

DPLR1\1058

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Nancy Pascoe

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPL00043

Q1. Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

British Virgin Islands (BVI)

Lead Organisation or Individual

National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands

Partner Organisation(s)

Fort Worth Zoo, H. Lavity Stoutt Community College

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£25,574.00

Project Start Date

25 April 2023

Project End Date

30 September 2024

Project Leader Name

Nancy Pascoe

Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

<https://www.facebook.com/NPTVI/>; <https://www.bvinpt.org/blog/categories/birds>

Report Author(s)

Report Date

29 November 2024

Project Summary

No Response

Project Outcomes

Checked	Biodiversity: improving and conserving biodiversity, and slowing or reversing biodiversity loss and degradation;
Unchecked	Climate Change: responding to, mitigating and adapting to climate change and its effects on the natural environment and local communities;
Unchecked	Environmental quality: improving the condition and protection of the natural environment;
Checked	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.

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?

4 - Outcome moderately did not meet expectation


Project outcomes and justification for rating above


The project set out to learn more about the population dynamics of flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) and this was achieved through monthly surveys across the BVI and weekly surveys on the island of Anegada that provided a snapshot of where the flamingos were distributed and if any nesting activity was observed. The private islands of Guana and Necker Island also contributed monthly data which was very important as these are two of the six main sites for flamingos within the BVI. This method of intensive Territory wide survey representing national dispersal had never taken place before and provided a real insight into the constant movement of the birds between the six sites and challenged our previous assumptions about the flamingos and their perceived nesting activity. The surveys confirmed our assumptions of preferred wetland habitats and provided scientific data to back this up.


The project did not achieve its goal of banding flamingos to learn about regional dispersal as the birds only nested at Necker Island during the project period and we were not permitted to band on this private island which is owned by Sir Richard Branson. Whilst we have a good relationship with the island's Wildlife Manager and are allowed to visit the island, Sir Richard did not want the birds disturbed. As the flamingos did not nest


anywhere else in the BVI this past year it meant that the banding and cat trapping equipment that was purchased was not used. However, the positive outcome is that NPTVI will be ready with the equipment as soon as nesting activity is observed at one of the publicly accessible locations on Tortola or Anegada. NPTVI note that we had not listed the absence of flamingos nesting on Anegada as a risk in our application form, as we were so confident that the birds always nested there based on our previous understanding of their behaviour. This DPLUS Local project has therefore helped us to better understand the fluctuations in their nesting behaviour and made us identify other limiting factors which we had not known about before, such as water depth in ponds, food supply and disturbance from cats and people from the game cameras that were set up. The project achieved its goal of raising public awareness of flamingos across the BVI as they were known primarily from just Anegada, as they are a popular tourist attraction, but the monthly BVI wide surveys provided actual data on how many flamingos are in the total BVI at any one time, with the highest count at 897 flamingos on 17th November, 2023. These count numbers and other project activities were shared on the NPTVI Facebook page and were consistently re-shared within the BVI and within the Caribbean region which broadened our public awareness reach. This assisted NPTVI in communicating the threats flamingos face through invasive species (cats), bird-strike mortality through utility lines and the need for people not to disturb them as they can change their nesting behaviour.


Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload


 [Appendix.1.Project.activities](#)


 02/12/2024


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 [Appendix3_BVI.flamingo.monitoring](#)


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 pdf 425.81 KB


 [Appendix4_Meeting.minutes.FWZ.10.10.24](#)


 02/12/2024


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 [Appendix.5.Facebook_post.NPTVI](#)


 02/12/2024


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 [Appendix2_Anegada.flamingo.monitoring](#)

 02/12/2024

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Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

Appendix 1 is a presentation of the project activities and equipment purchased that will be available at the next nesting opportunity, including game cameras, anti-bird strike devices, GSM transmitters, t-shirts for banding activity.

This project enabled a NPTVI Warden on Anegada to have increased hours to conduct flamingo monitoring every week. Anegada was the primary location that nesting was expected, followed by the private island of Necker Island which was monitored by Necker's team. The monitoring on Anegada took place throughout the project. (Appendix 2) A monthly BVI survey took place before 9:30am to assess the distribution across islands and ponds and to identify any other environmental or human related factors that might be impacting ponds. (See Appendix 3)

This effort provided invaluable insight into flamingo behaviour, their preferred pond locations, the environmental conditions such as water level of the ponds, their use of the coastal seas which was not realised before this project and the variety of other wetland birds that were present, which recorded unique bird species not commonly found in the BVI, such as a Red knot (*Calidris canutus*). The surveys showed that the Anegada ponds and Necker Island were the top two locations for flamingo presence, with Josiahs Bay, Tortola the third

most used site. The line graph in Appendix 2 shows a clear decline in their visitation to Anegada, which coincides with increased activity at Necker Island with mating observed in January 2024 and the first nests and eggs appearing there in April 2024.

Project Challenges

Inability to access juvenile flamingos was the greatest challenge that NPTVI had no control over. To try and resolve this NPTVI asked for a project extension to take us through a second nesting season in the anticipation that the flamingos would nest in a second location, but this did not happen.

The Necker Island management feed the flamingos daily as part of its guest attractions and this has habituated the birds to stay there as it's an easy source of food. NPTVI and its partners Fort Worth Zoo believe that this influences where the flamingos choose to nest. According to Necker Island they had 115 eggs hatch with 110 juveniles surviving.

