



**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	DPLUS212
Project title	Restoring Road Salt Pond, Anguilla: biodiversity conservation through community collaboration
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Anguilla
Lead Organisation	Anguilla National Trust
Partner(s)	Government of Anguilla (GOA), Sandy Ground Community Council (SGCC), Fauna & Flora, Wildlife Management International Ltd. (WMIL), Fort Worth Zoo (FWZ)
Project leader	Farah Mukhida
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2024 HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	

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.

Output 1. Biodiversity and ecosystem values of Road Salt Pond assessed to inform sustainable management frameworks and to monitor and evaluate management impacts within a climate changing context.

Over the last six months, we have collected bird biodiversity and abundance data through our monthly bird count programme (Activity 1.1). We have also been conducting quarter flower-insect timed surveys to monitor pollinator (insect, bird) activity, diversity, and abundance and updated our vegetation species list for the vegetation around and within Road Salt Pond (Activity 1.3). Beyond ecological data, we have also begun work on a socioeconomic assessment of the Sandy Ground community, and are finalising a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion assessment (Activity 1.5) to better inform how we community and engage Sandy Ground community members and to ensure that project activities, outputs and impacts are inclusive and beneficial for all.

Output 2. Road Salt Pond recognised and protected as a wetland of national and international importance

An important component of this project is the national designation of Road Salt Pond as a protected area and the international designation and recognition of the wetland as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. As part of this process, stakeholder consultations and community meetings were held to identify community priorities for Road Salt Pond and the role of the Sandy Ground community within the wetland's/protected area's management framework (Activity 2.1).

With the Sandy Ground community being so close-knit, it was decided that instead of establishing a separate multi-stakeholder management planning committee (Activity 2.6), Road Salt Pond management planning meetings would be open to anyone from the community and, through these meetings, a comprehensive management plan has been developed and endorsed by the Sandy Ground community (Activity 2.7). The management plan that was developed through a highly participatory approach and involved over 40 individuals, focuses on four main priority areas: 1. Natural, cultural, and built heritage conservation; 2. Tourism, visitation, and public use; 3. Information, education, and awareness; and 4. Collaborative governance.

A communications brief and presentation has been developed for the Government of Anguilla Cabinet, briefly outlining the ecological, ecosystem, cultural, and tourism value of the pond as well as the proposed management plan and suggested community-approved governance structure (ANT as a management agency, supported by a multi-stakeholder technical advisory group). We are currently identifying a suitable date for the presentation to Cabinet (Activity 2.2).

Output 3. Road Salt Pond restored through the removal and control of the most destructive invasive alien species, reducing predation of vulnerable wetland birds and seabirds while enhancing resting and foraging habitats through rewilding

To support the restoration of Road Salt Pond, we have been testing the design and construction of a floating raft system for nesting and roosting seabirds and shorebirds. The rafts are meant to be biosecure and with their design preventing predation by rats, iguanas, and cats. Monkeys, however, are also a concern especially with the increased number of reports of the invasive animals in the area. Adequately addressing the potential impact of monkeys on the site (as well as across Anguilla) will require their complete removal from the island and in July 2024, with the help of invasive species specialist Mr. Peter Haverson, we undertook a monkey removal feasibility study which will be used to inform discussions on an island-wide eradication programme (Activity 3.3).

As part of our on-the-ground habitat restoration and design work, we launched and trialled a single 8'x8' raft in April 2024 just prior to the least tern nesting season. Since then, through the BirdsCaribbean network, we have been able to liaise with colleagues in the Puerto Rico, Maryland and Maine (United States) who have constructed similar rafts and who have offered very helpful advice on how to improve our design. Following this advice, we are now exploring a modular system to increase contiguous nesting and foraging space for birds, supported by a sound system that plays seabird calls and the deployment of decoys on the rafts to further entice seabirds to use the biosecure space (Activity 3.1).

Output 4. National capacity to restore, manage, and monitor Road Salt Pond is raised, supported by enhanced technical skills, knowledge exchange, opportunities for direct engagement, and greater public awareness and collaboration

To support our outreach and engagement as well as to share project progress, we developed and are currently implementing a multi-media public outreach campaign (Activity 4.1, Activity 4.4). Over the last six months, we held a one-week summer camp for ten young people that focused on habitat restoration and ecosystem values and that included a session on Road Salt Pond, invasive species control, and designed habitat and held similar activities through our afterschool programmes (no. participants = 18). We have also presented initial project results at the BirdsCaribbean meeting in the Dominican Republic in July 2024 (no. attendees = 40), through which we were also able to establish new connections with colleagues from the region who are conducting or would like to conduct similar work (see Output 3). We also participated in Global Big Day (11 May 2024), a worldwide celebration of birds that corresponds with World Migratory Bird Day and that involves hundreds of thousands of participants who observe and record as many birds as possible within a single day. Global Big Day in Anguilla took place at Road Salt Pond where 11 participants recorded a total of 184 birds across 19 species. Outreach and advocacy activities have also included higher levels of the GOA, with a meeting held in September 2024 with the Premier of Anguilla and the GOA District Representative for Sandy Ground during which the project was discussed and an update was provided on project progress, and the importance and critical need for Road Salt Pond to be protected was reiterated.

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.

We have not encountered any notable problems or unexpected developments so far.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:

N/A

Formal Change Request submitted:

N/A

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

N/a

Change Request reference if known:

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 are no other issues that need to be raised.

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

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 BCFs-Report@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.