

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	DPLUS107
Project title	Community supported multispecies invasive vertebrate control on St Helena
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
Lead partner	Saint Helena National Trust
Partner(s)	St Helena Government (Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate (ENRP) INBIMA (Invasive Bird Management Consultancy) RSPB
Project leader	<i>Helena Bennett</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media	Update of project on social media https://www.facebook.com/SHnationaltrust

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).

1.5 Deploy tracking tunnels and camera traps at key locations for detecting rats, cats and rabbits & 3.5 Regular checks and analysis of tracking tunnels and camera trap recordings | Tracking tunnel cards and camera traps continue to be deployed in the project's key locations for the detection and monitoring of target species of rats, rabbits and feral cats. This data is regularly collected and analysed which shows that the populations are seasonal in these areas. Observations from project staff found that the target species are not in abundance where there is plenty of vegetation available.

2.1 Order equipment | Tracking tunnel cards and wire mesh were ordered to continue with operations, this includes 6 bales of wire mesh for building additional myna traps. The Project is still waiting on the consignment of rabbit traps from the UK, and should arrive in November/ December 2022.

2.7 Deploy myna, rabbit and cat traps in agreed sites | Rabbit and cat traps continue to be deployed at Deadwood, Millennium Forest, and Man & Horse during the past six months. Myna traps have been deployed across the island including other conservation areas outside of the key locations such as Horse Point, upper Deadwood and also to the farmers and volunteers. In total, 34 myna traps are active in the fields.

See figure below of locations for traps:



2.8 Install rat bait stations and regularly rebait, recording bait used/replenished | The project continues to rebait the bait stations in key conservation and agricultural areas. Rat bait stations are deployed in areas where tracking tunnels have recorded activity.

Please see table below recording the activity and bait stations:

Station_ID	Date	Bait Added	Bait Remaining	Observer initials	Comments
3047BS	17-May-22	5	0	MG NB	
3049BS	17-May-22	5	0	MG NB	
		84	1		
3001BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3013BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3014BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	less than 1 left
3020BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3024BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3032BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3033BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3034BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3035BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3036BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	less than 1 left
3037BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3038BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3039BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3043BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3044BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	less than 1 left
3047BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
3049BS	20-Jun-22	5	0	DL MG	
		85	0		
3001BS	20-Jul-22	5	0	NB, MG	
3013BS	20-Jul-22	5	0	NB, MG	
3014BS	20-Jul-22	5	0	NB, MG	
3020BS	20-Jul-22	5	0	NB, MG	
3024BS	20-Jul-22	5	0	NB, MG	

Comments	Observer initials	Station_ID	Date	Tunnel QTY	QTY In Tunnel	Comments	Observer initials
	NB, MG	2001BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2002BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2003BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2004BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2006BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2008BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2010BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2011BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2012BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2013BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2014BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2015BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2016BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2017BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2018BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2019BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2020BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2026BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2027BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2032BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2033BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2039BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2040BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2049BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG
	NB, MG	2050BS	09-Sep-22	5	0		NB, MG

2.10 Maintain records of location, date and number of target vertebrates trapped and humanely destroyed | During this reporting period 512 myna birds, 32 feral cats, and 45 rabbits were trapped and humanely destroyed.

2.11 Produce report on trap effectiveness | Project staff have observed the traps and bait used to trap the vertebrate species (feral cats, rabbits and myna birds). It was found that different methods are required for different locations across Island and different species. A report on the trap effectiveness has been draft and is in the finalisation stages.

2.12 Produce Best Practice for effectively vertebrate control for St Helena, including priority actions | A best practice guideline has been drafted and is in the final stages.

