

Darwin Plus: Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Writing a Darwin/IWT Report” Information Note: (<https://dplus.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/reporting-forms-change-request-forms-and-terms-and-conditions/>). It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2021

Darwin Plus Project Information

Project reference	DPLUS120
Project title	Spatial segregation of seabirds at South Georgia
Territory(ies)	South Georgia
Lead organisation	British Antarctic Survey
Partner institutions	Birdlife international
Grant value	£269,233
Start/end dates of project	1 March 2021-31 October 2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2020-Mar 2021) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2)	April 2021-March 2022
Project Leader name	Victoria Warwick-Evans
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/spatial-segregation-of-seabirds-at-south-georgia/
Report author(s) and date	Victoria Warwick-Evans

1. Project summary

Despite measures to minimise bycatch of South Georgia’s globally important populations of seabirds, albatross and petrel populations are still declining, and at different rates across the archipelago. We are using biologging devices to track albatrosses and petrels from different colonies. We aim to characterise variation among colonies in overlap of birds with fishing fleets during the breeding and non-breeding seasons, identify high-risk areas, and provide a more focussed approach for engaging with fisheries managers to better understand and address impacts of bycatch on these threatened species.

2. Project stakeholders/partners

Since the start of the project in March 2021, we have engaged with the project partners primarily via email. This was to update the project partners about the amended timescale of the project, and to update them on logistics. We will continue to engage with all partners as the project progresses. The project is still in its early stages so the level of engagement will increase, particularly once there are results to discuss and disseminate..

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

We had a very successful field season tracking albatrosses and petrels at South Georgia. We were able to deploy satellite transmitters or remote-download GPS loggers on 11 white-chinned petrels on Cooper Island, and 24 white-chinned petrels on Bird Island. We also deployed geolocators on all individuals, which will be retrieved in austral summer 2022/23, providing data on distributions during the non-breeding season. Our intentions were to also track grey-headed albatrosses, given the variation in rates of decline among different colonies around South Georgia. However, it was not possible to access the original target colony (Paryadin Peninsula) due to adverse weather conditions which prevented landing. Instead, we were able to deploy 10 satellite transmitters on wandering albatrosses breeding on Prion Island, and 30 GPS loggers on wandering albatrosses breeding on Bird Island. Although this is not the original target species, we will be able to answer exactly the same questions as those planned for the grey-headed albatross. Wandering albatrosses are also declining at different rates across South Georgia, which is likely to reflect spatial segregation in foraging areas and potentially in relative overlap with fisheries. The wandering albatross is listed by the international Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) and classed as Vulnerable to extinction by the IUCN.

We are very satisfied with our progress so far, and the data so far look very exciting. As such, despite the substitution of species (wandering albatross for grey-headed albatross) we have completed activity 1.1.

We have started to process the data and are currently working on activities 1.2 and 1.3 in accordance with the timeline stated in the log frame.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

We are making good progress towards Output 1, with the successful collection of the required tracking data. Other than a handful of days in March-May 2021 spent in fieldwork planning, sourcing equipment etc., the project effectively started in November 2021. The field season was 2 months in total, including quarantine. We are therefore still on track to complete the outputs as described.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

We are still on target to achieve the project outcome by the end of the funding. We now have the required tracking data from the breeding season, which will be used to understand spatial segregation in foraging areas of both wandering albatrosses and white-chinned petrels. We have also deployed geolocators on both species which will need to be recovered next year and will provide data on distributions during the non-breeding season. We are in the process of planning the upcoming field season.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 1.1 White-chinned petrels and grey-headed albatrosses breeding at our target colonies will be catchable. These species breed in large numbers and are tractable for tracking studies.

Comments: Although white-chinned petrels were catchable and we were able to successfully deploy devices, adverse weather conditions prevented landing at the target colony for grey-headed albatrosses. However, we are still able to address the same questions for wandering albatrosses, and as such, despite the substitution of species, will continue with the project as planned.

All other assumptions still hold true, and we will continue to monitor these as the project develops.

4. Project support to environmental and/or climate outcomes in the UKOTs

The project will directly benefit the GSGSSI as it will achieve several objectives stated in the MPA RMP, and GSGSSI-led Albatross Conservation Action Plans. These objectives include understanding the at-sea distribution of white-chinned petrels, and tracking albatrosses from

locations other than Bird Island. In the long-term it will benefit GSGSSI as they and other stakeholders will be able to use this information to maintain healthy populations of seabirds around the island group. The project will benefit the UK government as it will contribute to the Blue Belt initiative for protection of the marine environment, supporting vital conservation objectives whilst demonstrating the commitment of the UK to protecting the global marine environment. The project will benefit various NGOs as it will provide scientific results to present to fisheries managers to promote the adoption of mitigation measures in areas of high seabird bycatch.