The Wildlife Manager told NPTVI that Sir Richard Branson would not allow banding to take place on Necker Island as he did not want to disturb the birds. However, they also permit one BVI tour guide company to give regular tours of the wildlife at Necker Island and assist with feeding the birds which means that the birds are very used to being around people.

NPTVI has a good relationship with the Wildlife Manager and this project had been discussed with him prior to Darwin Local submission, with the goal of banding clearly explained and understood. The project's banding activities would have been led by trained banding experts from the Fort Worth Zoo, who routinely conduct flamingo banding, and the project team felt that there was minimal risk of any injury or mortality. (Appendix 4)

Lessons Learned

Collaborating with volunteers and the two private islands to conduct monthly BVI wide flamingo counts worked very well and the data was sent in the same day as all participants were eager to see the distribution data. The inability to band birds on Necker Island caused a major disruption to project success. It would have been wise to get written agreement from Sir Richard Branson prior to the project that banding could occur on Necker Island, but this was not seen as a risk at the time of application as NPTVI had been in discussion with the Wildlife Manager at Necker Island during project design.

There is always risk associated with birds nesting within a short project timeframe, but our understanding at the time was that this was an annual activity on Anegada. This project's consistent monitoring on Anegada as the most likely site and across the BVI helped to clarify our assumptions and provide solid data.

This project fit the Darwin Local funding criteria well in terms of budget needed and scale, but would be more suited to a Darwin Main in terms of a multi-year project to allow for years with no nesting in areas that NPTVI could access.

Section 3 - Project Finance (Essential)

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)
Staff Costs				
Consultancy Costs				
Overhead Costs				

Travel and Subsistence			
Operating Costs			
Capital Items			
Others			
Total	25,574.00	15,181.17	40.6

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

The most expensive activity would have been the international travel and hotel accommodation in the BVI by the Fort Worth Zoo scientists for the banding activity, but this did not happen due to the reasons specified. When the project was approved for an extension through to September 2024 more money was spent on NPTVI staff time monitoring the flamingos on Anegada in anticipation of additional nesting activity.

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)

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

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

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

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

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

Group A Indicator Results

n/a

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.**

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

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

Group B Indicator Results

n/a

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.**

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

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

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

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.**

Group C Indicator Results

1 new flamingo population assessment conducted over the project timeline (18mths), will be published following the project.

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.**

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

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

Group D Indicator Results

n/a

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

NPTVI has collaborated with the Fort Worth Zoo, Texas for over 20 years on the critically endangered Rock Iguana (*Cyclura pinguis*) rehabilitation programme so there is a very good working relationship. This enabled easy dialogue on project progress, issues arising and provided context during the final meeting about the BVI wide issues surrounding the flamingo population and future expansion.

NPTVI is a statutory body in the BVI and is nationally recognised as the institution responsible for bird monitoring and flamingo conservation, so we were able to lead this project with authority and share information widely through its Facebook page to a broad audience. (Appendix 5)

NPTVI coordinates and implements the annual Audubon Society Christmas bird count and has a cadre of birdwatchers who contribute to this, so it was easy to engage volunteers in the monthly flamingo counts across the multiple ponds before 9:30am to avoid duplication of count effort.

As stated in 'Lessons Learned' it might be necessary to have a Memorandum of Understanding or something similar in place with a private island owner to ensure access for specific wildlife monitoring or conservation activity.

Through its inter-Governmental relationships NPTVI has been able to share information on the status of the BVI flamingo population and raise the issue of access to private islands for wildlife monitoring as an issue that should be addressed in the near future as part of the national biodiversity strategy planning exercises.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

The impact of the project is still to be fully realised, in terms of national, regional and international movement of Caribbean flamingos and this will be supported with data once banding and GSM transmitters are in use.

However, NPTVI is committed to continuing with these project activities and will continue to share within the BVI Government through its position on the Technical Review Committee for the Town and Country Planning Department land development control process how important these key wetland areas are for flamingos and many other wetland birds, so that there is less destruction of wetland areas.

Sustainability and Legacy

The project's legacy will be the insight into flamingo activity that has been recorded over a consistent time period and the equipment that is now owned by NPTVI for banding and tracking using GSM transmitters. NPTVI's partner Fort Worth Zoo and other long standing partner institutions such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have been very supportive in providing small grants to assist with specific activities, so it is with confidence that NPTVI can assure that banding will take place as soon as the flamingos nest in a publicly accessible location.

The anti-bird strike devices were installed as a pilot test in a known location for utility line collisions and there was public support for this to be expanded elsewhere. The BVI Airport Authority were also interested in installing these in areas they manage where bird strike risk is high.


Section 6 - Communications & Publicity


Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements


Unfortunately, not at as yet but we will certainly share the outputs once banding has been successful.


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.

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

(DPL00043_VID-20231117-WA0051) – Caribbean flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) at Anegada, British Virgin Islands – by Rondel Smith

(DPL00043_IMG-20240906-WA0008) - Caribbean flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) in the coastal flats, Anegada, British Virgin Islands – by Rondel Smith

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.

www.bvinpt.org

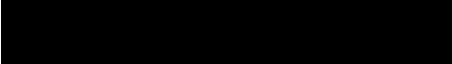

<https://www.facebook.com/NPTVI/>

Section 7 - Darwin Plus Contacts

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