



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign &
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Office



Department
for International
Development



Darwin Plus: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2015)

Project Ref No	DPLUS028
Project Title	Assessing the conservation status of the Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross
Country(ies)	Tristan da Cunha
Lead Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Partner(s)	Tristan Conservation Department
Project Leader	Andy Schofield (RSPB)
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	HYR2
Project website	N/A

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) 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) (max 500 words).

Remaining outputs that were still outstanding from the last annual report were as follows:

1.1 – Aerial photography survey to map AYNA nesting colonies on TDC (and possibly Nightingale and Inaccessible Island if time allows.)

Weather during this year's Aghulas II visit was much better than in previous years. Thankfully this allowed for the whole Island of Tristan da Cunha to be photographed aerially and has therefore meant that we have now met this output.

1.2 – Analyse aerial photographs using established methods to census TDC AYNA population.

Due to excellent weather this year we did manage to get all the aerial photographs that were required. These photographs are now under the first phase of analysis with the second phase of analysis to be carried out by the research assistant in January through to March and this output will be completed before the project is due to end.

1.3 – Ground truth population estimates at predetermined sample areas.

The ground truthing aspect of this output is underway at present and will only take a few more days to complete; this will therefore be successfully completed before the scheduled end date of this project.

1.4 – Population estimate analysis and report produced and published.

This will be completed following the successful analysis of the aerial photographs and ground truthing work. This will be completed by the end date of the project.

2.2 – Review aerial data to see if other sites could be suitable for long term monitoring.

This will now be conducted following on from the aerial surveys in September. Ground-based reconnaissance has been conducted in some areas, and additional areas are now to be considered for 2016 to establish further long term monitoring beyond the end of the Project.

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 (max 300 words).

The one biggest potential issue was the weather dependency factor with regards the aerial photography flights. Thankfully the weather this year was perfect at the exact time the SA Aghulas II was off Tristan's shores and the air crew prioritised the rescheduled flights.

There was not a suitable weather window in the preceding three weeks before the vessels arrival and there has not been a suitable weather window since so we were incredibly fortunate that we managed to get them in this year. This is most certainly a lesson learnt in the planning of projects in such places as South Atlantic territories, especially if a project depends on the weather to be completed to its maximum potential. These should now have no impact on the success of this project.

It is hoped that some of the operating costs that were reallocated in the recent amendment will be used to build a new research hut up on the mountain which will enable easier, safer and more consistent access (especially during inclement weather) to the albatross "constant effort" monitoring colony. This will provide a great Darwin legacy for continued AYNA work on Tristan. Whilst we were unable to use the un-needed audit cost towards the hut, or to enable further legacies for albatross research to be put in place, we believe sufficient underspends elsewhere will still enable this.

If any of the issues mentioned above are not clear please do not hesitate to contact me and I will be happy to discuss at greater depth or clarify anything that is unclear.

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**

Formal change request submitted: **No**

Received confirmation of change acceptance: **No**

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 as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. 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 and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

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

No