



## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS135
<b>Project title</b>	From Pseudoscorpions to crickets: securing Ascensions Island's unique invertebrates
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Ascension Island
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Ascension Island Government
<b>Partner(s)</b>	MAISG, UKCEH, SHNT
<b>Project leader</b>	Diane Baum
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	N/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).**

The project start date was 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 and so this report covers the three month period to the end of September 2021.

**1. General Progress**

**a) Recruitment of Project Coordinator**

A Project Coordinator has been recruited and will arrive on Ascension on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Dr Adam Sharp has extensive experience of invertebrate field survey and established contacts with invertebrate taxonomists in the UK.

**b) Equipment purchase**

With assistance from project partners MAISG and UKCEH, the existing survey equipment on Ascension has been reviewed and additional equipment purchased to allow a full range of sampling techniques to be employed.

**c) Opportunities for additional capacity**

During September 2021 AIG have been contacted by FERA in the UK about taking part in an ant identification project. FERA would provide taxonomic support to identify ant specimens provided by AIG. The Species Recovery Trust have also applied for a small grant to allow a bush cricket expert to visit Ascension and collect specimens. Both of these projects would be integrated into the comprehensive invertebrate survey funded by DPLUS135 and provide additional capacity for the Project Coordinator to draw on.

**2. Output delivery**

Only one project output was due to begin within the Q2 reporting period.

**a) Output 1.1 Training and upskilling of Project Coordinator in the UK**

Following the recruitment of the Project Coordinator, AIG, MAISG and UKCEH met to consider what skills gaps needed to be filled in the UK before he travelled to Ascension. The Project

Coordinator's extensive experience of sample collection and preservation has meant the training in the UK will now focus on a review of past collecting trips undertaken on Ascension and the building of networks with UK taxonomists. MAISG and UKCEH have organised a week-long programme of meetings and visits for the Project Coordinator in October 2021. This will enable face-to-face contact with project collaborators that will be invaluable for forming good working relationships.

**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.**

None.

**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.**

None so far beyond the relatively minor additional testing and quarantine requirements that the Project Coordinator will have to meet when travelling to Ascension.

**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: N/A

Formal change request submitted: N/A

Received confirmation of change acceptance N/A

**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](mailto: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**