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Preserving the biodiversity of Papua New Guinea

BIOLS lecturer Alan Stewart will lead a three year project to help conserve the rich biodiversity of Papua New Guinea.



"Papua New Guinea is one of the few remaining relatively pristine environments," says Alan. "This project will train local people in the skills they need to help preserve it."

As elsewhere in the world, the rain forest in Papua New Guinea is under mounting pressure from commercial demand for tropical timber, and there is also a threat of pollution from mining for gold, silver and copper.

Biodiversity, defined as the existence of a wide variety of plant and animal species in their natural environment, is consequently under real threat, and the aim of this project is to help Papua

New Guinea to avoid the kind of serious environmental problems - such as the major slash-and-burn forest fires in Indonesia - that other countries have suffered as they develop economically.

The project has received £163,000 in funding from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) as part of the Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species.

The project will run from June this year until May 2004 and will train locals in the skills necessary to undertake biodiversity surveys. Twice a year, Alan will visit Papua New Guinea to provide several weeks of intensive training and fieldwork. In addition, two trainees will visit Sussex each summer for further training.

During the course of the project, six major surveys will be undertaken in different provinces of Papua New Guinea. The training will cover everything from collection of samples and data analysis to publication and presentation of results at conferences. At the end of the project, the team will be self sustaining and able to take on contract work.

Alan will be collaborating with Vojtech Novotny from the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and Mike Wilson from the [National Museums and Galleries of Wales](#) in Cardiff.

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