



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	DPLUS 118
Project title	BVI Amphibian Conservation Programme
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	British Virgin Islands
Lead organisation	Jost Van Dykes BVI Preservation Society
Partner(s)	National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, University of New Hampshire, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Project leader	<i>Susan Zaluski</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>October 30, 2020 HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	www.jvdps.org

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).

DPLUS 118 activities for Q1 (April -Jun) and Q2 (Jul-Sept) was entirely based on mobilisation with field work scheduled to begin in Q3 (Oct- Dec).

Output 1: Greater understanding of native and invasive BVI amphibian populations and threats

-JVDPS worked with the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI) to develop maps of ghuts, roadways and rare plants and are collaborating on the refinement of survey design.

-Equipment for acoustic monitoring (AudioMoths, Wildlife Acoustics' Songmeters) were ordered for the project.

Output 2: Improved Capacity to monitor and report on amphibian populations

-JVDPS issued a call for Research Assistants/Field Assistants in August via a student intern network from a summer research programme at H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (see Annex A), which helped to identify one suitable candidate. Mr. Jahnai Caul is an Environmental Officer for the BVI Tourist Board's "Seeds of Love Programme" (reforestation initiative) and is enrolled as a student at HLSCC and has a keen interest in environmental initiatives. Mr. Caul, a resident of Virgin Gorda, accepted the position of field assistant and will receive training in Manual Call Survey (MCS) methods during Q3Y1 to conduct surveys on Virgin Gorda. Along with Mr. Caul, Ms. Justine Callwood (Jost Van Dyke) were both trained in Manual Call Survey (MCS) methods. At least three (3) additional persons will be trained during Q3Y1.

-A suitable BVI candidate was located to provide graduate-level research with the University of New Hampshire (UNH). An offer has been extended to her at the writing of this report and the candidate she has tentatively accepted with details being worked out in Y1Q3.. The project initially intended to utilise a previously enrolled UNH students; however, Covid19 related impacts

have complicated /delayed project timelines. That a qualified, engaged BVI candidate has been located represents a major opportunity for DPLUS118 to meaningful build local BVI amphibian research capacity and a notable value added to the project.

-Participatory “Citizen Science” acoustic surveys launched: Dr. Renata Platenberg, a herpetologist at the University of the Virgin Islands (USVI) launched the “*Great VI Frog Count*” in 2015. Initial conversations about partnering with Platenberg were carried out in Q2 to develop the citizen science monitoring components of the project. Dr. Platenberg carried out this component independent, but follow up discussions to partner with DPLUS118 will be carried out before the close of year 1.

Output 3: Development of a Stakeholder-Informed Amphibian conservation management and recovery plan

-Members of the Steering Committee were identified and invited during Q2 with the first project steering committee meeting to occur during Q3Y1.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Although purchase orders were placed for acoustic monitoring equipment during Q1Y1, companies experienced major delays in sourcing components from China due to Covid19 pandemic, and as of the end of Q2Y2, equipment had not yet arrived on project site but has been shipped from factories and is scheduled to arrive during Q3Y1.

During the month of September when trial night-time acoustic surveys (1900h- 2100h) were scheduled to commence for training the Government of the Virgin Islands issued a series of Curfew Orders for the Territories, restricting citizen movement outside their homes between the hours of (500h and 1300h) and then eased (500h- 1700h) and finally (500h- 2000h) towards end of month, preventing movement to enable surveys.

The most notable Covid19-related change to the project is that although Amphibian Specialist (Dr. Kim Babbitt) and Habitat Specialist (Dr. Gregg Moore) were scheduled to visit the BVI during Q3Y1 for an important field visit; travel restrictions and quarantine requirements for international visitors (announced to the public on 26/10/2020) to the BVI have, as of the writing of this report, made this important field visit impossible. While we originally anticipating the project proceeding on its original schedule, we will file a change request form to Darwin following the completion of this report.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there

may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

During the mobilisation phase of this project, we became concerned about Covid19 travel restrictions making it difficult for student travel. Our original proposal called for an admitted University of New Hampshire (UNH) student to visit the BVI to carry out field work. UNH project partner Dr Gregg Moore has made a BVI graduate student scholarship available and a suitable candidate was located. The candidate, who is currently completing her B.S. in Natural Resources at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) has been exposed to acoustic monitoring at UVI and has interned with the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands for 2 consecutive summers. If the candidate is able to meet admissions requirements for UNH, a scholarship to cover her full tuition at UNH will be provided and she will be assigned as a research assistant to the project (a USD value added to the project). The addition of this student to the project will add considerable value to the project and provide enormous benefit for long-term project sustainability and in-territory capacity-building; however, it may also delay project timelines.

2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS:	No
Formal change request submitted:	No (<i>being prepared now for LTS</i>).
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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.

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**