

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: 31st October 2023

Project reference	28-001
Project title	Building wetland resilience in Madagascar; Community-based conservation of Lake Tseny
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Madagascar
Lead partner	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)
Partner(s)	Madagasikara Voakajy (Mavoa)
Project leader	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (DWCT)
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	October 2023, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	n/a

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

WWT and the project partners have made a number of achievements over the past six months. Most notably, following some unavoidable delays due to weather we were able to complete the climate change vulnerability assessment for the lake. This involved several days of community consultations and further discussions with experts, and subsequent analysis. We have also undertaken multiple consultations with the local communities and departments of fisheries and environment to define a restoration plan for the community managed areas, which cover almost all of the lake, seasonally inundated forest and importantly the uplands in the watershed of the lake. The plan is now being implemented, with nurseries due to be established before the end of the calendar year to allow planting out of seedlings in 2024.

A new template for the Ramsar site restoration plan was devised by WWT's catchment planning specialist, and consultations were launched in the five project villages for the elaboration of the Tseny basin restoration. The draft plan has been prepared, and is being used to guide activities; as a first step we have now recruited and trained two local people to act as tree nursery managers, and purchased a number of materials for nursery construction.

We have also developed a threats assessment methodology to better guide lake restoration and management. We have also set up a technical group to begin the elaboration of the management plan for the lake and its watershed.

We also completed editing and reviewing several technical documents (socio-economic and fishers/collectors baseline surveys, a short report from our international mangrove day learning event, plus the biodiversity survey), which we are submitting along with this report.

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.

The only problem we encountered was during a recent trip to the site by the WWT UK ichthyologist, who had planned to work with the local team and VOIs to use our new drone to map the lake in high resolution for the purpose of habitat monitoring and restoration planning. Despite having the required ethics approval from WWT, and the flight permit from the relevant authorities in Madagascar, there was some concern at the site that not all community members had been suitably informed of the nature and purpose of the drone flights. To avoid stoking fear of resource grabbing, spying or worse, the flight was postponed. The project management is pleased that safeguarding precautions are being taken seriously by the field team and are working, as reasonable mitigating actions can be quickly agreed in the field when concerns are raised. So despite the cost in time and effort, an important lesson was learned about the importance of making a thorough plan for activity-specific FPIC, and our mitigation procedures have been modified to reflect this learning.

There have been no other notable problems or unexpected developments during the reporting period.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known: n/a

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: ██████████

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4c. 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.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

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

We have no other issues to raise at this time.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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**