

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	DPLUS136
Project title	Anguilla Shark Conservation: social acceptance, spatial protection and legislative reform
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Anguilla
Lead partner	Marine Conservation Society
Partner(s)	Anguilla National Trust; Government of Anguilla; University of Exeter
Project leader	<i>Dr Peter Richardson</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR2</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>MCS - https://bit.ly/3eCVR5o</i>

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).

Output 1: Development of first ecological and social science baselines regarding sharks in Anguilla

Over the last six months of this project, we completed a third round of baited remote underwater video station (BRUVS) deployments between 19 and 31 July 2022, including 52 camera drops (minimum 1 hour soak time) across 52 distinct locations (Activity 1.9). We have begun analysing the results of video footage collected in 2021 and 2022 with a focus on species identification, approximate life stage identification (juvenile, sub-adult, adult), length measurements, habitat association). We have completed analysis of 32 of 60 videos from 2021 and are projecting to complete analysis of all collected data by the end of the year (Activity 1.10). Video footage from the BRUVS deployments so far confirms the presence of Caribbean reef sharks, Black tip shark, lemon shark, nurse shark and southern stingray. In addition, we have taken advantage of video footage to also record presence and note locations of sightings of other noteworthy species, including several other fish species and sea turtles.

Building on the Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) surveys undertaken in Year 1, we developed a Community Voice Method (CVM) questionnaire and tentative interviewee sample list (Activity 1.13). In May 2022 we conducted CVM interviews with 33 interviewees over a period of three weeks (Activity 1.14). The sampling attempted gender-balance, with representation from 20 males and 13 females over a wide age range and from locations around the island. The interviewee sample included natural resource managers and policy/decision makers, fishers, sport anglers, dive operators, consumers, business owners, tourism workers, educators and students. Interview data has been transcribed and analysed and a CVM documentary film is in production (Activity 1.15). The gender balance represented in the film will be carefully considered. The editing and inclusion of interview clips will be primarily guided by the analysis and interview narrative, and there may be opportunities to weight female interviewee clips in the final edit in preference to male interviewee contributions when there is a choice to be made

between two contributors making the same point equally well. In addition, every effort will be made to ensure that the public CVM workshops are accessible to males and females equally.

Output 2: Evidence-based shark SAP and supporting legislative amendment recommendations are produced through a participatory process

Relevant national policies, legislation and regulations for sharks have been identified (Activity 2.1), including the Government of Anguilla Fisheries Act (and supporting regulations), Biodiversity and Heritage Conservation Act, Trade in Endangered Species Act (and supporting regulations) and Fisheries Development Plan. These structural documents will be analysed to determine the existing (and potential) framework for elasmobranch conservation, protection and/or fisheries management and to support the development of an Anguilla Shark Species Action Plan (Activity 2.3).

Output 4: Enhanced national capacity to plan, manage, implement, and monitor shark conservation action, supported by improved technical skills and greater public awareness and cooperation

During the first half of Year 2 of the project, we have held two Project Steering Committee meetings (Activity 4.1).

One national staff member benefited from on-the-job mentoring by MCS staff in CVM while four national staff (including three FMRU summer interns) received practical training from Dr Matt Witt of the University of Exeter in BRUV deployment and an additional three national staff have been trained in BRUVS data analysis (using Event Measure software) in July 2022 (Activity 4.5). In addition, Anguilla National Trust staff attended an introductory workshop regarding the NVIVO coding and analysis of the CVM data in May 2022.

Taking advantage of regional networks, two national staff attended a virtual introductory workshop on Caribbean shark conservation while two national staff attended a regional in-person training workshop in neighbouring Sint Maarten, which focused on shark tagging, BRUVS deployment and opportunities for regional collaboration. Both workshops were hosted by the Caribbean Shark Coalition in September 2022.

A series of meetings with the (new) Minister and the Permanent Secretary responsible for natural resources have been held with national partners to discuss project goals, activities and progress within the context of both fisheries and species conservation/protection.

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.

COVID-19. Although COVID-19 has so far not affected travel to and from Anguilla during Year 2 of the project, the pressures of increased amount of travel around the world has led to some travel-related inconveniences, including lost/delayed baggage. To support BRUVS deployment in July 2022, Dr Matt Witt had intended to train national staff in the use of additional BRUVS equipment. Unfortunately, that equipment did not make it onto the flight (and was only returned to Matt by the airline in September 2022). We hope that during Matt's next visit to Anguilla, that equipment can be deployed. Furthermore, while we had hoped to have deployed IR-enabled long-term video cameras (Activity 1.12), technical issues with the equipment have been identified by the developers which requires additional work and tweaking before it can be effectively deployed.

Anguilla's political context. In July 2022, the Minister responsible for natural resources resigned from the Government of Anguilla. With a new Minister now in place who has a particular interest and passion for the sustainable expansion of Anguilla's fisheries industry particularly into offshore waters. Recognising the potential sensitivities related to sharks and fisheries there has been a request from the Minister that film screenings of the CVM and the related stakeholder conservation action planning workshops be postponed until all ecological

data has been collected and can be presented which would help to better inform workshop discussions. As another round of deployments has been scheduled for next year to capture the shark breeding season, and to accommodate the Minister's request, this would mean that the CVM workshops will be postponed to coincide with the species action plan community workshops around June 2023 and therefore in the following financial year than that scheduled. A change request will be submitted in coming weeks detailing this change in scheduling, and will also consider the comments regarding the outcome and output indicator comments made in DPLUS136 AR1R.

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 – change request to be submitted

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known: N/A

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: ████████ – CVM workshops and associated costs including staff time, overheads, T&S and international travel.

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?

In response to the points made by reviewers in the award letter and in DPLUS136 AR1R:

- *Appropriate M&E should be incorporated from the outset with a focus on budget management and reporting (address in half year report - HYR);*
Our M&E process has been implemented from the outset of the project, with a project action tracker, risk register and regular project partner meetings ensuring that we are reviewing project progress and suggesting adaptations to the implementation plan when necessary. For example, the M&E process led us to making the first successful change request associated with rescheduling the Community Voice Method fieldwork. With respect to budget management, in the first year of the project, and in agreement with partners, the Anguilla National Trust opted to claim their project costs at the end of the first financial year. We have since reviewed this and agreed that they will make more regular claims throughout the year.

- *It is unclear if there is a commitment to include shark species action plan in legislation (HYR).*

The shark species action plan resulting from this project will be designed in cooperation with the Government of Anguilla with input from our biological research, social science and community engagement through the Community Voice Method. The plan itself will not sit within national legislation, but will align with and be supported by the existing legislation, and will be officially endorsed by the Government.

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**