



Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2016)

Project Ref No	DPLUS029
Project Title	Securing St Helena's cloud forest trees and associated invertebrates
Country(ies)/Territory(ies)	St Helena island
Lead Organisation	Environmental Management Division, St Helena Government
Partner(s)	Buglife, RBG Kew, RSPB, SHNT
Project Leader	<i>Lourens Malan</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>HYR2 2016</i>
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	
Funder (DFID/Defra)	<i>Darwin Plus</i>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Output 1 All old trees accessed and habitat assessment made including suite of invertebrates present												
1.1 Survey to identify location of remaining isolated trees									completed			
1.2 Assess community composition of each site										Extend to Q4		
1.3 Record quality and abundance of invertebrate habitat niches										ongoing		
Output 2 Germplasm of rare Peaks trees secured												
2.1 Collection, recording and banking of seed												
2.2 Secure clonal material for propagation										Ongoing till all ramets secured		
Output 3 Secured genetic material grown on and planted in 'seed-orchards'												
3.1.1 Propagation facility set up											complete	
3.1.2 Expand propagation facilities											as needed	
3.2.1 Clonal material propagated										Difficult to root trees need repeat tries		
3.2.2 Make duplicate sets										Aim for 5 duplicates		

3.3	Sites prepared for planting														In progress
3.4	Seed-orchards planted up and labelled														Partly possible
3.5	Establishment rates assessed														In nursery only
Output 4	Practical methodology developed to inform NCA management plan activities														
4.1	Field data collated and analysed														
4.2	Produce protocols														
4.3	Present completed protocols to NCA management team														

Quarter where activity takes place as seen on DPLUS029 Ghant end year report 2013-14

Quarter where activity takes place, new and/or in addition to previous Ghant to reflect accepted change requests. To enable better success with output 3 activities have been extended to take account for the growth rates of plants as seen through the first year.

1. Mapping the location and assessing tree health, habitat and invertebrates present at the site of all wild trees of the target species;
2. Collecting and storing genetic material and seeds from wild trees of the target species;
3. Propagating clonal material from the target species in a newly developed propagation facility and establishing these in carefully selected seed orchards; and
4. Developing a practical methodology for management of the target species, informed by data collected during the project, that can be incorporated into the NCA management plan

The table above has been copied from the last annual report for ease of reference.

1.1 Completed. Locations of all isolated trees have been identified.

1.2 99 site assessments completed out of an estimated 110.

Habitat specific data recorded: different plant species abundance using the DAFOR scale; presence/absence of Functional Ecological Surfaces; habitat structure & Early Successional Surfaces using the AISLIN scale; succession of cohorts; structure; moss & litter cover; aggregation of trees within site; and other site specific spatial data. Tree specific data recorded

1.3 Detailed invertebrate assessments are being undertaken in selected representative sites to verify assumed quality and abundance of invertebrate habitat niches as documented under 1.2

2.1 Seed has been collected from all remaining false gumwoods and from 24 out of the 30 remaining he cabbage sites. Dogwood and whitewood are added to the seedbank as and when collecting opportunities arise. 80 genetically diverse seedlings have been raised from whitewood seed collected from the rooted cuttings ex-situ in the nursery

2.2 Cuttings are secured and in the process of rooting. Clones from 23 whitewood sites out of a total 33 rooted and duplicates secured post cutting stage

3.1.1 Propagation facility (Peaks Nursery) is running smoothly with the project's propagation methods being adopted by the recurrent staff at the Peaks Nursery incorporated into general practices

3.1.2 Upgrades to the nursery benches are underway and all construction materials needed are secured and or in transit, including a water tank, further increasing capacity and enabling increase in production outputs. This gives a major boost and long lasting legacy, supporting future safeguarding of the cloud forest.

3.2.1 Whitewood and dogwood vegetative propagation is a great success. Dogwoods take much longer than whitewood to establish. Despite a slow start on the dogwood trees, cuttings are now pushing roots through the bottom of the 'root trainer' pots

- 3.2.2 Multiple sets are on target. The clones, of which only one cutting rooted successfully have been potted into 10 litre plastic bags to accelerate growth and to make additional cutting material available. This will reduce the need for return visits to fragile and sensitive habitat at remote sites.
- 3.3 5 sites have been identified. The primary site at (1) **peaks nursery** is the priority and should hold a full set of clones by the end of the project. Duplicates will be distributed to the secondary sites: (2) **peaks secondary1** near mount Actaeon; (3) **peaks secondary2** near Cuckholds point; (4) George Benjamins' arboretum under management of Terrestrial Conservation Species Team; (5) Mnt. Pleasant the midway point between the peaks and high peak and logical first step for future corridor creation.
- 3.4 Plants have been planted out at sites 1, 4 & 5 (see 3.3 above). Additional duplicates have been distributed at Mnt Vessey and High Peak
- 3.5 Nursery records are updated regularly to assess growth and establishment rates. Results will be written up nearer the end of the project
- 4.1 90% complete
- 4.2 Ongoing, and being formulated
- 4.3** The project team will be directly involved with the practical management plan for the Peaks and the protocols will be included as examples of best practice

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

We have had major delays (explained in previous reports) in engaging a competent field entomologist and as a result the consultation budget has been carried over into the final year. Unfortunately our overseas expert has been unable to commit a date due to personal health reasons.

We have devised an interim solution which will give us a chance to get entomological assistance from David Pryce who is working on island under the DPLUS0040. In return for David's assistance on this we make it possible for him to access unexplored sites and he retains specimens to further the aim of establishing a complete reference collection under DPLUS0040 in the St Helena Museum.

Work has been started in early October and it is too early to accurately report on the likely spending of the Consultation budget. Our best estimate is that we would have a minor underspend.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: **Yes**, we eluded to it in previous change requests and reports

Formal change request submitted: N/A

Received confirmation of change acceptance N/A

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

No Estimated underspend: N/A

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**