

# DPLR1\1037

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Jessica Magnus

## Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

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### Project Reference Number

DPL00023

### Q1. Project Title

*No Response*

### Overseas Territory(ies)

Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia (on Cyprus)

### Lead Organisation or Individual

BirdLife Cyprus

### Partner Organisation(s)

University of Cyprus (UCY)

### Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£31,663.00

### Project Start Date

01 May 2023

### Project End Date

31 March 2024

### Project Leader Name

Martin Hellicar

### Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

<https://birdlifecyprus.org/myna-control-have-you-seen-this-bird/>

### Report Author(s)

Martin Hellicar, Tassos Shialis

### Report Date

29 April 2024

### Project Summary

*No Response*

### Project Outcomes

Checked	<b>Biodiversity: improving and conserving biodiversity, and slowing or reversing biodiversity loss and degradation;</b>
Unchecked	<b>Climate Change: responding to, mitigating and adapting to climate change and its effects on the natural environment and local communities;</b>
Checked	<b>Environmental quality: improving the condition and protection of the natural environment;</b>
Checked	<b>Capability and capacity building: enhancing the capacity within OTs, including through community engagement and awareness, to support the environment in the short- and long-term.</b>

## Section 2 - Project Outcomes (Essential)

On a scale of 1 (high – outcome substantially exceeded ) to 5 (low – outcome substantially did not meet expectation ), how successful do you think your project has been?

2 - Outcome moderately exceeded

### Project outcomes and justification for rating above

The main objective of the project was to achieve a significant reduction and to prevent the spreading and establishment of Common Myna in the Akroriti SBA and in the Republic of Cyprus. This has been achieved and this project has been the driving force for this success, since it created the right conditions and collaborations to tackle Myna arrivals on the island. In total 14 individuals were shot by the Game & Fauna Service and the SBA Environment Department teams during project duration. No new Myna observations have been recorded in Cyprus since November 2023.

One of the first achievements was the creation of a 'Myna control task force', a working team of relevant government departments and other stakeholders that would oversee the effort to eradicate Mynas. This team comprised of the Cyprus Game & Fauna Service, the Cyprus Environment Department, the SBA Environment Department, University of Cyprus and BirdLife Cyprus. With the lead of BirdLife, this team met regularly to discuss progress on deliverables. More importantly, this working team put in place a collaborative system for tackling future invasions. The team realised the benefits of working together to address this issue, and more widely how similar approaches and best practices can be applied to tackle other invasive species.

The project was also successful in creating and disseminating awareness raising materials on why the Common Myna, as an invasive species, would be a problem if established on the island. It should be mentioned that there was pushback and criticism for the action taken to control Mynas, including from birdwatchers, arguing that these birds are beautiful and should not be controlled. This indicates that further awareness is needed to highlight why Common Mynas would be a problem for native birds if established in Cyprus.

Awareness material was provided to environmental educational centres at Akrotiri (within Overseas Territories) and Kritou Terra (in the Republic), making children aware from early on why invasive species are a threat to local biodiversity.

Finally, via this project a biosecurity workshop was organized to raise awareness and to train the personnel of agencies working at various entry points within the island, both within the Republic of Cyprus and the Sovereign Base Areas, to identify invasive alien species that affect the health of the environment, plants, and humans. It was attended by 35+ individuals from various authorities and agencies (including Republic of Cyprus (RoC) bodies), including invasive experts from different fields, that were brought together and discussed collaborative approaches for tackling biosecurity.

With regards to scientific research, 42 Myna specimens were analysed. Specifically, 14 samples were culled in Cyprus, 12 individuals were secured from Lebanon, and 16 samples from Israel. The samples from Lebanon and Israel were only obtained in February 2024, due to delays caused by the Gaza war. Preliminary DNA analysis suggest samples come from a single origin population. However, further analysis of a likely colonization pattern will require genetic analyses at a finer scale, looking at relatedness. These analyses are planned for the coming months.

### Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload

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[2024\\_03\\_13\\_Biosecurity\\_worshop\\_Participants](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:29  
📎 jpg 1.72 MB

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[Myna Poster English version](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:28  
📎 pdf 876.25 KB

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[2024\\_03\\_13\\_Biosecurity\\_worshop\\_ppt\\_by\\_UK\\_Defra\\_expert](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
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📎 jpg 1.52 MB

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[2024\\_03\\_13\\_Biosecurity\\_workshop\\_Participation\\_list\\_signatures](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:25  
📎 pdf 1.43 MB

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[2024\\_03\\_13\\_Biosecurity\\_workshop\\_Invitation](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:25  
📎 pdf 236.4 KB

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[2023\\_Myna\\_sightings@Limassol\\_area](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:23  
📎 jpg 190.79 KB

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[2024\\_April\\_Report\\_Genetic\\_analyses\\_Common\\_myna\\_samples\\_from\\_UCy](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:23  
📎 pdf 323.74 KB

