

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	DPLUS158
Project title	Piloting a new solution for invasive species in UKOTs
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Anguilla
Lead partner	Fauna & Flora
Partner(s)	Anguilla National Trust, Government of Anguilla
Project leader	Julio Bernal
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2023, HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	

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.

Output 1. Monitoring system established to inform and evaluate conservation actions on the ecology and globally threatened biodiversity of Fountain National Park

With baseline biodiversity assessments having been completed during the first year of the project, over the last six months (of year two), we have been collecting additional supplementary biodiversity data to help monitor change over time. A passive acoustic station was deployed at the end of September to continue to collect terrestrial bird (resident, but especially migratory) data. The station will be kept in place until the end of October and redeployed in May 2024 (Activity 1.1).

Complementing work conducted through the ANT-led DPLUS131 pollinator project and the DPL00021 digital conservation project, bat acoustic stations were deployed inside and outside of Fountain Cavern in July 2023 to collect a range of bat calls (social, foraging) and to assist with the development of a bat acoustic classifier. Flower-Insect Timed surveys were also conducted in June and September 2023 (Activity 1.1).

Output 2. The biodiversity of Fountain National Park is recovering following permanent eradication of multiple harmful invasive aliens and reintroduction of native species.

Following the operational plans for the construction of a pest-proof fence, a local fencing construction team was contracted to construct the pest-proof fence in June 2023, with construction beginning soon after. By the end of September 2023, the 925-metre fence was almost completely constructed with only a few fencing and bracing posts left to be connected and the primary and secondary entry gates to be secured (Activity 2.2).

While fence construction was on-going, in preparation of the removal of invasive alien species, a grid system was outlined, with tracks being cleared (running east-west across the property, every c.20m) to allow for the placement of rodent bait and monitoring tools. The actual invasive alien species eradication work is scheduled to begin in mid-October 2023 (Activity 2.4).

We are also preparing for the reintroduction of native biodiversity into Fountain National Park. Lignum vitae *Guaiacum officinale* seeds have been collected and seedlings are being cared for at the ANT nursery. Following the eradication of rodents from within the fenced area, seedlings will be planted on site.

Output 3. Effective and sustainable structures and tools for management of FNP in place.

In April 2023, a two-day multi-stakeholder planning workshop, facilitated by Re:Wild's protected areas management expert Mr. Michael Appleton, was held. With representatives from the Government of Anguilla, neighbouring hotels and restaurants, biodiversity conservation experts, youth, and civil society organisations, a ten-year management plan for Fountain National Park was outlined/developed (Activity 3.4). The plan is currently in draft form and will be presented to the GOA Executive Council/Cabinet for review and endorsement before the end of 2023.

Output 4. National capacity to plan, manage, implement, and monitor national parks is raised, supported by enhanced technical skills and increased public awareness

During the first six months of year 2, the project team has been implementing the public awareness and outreach activities. Between 1 April and 30 September, 324 individuals have been taken on visits to FNP during which the site's heritage (ecological social) value as well as plans for the mainland island have been discussed. In August 2023, a summer camp for 12 young people between the ages of 8 and 16 was facilitated. The camp focused on Anguilla's marine and terrestrial protected areas and included a site visit to Fountain National Park during which discussions were held about the impact of invasive alien species on native biodiversity, the importance of restoring habitat, and restoration plans specifically for Fountain National Park biodiversity.

Work at Fountain National Park was also presented in May 2023 as part of the DPLUS175 Invasive Non-Native Species Enhancing monitoring and prevention of invasive non-native species across UK Overseas Territories workshop (no. participants: 20) and at the Celebrate Islands international webinar hosted by the International National Trust Organisation (no. attendees: 36).

In mid-June, a sub-regional exchange was facilitated for colleagues (total no.: 3) from Reserve Naturelle St. Martin (RNSM) and St. Barthelemy's Agence Territoriale de l'Environnement. During the exchange visit, staff from these two agencies were taken on a site visit to Fountain National Park, with ground work just beginning at the site, plans for the mainland island, including the logistics for fence construction and invasive alien species eradication were shared and discussed. Since then, RNSM have confirmed that they are in the process of applying for financial support to launch a major invasive alien species eradication project on one of their offshore cays (Tintamarre). Their initiative opens opportunities for additional sharing of lessons learned, capacity building, and further collaboration.

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.

The construction of the pest-proof fence was the most significant activity undertaken during this reporting period. This is the first time that this type of fence has been constructed in the Caribbean and one of the most significant lessons learned is the importance of being responsive and adaptive to local contexts and environments. Site preparation (especially drilling of fencing and bracing post holes) was more difficult, took longer, and was therefore more expensive than expected. As the entire fence is stainless steel, all fencing supporting fencing materials had to also be stainless steel and construction equipment had to be strong enough to cut and drill through this durable

metal. Materials were imported into Anguilla through special orders as stainless steel is not a preferred construction material primarily due to its significantly higher cost. The construction process was a series of trial and error and constant learning and problem solving, taking time and ingenuity.

We also note that shipment of the materials was delayed and only arrived in Anguilla in early July. Construction of the fence began shortly thereafter, and has taken approximately 3 months to erect as construction was far from straightforward. Anguilla is now in the rainiest time of the year and we are hesitant to begin rodent removal when there is so much natural vegetation and food sources available, making a rodent eradication at high risk of failure. We will therefore be submitting a change request to shift the rodent eradication to take place between March and April 2024, when Anguilla enters the peak of its dry season. We, however, will not need to request a change in the budget as all necessary materials required will be procured before the end of March 2024.

In the meantime, iguana and potentially cat and livestock removal will be undertaken by the Anguilla-based team. During surveys at the Park, dogs and monkeys have not been observed within the Park's boundaries. Monitoring will continue to ensure that these initial observations are correct. If there are dogs and monkeys within the fenced area, however, they too will be removed.

We now recognise that we underbudgeted and were a bit too optimistic in our timeline. We have been fortunate to secure additional funding to cover project overspend and we are confident that we will be able to complete the eradication by the end of April 2024, with the completion of the output delayed by only month. We have been able to secure additional funding to cover accommodation, subsistence and travel and, due to the overspend on fencing construction, we will be submitting a change request to reallocate some of this funding from these budget lines, to put instead towards fencing construction (supplies and contracts).

Experiences, material suppliers, and lessons learned have already been shared with colleagues in Barbados where a similar (though smaller) pest-proof fence is about to be constructed.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance 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: £

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?

Olivier Raynaud, Project Lead, has recently left the organisation. Fauna & Flora is currently recruiting to replace Olivier's position but recruitment is taking more time than expected. Until a new staff member has been appointed and ready to take over the position, Fauna & Flora appointed Julio Bernal as the Project Lead. Change request has been recently submitted to NIRAS and we are awaiting, in due course, for the official response.

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**