

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 2022

Project reference	DPLUS104
Project title	Conserving St Helena's endemic invertebrates through invasive invertebrate control
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
Lead partner	St Helena National Trust
Partner(s)	St Helena Government (SHG), IUCN Mid Atlantic Island Invertebrate Specialist Group (MAISG) c/o Species Recovery Trust, Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), Buglife
Project leader	<i>Helena Bennett</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media	Weekly update of the project on social media, https://www.facebook.com/SHnationaltrust https://www.instagram.com/sthelenabugteam/ Updates on the St Helena National Trust website. http://www.trust.org.sh/shnt-conservation-programmes/natural-heritage/invertebrates/

1. 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).

From April to September 2022 there have been 4 steering group and ad-hoc meetings held, in which the following has been discussed:

- Project delivery and issues,
- Analysing wasp and ant data from the trials and monitoring survey.
- Assessing impacts on non-target species and agreeing on ant roll-out sites.
- Progressing in citizen science.
- Steering group regular review risk register and indicator tracker for the project

Output 1.5, Control method results for the wasp and ant trials have been written up and distributed to the steering group. From the results / trials it was determined that the wasp life cycle is different to other countries and varies in the different areas on St Helena; the wasps continue to be active during the winter months. Therefore, we would need to continue to monitor the wasp life cycle further to be able to provide recommendations for the best time of the year to deploy the toxin.

Output 2.1, There have been 2 workshops (21st July and 2nd August – 13 people attended in total) held to disseminate the wasp and ant trials results this workshop were open to the public and stakeholders (St Helena Government, Bee association, farmers and landowners), discuss target species, sites in which we will apply the toxin and discussion on the control methodology. During the workshop the feasibility was discussed to conduct the wasp or ant roll out, but due to the low wasp activity it was decided to carry out the ant roll out.



Workshop discussing the mantis ant and wasp trial at the museum

Output 2.2 to 2.3, Project roll-out sites have been mapped, GPS coordinates taken and habitat and environmental risk assessments have been completed at 6 endemic sites (Peak Dale, Barren Ground, Mulberry Gut 7.5, Bottom Woods 9.1A, Pipe path, and Longwood Farm) and have been discussed and approved by the steering group. The control method (using Maxforce toxin) for the ants will be deployed on the endemic sites in November 2022.

Activity 2.4, Roll-out implementation plan written up, discussed and agreed with steering group members and St Helena Government stakeholders via a meeting.

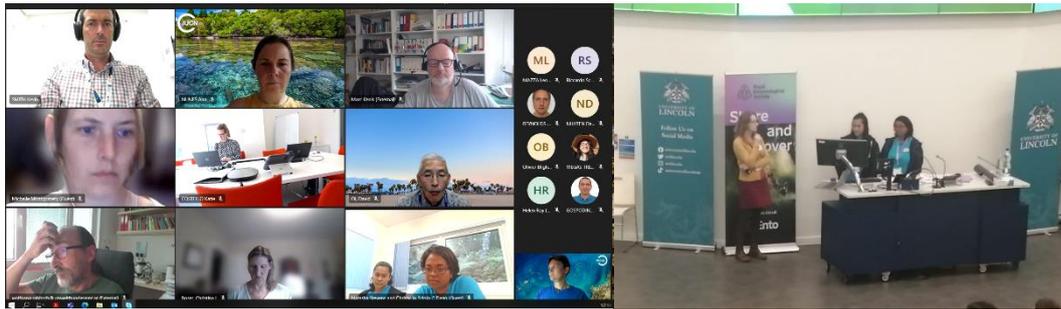
Output 3.2, A workshop took place on 22nd September 2022 to increase capacity of 4 conservation practitioners and land managers on invasive invertebrate control. This low turnout was due to the lifting of all Covid-19 restrictions on island, therefore during this period a large proportion of St Helena population was infected with covid, making a lot of people timid to be inside in larger groups. Overall the information provided at the workshop was well received.

Output 3.4, Final edits of the updated version of 'St Helena Invertebrate Conservation Strategy' is on progress and the strategy will be completed by October/November 2022 in Q3 this will contribute and influence National conservation area (NCA) management plans being produced under the DPLUS154 project.

Activity 3.9 and 3.10, Project Manager disseminated results in the UK Overseas Territories conservation forum (UKOTCF). The Project Manager and the Project Manager Assistant presented the big-headed ant methodology and results to the management of invasive alien ant species workshop. They also present a case studies of the praying mantis, big-headed ant and the common wasp to the Royal Entomological Society at Ento 22.

[https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/ento22?_eep_ =6&_cft_\[0\]=AZWTQgo_MHKiJDysGyCWV1o7_](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/ento22?_eep_ =6&_cft_[0]=AZWTQgo_MHKiJDysGyCWV1o7_)

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Project manager and project manager assistant contributing to the alien ant species workshop

Project manager and project manager assistant presenting mantis, ant and wasp case study at Ento 22

Output 4.4 and 4.5, From the public pop-ups and going into the schools there was some interest from the kids. For this reason, we have set up a bug club for the children and they were included in carrying out the wasp traps in their area. The 3 primary schools, 8 children from the bug club and 3 adults took part in the citizen science (wasp traps and monitoring the mantis behaviour); 10 people informed us where they have seen a mantis and 1 person went out to look for wasps in his area (near to a forest). We have presented and communicated information to the public through pop up stalls, radio, social media and articles in the newspapers.

Activity 4.5, Citizen science scheme have been published via the newspaper and the radio. This can be accessed on the National Trust website (<http://www.trust.org.uk/shnt-conservation-programmes/natural-heritage/invertebrates/citizen-science/>).



Left: School pupil from Pilling Primary School deploying wasp trap. Kids at the bug club looking for the big-headed ant

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.

On 8th August 2022, St Helena Government removed all covid-19 restrictions the effect of which the general public were afraid to be indoors in groups and members of the team had also been off with covid; 5-day quarantine was mandatory. This resulted in low attendance at our workshops and cancelling of our popup stalls.

The land rover also continues to require a lot of maintenance and repairs, which was very expensive, resulting in overspend on the vehicle and maintenance budget line. We will send a change request to reallocate funds from another underspent budget line. Unfortunately, this was an unforeseen circumstance, however we have put into place regular servicing and the staff carry out fortnightly maintenance checks. However, procuring landrover parts outside of St Helena continues to be difficult in terms of time taken to reach the island via the MV Helena, but also procuring parts on St Helena is extremely limited making overseas procurement a necessity. This will cause the land rover to be out of service for extended periods of time. There are a small number of garages on island, who's services are in high demand. The garage which services the St Helena National Trust vehicles has a high demand for their service – does a lot of work on land rovers - therefore the time taken to repair has caused the land rover to be out of service longer than expected. Covid-19 restrictions have impacted on importing products via air freight as the items have been getting 'bumped off' due to other goods being high priority or just too many.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

4a. 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: £

4b. 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.

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

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), 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.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS-LTS International 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**