

## Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

*Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.*

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	27-003
<b>Project title</b>	Creating a sustainable landscape for the Tau-Buid and the Tamaraw
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Philippines
<b>Lead partner</b>	Re:wild
<b>Partner(s)</b>	D'Aboville Foundation and Demo Farm Inc.
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Mike Appleton</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	20/10/2022 HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.rewild.org/wild-about/mounts-iglit-baco-natural-park">https://www.rewild.org/wild-about/mounts-iglit-baco-natural-park</a>  <a href="https://www.dabovillefoundation.org/mangyan-tamaraw-driven-landscape-pr">https://www.dabovillefoundation.org/mangyan-tamaraw-driven-landscape-pr</a>

**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).**

Overall progress from April to September has been very good. The positive response to the last annual report was greatly appreciated by the project team and boosted morale after a difficult year. The report did not require any specific reporting requirements for this half year report.

Progress on specific outputs and activities relevant to the reporting period is detailed below.

**Output 1 A sound understanding of the structure, culture and needs of Tau-Buid communities in and around the Tamaraw habitat and of the options and needs for sustainable land use and landscape rehabilitation.**

**1.1 Commission a study of Tau-Buid agriculture and resource use and food security from a national specialist.**

**1.2 Conduct socio economic and ethnographic studies of one Tau-Buid village in order to understand how new practices in agriculture and land use can best be assimilated.**

Most of these studies are now complete, although the process of documenting the culture and traditions of the Tau – Buid is a continuous process. Project personnel continue to participate in the online/hybrid training sessions provided by external experts and to assemble further knowledge in the field. We are now looking at how to publish some of this information, although this would require the explicit consent of the Tau-Buid.

**1.3 Conduct exchanges, training events and study visits from the Tau-Buid to other Indigenous initiatives in the Philippines**

Training events on permaculture have taken place for project staff and partners. We have drawn up ToR for a study visit and are now in negotiation with two possible exchange partners. We have also secured \$5,000 of co-financing to enable more community members to take part.

#### **1.4 Establish an area inside MIBNP for trials and demonstrations of agriculture and agroforestry techniques.**

The trial areas are now well established and being monitored monthly. Tree survival has been good in the area set aside for assisted natural regeneration (through establishment of planning mounds). We are seeing exceptional recovery through natural regeneration of the area that has been set aside or unassisted regeneration and protected from burning. The garden and the 'food forest' around station two are doing well are now supplying fresh food for our team and for rangers, reducing the need to transport food and packaging into the protected area.

Most importantly local Tau Buid residents are taking an increasing interest in the work that is being done, visiting frequently and asking questions. They also supply the project with materials, vegetable plants and tree seedlings in return for rice and basic necessities. We have set up and agreed a set of 'rules' for such barter exchanges and continue to emphasise that we are not a trading post.

#### **Output 2 At least two Tau-Buid communities (approximately 200 men, women and children) are engaged in implementing agreed plans of activities to improve sustainability of resource and land use and rehabilitate damaged landscapes in and around Tamaraw habitat.**

**2.1 Hold participatory resource management planning events with the Tau-Buid**

**2.2 Support participatory identification of location and boundaries of Community Conservation Plan (CCP) areas inside MIBNP**

**2.3 Support participatory development of management and action plans for CCP areas.**

Based on the results of the survey work and on several discussions with Tau Buid leaders we have now developed a concept and some options for establishing the CCP in the protected area. The challenge is that the plan must be meaningful to a) the Tau Buid, whose language is not written and who have their own conceptualisation of planning and b) the responsible authorities who expect a rational, structured plan of official endorsement and implementation.

We have developed a draft concept plan which to the extent possible makes use of traditional Tau-Buid systems of resource management and allocation. It will take the form of an annotated map, rather than a structured plan. The next step is to discuss this with the Tau-Buid leaders and the Protected Area Superintendent. Once agreed we would then produce an 'official' version in the standard plan format.

#### **2.4 Work with at least one selected village to enable and encourage uptake agricultural extension advice**

The sensitivities of the Tau-Buid to outsiders visiting their settlements has required a revised approach to this. By establishing the demonstration area at Station 2, we are encouraging community members to come and see for themselves at their own pace and on their own terms. This is working: increasing numbers of villagers are visiting, asking questions and discussing our work and providing materials to support it. Groups who had previously shunned us are now more approachable. The intention is that they will copy the practices that make sense to them, and ideally will request our assistance at a later date.

