

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	<a href="#">DPLUS109</a>
<b>Project title</b>	Initiating monitoring support for the SGSSI-MPA Research and Monitoring Plan
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	South Georgia
<b>Lead partner</b>	British Antarctic Survey
<b>Partner(s)</b>	GSGSSI
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Philip Hollyman</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR3 Third year, mid-year report</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/fixed-wing-wildlife-surveys-at-south-georgia/">https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/fixed-wing-wildlife-surveys-at-south-georgia/</a>

**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).**

Over the last 6 months, good progress has been made on several key outputs for the project. In summary, work has progressed on the analysis of imagery from the 2021/22 field season, alongside the planning and undertaking of the 2022 October/November field season.

Progress against specific outputs:

2.1 – as detailed in the annual report for year 2, the originally planned three field seasons were concatenated into two, combining two field campaigns during the 2021/22 season. This only left a single field season focussed on data collection for southern elephant seals during their breeding season in October-November 2022. Planning for this season has been underway since the start of the year and has faced several setbacks and logistical issues (detailed in section 2), despite this, Nathan Fenney and Jamie Coleman are currently on South Georgia surveying key breeding sites.

2.2 – Photogrammetric processing has been undertaken on imagery collected during the 2021/22 season, resulting in 3D models for 2021/22 season sites.

2.3 & 2.4 – Orthophotos have been produced for 2021/22 season sites, along with georeferenced outlines.

3.1 – We are working closely with collaborators to employ automated counting methods to the processed imagery. We are currently awaiting the initial results from this collaboration, assuming the results are positive, we will be able to utilise these automated counting scripts to count all of the remaining imagery. In addition to this, progress has also been made in manually counting several key sites (as well as subsets of larger sites) to test the accuracy of the automated counting. This has already resulted in population counts for several sites (3.2).

4.1 – A methodology paper is being developed, this will be completed once the next field season is over.

4.2 – We have been in extensive discussion with GSGSSI regarding the training of field assistants. The scientific assistants at King Edward Point station (employed by BAS) are unsuitable for this training, as they are employed on short contracts and the training is expensive. We have agreed that the GSGSSI operations manager (Vicki Foster) will receive training to fly the fixed wing platforms. This training is currently being organised but is dependent on Vicki's schedule. The same applies for 4.3 and 4.4.

5.1 – Work on the peer reviewed paper will begin once the current field season has finished.

6.1 – The work to date has been presented at one international conference, as well as to stakeholder groups. Once the work is finalised following the second field season, we plan to disseminate the work more widely.

We are also in discussion to organise a workshop focussed on the implementation and long-term use of UAV platforms for wildlife monitoring at South Georgia. We aim to have input from any stakeholders with an interest in wildlife monitoring at South Georgia as well as GSGSSI.

One query was raised at the last annual review to be addressed at in this report:

*Operational cost - How do you foresee the rise in commodity prices (e.g., fuel price) affecting the planned second season?*

As it stands, there has been no increase in the charges for small boat support from King Edward Point station, so the budgeted funds for this financial year should cover all costs. As for support from the Pharos SG, this support was always in-kind. The cost of airfare for flights between the UK and the Falklands has also remained within budget.

**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.**

Over the last 6 months we have faced severe problems with logistical support for the ongoing field season. These problems centred on the availability of ship support for transport to and from South Georgia, as well as ship support to access field sites. This is due to October/November being one of the busiest times of the year for the Pharos SG, which supports Bird Island and King Edward Point bases with movements of ingoing and outgoing base staff, as well as cargo. As an alternative we looked to secure passage on cruise ships, after agreed passage to South Georgia on one vessel this trip was eventually cancelled. Luckily, the team are still able to rely on a cruise ship pick up upon completion of the field season. Eventually, due to the heavy demand for berths on the Pharos, an extra rotation was added in mid-October on which we were able to secure places for input to South Georgia.

**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?**

No

**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](mailto: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**