



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects  
Half Year Report  
(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)**

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS104
<b>Project title</b>	<b>Conserving St Helena's endemic invertebrates through invasive invertebrate control</b>
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
<b>Lead organisation</b>	St Helena National Trust
<b>Partner(s)</b>	St Helena Government (SHG), IUCN Mid Atlantic Island Invertebrate Specialist Group (MAIISG) c/o Species Recovery Trust, Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), Buglife
<b>Project leader</b>	Mike Jervois
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	Weekly update of the project on social media, ( <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Buglives">https://www.facebook.com/Buglives</a> ) ( <a href="https://www.facebook.com/SHnationaltrust">https://www.facebook.com/SHnationaltrust</a> ) <a href="https://www.facebook.com/communityforests">https://www.facebook.com/communityforests</a> ( <a href="https://www.instagram.com/sthelenabugteam/">https://www.instagram.com/sthelenabugteam/</a> )  Updates on the St Helena National Trust website. ( <a href="http://www.trust.org.sh/shnt-conservation-programmes/natural-heritage/invertebrates/">http://www.trust.org.sh/shnt-conservation-programmes/natural-heritage/invertebrates/</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).**

To date there have been 16 steering group meetings held, in which the following has been discussed:

- Project delivery and issues,
- Contributing to and signing off trial plans
- Assessing impacts on non-target species and agreeing on ant trial sites.
- Progressing in citizen science.
- Finalising on monitoring plans and training
- A risk register and indicator tracker for the project have both been composed and will be regularly reviewed by the steering group.

It is very hard to monitor change in endemic invertebrate population, as they are influenced by many factors such as; climate, habitat and their ecology, therefore, it was agreed by the project steering group to revise Outcome 0.2 ' *By project end endemic invertebrate indicator species show a 10% increase in abundance/ distribution in 3 years post control from baseline monitoring.*' to ' *A demonstrable positive change in endemic and indigenous species richness/and or abundance from baseline data at project control sites by March 2023.*' To make the outcome more achievable, this will be requested in the next change request (Dec 2021)

Output 1, Activity 1.9, Wasp trials have been postponed to the following year (2021-2022), due to the wasp being seasonal and the activity was low with 13 wasp callouts (44.8% decrease) for (Jan – Aug) 2021 compared to the 29 wasp callouts for 2020 and the 35 for 2019. The wasps have shown little to no interest in the protein (chicken) that was put out at the trial sites, this could be contributed to the wasp's food supply being abundant (other invertebrates i.e. Loveridge hoverfly) or possibly wasp numbers are so low that they are finding efficient amount of food in the surrounding area. The project team are ready to monitor wasp activity and begin trials when the wasp season starts (February 2022).

