



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development



Darwin Plus: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2015)

Project Ref No	DPLUS029
Project Title	Securing St Helena's Cloud Forest Trees and Associated Invertebrates
Country(ies)	UK OT St Helena
Lead Organisation	Environmental Management Division of the St Helena Government
Partner(s)	Buglife, RBG Kew, RSPB, St Helena National Trust
Project Leader	<i>Lourens Malan</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>HYR1</i>
Project website	Not a specific project website but information regarding the project available on <i>https://www.facebook.com/sthenaconservation</i>

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).

The project has recruited a Terrestrial Conservation Officer (TCO), Mike Jervois who is bringing additional skills into terrestrial conservation on the island and have been in post since 20 April.

The Project Officer (PO) and TCO have agreed management changes which will maximise the projects outcomes and long term benefits. Two of the Terrestrial Conservation staff have been assigned to the Peaks Nursery for two days a week and will have direct exposure to the project learning propagation techniques and nursery best practices. Nursery scheduling and species selection have been revised and written into the Peaks management programme.

Nursery facilities are being updated and expanded as the project bulk up nursery stock materials. Two High humidity rooting benches and one root pruning standing out table have been built and further structures will be added as and when project clonal production requires.

The project has introduced new cost effective cultural methods translating to a more efficient nursery.

The project has spent 70 to 80% of its time in the field.

Sixty two Sites have been surveyed and data collected and collated using Microsoft Access for later analysis. Selective habitat manipulation (invasive plant control) has been carried out and cuttings were taken from all the target trees within these sites. Those that were in seed were collected and are being banked in the St Helena endemic seed bank under the care of the Nursery Officer at EMD, Scotland. Access roads have been opened up into remote areas, enabling access to otherwise inaccessible and isolated trees. These access roads will serve as service access for invasive plant management post project.

Germination tests are done for each collection and resultant seedlings used to bulk up numbers required for habitat restoration plantings. Site preparations are under way and preparatory plantings of endemic ferns has been started. This is to pre-prepare a natural litter layer, activating soil fauna activity and create the micro climate required for successful genetic field gene bank creation (seed orchards).

The project has made significant discoveries of endangered flora and fauna and has increased the known extent of many critically endangered plants and invertebrates. Notably increasing the known extent of spiky yellow woodlouse *Pseudolaureola atlantica* from an estimated 90 individuals confined to one locality to at least six additional localities with numbers thousands strong, improving our knowledge of the spiky yellow woodlice niche requirements in the process. This knowledge will feed directly into other Darwin projects notably DPLUS025 Conservation of the spiky yellow woodlouse and black cabbage tree woodland on St Helena and other St Helena National Trust & Buglife run invertebrate projects funded by Darwin.

The PO and Nursery officer attended a Training/Exposure visit to the RBG Kew and Wakehurst Place MSB funded by DPLUS037 Conserving the genetic diversity of St Helena's threatened endemic flora project. This allowed for making known the work we do and gaining scientific interest in our Population Genetics issues which are being addressed through this project. Seed Conservation training was provided and it was good to validate our methods with the MSB expertise together with the EMD Nursery Officer.

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 project has had delays due to difficulties recruiting a suitable stand-in for the Terrestrial Conservation Officer (TCO), allowing his secondment to the project without impacting regular TCO duties. A change request has been accepted and the official start date has been changed to February 2015.

A suitable TCO has been engaged and started work on 20th April 2015 (see above).

The only change to the project plan is its timeline which was agreed (see Annual Report 1) by LTS/Darwin

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: **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 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?

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 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: DPLUSXXX Darwin Half Year Report**