

## Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

*Note: 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 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS133
<b>Project title</b>	Streamlining Ascension Island's Marine Turtle Monitoring Programme for Long-Term Sustainability
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Ascension Island
<b>Lead partner</b>	University of Exeter
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Ascension Island Government Conservation & Fisheries Directorate
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr Sam Weber
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	

**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).**

***Output 1. The status of the Ascension Island green turtle nesting population is updated and population estimates are made widely available.***

This output was completed in Y1

***Output 2. The efficiency of alternative monitoring protocols is evaluated through simulation-based modelling.***

Following changes in project staffing arrangements described in first Annual Report, no further progress has been made on this key output during the current reporting period. As such, we are currently behind where we had planned to be at this stage. Further explanation is provided below and we have submitted a change request in conjunction with this report proposing a short extension which will allow us to make up lost ground.

***Output 3. Novel technologies that may one day supplement or replace existing monitoring methods are reviewed and assessed for suitability and field readiness.***

A literature review of the use of novel technologies in marine turtle monitoring has now been completed. In addition, a proposal to host a 'novel monitoring technologies' workshop at the 41<sup>st</sup> International Sea Turtle Symposium (ISTS) in Colombia has also been accepted. The ISTS is the principal international meeting for sea turtle researchers and marine managers, so the planned workshop presents an opportunity to bring together colleagues working at high density nesting populations around the world to present the findings of our literature review and discuss any emerging technologies that could streamline monitoring programmes at Ascension Island and similar locations globally. This represents a significant enhancement of our original objective to host a by-invitation online workshop. However, due to the timing of the event (March 2023), it is contingent on the no-cost extension we are requesting being granted.

**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.**

As detailed in previous project reports, the project leader from the University of Exeter has had to significantly reduce his time commitment to this project after moving to a permanent faculty position. A replacement has been appointed. However, they are splitting their time across two parallel Darwin Plus projects that Dr Weber was previously employed on (current project and DPLUS113) and it has understandably taken them time to familiarise themselves with the different projects, datasets and methods involved. We are therefore behind where we had planned to be at this stage. A change request has been submitted to the Darwin Secretariat in conjunction with this report proposing a no-cost extension until the end of the current financial year to give us additional time to complete planned outputs.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

**4a. 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: £

**4b. 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 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 if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

**5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

**If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response 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 NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**