

## Darwin Initiative Main Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2015)

<b>Project Ref No</b>	DPLUS 035 BVI SEABIRD RECOVERY PLANNING PROGRAMME
<b>Country(ies)</b>	BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	JOST VAN DYKES PRESERVATION SOCIETY, ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS, NATIONAL PARKS TRUST OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS, BVI CONSERVATION & FISHERIES DEPARTMENT
<b>Project Leader</b>	<i>DR LEWIS HALSEY</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)</b>	OCTOBER 31, 2015: YEAR 1, REPORT 1.
<b>Project website/Twitter /Blog/Instagram etc</b>	<a href="http://www.caribbeanseabirds.org.uk">www.caribbeanseabirds.org.uk</a>
<b>Funder (DFID/Defra)</b>	<i>Darwin Plus</i>

### 1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).

Overall, the first two project quarters went reasonably well and the project is being well received in the BVI by both government and private interests. The table provides a summary of successfully completed activities against the agreed baseline timetable.

<b>Output 1.1</b> "All Cays surveyed by boat for summer breeding seabirds and validated by land-based counts when possible at least once during the two-year project"	During June, a field team travelled throughout the BVI to conduct initial surveys of seabird breeding sites.
<i>Outputs 1.2 scheduled to take place in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of year one</i>	
<b>Output 1.3</b> "Breeding success of roseate terns on different cays monitored"	For 2015, birds were breeding in extreme locations and monitoring nest success would have threatened the safety of both birds and project field team. Armed with new knowledge from the 2015 field season, project leaders are developing a plan to monitor breeding success in 2016, possibly sourcing and using game cameras (not originally provided for in the budget) with minimal disturbance to birds.
<b>Output 2.1</b> "Breeding individuals tracked using"	One Pathtrack GPS nanologger was attached to a breeding adult on East Seal Dog Island; however, we were unable to retrieve the

Pathtrack nano loggers"	device. Fear of disturbing birds and causing nest abandonment alongside the low probability that we would be able to retrieve the deployed devices as well as health and safety concerns at the site caused us to abandon this activity for Year 1 with plans to reschedule for Year 2. It was discussed at the project steering group meeting (13/10/2015) that if roseates do not breed at a more accessible site in 2016 then we may need to discuss whether alternative species (e.g. bridled terns) would provide useful data that adequately supports the project's main objectives.
<b>Output 2.2</b> "Individuals tracked for long-term movement"	Two 2-gram PTT tags were deployed on breeding roseate tern adults. These tags did collect data on local foraging, however, both devices malfunctioned after just a few weeks. These tags are newly developed and have not previously been tested but provide potential for future tracking work of small seabirds ( <a href="http://arcianconservation.blogspot.co.za/2015/07/roseate-terns-being-tracked-with.html">http://arcianconservation.blogspot.co.za/2015/07/roseate-terns-being-tracked-with.html</a> ). The tag manufacturers have agreed to donate additional tags to be deployed during the next breeding season.
<b>Output 2.3</b> "Banding of breeding adults at selected sites"	The breeding colonies of roseate terns during the 2015 breeding season were not easily accessible or we observed that our presence within the colony caused unacceptable levels of disturbance, thus only three individuals were banded.
<b>Output 3.1</b> "Collation of Previous Seabird Data"	This activity was successfully completed. Previous seabird data have been provided to government agencies.
<b>Output 3.2</b> "Trial Habitat Enhancement"	10 wooden nest boxes for roseate terns were built and placed at a former breeding site and two composite nest boxes for red-billed tropicbirds were placed at two separate breeding sites. Project leaders spent the first two project quarters liaising with other conservation professionals and reviewing literature on successful projects. With regards habitat enhancement features - a 'decoy artist' has been contacted and has now begun work on Roseate tern and tropicbird decoys for the project. A RSPB Recovery Manager visited the BVI during Q1 and after site visits is researching other habitat enhancement methods, such as the clearing of vegetation from rocky outcroppings at one site. A report will be developed.
<b>Output 3.3</b> "Identify threats on each island" (introduced predators, development, disturbance)	The BVI-based field team placed chew blocks at several breeding sites and game cameras at some colonies to monitor for presence of introduced predators. Interviews were conducted with marine park wardens and dive operators about site disturbance at some cays identified as breeding 'hotspots'. Project leaders also developed a feasibility study for the eradication of invasive black rats at one of the priority sites identified (The Seal dog islands). The draft of this paper is currently being peer reviewed by project partners.
<b>Output 3.4</b> "Hold Stakeholder Workshop to prioritise cays for breeding seabirds."	The first stakeholder workshop was held on June 16, 2015 in Road Town, Tortola, facilitated by JVDPS, the University of Roehampton and the RSPB. This meeting focused on Government agencies and personnel from the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, BVI Conservation & Fisheries Department, The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture were in attendance. The main purpose of the meeting was to outline the work being undertaken. It was agreed that more data from the first year of field work was needed to help inform for planning processes for