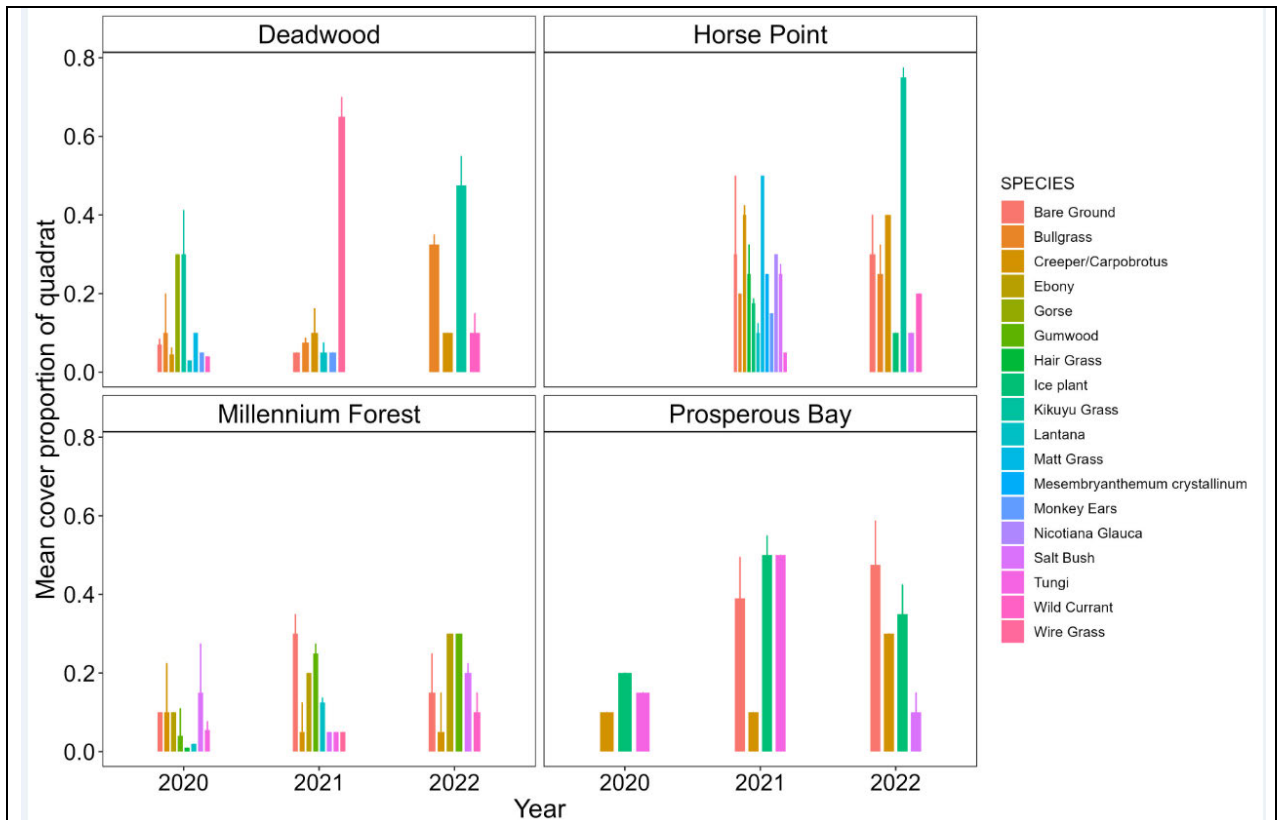
3.6 Monitor vertebrate presence/abundance on control and comparable sites | Vertebrate survey has been conducted on the control and comparable site. At present, there is a balance of native and invasive vertebrate existence.

See table below of vertebrate activity within the Millennium Forest:

MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#87	cat	1	2022	3	10	
CAMERA LOCATION	GPS NOTE	SPECIES	NUMBER	YEAR	MONTH	DAY	TIME
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#88	myna	1	2022	4	11	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#88	myna	1	2022	4	12	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	5	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	wirebird	1	2022	4	10	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	wirebird	1	2022	4	10	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	wirebird	1	2022	4	10	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	wirebird	1	2022	4	10	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	16	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#89	rabbit	1	2022	4	16	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	rabbit	1	2022	4	9	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	rabbit	1	2022	4	9	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	rabbit	1	2022	4	9	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	rabbit	1	2022	4	9	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	rabbit	1	2022	4	9	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	rabbit	1	2022	4	11	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	wirebird	1	2022	4	19	
MILLENNIUM FOREST	MFCAM#90	wirebird	1	2022	4	19	

3.7 Monitor vegetation changes annually on control and comparable sites | The change in vegetation at the key locations changed from year on year within the project.

See graph below for the monitoring of vegetation over the past 3 years.



4.2 Recruit trapping volunteers from the community, including farmers, syndicate members and landowners/managers | Volunteers from the community have joined the project, by trapping myna, cats and rabbits. Whilst only a few farmers and members of the syndicates was interested, the projects have 35 volunteers trapping myna birds and 4 culling, and 10 volunteers trapping and humanely dispose of rabbits.

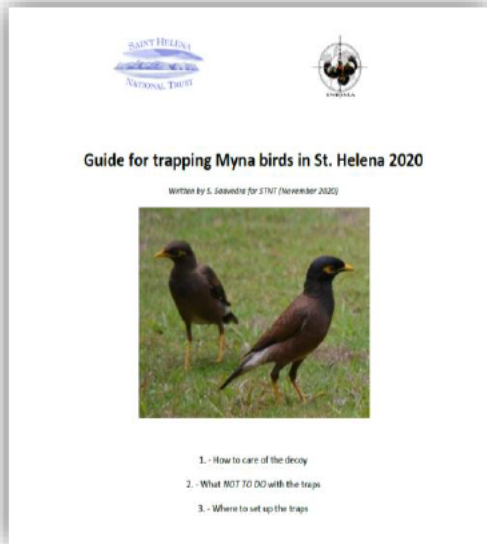
4.3 Run community trapping information sessions and workshops & 5.1 Undertake public awareness events, including getting feedback | Two workshops were held during this period in July. One workshop was held at the Kingshurst Community Centre for Community residing on the western side of the island and the other was at the Millennium Forest Classroom for the Community residing on the Eastern side of the island. There was very poor attendance at each workshop where only one person attended at each workshop. Although it was poor attended, there was a very lively discussion amongst the Trust staff and the two members of the community. We acknowledge their concerns and exchanged information and trapping knowledge with them.

