

# DARWIN NEWS

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Newsletter of the UK Darwin Initiative



Promoting biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of resources • <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk>

This is a bumper issue of the Darwin Initiative's newsletter due to a fantastic response to a request for articles on 'Training and Capacity Building'. This is obviously a subject with which many Darwin funded projects have had great success. We feature articles from projects that are able to demonstrate the long-term legacy as a result of Darwin Initiative funding. We also feature relative newcomers to the Darwin Initiative and their hopes for the future with regards to training and capacity building.

In addition to a new cohort of Darwin Initiative Fellows, the Darwin Initiative has also welcomed new faces to the Darwin Advisory Committee (DAC). Following applications from highly talented biodiversity specialists we can now announce the appointment of 5 new Darwin Advisory Committee members, two of whom are featured in this newsletter. The new members are Alistair Gammell (formerly of RSPB), Dr. Brendan Godley (Exeter University), Joanna Elliott (African Wildlife Foundation), Prof. Mary Gibby (RBGE) and Dr. Monique Simmonds (RBG Kew). We hope to feature the remaining new DAC members in future editions of the newsletter.

This quarter saw the close of Stage 1 applications for Main Projects. We received over 180 applications with a record 24 for work in the UK Overseas Territories. The DAC faced the difficult job of reducing this number for Stage 2 and all applicants should have received feedback letters by now. The deadline for applications to Stage 2 is 30th November which is also the closing date for all Post-Project applications. Details of the Scoping, Challenge fund and Fellowship application dates will be announced later in the year.

This quarter we are also pleased to announce the next Darwin Initiative Regional Workshop which is to be hosted in Brazil this year. Full details of funding support for delegates is available on the website (<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/>). Whilst financial support is restricted, other Darwin Initiative project staff are more than welcome.

The deadline for articles for the next newsletter is the 20th December. The theme of articles of the next newsletter is 'Communicating Biodiversity'.



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Darwin News Editors – Ruth Palmer & Lesley Brown

E-mail – [darwin-newsletter@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:darwin-newsletter@ltsi.co.uk)

Full contact details for the Darwin Secretariat and the Darwin Initiative Programme are available on the Darwin website (<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk>)

Bushmeat studies abound from sub-Saharan Africa but there have been remarkably few from Madagascar. However evidence from the initial studies which Madagasikara Voakajy have carried out suggest that hunting may pose a threat to some threatened species and that wild meat contributes significantly to rural livelihoods where alternative animal protein sources are limited. The new Darwin Initiative project combines the experience of Madagasikara Voakajy staff with the expertise of British scientists from Bangor University to quantify the pressure on threatened species while investigating opportunities

for sustainably management of game species. With Julie leading by example, it will combine science, community involvement and student training to help the Malagasy government address this important issue which is currently moving up the political agenda. *“This project gives me the opportunity to put into practice the skills I have learnt. At the end of this project, I hope the students, staff and community members I’ll be working with, will be leading on new projects for the conservation of Malagasy biodiversity while sustainably using it”.*

## Assessing the Impact of Exotic Salmonids on Chilean waters

Project Ref: 15-020

Dr Carlos Garcia de Leaniz (University of Wales)

Photo: Patricia Beristain



Students attended our workshops in some numbers and received updated information from national and international expert on the threats posed by exotic fish species, and the use of various tools for studying the origin and impacts of exotic fish escapes. Practical ‘hands-on’ sessions were scheduled at the end of our last two workshops. Here students were taught to use software for monitoring and assigning fish escapes, and learned through dissection and scale reading how to identify recent escapees from naturalized fish.

In addition to the workshops, extensive field training has been provided to 13 students and volunteers, both from Chile and overseas, resulting in 10 theses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Through our project, students have been able to appreciate the beautiful landscapes of southern Chile, but also to study – and learn to mitigate – the process of biological invasions in situ.

Photo: Daniel Isla



Three international workshops have been organized within the framework of the Darwin Initiative “Reducing the Impact of Exotic Aquaculture on Chilean Aquatic Biodiversity” ([www.biodiversity.cl](http://www.biodiversity.cl)), and these have been popular with students and stakeholders, fulfilling important training and outreach components. We met all major stakeholders at the beginning of the project in 2007(15-020), when a proud Chilean salmon industry (based on exotic species) was still operating under the paradigm of unlimited growth, solely regulated by market forces. We saw them again at the end of 2009 when the industry had been decimated by the outbreak of the deadly ISA virus, several massive escapes of invasive salmonids had occurred, and a Code of Best Practices was badly needed.