

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 2023

Project reference	DPLUS143
Project title	What goes thump at night: managing bird-strike in South Georgia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI)
Lead partner	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
Partner(s)	Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) Argos Froyanes Ltd (AFL)
Project leader	Dr Megan Tierney
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	October 2023, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	N/A

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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

DPLUS143 is a 2.75-year project which commenced in July 2021. This half-yearly report therefore outlines progress made to date on activities that were scheduled for Year 3 (Y3) of the project (April-September 2023). Please note that we have used the revised Logframe and Implementation timetable which were approved through a formal Change Request [CR21-125] in Year 1 (Y1) of the project.

Output 1. GSGSSI and key stakeholders have informed overview of the incidence and causes of bird-strike, and the effectiveness of existing mitigation measures to reduce strike rates used in regions/areas outside of SGSSI.

The literature review on the incidence and causes of bird-strike was completed and reported upon in Y1 (**Activity 1.1**), with the SWOT analysis to identify and assess the effectiveness of bird-strike mitigation measures completed in Year 2 (Y2) (**Activity 1.2**), together with the report summarising both these activities (first deliverable of **Activity 1.3**). In this reporting period, initial discussions have been held with the Project Management Group (PMG) as to the content and format of the Information documents for partner and stakeholder networking meetings (second deliverable of **Activity 1.3**). It has been agreed that a general synthesis of the project as a whole will be prepared, which Project Partners can then tailor for specific meetings/forums. This document will be drafted and finalised during the next reporting period.

Output 2. Standardised bird-strike reporting forms that capture all essential information to enable monitoring and assessment of bird-strike in SGSSI MZ developed and presented to GSGSSI for implementation across fleets operating in SGSSI MZ; and

Output 4. Easy-to-follow guidelines for non-bird specialists showing how to handle and care for birds that may be injured after striking and landing on vessels developed and presented to GSGSSI for circulation across fleets operating in SGSSI MZ.

In this reporting period for Output 2 and Output 4 trials of the beta-version of the bird-strike reporting form and bird-handling guidelines were completed (**Activity 2.3 and 4.3**) – the form and guidelines were trialled on a total of 16 vessels. A total of 10 responses were received from trial participants, and this feedback was used to prepare a final version of the reporting form and guidelines (**Activity 2.4 and 4.4**). A report summarising the feedback is being prepared. Barring one amendment to the bird-handling guidelines (addition of a contact point), both the bird-strike reporting form and the guidelines were signed off by the PMG. The bird-strike reporting form was formally delivered to GSGSSI (**Activity 2.4**), and it has already been included in their operational update for tourist vessels operating in the SGSSI Maritime Zone this austral summer. Once the final amendment to the bird-handling guidelines has been made, these will also be formally delivered to GSGSSI (**Activity 4.4**).

Note, although the bird-handling guidelines contain a caveat that they only apply outside of outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), given the likelihood that HPAI would reach SGSSI in the 2023-24 austral summer, a decision was taken by the PMG (which includes GSGSSI and IAATO) to not include the new guidelines in any of the 2023-24 operational updates. This is because GSGSSI and IAATO have some specific protocols in place this season regarding bird-handling if HPAI is present¹, and we did not want to cause any confusion amongst operators by presenting the guidelines developed by this project and which might have been taken as conflicting with those protocols. GSGSSI will take a decision as to when/how the guidelines will be rolled out to tourist operators and other vessels, once there is a greater understanding of the HPAI situation.

Given that the operational language for reporting on vessels is English, the PMG further agreed that the bird-strike reporting form does not need to be translated into other languages, as originally proposed (Indicator 2.4). However, the PMG did agree that it would be useful to translate the bird-handling guidelines into a number of languages so it was more accessible to crew/staff of different nationalities (Indicator 4.4). The final set of languages is still to be determined, but guidance from feedback received

¹ At the time of compiling this report, HPAI has now been confirmed in South Georgia.
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from participants of the workshop held in Y2 will be taken on board, as well as that from the Project Partners. The guidelines will be translated by professional translators by the end of the project.

As noted in Output 1, it has been agreed that a general synthesis of the project as a whole will be prepared, which Project Partners can then tailor for specific meetings/forums. This document (which can also form part of **Activity 2.6 and 4.6**) will be drafted and finalised during the next reporting period.

All other activities for Output 2 and Output 4 were either completed in previous reporting periods (**Activities 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 4.2**), or not due to commence in this reporting period (**Activities 2.5 and 4.5**); although note, planning for the latter has been initiated – e.g. content, format and potential timing.

Output 3. Standardised data input and storage facilities and guidelines for data returned in bird-strike reporting forms, and which integrates with the existing national information management system of GSGSSI, is developed.

The primary activity of Output 3 for this reporting period was to test the existing data management system used by GSGSSI to store and manage bird-strike data (i.e. the [UK Polar Data Centre](#)) with dummy or real data returned from the trials of the bird-strike reporting forms (**Activity 3.2**). The Head of the Data Centre has confirmed that there are no issues with uploading data returned in the new forms. Given that the existing system is functional, it will be proposed to the PMG that there is no need for developing a specific set of data management guidelines for GSGSSI (**Activity 3.3**); however, it is thought it will be beneficial to add a 'ReadMe' tab to the bird-strike reporting forms, which amongst other guidance, will details where/how the bird-strike data will be handled post-submission.

All other activities for Output 3 were completed in previous reporting periods (**Activity 3.1**).

Output 5. Strategic programme of prioritised research to advance use and/or development of mitigation measures to reduce bird-strike in SGSSI MZ, including identification of resourcing options, is formulated.

There were no deliverables due for this Output during the reporting period and no work was due to commence. Note, however, some initial discussions amongst the PMG highlighted that it may be premature to try and formulate a future programme of work focussed on bird-strike mitigation measures (**Activity 5.1**), given a good set of data, from the new reporting forms, will be required to shape such a programme. As such, we are likely to propose a change to Output 5, which we will discuss with NIRAS in the first instance.

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.

As noted above and in the Y2 half-yearly and annual reports, the potential for HPAI to reach SGSSI meant that specific protocols were put in place by GSGSSI with respect to handling birds to help prevent spread or transmission between birds, humans and sites. As such in-depth trials of the bird-handling guidelines were not possible. Instead, participants in the trial, were only able to review and comment without necessarily putting proposed procedures into practice. However, feedback we received was still very useful for finalising the guidelines.

As also noted, the ongoing HPAI situation in SGSSI has also prevented the guidelines being rolled out by GSGSSI at this point in time.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS: Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No N/A
Change request reference if known: N/A	

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: ████████

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £0

4c. 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.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

N/A

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, 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.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS 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**