



**Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2018)**

Project reference	DPLUS057
Project title	Population recovery of right whales in South Georgia waters
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
Lead organisation	British Antarctic Survey
Partner(s)	University of St Andrews, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, University of Utah, Instituto Aqualie, Projeto Baleia Franca, University of Barcelona
Project leader	<i>Jennifer Jackson</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/south-georgia-right-whale-project/

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).

We suffered a set-back in our project goals in May, as the vessel we were negotiating to support us during the planned Jan/Feb 2019 survey took a contract elsewhere, and we were not able to find any suitable alternatives able to conduct the work during this season. Hence, we submitted a change request to Darwin to delay the work by a year, affording us more time to secure a suitable vessel. During April-September we worked on a new vessel tender document for publication on Contracts Finder. Large items of equipment for the survey have also been purchased and are now securely stored, including the DiFAR sonobuoys for acoustic work.

Work on the southwest Atlantic right whale catch history is progressing well. In July 2018, Emma Carroll and Jen Jackson travelled to the University of Barcelona for a meeting with Project Partner Alex Aguilar and the project post-doc Morgana Vighi, in order to discuss progress on the right whale catch series (estimating the number of catches over time) and any areas of concern arising. We have a Powerpoint summary of their progress available for review by Darwin. Their investigation so far suggests that the level of offshore catch will be able to be estimated using this approach, but there is more uncertainty around the level of shore-based catch, which was much more poorly recorded. Our discussions focussed around possible solutions (i.e. can we fill in gaps using better data from other parts of the range), and how to incorporate the catch uncertainty in the assessment models. To date 667 right whale catches had been identified offshore, and these will be upwardly corrected to reflect boats for which logbooks are not available, and then corrected upwardly for whales struck but lost at sea.

During this period we also planned a second small-scale field season based at King Edward Point during Dec 2018- Feb 2019, in order to test if it is possible to do whale research locally to King Edward Point base, using the existing infrastructure. This work will be on small boats in the Cumberland Bay area and restricted to tagging, biopsy sampling and photo-ID with occasional drone flights to measure body condition if conditions permit. All activities in relation to this field season are on track; the team have been secured and appropriate training undertaken where necessary (i.e. Powerboat training, first aid certification, sea survival certificates), permits (for drone work and to conduct research in these waters) have been

acquired, statement of procedure for the activity, and risk assessments have been completed, and all necessary equipment has been purchased.

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.

Our inability to secure a vessel charter for the planned field season was the most notable problem encountered during this period. The reasons for this included a lack of suitably experienced and available vessels (very few have sub-Antarctic experience and very few are capable of supporting this type of cetacean research). With Darwin approval of a one year extension, we have been able to adapt to this loss of the vessel charger and are in the process of securing the R/V Braveheart for a 2020 field season (contract to be signed December 2018). These changes affected the timetable of the work, and Darwin have agreed to move the final project date to December 2020 consequently.

The costs quoted for the work by the survey vessels were also substantially higher than the costs quoted prior to the start of the project; we also learned some lessons from our first field season about what vessels will / will not work well in the vicinity of whales. The Song of the Whale (21.5m yacht) was well designed for acoustics but did not do well in heavy swell conditions and lacked manoeuvrability, making it difficult to biopsy or tag from the bows. A larger vessel could have afforded better working opportunities (i.e. less weather restricted), and also has the capacity to deploy a small rigid hulled inflatable so that close-up work can be done efficiently, in appropriate weather conditions.

Our post-doctoral researcher on the grant (Dr Emma Carroll) was offered a fully funded Fellowship in New Zealand which would include time for her to carry out the planned Darwin activities. We requested to Darwin to use some of this funding in order to secure a larger sized vessel for the 2020 survey with more capacity to do close up work (i.e. via a rigid hulled inflatable). We still could not find an appropriate boat within the available funding but have found matched funding from elsewhere to support a larger sized charter.

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. 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R24 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate 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 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**