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[2023\\_Myna\\_sample\\_Shot\\_by\\_Cyprus\\_Game\\_Service](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:23  
📎 jpg 127.84 KB

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[2023\\_10\\_06\\_Myna\\_Trap\\_installment\\_by\\_Cyprus\\_Game\\_Service\\_warden@private\\_house](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:27:22  
📎 jpg 721.2 KB

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[Myna Traps constructed by BirdLife Cyprus](#)  
📅 29/04/2024  
🕒 12:26:49  
📎 jpg 404.68 KB

## Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

Links of animation film created to raise awareness regarding the invasive Common Myna

- Fb post link <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=293977363504189>

- Instagram link <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyxuFsBMk8Z/>

- You tube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyRq6zoGCYo>

Links of social media posts and articles written to raise awareness regarding the invasive Common Myna

- 17th May 2023 – BirdLife Cyprus wrote an article on Cyprus Mail with title ‘Sounding the alarm about the Myna invasion’ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2023/05/17/sounding-the-alarm-about-the-myna-invasion/>. The aim of this article was to raise awareness of the issue

- Fb post on 14th July 2023

<https://www.facebook.com/BirdLifeCyprus/posts/pfbid0pqZZmZcRvHtp6PpQATb5hj4yq7zsgPQ4cj2ckv4qDvfsyq31iSzGczbaA5Wu5DVQI>

## Project Challenges

One major challenge faced by the project was the obtaining of 45 Myna specimens to undertake genetic analysis with a focus on the identification of the origin of Mynas arriving in Cyprus. This action was led by the University of Cyprus Behavioural Ecology and Evolution Lab, with extensive experience of such genetic analysis.

Knowing the possible points of entry would enable targeted mitigation measures to be implemented as part of a future contingency plan to address this invasive species, which would presumably be developed by the competent authority. From Cyprus, 14 specimens were collected and analysed – 13 adults and 1 juvenile.

Once the analysis of these specimens was done, the plan was to acquire specimens from neighbouring countries that are suspected possible countries of origin of Mynas, namely Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. However due to the war in Israel that started in October 2023, acquiring specimens from these countries proved very challenging, causing significant delays. Eventually, 12 and 16 Mynas were obtained from Lebanon and Israel respectively, in February 2024 and results from the genome sequencing were ready and provided in early April. Despite this short time frame, the University of Cyprus was able to undertake analysis, producing preliminary results as abovementioned.

## Lessons Learned

The project was successful in getting key stakeholders / authorities engaged and actively participating in this ad-hoc ‘Myna control task force’ that was created. In the absence of the project, it would have been very difficult to create and to maintain the engagement of the competent authorities. The support provided by UK Defra / APHA non-native expert, Mr James Millett, was also very helpful. Mr Millett joined the progress meetings the task force would have on a bimonthly basis.

Being a short, 11-month project, meant that it was important to have regular progress meetings. This was done every two months online or in person, and meetings proved quite useful both for an update and for planning. Considering that invasive species are a growing problem in Cyprus, and worldwide, the task force organized a biosecurity workshop in March 2024. The aim of the workshop was to cover invasive alien species that affect the health of the environment, plants, and humans. The Myna project was presented as part of the workshop, and a constructive discussion with experts from various agencies took place, particularly on how a generic contingency plan could be developed and what it should include in it. The only drawback has been the delay in obtaining Myna samples from other neighboring countries, caused by the unexpected war in Israel. One take away lesson for any future project would be to start the process for the obtaining of any samples from other countries as early as feasible in the project.

### Section 3 - Project Finance (Essential)

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#### Project Expenditure

Project Spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
<b>Staff Costs</b>				
<b>Consultancy Costs</b>				
<b>Overhead Costs</b>				
<b>Travel and Subsisten</b>				
<b>Operating Costs</b>				
<b>Capital Items</b>				
<b>Others</b>				

<b>Total</b>	31,663.00	25,955.00	-18
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## Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

Overall there was an underspent of just over £5708, which was mainly due to the following reasons:

- For consultancy costs it was budgeted that an expert would be involved to provide support and guidance during the project implementation, including a site visit. Fortunately, Mr James Millett, UK non-natives expert working for APHA / Defra, was happy to provide support and guidance without any incurred salary expense. The site visit was undertaken as part of the biosecurity workshop that was organised in March 2024.
- There was less than expected traveling needed for Myna monitoring or for progress meetings (which were done online).
- Capital costs: this budget was for making Myna traps and four were made (instead of 15). During the project implementation it was realised that shooting would be the most effective control method, which was also the opinion of the UK non-natives expert, James Millet. A change request for buying an air rifle was sent in November 2023, however this was rejected as fire arms are not an eligible expenditure item. However, it was decided not to spend resources on making myna traps that would likely not be used.

