



**Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects**  
**Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

**Half Year Report**

<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 Organisation</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>	HYR3 (Oct 2024)
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	N/A

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).**

Activities are only listed below if there has been an update in the last six months.

**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.**

Following a visit to Pitcairn in January 2023 by the community engagement lead, feedback was collated to produce a consultation document which covered the key questions/issues raised by the community. While the document was completed, shared with the community, and well received, it is still open to iterations to ensure it continues to respond to all community concerns and with the most up to date information. Following the recent July-August 2024 visit to Pitcairn, this document has been updated to reflect these ongoing conversations whilst on island, and the NZ rodent eradication expert (project consultant) has added more detail to responses to community concerns informed by his recent visit.

**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 and hives on Pitcairn is undertaken.**

**2.4 All built infrastructure and natural feature issues re-assessed as part of an updated final feasibility study.**

During the summer 2024 Henderson expedition, the team successfully took GPS coordinates of coconut groves around the coast of Henderson, which will enable us to produce a ground-truthed map. Guided by a 2023 Biosecurity report, which detailed an initial assessment of coconuts on Henderson by sight, the team checked all referenced locations - circumnavigating the island, North and West Beach (which hold the main coconut groves on the island).

Prior to the summer visit to Pitcairn, the project team created a property management survey, to be completed for every household on island. The survey aimed to record all built structures and their usage (especially regarding domestic livestock), to then be able to determine suitable bait application/livestock protection methodology during a potential eradication attempt. On island, the team successfully visited every property systematically and completed initial surveys. The GPS coordinates of every property were also taken and have been sent to a GIS consultant who will produce a map of all the structures on Pitcairn in combination with satellite imagery.



*Photos from the summer 2024 Henderson expedition - The expedition camp (top left), assessing coconuts (top right) and the team unloading supplies (bottom left).*

**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.**

All project activities were designed to test and inform a safe and effective rodent eradication plan for Henderson and Pitcairn. The results would then enable the Pitcairn community to make a fully informed decision on whether to proceed with the joint operation, by project end.

However, the results of the bait preference trials undertaken on Pitcairn in July and August 2024 show that any rodent eradication attempt on Pitcairn Island would have a very low chance of success if undertaken at the same time as the preferred operational window for Henderson (July and August), as there appears to be an abundance of highly palatable and preferential alternative plant food sources at such a time. We therefore will be unable to present a viable operational eradication plan for Pitcairn Island to the Pitcairn community within this project's lifespan (this is not the case for Henderson). Further feasibility work will still produce this, but on an alternate timeline.

The findings from the trial are surprising and we are grateful that Darwin funding has enabled us to identify for Pitcairn that the presence of abundant and preferred alternative natural food challenges operational efficacy. Without this extensive fact-finding and preparatory work, it is possible that significant investment would have occurred to carry out an eradication attempt that would have carried a low likelihood of success.

In response, we are commissioning (from alternative funding) a 12-month long fruiting plant phenology study on Pitcairn to identify whether there is an alternative suitable operational window for a rodent eradication attempt, and if so, when it would be. We will also likely continue to test alternative bait modifications (e.g. guava flavoured) to see if there is a more attractive rodent bait.

**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. Full details will be reported in our End of Project report, but we are happy to speak to NIRAS and offer more details sooner if requested.
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 2024 – 30 September 2024)**

**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 2025)?**

**No** ☒

**4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should 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 to your project 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

**6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an**

Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment, please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.
N/A