nd Sept 2005, the Fellow participated in an ecological field course to Ireland organised by UEA School of Biological Sciences to impart a European conservation perspective to the M.Sc. course participants
 - 28th to 30th of March 2006, attended the Seventh Students Conference on Conservation Science in Cambridge University.
 - In March 2006 developed a proposal to study the a rare and declining woodland bird species - the Eurasian Golden Oriole in the Fenland basin of East Anglia with support from the Reserves and Ecology and Conservation Departments of the RSPB.
 - April 2006 to June 2006, conducted field work for the project, data was analysed and dissertation submitted to the UEA as part of the M.Sc. degree course. The outcome and recommendations will be used for conservation strategies by the RSPB for conservation of the rare and declining Eurasian Golden Oriole

Unexpected but beneficial outcomes

- 25th Nov 2005, Paul Buckley and the Fellow together met the Darwin Initiative staff to formally introductions and updates. Subsequently attended the Darwin annual workshop on the 22nd of Feb. 2006 and another Darwin Initiative organised workshop on Climate Change and Biodiversity on the 24th Oct 2006.
 - May 2006 nominated to be a Virtual International Student's Ambassador for Kenya, helping the International Office at UEA to offer guidance and advice to applicants from Kenya for the 2006/2007 academic year
 - 18th Sept 2006 to 31st Jan 2007 (outside the period of the Fellowship), attending an internship programme at the BirdLife International Secretariat in Cambridge, working with the Head of Policy and the BP Conservation Programme in the Science Policy and Information Department.
- **What have been the main achievements of your fellowship? Key documents should be annexed to this report.**
 - Successful completion and passing the taught courses on the M.Sc. Applied Ecology and Conservation programme
 - Development of a proposal for the research project leading to the M.Sc. project, successfully conducting the fieldwork and writing up of the dissertation to fulfil requirements of the course (M.Sc. thesis attached)
 - Establishing new contact with a variety of conservation professionals in the UK
 - Having greater understanding of the link that conservation biology offers to scientific research and conservation action

- Contributing to the practical body of science by submitting two case studies to an internet database of conservation evidence website (www.conservationevidence.com)
Case 243 (<http://www.conservationevidence.com/ViewEntry.asp?ID=243>) and Case 244 (<http://www.conservationevidence.com/ViewEntry.asp?ID=244>)
- Contributing a short brief to a peer reviewed journal *Oryx* Volume 40 (1): 2006, *Conservation opportunities and problems from the tsunami*
- Submitted a short note on Fellowship experiences to the 9th Annual Darwin Report 2006

Outcomes, lessons and Impact

- **Do you feel that the work undertaken during your fellowship has improved skills that are relevant and important for your work in your organisation? How are you planning to apply those skills in future work?**

Outcomes

- Generally, the M.Sc. Applied Ecology and Conservation had emphasis on developing sound research and scientific skills which have greatly enhanced the Fellow's understanding of conservation biology and will be very useful in designing scientific projects, fieldwork and data collection, data analysis and communication of results for example in the monitoring of biodiversity in the Kenya's Important Bird Areas

Specifically the Fellow has;

- greater capacity to design and implement scientific research projects
- Greater capacity to deal with detailed data analysis and present results on clear and precise manner
- Increased network of contacts with conservation biologists
- Increased understanding of British conservation issues
- Increased capacity of working at an international level
- Increased capacity and understanding of climate change issues and their interaction with biodiversity conservation

Lessons

- It is very important to go through the rigour of scientific training to appreciate the value of science to inform conservation activities and decision making processes leading to improved natural resources management

Impact

- Taking the Fellowship in the UK has had greater impact on understanding global conservation issues due to the interaction with international community at UEA, the RSPB, BirdLife International, conferences, talks organised by Cambridge Conservation Forum and workshops which will continue to benefit the Fellows career in the future

- **Has the fellowship helped to improve your capacity to solve practical problems related to the sustainable use and/or conservation of biodiversity in your country?**
 - The course was formulated on the principles of applied ecology which is relevant to conservation action leading to increased capacity of natural resource managers to implement sustainable use of biological resources

- The experience gained at UEA, RSPB and BirdLife International will help especially in developing some skills that are considered to be currently limiting in Nature Kenya's work particularly in:
 - Improving the links between science and application, especially in relation to the sound science basis of management plans and ensuring their more effective integration into decision making and action programmes
 - Improving the management of information and analysis of data so as to turn into usable formats
 - Inputting to the sound ecological management of IBAs including Nature Kenya's first ever nature reserve on the Kinangop Grasslands
 - Making better judgements on the costs and benefits of different conservation approaches and evaluating the success of past projects carried out by Nature Kenya and other agencies

- **Have you had the opportunity to make contacts with other UK biodiversity institutions, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs or the private sector during your fellowship? Will these contacts be useful for your future work, and how are you planning to maintain them?**

Contact with

- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- BirdLife International secretariat,
- Flora and Fauna International,
- Zoology Department of Cambridge University
- UNEP-WCMC
- IUCN – Fresh water biodiversity programme in Cambridge
- Cambridge Conservation Forum
- All this contacts will be very useful in future development of conservation strategies and projects

- **Any other issue emerging from your experience as Darwin Fellow that you would like to raise, or suggestions for improvements to the Darwin Initiative Fellowship scheme.**
 - RSPB, UEA and the Fellow himself all believe that this Fellowship has been of huge benefit to Mike Mwangi and in the future to Kenyan conservation. We are very grateful to Darwin for agreeing to fund this programme of activities built around the core base of a Masters degree. We are convinced that this is a good basis for such a programme and are very pleased that Darwin has now broadened the criteria for fellows to make this more commonplace.
 - We suggest the formation of a follow-up support programme for Darwin Fellows by establishing an alumni which would go into extending the legacy of the Darwin Initiative
 - It is worth noting the Fellow has planned a return to Nature Kenya in February 2007. This largely depends on the availability of resources from proposals waiting funding from various donors to facilitate integration into the conservation programme. In

view of this uncertainty, the Fellow is planning to apply for an extension of leave to remain in the UK through a Home Office graduate scheme called, '*The Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme*'. This will allow continued interaction with the BirdLife International Science Policy and Information department and the BirdLife partnership increasing the Fellows scientific skills while awaiting the opportunity to return to Nature Kenya within the period.

- Opening a bank account in the United Kingdom took longer than expected and could have been a major issue were it not for the intervention of the RSPB staff that organised for advance cash to cover living expenses in the first four weeks. Fellows would benefit from knowing the banking procedures to allow for forward planning and avoid inconveniences.