An information pop-up section was held in front of the Tourism Office, the Canister Jamestown in August which attracts 22 members of the community. The community was very interested in the types of traps used by the Project team. The Project team also have informal discussions with the farmers and community whilst going about the project activities, the Trust will look into ways we can document these discussions as they are productive.

The project team have recently started a bi-weekly radio show on the more popular radio “Saint FM, where the team will be airing news, facts, and hold Q&A with the listeners.

4.4 Train volunteers’ trappers & 4.6 Provide traps to volunteers (following Training) | 22 volunteers were trained to use the myna cages and 7 volunteers to trapped rabbits. This also include how to care for the vertebrates (myna and rabbits) that are trapped inside the traps and how to cull, and humanely destroyed them.

They also are issued with a guide booklet. See below figure:



4.8 Participate in international conference or workshop | Due to the Covid-19 pandemic an international conference or workshop was not possible for a staff member to attend. However, Denis Leo (Project Officer) travelled to the UK, on an exposure visit with project partner, RSPB. This visit included trips to Frampton, Arne and Nene and was based on habitat management. The trip also included talks on education outreach and attracting members to the National Trust. Whilst there Denny also visited Sandy, RSPB headquarters where an App was designed to record nesting and Census counts in relations to the Wirebird.

5.3 Undertake monthly social media posts | Two radio chats were conducted via the two radio station (St FM and SAMS) and two newspaper article were placed into the Independent and Sentinel newspaper. An International newspaper article and six social media information were put up on National Trust Facebook.

The Trust received over 500 views for each post. The post on volunteer Norman peaked at 2570 views.

See examples below:

Species	Target	Current
Rabbits	323	323
Cats	100	100
Myna birds	2128	2128
Rats	100	100

RABBITS AND ST HELENA
European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Rabbits are famous for their **fertility**, and can produce litters of four to eight offspring several times a year.

Estimated population size about 45,000

The extensive burrowing and feeding causes extensive damage to **Wirebird habitat**.

The European rabbit is the most **social rabbit**, sometimes forming **extensive burrow systems** of up to 20 individuals.

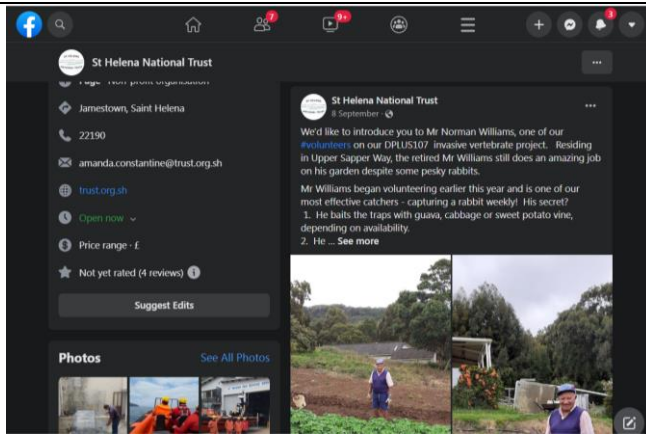
Active throughout the year, but it is **harder to trap rabbits in winter** on St Helena because of the abundance of vegetation available naturally.

Jan - June 2022
68 rabbits caught by trapping in conservation sites, **Deadwood, Millennium Forest and Man and Horse**

Bait used locally
Sour Thistle
Sweet potato
rabbit food
Apple
cabbage

Total rabbits caught on project so far: 186

Traditionally rabbit was a **cheap and nutritious meat** on St Helena, although fallen out of fashion.



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.

In the second quarter St Helena was impacted by the fuel price increase. This required staff an extension of routes around the island due to the volunteers not willingly to cull the myna birds and staff were required to travel around the island to cull these birds. This has caused a huge increase expenditure for fuel. However, at present there is no need for change of budget.

The island lifted its travel quarantine in August 2022 and as a result Covid-19 was introduced to the community. Majority of Trust staff and their families caught the virus and was required by our local Public Health to self-isolate. Therefore, for a 3-week period staff were off work and all traps had to be closed. This impacted the project delivery.

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: No

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**