

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	DPLUS165
Project title	Barcoding an Island: expanding genetic biomonitoring on Ascension
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ascension Island
Lead partner	Ascension Island Government
Partner(s)	University of Edinburgh, Natural History Museum
Project leader	Diane Baum
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	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 pushed back to 1/7/2022 through an approved change request.

Only one of the activities contained within the agreed project timetable was due to begin before 31st September 2022:

2.1 Write and test protocols for DNA extraction and metabarcoding. Completion Y1Q4.

Significant progress, on schedule. Draft protocols for DNA extraction and metabarcoding have been prepared by the Project Co-leader, Dr Tiffany Simpson. These will be reviewed and finalised when the Project Officer takes up her post in November 2022.

The following activities have also taken place in this reporting period to initiate the project:

- Recruitment of Melissa Morgan to the Project Officer role. Pre-employment checks have been completed and Melissa is due to arrive on Ascension on 5/11/2022. An induction programme has been planned for her first two weeks in post.
- An introductory meeting has been arranged between the Project Officer and partners at the University of Edinburgh. This will take place in late October before the Project Officer departs for Ascension.
- An initial meeting has been held with Paul Brickle of SAERI to identify and locate marine invertebrate samples collected as part of DPLUS021, which will be sequenced as part of this project.

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 later than expected decision letter required a one month delay to the start of the project from 1/6/2022 to 1/7/2022. This was approved via a change request.

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: Yes

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

Change request reference if known: No reference given. Confirmed by email on 1/6/2022

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: £

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?

None

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**