

**Project number:** 10

**Project applicant:** Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

**Project Name:** Participatory ecological monitoring competitions as direct incentives for threatened species conservation in Madagascar

**Funds provisionally allocated:** €19,908

### **Summary**

Benefits from conserving biodiversity are often perceived at the international or national level, but it is the local people, often the rural poor struggling to assure their livelihoods, that usually sustain the highest opportunity costs. There may be some existing local benefits from conservation, such as ecological services like watershed protection, or employment or revenue sharing from eco-tourism. However, not all sites and not all members of society can benefit from these, and sites with exceptional levels of local endemism may succumb to logging and deforestation pressures because of insufficient local incentives for conservation. It is perfectly understandable that a villager sees a lemur as just another source of protein to supplement their diet unless we can reinforce the perceived value of having lemurs or other threatened species near the village.

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust Madagascar Programme has pioneered an innovative approach to provide direct incentives to local communities for conservation of endangered species through participatory ecological monitoring competitions. These schemes have been implemented in Alaotra from 2001 and in Menabe from 2004. They have proved extremely popular at the local level and are showing very promising results as an effective means to encourage strong participation and interest of local communities leading to enhanced conservation of endangered species and their habitats.

Participatory ecological monitoring competitions have been initiated by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust at three sites in Madagascar: Menabe, Alaotra and Baly Bay. Expansion to Nosivolo and Manombo is planned. All five sites are of key importance for conservation of threatened species (see Appendix for details). EAZA funding will be used for participatory monitoring competitions at one or more of these sites depending on specific needs once funding is confirmed in 2007. The following activities are undertaken at each site:

- Develop conservation targets with local communities, specifying the conservation area and monitoring criteria (presence of endangered species, cleared or burned areas, cut stumps, percentage of villagers member of community management association etc);
- Train ecological monitoring teams from villages;
- Undertake monitoring along transects;
- Publicise results and prize amounts in participating villages and regionally;
- Distribute prizes in the form of materials for development project chosen by villagers.

This project aims to contribute to a more equitable distribution of costs and benefits of biodiversity conservation by channelling some of the "willingness to pay for the existence value of biodiversity" of the more developed world "the biodiversity consumers" back the local communities in biodiversity-rich but less developed countries "the biodiversity producers". Through this scheme, the EAZA institutions will be able to connect their visiting public directly to the local communities living next to and conserving endangered species. They will effectively be sponsoring local people to protect village reserves.