	prioritising cays. Project leaders will host at least two additional workshops. Additionally, project leaders met with private island owners/personnel and also consulted dive operators, who will all be included in the prioritisation planning process.
<b>Output 3.5</b> Produce seabird recovery plan	Local project partners have begun to collate geographical and biological data on each of the BVI cays that will form the basis of this plan. Meetings between local project partners and Government are planned over the 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the year to discuss potential actions
<b>Output 4.1</b> Train NPT, CFD and other partner staff in seabird survey and monitoring methods	The June 16 <sup>th</sup> workshop in BVI introduced monitoring and survey methods for seabirds in the morning session, then during the afternoon two CFD and 3 NPT accompanied JVDPS and University of Roehampton staff to conduct seabird surveys around three of the BVI cays.
<b>Output 4.2</b> Train CFD in the planning and implementation of seabird monitoring programmes	Three CFD staff members attended the morning session on our first stakeholder workshop; two also stayed for the field-component. Local project partners are working with CFD to develop a long-term monitoring strategy.
<b>Output 4.3</b> Establish a project steering group with government in key role to ensure buy in and long term support for the project.	A project steering group has been established. Its first meeting (conference call) was held on the 13 <sup>th</sup> October 2015, with representatives from JVDPS, CFD, RSPB and University of Roehampton present – minutes were circulated to all project partners after the meeting.

**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.**

We realised at the beginning of the project that the UK£-US\$ exchange rate had altered significantly and not in our favour since writing our budget. This resulted in less money being available for transfer to our local partner JVDPS which would have reduced the amount of work they would have been able to conduct. However, through the re-distribution of some budget lines we were able to still complete all field tasks within budget.

A further challenge associated with this project relates to our lack of understanding about the distribution of and variability of breeding site selection for the Virgin Islands' roseate terns (which this project seeks to address). We had initially anticipated banding and GPS tagging in a site that has been occupied for 2 consecutive years; however, the terns did not occupy this site for the 2015 season, thus making banding and GPS tagging difficult to achieve in the first year of this project. In anticipation for the 2016 summer survey season, we have developed a better early monitoring system and will seek information from Marine Park Wardens and other on-water personnel (e.g. dive operators) early in the breeding season so that we can develop a more flexible approach to ensure successful completion of outputs. We will complete these activities in tandem with scheduled fieldwork and we do not assume this will have an effect on the project budget. The only issue that will arise is that long-term tracking data from PTT tags may be insufficient to inform the prioritisation plan to be produced by the end of the project.

**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 (April 2015)
Formal change request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes (April 2015)

**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: £

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

Dr Jenny Bright (RSPB) has decided to step down from advising on this Darwin project. Lyndon John (RSPB) will replace her. Mr John is Caribbean-based with vast experience in conservation monitoring, management and policy in the region and is currently engaged with BVI government and local BVI NGO's on other projects, thus he will be a good asset to the project.

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto: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: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**