



**BIODIVERSITY  
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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

### **Half Year Report**

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

**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 2024**

**Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.**

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	<i>DPLUS195</i>
<b>Project title</b>	Protecting Seabirds Across Borders
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Ascension Island, South Atlantic Ocean
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Ascension Island Government (AIG)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	BirdLife International (BI) Global Fish Watch (GFW) Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Tiffany Simpson (AIG)</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR2</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<i>N/A</i>

**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).**

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.

- 1.1 Collate previous seabird tracking data from Ascension and St Helena.  
An additional 122 GPS tracks collected between 2021-2022 from 10 frigatebird, 7 brown booby, 8 masked booby and 97 sooty tern have been sourced and uploaded to the BirdLife International Seabird Tracking Database online ([Datasets | Seabird Tracking - Data Portal](#)). In addition, GPS tracking data from three additional juvenile frigatebirds collected in 2018 have been uploaded onto the portal.
- 1.2 Deploy satellite tags on 35 Ascension frigatebirds and 35 masked boobies.  
The TAV-2630 ST-26 ARGOS satellite tags ordered for juvenile masked boobies have arrived safely on Ascension Island ready for deployment when the chicks are ready, estimated to be ~ January/February 2025. Similarly, the 13 remaining Lotek Pin Point Large ARGOS tags for juvenile frigatebirds are ready on island for deployment in the upcoming breeding season.
- 1.3 Download and store data from satellite tags.  
Data collected from the 27 ARGOS tags deployed on juvenile frigatebirds and 8 adult masked boobies in the 2023 season have now been uploaded to the BirdLife International Seabird Tracking Database online ([Ascension Frigatebird juvenile tracking 2023-2024 | Seabird Tracking - Data Portal](#)) to accompany the other collated seabird tracking data (1.1).
- 2.2 Submit catch data requests to ICCAT for Atlantic tuna fisheries overlapping in time and space with seabirds.  
Additional discussions have been held with relevant stakeholders to agree future actions to request data from ICCAT. A plan has been formulated to ensure the appropriate requests are submitted to ICCAT when the necessary data specifications are finalised.
- 2.3 Compile database of ICCAT catch data.  
Freely available datasets from the ICCAT website have been downloaded and limited catch data for the Atlantic has been extracted and compiled up until 2022. (see Appendix 1).
- 4.3 Publicise projects through accessible social media output and public events on Ascension  
3 Facebook posts and 8 X (formerly Twitter) social media posts have been published since the last reporting period (See Appendix 2).

**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 access road to the main monitoring site at Letterbox on Ascension Island has been heavily damaged and repairs have been delayed until appropriate machinery can be used. This reduces the amount of time that can be spent at the site due to increased travel time to and from Letterbox. Regardless it is not expected to impact the deployment of the remaining satellite tags (output 1.2) as it has been planned to coincide with the peak season when multiple juveniles will be available for tagging and therefore deployments can be done in batches.

A change request was approved in January 2024 to allow masked boobies to be tagged during the 2023-24 tagging season. However, despite earlier procurement, the tags did not arrive in time to be deployed. As mentioned above, they have since been received and are ready for deployment in the 2024-25 breeding season.

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

<p>The access road issues have not been previously discussed with NIRAS as it does not pose significant risk to deployment of the tags.</p> <p>The delayed procurement of the masked booby tags was raised in the Y1 annual report and addressed with the change report CR23-096.</p>	
Discussed with NIRAS:	Yes/ No
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/ No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ No
<p>Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i> CR23-096</p>	

<p><b>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)</b></p> <p><b>Actual spend:</b></p>
<p><b>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)?</b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully.</b> Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.</p> <p><b>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.</b></p> <p><b>NB:</b> if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</p>
<p><b>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</b></p> <p>n/a</p>

<p><b>6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.</b> 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.</p>
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<p>Comment 1.1: Photographs in the YR1 report show handling seabirds with no PPE, which seems to contradict the statement in the main text re bird flu precautions?  Photographs used for social media were taken prior to the identification of HPA1 in other UKOT's in the South Atlantic and prior to additional precautions being implemented.  Appropriate health and safety measures are being followed as per British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) guidelines as part of the BTO ringing licence scheme.</p> <p>Comment 1.2: Should HPA1 be included in the risk register?  The risk register submitted with the YR1 report included HPA1 and identified issue on the register, logged on 23/08/2023.</p> <p>Comment 2: Will the tags deployed in the coming season favour masked boobies?  Indeed, there are 35 satellite tags ready for deployment of juvenile masked boobies this coming season and 13 for juvenile frigatebirds. The manufacturing time for the masked booby tags was considerably longer than expected once the budget change request had been agreed therefore effort will focus more on the masked boobies this season. Frigatebirds are unable to dive or land on the water and many are thought to rely on subsurface predators such as tuna and cetaceans to push their main prey (flying fish and flying squid) to the surface and into the air. In other regions, frigatebirds are used by fishers to locate tuna and are accidentally caught as bycatch. Frigatebirds also kleptoparasitise off other seabirds associated with facilitated foraging, such as brown boobies, masked boobies and sooty terns.</p>
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## Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024)	
Have you <b>responded to any additional feedback</b> (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your <b>risk register</b> ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024)	
Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
For All Projects	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	