



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2020)**

Project reference	25-007
Project title	Protecting Yap's Biodiversity and Livelihoods through Invasive Alien Species Removal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Yap State, Federated States of Micronesia
Lead organisation	Island Conservation
Partner(s)	Ulithi Falalop Community Action Program (UFCAP) One People One Reef (OPOR)
Project leader	Tommy Hall
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	April 2020 - September 2020 (HYR3)
Project website/blog/social media	www.islandconservation.org

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

When the COVID-19 became a global pandemic in March 2020, the partnership decided to delay project work requiring travel. Shortly after the decision, all non-essential travel to Yap State, F.S.M was closed, and travel from Yap to Ulithi Atoll was closed to anyone outside of the community. Before the delay, the project was well into preparations for the implementation of the eradication of rats and monitor lizards, shifting away from field trials and baseline biological monitoring. Once we decided to delay, our focus shifted to maintaining the project's momentum and identifying achievable objectives while planning for a 2021 implementation of the eradication projects.

Communication amongst the partnership has remained good despite the delay in fieldwork. Several community leaders, including our primary point of contact from UFCAP, have remained on either Guam or Yap during the pandemic and have reliable access to the internet. Community engagement has continued with members outside of the Atoll. In July, the Council of Ten held summit meetings on Zoom, and our team had the opportunity to update the leadership with contingency planning information. The Council of Ten is excited to see a successful outcome once the project resumes. Additional planning has begun for the next phase of a work program focused on eradication, resource management, and traditional gardening across the Atoll.

The field team completed several activities at the project site since March. Over the past six months completed five trips out to Loosiep Island, the primary project site. Each trip had a specific set of objectives. Activities included: maintenance and repair to the field camp structure, maintenance to water catchment and gutters, cleaned and checked all field equipment and tools, re-cut and marked the island-wide baiting grid, collected and serviced cameras on island-wide trail camera network, collected memory cards for review, completed turtle nesting surveys, completed seabird surveys, and completed monitor lizard transect counts to build an index of abundance. The Island Conservation field manager and eradication experts re-evaluated project objectives and continued to refine strategies, primarily those associated with the monitor lizard removal.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

There have not been any notable problems nor unexpected developments outside of those resulting from COVID-19.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

As stated in question one above, COVID-19 forced the delay of the project. The partnership determined that a successful eradication outcome was an absolute priority. In the absence of UFCAP's project coordinator (who is temporarily on Guam) and IC's eradication experts, there was a unanimous agreement that the project must be delayed. However, maintaining momentum through positive communications was a priority. The primary impact of a one-year delay is to the budget. The project delay for 2020 was communicated to LTS International, and a one-year extension was granted. However, there were lost expenses incurred as part of the planned 2020 implementation. These included shipping expenses, sea charters, rodent bait, and fuel, all of which are unrecoverable. Further, there are expenses associated with continuing project activities in 2020. We are now discussing the potential to extend the delay into 2021. Travel to Yap remains limited, and the pandemic is becoming more severe as the northern hemisphere heads into the winter months. We may need to delay the project again if COVID-19 isn't resolved by early 2022.

The pandemic has caused significant disruption to the supply chain to Ulithi. As a result, the community has increased interest in increasing independence from imported foods. Invasive species eradication and natural resource management lead to increased agricultural productivity and increased and more sustainable national resource productivity. This situation highlights the need for Ulithi leadership to increase the capacity to implement these projects from a local standpoint. However, it is understood that capacity building will require the successful completion of several projects with expert oversight, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the projects.

UFCAP is exploring options for improving communication on Ulithi. They are evaluating satellite internet connections to improve communications.

2c. 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

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

We would like to understand the process for evaluating and requesting another project delay in 2020 due to the COVID19 pandemic. We want to learn what the implications of another delay should we need to request one.

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**