

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: 31st October 2023

Project reference	DPLUS195
Project title	Protecting Seabirds Across Borders
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ascension Island, South Atlantic Ocean
Lead partner	Ascension Island Government (AIG)
Partner(s)	Birdlife International (BI) Global Fish Watch (GFW) Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
Project leader	Tiffany Simpson
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	N/A

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).

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.

1.1 Collate previous seabird tracking data from Ascension and St Helena and create database uploaded onto the GFW Marine Manager Portal

A formal data sharing agreement has been issued by St Helena Government (SHG) for all relevant seabird tracking data from St Helena as part of the project (see supporting info). This includes ~480 GPS trips from 60 individual masked boobies between 2012-2015 and GLS data from 21 individual masked boobies between 2016-2020. Data is in the process of being uploaded online to the Birdlife International Tracking Database ([Datasets | Seabird Tracking - Data Portal](#)). Collation of existing Ascension seabird tracking data is ongoing.

1.2 Deploy satellite tags on 35 Ascension Frigatebirds and 35 masked boobies

Match funding through the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme enabled the purchase of 16 satellite tags. 8 Lotek tags (PinPoint Argos Solar L) have been deployed on 6 juvenile and 2 adult frigatebirds, 4 Telonic TAV-2630 tags onto adult male masked boobies. An additional order has been placed for 32 Lotek tags for frigatebirds due to arrive at the beginning of November 2023.

1.3 Download and store data from satellite tags

Satellite data from the initial 8 tag deployments on frigatebirds are still actively logging locations.

4.3 Publicise project through accessible social media output and public events on Ascension

Two social media (Facebook and Twitter) posts on the project have been published since project commencement.

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.

Two of the initial 8 deployments of Lotek satellite tags on juvenile frigatebirds encountered minor issues with the attachment method onto the tail feathers. One tag has been re-deployed back onto an adult frigatebird. Alternative attachment methods to reduce the stress on the feather shafts and the risk of tag loss have been discussed by project partners for future tag deployments.

Access to the breeding colony on the Letterbox Nature Reserve has been limited due to severe damage to the main access track. As a consequence, most masked booby fledglings in the 22/23 breeding season were missed, hence deployment onto adults masked boobies instead of juveniles. Increased monitoring of the colony closer to the peak breeding season (December/January) will ensure that enough suitable juveniles will be found for the next planned batch of deployments.

It has also become apparent that masked booby adults have different moult strategies between sexes; in August females were still in active tail moult whereas males had completed their tail moult. Timing of future deployments using tail mounted devices on adult masked boobies will need to take this into consideration.

Unexpectedly, delivery of the TAV satellite tags from the US were delayed. This was an identified minor risk in the project outline. However, it is not foreseen that this will be an issue for future tag orders.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known:	

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)</p> <p>Actual spend: £ ██████████</p> <p>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 2024)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £</p>
<p>4c. 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</p>
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p>

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, 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.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your projectschedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS 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. 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**