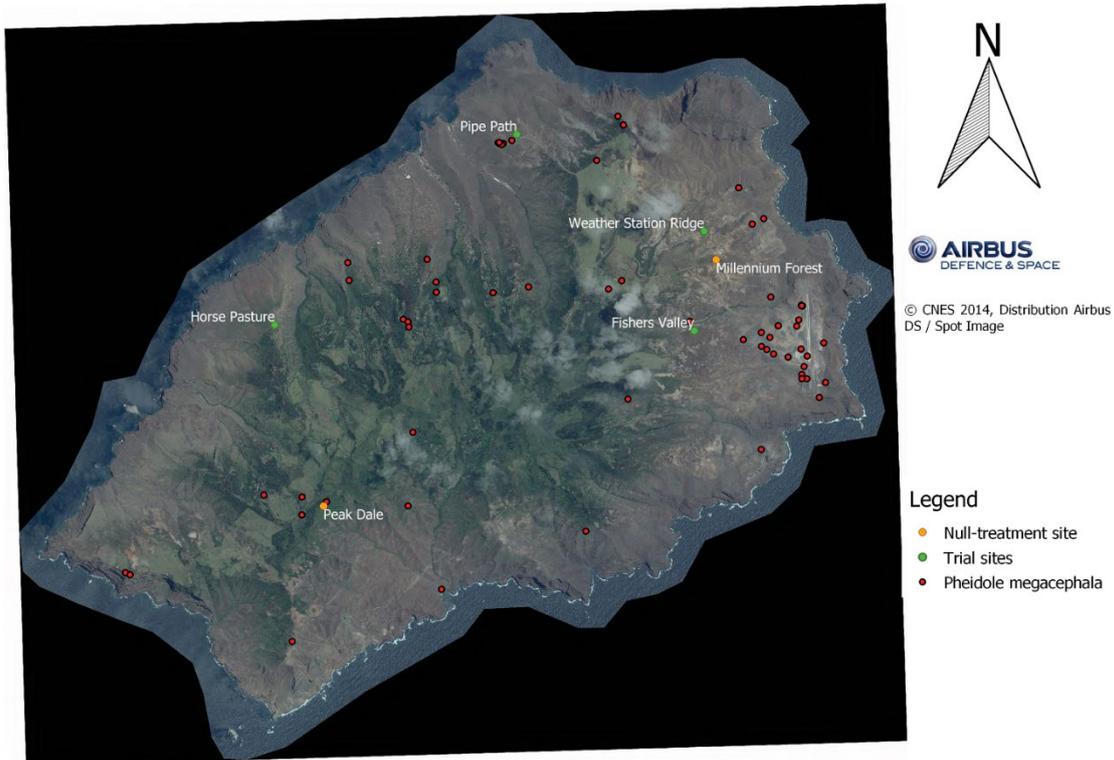


**Left to right: Monitoring wasp activity at Diana's Peak. Staff member checking wasps' lures at Mount Pleasant.**

Ant sites (2 hectares) are prepared and non-target/ant activity baseline gathered, 3,200 bait stations created and filled with ant poison. Trials were scheduled to start in October, but due to the weather and delay in permission for land use from owner, the trials have been postponed until January 2022 at 4 non-sensitive sites. The poison will be out on site for one week only. Peak Dale will be monitored as a control site (null-treatment) to monitor invertebrates and the weather. We will monitor Millennium Forest to determine if the weather is affecting the ant activity.



**Ant Bait Station**



**Map showing ant trial sites and null treatment sites**

Praying mantis from South Africa (SA) have been collected and sent to Fera (UK) to determine if this is the same species that is present on St Helena, however there have been delays and flight interruptions due to riots in SA and covid-19.

A parasitic wasp that is known to parasitoid the mantis egg pods is found in SA. We have contracted a master student to collect the egg pods and the parasitic wasp. The specimens will be sent to CABI to carry out a risk assessment. Due to the weather and drought there have been low numbers of mantis found; which means we were unable to collect any of the wasps or eggs in SA. This survey will be conducted again in 2021/2022.

Output 2 cannot be initiated until Output 1 has been completed. The weather and low activity have delayed the project dramatically therefore both the ant and wasp trials will start in the beginning of Year 3 (March 2022). The wasps are seasonal which means the project will only be trialling the control method. The ant control method will be rolled-out in the endemic sites as they are found all year round. To get the full effects of the poison the control method will be run in the warmer part of the year.

Output 3, activity 3.2, Invasive invertebrate control workshop is being organised, by first identifying the pest causing the biggest problems to farmers/ landowners. We collaborated with GB non-native during the invasive species week (24<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> May) raising awareness on invasive species on St Helena through their blog. (<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?pageid=690&fbclid=IwAR17cXLQW9P-XWLhTP5IOw8emCEbfOYucSHqZelvGGq4do1yCkZ-Fdz0dvY>)

Activity 3.4, updates/ comments on the 'St Helena Invertebrate Conservation Strategy' have been collated which will be presented and reviewed in a 2-day workshop that will take place in November 2021. Covid has caused a lot of restrictions therefore no international conference has been organised.

Output 4, The project has published information to increase project/invasive invertebrate awareness through 5 community pop-up information stalls around the island; 60 people were interested in the project and invasive invertebrates. Common questions asked were 'why these target invertebrates are invasive? how we going to control them? and general questions about invertebrates. The team further promoted the project on the local radio and competitions.

We have conducted 8 bug hunts and engaged with 135 members of the general public (adults and children) and 3 competitions to increase awareness of the project. Baseline data of the public knowledge on invertebrates (invasive) were carried out at the beginning of the project and another survey has been carried out to determine if the public engagement methods are working.



Pop up stall at Levelwood



Ant activity at Millennium Forest

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

The land rover required a lot of maintenance and repairs, which was very expensive, resulting in overspend on the vehicle and maintenance budget line. We had to move funds from another budget line and the National Trust also contributed to be able to cover the costs. Unfortunately, this was an unforeseen circumstance that was out of our control and if we were to conduct the project again, we should have increased the vehicle and maintenance budget line to ensure that the vehicle is being serviced regularly or if deemed necessary purchase a new land rover.

During this financial year (2021 – 2022) there have been a lot of staff changes within the project. Liza Fowler, Invertebrate Control Project Officer transferred to another project. The Trust continues to support increasing capacity by promoting the Christy Jo and Daryl, Invertebrate Control Field Assistants to Invertebrate Control Field Officer (Daryl) and Invertebrate Control Assistant Manager (Christy Jo) and will be hiring another Field Assistant.

Losing Liza Fowler, Invertebrate Control Project Officer have left some gaps in knowledge, however Liza will still be working closely with the project team and project staff will have ongoing training and will eventually be able to close this gap.

**2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

Consultants were arranged to come to St Helena to support the project, but due to covid-19 and the restrictions, this was postponed. The assigned budget had to be increased due to the restrictions and travel between countries is difficult. The same applies to send staff member to the UK to promote the project, this mainly now takes place via zoom, online conference or through social media.

Procuring goods from outside of St Helena is very difficult, it takes at least three months from time of ordering for goods to arrive via the ship (MV Helena). Covid-19 restrictions have impacted on importing products via air freight. The flight schedule has reduced dramatically from four flights a month to one flight every 6-8 weeks and the items must undergo one-week quarantine. As well the items might get bumped off the flight due to other goods being high priority or they could get left behind.

**2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

**3a. 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: £

**3b. 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget 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.**

**4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review 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 LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report** by email to [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**