

Darwin Fellowship - Final Report

(Please check guidance for submission deadlines, max 6 pages.)

Darwin Project Ref No.	EIDPS 13
Darwin Project Title	Web-Catalogue of the Beetles of Mauritius
Name of Darwin Fellow	Saoud Motala
UK Organisation	The Natural History Museum
Your Organisation	Mauritian Wildlife Foundation
Your role in your Organisation	no longer with this organization
Start/end date of Fellowship	1st October 2006 to 30th September 2007
Location	The Natural History Museum, London
Darwin Fellowship funding (£)	£18,893
Type of work (e.g. research, training, other, please specify)	research
Main contact in UK Organisation	Dr Frank Krell, no longer with the UK organization
Author(s), date	Dr Frank Krell, 11.03.2008

1. Background

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

Saoud Motala was local counterpart and MSc student in the Darwin project 162/12/005 'Rediscovering the neglected insects of Mauritius'.

- Describe aim and objectives of the Fellowship, and programme of work.

Developing a complete web-catalogue of the beetle fauna of Mauritius, presenting a web-page for each species with a photograph, distribution information and major references.

- Briefly describe the roles of the UK and Fellow's institutions.

The Natural History Museum London possesses the beetle collection of Jean Vinson, former director of the Mauritius Institute. This is de facto the national insect collection of Mauritius, unmatched in its completeness. NHM provided access to this collection with the NHM Photo Unit providing the photographs.

- If you have undertaken a formal course of training, please provide a brief explanation of the course and a link to the course website if available.

No training course undertaken.

2. 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.

All Mauritius beetle species present in the collection of the Natural History Museum were prepared for the NHM Photo Unit. Almost all species web-pages have been prepared. The majority of species has been photographed. Workload of the NHM Photo Unit was mitigated by Saoud's willingness to continue the project after the official end of the project. A major problem was Frank Krell's acceptance of a job offer in Colorado. Despite continuing email contact, this relocation has delayed the project significantly.

- What have been the main achievements of your fellowship? Key documents should be annexed to this report.

See above. It is still an ongoing project. About 1000 (out of 1050) species web pages are ready on publisher, but not yet posted online. 400 (out of 680) photographs were done. The remaining specimens are waiting to be processed by the NHM Photo Unit with NHM Collection Management (H. Mendel, M. Barclay) having taken over the responsibility for this material. If Saoud is, for whatever reason, deciding to not complete the project, NHM Collection Management will take over the final part of posting the catalogue online.

3. 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?

Saoud is no longer working for the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation. His fellowship has improved his personal skills and knowledge about the work with natural history collections, web design and taxonomy of beetles. It helped his personal development.

- What arrangements have been made for your future involvement, what more could be done, what discussions have taken place with your original employer to ensure that your new skills are utilised?

Saoud has decided to no longer work in research or conservation.

- 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?

Actually, it has, but Saoud is no longer employed in his former capacity.

- 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?

I am not aware that Saoud has made such contacts. Because of the tightness of his financial situation as a fellow, he has reduced travel costs in London to a minimum and did certainly not visit other institutions.

- 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.

As far as I am aware, the amount of the stipend appeared to have shown Saoud that scientific research doesn't pay sufficiently which is certainly one of the reasons that he decided to change his career. Particularly in London, a higher stipend might increase motivation and stamina of young researchers.