## Section 4 - Contribution of Project to Darwin Plus Programme Objectives

Please select up to **one** indicator that applies within **each group/indicator list (A, B, C, D)** and report your results for that indicator in the text box underneath. If you do not have relevant results to report for any of the indicators in a particular group, you can leave them blank.

Please also submit some form of evidence (above) to demonstrate any results you list below, where possible.

### Group A: Capability and Capacity - Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

Unchecked **DPLUS-A01: Number of people from key national and local stakeholder groups completing structured and relevant training.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-A02: Number of secondments or placements completed by individuals of key local and national stakeholders.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-A03: Number of local/national organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of project.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-A04: Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-A05: Number of trainers trained reporting to have delivered further training by the end of the project.**

### Group A Indicator Results

We are not reporting under this section

### Group B: Policies, Practices and Management- Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

Unchecked **DPLUS-B01: Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-B02: Number of new/improved species management plans available and endorsed.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-B03: Number of new/improved community management plans available and endorsed.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-B04: Number of new/improved sustainable enterprises/ community benefits management plans available and endorsed.**

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Unchecked **DPLUS-B05: Number of people with increased participation in local communities / local management organisations (i.e., participation in Governance/citizen engagement).**

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Unchecked **DPLUS-B06: Number of Local Stakeholders and Local Communities (people) with strengthened (recognised/clarified) tenure and/or rights.**

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## Group B Indicator Results

We are not reporting under this section

## Group C: Evidence and Best Practices - Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

Unchecked **DPLUS-C01: Number of best practice guides and knowledge products published and endorsed.**

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Unchecked **DPLUS-C02: Number of new conservation or species stock assessments published.**

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Unchecked **DPLUS-C03: New assessments of habitat conservation action needs published.**

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Unchecked **DPLUS-C04: New assessments of community use of biodiversity resources published.**

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Unchecked **DPLUS-C05: Number of projects contributing data, insights, and case studies to national Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) related reporting processes and calls for evidence.**

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## Group C Indicator Results

We are not reporting under this section

## Group D: Sustainable Benefits to People, Biodiversity and Climate - Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

Unchecked **DPLUS-D01 Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices.**

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Unchecked **DPLUS-D02: Number of people whose disaster/climate resilience has been improved.**

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Checked **DPLUS-D03: Number of policies with biodiversity provisions that have been enacted or amended.**

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## Group D Indicator Results

The relevant competent authority, the Cyprus Environment Department, has officially reported the presence of Common Mynas on the European Alien Species Information Network / Notification System. This would mean that in the future an action plan should be developed to address this invasive.

## Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

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### Project Partnerships

One of the first achievements was the creation of a 'Myna control task force', a working team of relevant government departments and other stakeholders that would oversee the effort to eradicate Mynas. This team comprised of the Cyprus Game & Fauna Service, the Cyprus Environment Department, the SBA Environment Department, University of Cyprus and BirdLife Cyprus. With the lead of BirdLife, this team met regularly to discuss progress on deliverables. More importantly, this working team realised the benefits of working together to address this issue, and more widely how similar approaches and best practices can be applied to tackle other invasive species.

### Wider Impacts and Decision Making

We are not reporting under this section

## Sustainability and Legacy

We are not reporting under this section

## Section 6 - Communications & Publicity

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### Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements

We were very pleased with the short animation we created to raise awareness regarding the invasive Common Myna. Links to this are below:

- Fb post link <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=293977363504189>
- Instagram link <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyxuFsBMk8Z/>
- You tube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyRq6zoGCYo>

### Photo, video or graphic to be used for publicity and communications.

**Please upload at least one relevant and engaging image, video or graphic that you consent to be used alongside the above text in Defra, JNCC or NIRAS communications material.**

-  [Game & Fauna Service warden with Myna trap](#)
-  30/04/2024
-  12:45:56
-  pdf 1.04 MB

### Photo, video, and/or graphic captions and credits.

We are not reporting under this section

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat, Administrator, and/or JNCC to publish the content of this section.

- Yes, I agree for the BCFs Secretariat and/or JNCC to publish the content of this section.

Please list any accounts that you would like tagged in online posts here. This can include project pages, partners' pages or individuals' accounts for any of the following platforms: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

<https://birdlifecyprus.org/myna-control-have-you-seen-this-bird/>


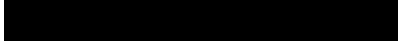
## Section 7 - Darwin Plus Contacts

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**Please tick here to confirm that you have read and acknowledge the BCF's Privacy Notice on how contact details will be used and stored and that you have sought agreement from anyone that you are sharing personal details with us on their behalf.**

- I confirm I have read the Privacy Notice and have consent to share the following contact details

### Project Contact Details

Project Contact Name	Martin Hellicar
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Project leader
Email	
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

