



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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## Britain funds eco project

THE British Government is funding an important three-year project to help preserve Papua New Guinea's rich biodiversity and unique environment.

Britain's Darwin Initiative for the Survival of the Species is funding the project.

British Deputy High Commissioner Christopher Thompson said he was delighted that the British Government was able to offer such a serious investment into the preservation of PNG's forests, plants and insect life.

"PNG is a country that is exceptionally rich in biodiversity but does not have the adequate resources for its conservation. This project will collect data on previous-

ly unexplored areas of PNG and substantially expand the data available on plant and insect life in PNG. The project also aims to educate local village landowners on their options for future forest use," he said.

Local village communities own 97 per cent of PNG rainforests and therefore local village landowners are crucial to forest conservation versus logging decisions. The project aims to create links between the researchers and local communities and educate them on their options for future forests use.

The project, which will run until 2004, will fund a team of 13 parataxonomists, all

from Papua New Guinea including training in UK for six of the team members.

It will also fund biodiversity surveys in six provinces of PNG — Madang, Enga, Gulf, Simbu, Southern Highlands and West Sepik.

The Parataxonomists Training Centre (PTC) in Madang will be the project's logistical base and will be responsible for collaborating with environmental institutions in PNG.

National Agriculture Research Institute in Port Moresby, which houses the best insect collection in PNG, will be the recipient of the insect material collected and the National Forestry Institute, which houses the national

herbarium, will hold the plant material.

PTC parataxonomist William Boen said: "It was a good idea for the Darwin Initiative to fund our biodiversity survey because PNG has large biodiversity but not enough resources for its study."

His colleague Markus Manumber said the Darwin project would promote conserving of unique resources among landowners and the sustainable use of forests.

"PNG parataxonomists will also have the opportunity to broaden their studies overseas so that they will be able to look after our research collections in the future," Mr Manumber said.

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