

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS178
<b>Project title</b>	Inhabited Territory restoration: completing preparations for a rodent-free Pitcairn Islands
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie & Oeno Islands
<b>Lead partner</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	The Pitcairn Environmental, Conservation & Natural Resources Division
<b>Project leader</b>	Andy Schofield
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR1 (Oct 2022)
<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).**

**Output 1. Detailed community consultation achieves agreement on the eradications' operational approach and mitigation measures, plus ensures local understanding to achieve prior informed consent**

*1.1 Community Impact Assessments written for Pitcairn Island community*

*1.2 RSPB engagement lead and an eradication operation expert complete initial face-to-face consultations with Island Council & community*

Preparations are being made for a visit to Pitcairn from the RSPB engagement lead in January 2023. Unfortunately, due to a lack of berths the visit from the island eradication expert is going to need to be delayed until Year 2. Fortnightly meetings have been held with Michele Christian (Manager of the Environment, Conservation and Natural Resources Division of the Pitcairn Government) to lay the groundwork for this visit, planning how best to structure the community consultation. All households on the island will be visited and given a questionnaire so that they have an opportunity to privately voice any concerns. Another possible idea is to place flipcharts in the community centre so that people can come in and anonymously write down their thoughts; these can then be discussed during a whole community meeting.

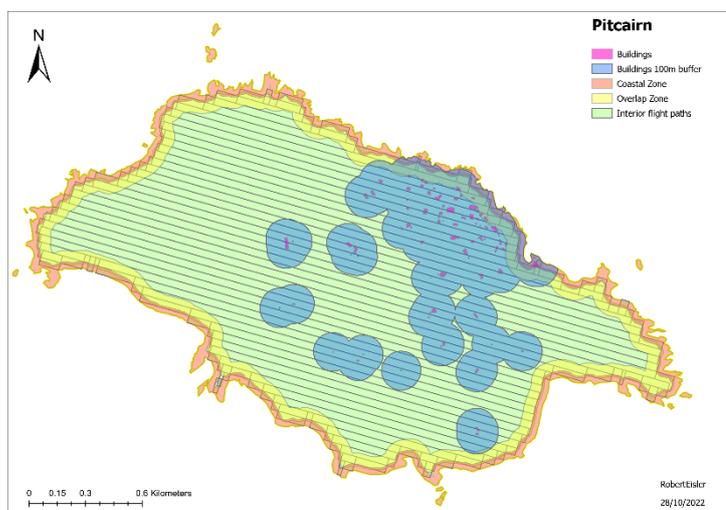
**Output 2. Mapping and condition assessment of built infrastructure and natural features fills outstanding knowledge gaps required to inform operational planning**

*2.1 Mapping of coconuts on Henderson is undertaken and ground-truthed.*

**2.2 Mapping of built structures, domestic animal pens, fruit trees of interest and hives on Pitcairn is undertaken.**

**Summary of GIS work done so far**

Pitcairn and Henderson Island boundaries have been traced from satellite imagery and proposed flight lines have been added (swathe widths at 40m) – see Fig 1. From these boundaries, the length of the coastlines and 2D surface areas of both islands have been worked out (see table below). From the flight paths, the areas have been worked out for bait calculations (see table). For Pitcairn, all buildings have been identified using satellite imagery with their outlines traced, and a 100m buffer added (on recommendation of the island eradication expert).



**Fig 1.** Island boundary, flight lines and buildings (plus 100m buffers) mapped for Pitcairn Island

Work in progress:

- Calculating the 3D surface area of Pitcairn Island (Henderson is practically flat so not necessary to calculate for that island).
- For cliffs on Pitcairn, adding specific flight paths at different altitudes at 30m intervals up the cliff faces.
- Labelling small offshore islands around Pitcairn and calculating their areas.

Island	Areas (ha)					Lengths (km)
	Total area of island	Interior zone area	Interior flight paths coverage	Overlap zone area	Coastal zone area	Coastline
<b>Pitcairn</b>	393.3	328	1407.9	64	41.2	14.1
<b>Henderson</b>	4298.7	200.6	16608.6	105.9	105.9	31.75

**Output 3. Potential non-target bird species are better understood, have more detailed risk assessments and, if necessary, have undergone successful trials of mitigation measures to inform operational planning.**

**3.1** Surveys of Pitcairn reed-warblers provide a population estimate and feeding habit assessment, with the results written up for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

**3.2** Pitcairn reed-warbler feeding trials with non-toxic blue bait and rat carcasses conducted and used to inform an updated risk assessment.

A researcher has been recruited and will be visiting Pitcairn from November '22 to February '23. The main aims of this research will be to:

- Calculate a population estimate for the Pitcairn Reed Warbler (PRW) and create repeatable methodology so that they can be surveyed on a more regular basis to monitor the population trend. This will be done by surveying territories, point counts, counts along transects, or a combination of all these methods.

- The second aspect will be to try and find PRW nests and to understand whether they nest in any particular vegetation or specific habitats. By observing any nests, we will also learn how many fledge young and reasons for failure.
- And finally, behavioural observations of the birds will provide an understanding of how the birds forage, what prey they catch and what food is delivered to nests. This will be valuable information for understanding how PRWs might be affected by a future proposed rat eradication.

Feeding trials with non-toxic bait will not be carried out until the community engagement lead is on the island and has started consulting Pitcairners, so that there aren't concerns that baiting has already commenced.

**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.**

Berths on board the *MV Silver Supporter* and flights from Papeete to Mangareva have had limited availability following Covid restrictions being lifted for the islands. This is because Pitcairners have been keen to get off the island for delayed medical treatment, as well as family members visiting/returning to the island. Therefore, visits from the island eradication expert and operational manager have had to be delayed until Year 2 due to lack of availability. This is unlikely to have any impact on the overall project, but it will mean that we will be submitting a change request next month to adjust the budget and timetable accordingly.

**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

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

**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: £

**We are reviewing the budget and are currently unable to determine the estimated value of the underspend. A change request will be submitted in November.**

**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?**

N/A

**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](mailto: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**