5. OPTIONAL: Consideration of gender equality issues

The PI on the project is female and is supported mainly by a male Co-I. Project partners are 1 male and 1 female. The field assistant who assisted with the deployment of tracking devices is also female. Therefore our project is supportive of gender equality issues.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

The PL and Co-I will continue to work together for M&E. As the project progresses we will continue to meet weekly as necessary to discuss the day-to-day running of the project (such as fieldwork logistics, analysis, interpretation, and communication with stakeholders). Additionally, monthly meetings are organised where progress is evaluated, any challenges are discussed, and any modifications to the project are developed. The first of these meetings was held prior to the first field season, when all fieldwork planning was confirmed and discussed. Since returning from fieldwork in February, we have continued to meet to discuss project progress and challenges. We will also have biannual meetings with the project partners that will be written up and reported. Papers to be presented at stakeholder meetings such as regional fisheries management meetings, GSGSSI stakeholder meetings, ACAP and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), will be developed and discussed in advance of the relevant meeting. Additionally, we will hold post-meeting debriefs with project partners to discuss, in particular, how our project was received by stakeholders, and if there are any improvements we can make to improve engagement. Additionally, in the final year of the project, we will have meetings with the project partners to discuss the progress in terms of implementing changes to management in order to mitigate seabird bycatch in fisheries.

7. Lessons learnt

We have learned that carrying out fieldwork in South Georgia can be challenging for a number of reasons. The weather is highly variable and changes quickly, resulting in shortened periods ashore. Additionally, the terrain is steep, with few suitable landing sites, and it was often impossible to land near to suitable breeding colonies. We have learned from this that the fieldwork must be flexible, allowing adjustments to be made at short notice. We believe we dealt with these situations well, and the project remains on track.

8. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

The last reports were very brief as we had yet to really start the project as we had only spent a handful of days on the project. As such there were no comments on the previous reports.

9. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

We have covered all progress made to date in previous sections.

10. Sustainability and legacy

We have engaged with various members of GSGSSI and the NGO, Friends of South Georgia, to discuss the project. As a result of these discussions we were offered additional funding to purchase more tracking devices. This provides evidence of increased interest and capacity as a result of the work we have done so far. Additionally, we were fortunate to be on the ship to South Georgia with the CEO of GSGSSI with whom we discussed the project in depth, ensuring that she understood the details and purpose, and was invested in a successful

outcome. We also have created a project website (<https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/spatial-segregation-of-seabirds-at-south-georgia/>) which has been widely shared on the BAS, ACAP and other social media networks.

Our planned exit strategy is still valid.

11. Darwin identity

The Darwin Initiative is publicised on the project website. Additionally, we have given a number of presentations about the project on which the Darwin Plus logo is displayed, and the Darwin Initiative mentioned in the acknowledgements. As the project develops we will take every opportunity to publicise the Darwin Initiative.

12. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

COVID-19 has impacted our project as a result of limited international travel during December 2020 and January 2021. As it became clear during the summer of 2020 that it would be unlikely that the project would go ahead as planned, we submitted a change request to delay the project and change the timescale. This was approved, and a new implementation timetable and logframe were developed. As such, the impact of COVID-19 on the revised time-frame is minimal to-date. We have been able to make good progress during a period of hybrid working from home and the office, and the first field season was successfully carried out during January and February 2022.

It is likely that as a result of COVID-19 there will be more of an opportunity for remote working, and for remote attendance at international meetings. We will take every opportunity to use virtual meetings in future, as appropriate (i.e. if outcomes will not be compromised).

Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have ticked the box, please ensure these are reported to ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk as indicated in the T&Cs.

13. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021)

Current Year's Costs	2021/22 Grant (£)	2021/22 Total actual Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain any variance)
Staff costs (from Section 5)	████████	████████	██████	████████████████████
Consultancy Costs	██████	██████	██████	
Overhead Costs	████████	████████	██████	████████████████████
Travel and subsistence	████████	████████	██████	Due to extra fieldwork costs
Operating Costs	██████	██████	██████	
Capital items (from Section 6)	██████	██████	██████	
Others (from Section 7)	████████	████████	██████	Slightly less than budgeted for

Audit costs					
			Claimed So Far	Claim for this period	Surrender Amount
TOTAL	£				

Checklist for submission

	Check
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report? If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	