



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

Project reference	DPLUS133
Project title	Streamlining Ascension Island's Marine Turtle Monitoring Programme for Long-Term Sustainability
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ascension Island
Lead organisation	University of Exeter
Partner(s)	Ascension Island Government Conservation & Fisheries Directorate
Project leader	Dr Sam Weber
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	

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).

Work on this project began a month late in August 2021 following a change request approved by the Darwin Secretariat and as such there are only two months of activity to summarise in the current half year report. Nevertheless, progress has been made on the two outputs that were scheduled for Q2 of Y1 in the original implementation timetable.

Output 1.1 Re-analyse all existing marine turtle monitoring data for Ascension Island using Bayesian state-space models.

All existing green turtle monitoring data has now been analysed to generate estimates of total nesting activity on index beaches that are surveyed annually. We are currently working on integrating and extrapolating these estimates to produce estimates of whole island activity that will form the input for Bayesian trend analyses. We anticipate that these remaining steps will be completed over the next 2-3 weeks.

Output 2.1 Using the current population estimate as a starting point, simulate future marine turtle nesting data assuming a range of long-term trends.

Simulations have been run to evaluate the impact of different monitoring regimes on the accuracy and precision of estimates of nesting activity derived in Output 1.1. We now need to combine these estimates of observation error with simulated time series to determine the impact on statistical power to detect trends. This will follow once the observed trend in Output 1.1 has been fitted.

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.

Since the project award, Project Leader Dr Sam Weber has been moved to a permanent, core-funded academic position at the University of Exeter. This change in contract status and additional responsibilities has inevitable implications for the running of the project, but we are working to minimize any impacts on the budget and implementation timetable through the timely appointment a qualified replacement at an appropriate salary level. The new appointee will work under the supervision of Dr Weber, who will retain overall oversight as Project Leader. The Darwin Secretariat have been notified of the change and have advised that a formal change request should be submitted once a suitable candidate has been identified.

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.

The project was approximately 1-month late in starting due to fieldwork commitments on another Darwin project delayed from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This change was approved by Darwin and has resulted in all activities and outputs being delayed by approximately 4-6 weeks. Nevertheless, we hope to finalise all modelling outputs by the end of Y1 Q3 as planned so that revised monitoring protocols can be trialled during the upcoming turtle nesting season beginning in Y1 Q4.

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: Yes

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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. 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**