#### **2.5 Identify and mobilise potential sources of additional extension support for implementing CCPs.**

We are starting to look at options for further funding to support this, once the CCP is approved.

#### **2.6 Develop and implement strategies and joint actions for fire management, erosion control and invasive species control.**

This scheduled activity will take place as part of the development of the community conservation plan.

**Output 3 The Tamaraw population is well protected, stable or increasing and occupying an increased protected zone of at least 2,500ha.**

**3.1 Support and development of and implement refined census techniques for Tamaraw**

**3.2 Conduct and analyse annual Tamaraw census.**

We have now completed our assessment and review of the tamaraw census method (mainly conducted as a co-financed element of the project). A draft report will be shared with officials in October. The findings give cause for concern. It appears that the census method used for the last 20 years has been significantly overestimating the numbers of tamaraw and that actual numbers may be nearer to 200 than 400. These findings do not invalidate previous survey efforts; they certainly show that they cannot be considered as absolute counts, but are still very important as comparative counts and indicators of trends in the population. We are now planning a set of consultations with the relevant authorities on how to explain and respond to this and how to adjust future census methods. This information is very concerning, but will not fundamentally change any of the objectives and outputs of this project. It does however add to the importance and urgency of achieving those objectives, and of revising strategies for long term population management of Tamaraw.

**3.3 Agree an enlarged no hunting area with the Tau-Buid (linked to 2.2)**

Discussions on the enlarged no hunting area is being done alongside the formulation of the Community Conservation plan as discussed in section 2.3 above.

**3.4 Train, equip and support rangers to improve protection and monitor and plan activities using SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) software.**

Patrol activity had reduced in the last year due to the COVID pandemic, equipment problems, and ongoing issues with the status and contracts of rangers. The new Protected Area Superintendent is reviewing the situation and deploying more rangers in the field. In past months the rangers have been provided with adequate insurance protection which has increased morale considerably. We also applied for (and likely secured) co-financing of around \$100,000 to bolster ranger training and operations.

**3.6 Conduct an awareness campaign on the management of MIBNP need for tamaraw conservation. Focal groups - Park edge communities - Local government units and official agencies with an interest in MIBNP.**

We continue to produce a series of videos explaining the work of the project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVKwrt69RMA> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9JKQEIx6es>

We are currently planning our engagement in the tamaraw month programme (October 2022)

**Output 4 A claim for the rights of the Tau-Buid in their Ancestral Domain is prepared and submitted by the end of the project.**

**4.3 Formalise agreement with the Tau-Buid and NCIP for provision of support.**

Very good progress has been made on this, although it does take time to ensure that all the responsible authorities are aligned and able to proceed. This is because: i) some of the boundaries of the proposed ancestral domain are outside the protected area; ii) changes in personnel in the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, complex official procedures and the ongoing impacts of the COVID pandemic.

We have also focused on working with the Tau-Buid so that they are the ones who lead the requests for progress and clarification. This reinforces their ownership of the process and is more effective than sending requests from outside agencies.

As a result, most of the required negotiations have been concluded, the official geodetic engineer who will survey the as yet unverified boundaries of the ancestral domain has been appointed and the process has been pushed to the top of the workflow for the NCIP. We are optimistic that the process can be concluded this project year.

**2. 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.**

1. **COVID.** The effects of the pandemic have had a knock-on impact on some activities, but not so much as to required major changes.
2. **Lower than thought numbers of Tamaraw.** This does not fundamentally change any project activities and may indeed encourage more action on the part of the responsible authorities. However, once we have discussed the implications in detail there may be a need for some changes. Positively, we have (99%) secured further financing both for improved law enforcement and for a feasibility study into more active population management and captive breeding of Tamaraw.
3. **Personnel turnover and reorganisation in national and local authorities.** These continue to be a challenge, but one we are quite accustomed to dealing with. We are now working with our fifth protected area superintendent since we started planning this project. There have also been changes at higher levels, a national election and changes in the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. We have to invest a lot of time in briefing and relationship building with new appointees.
4. **Weakness of the pound.** We are concerned about the impact of the recent major decline in value of the pound and its effect on the project budget. We are reviewing costs and expenditure in order to assess any required adjustments. The impact has been reduced by the weakness of the Peso, but we estimate will have to find savings of around 70,000 Pesos (£1000)

**3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS-LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance N/A

Change request reference if known:

**4a. 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: £

**4b. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.**

**5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

No thanks

Please send your **completed report** by email to [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**