



**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: 31st 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 including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	<i>DPLUS209</i>
Project title	Tracking terns for conservation in BIOT
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	British Indian Ocean Territory (the)
Lead Organisation	Heriot-Watt University
Partner(s)	BIOT Administration, Zoological Society of London
Project leader	<i>Stephen Votier</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<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. We appointed Dr Hannah Wood as the PDRA for this project - she started 08/07/2024
2. Developed fieldwork protocol for monitoring terns
3. Initial project meeting with Environment Officers in Diego Garcia (Lindsey Hollingsworth, Caroline Gittins, George Balcombe)
3. Planned first fieldwork campaign Diego Garcia 25th October- 9th November 2024
4. First fieldwork campaign in Diego Garcia currently underway.

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.

Geo-politics: The long-anticipated announcement, in October 2024, that the UK will be handing-over sovereignty of the Chagos to Mauritius represents the most significant change to the project landscape over the last 6 months. This will not have any impact on our proposed research but instead highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining effective biodiversity monitoring and preservation in the region. We hope to engage with Mauritian stakeholders during this project.

Start-date delays and subsequent underspend: The project was due to start on 1st Apr 2024, but we did not receive confirmation of funding until late May. This also led to a delayed start for named PDRA Hannah Wood (who did not start until 8th July 2024). Can you advise on how to deal with this issue?

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	Yes/ No
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Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/ No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ No
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Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

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)?

Yes ☒ 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?

There was a delay at the start of the project which appeared to stem from delays with Darwin - is this something that can be factored into reporting and process?

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.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (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 risk register ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com .	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	