

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2015)

Project Ref No	DPLUS025
Project Title	Conservation of the spiky yellow woodlouse and black cabbage tree woodland on St Helena
Country(ies)	St Helena
UK Organisation	
Collaborator(s)	St Helena National Trust (SHNT), Environmental Management Division - St Helena Government (EMD), St Helena Nature Conservation Group (SNCG), Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Project Leader	Phil Lambdon
Report date	26/11/2015
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR2
Project website	http://www.nationaltrust.org.sh/shnt-conservation-programmes/natural-heritage/spiky-yellow-woodlouse/

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

The problems encountered on the project and the revision of the original schedule have been reported previously and will not be repeated here. In summary, the project has effectively been 'on-hold' between Nov 2014 and Nov 2015, limited to basic maintenance activities.

1. Habitat restoration at The Dell

In December 2014, Rebecca Cairns-Wicks took charge of the restoration site supported by Colin Richards and Donald Thomas contracted to conduct maintenance, typically one day every three weeks. Rebecca's practical work was curtailed after she suffered an injury and subsequently had to depart St Helena for medical treatment in Cape Town. She has now returned but is still restricted from undertaking strenuous exercise. Fortunately, Colin and Donald have been able to keep the programme running.

The site has been maintained in good condition with regular weeding throughout 2015. Invasive species will continue to recolonize rapidly until dense canopy and ground cover have been established throughout. However, the plantings have been expanded reasonably effectively, with over 400 dwarf jellico (*Berula burchellii*) planted as ground cover alongside additional Diana's Peak grass (*Carex dianae*). Total tree plantings have yet to be collated but at least 40 black cabbage trees (*Melanodendron integrifolium*) and 30 dogwood (*Nesohedyotis arborea*) have been introduced. A number of the trees planted in 2014-15 have started to establish.

Baiting has been continued all year to suppress the population of brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*). A small number of rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) have also settled locally and caused some plant mortality, but removal of these has been difficult because traps require daily attention to operate humanely. Some plants have also been lost to stem rots from an unidentified disease. This is a widespread issue in St Helena's cloud forest and the possibility of bringing a mycologist / plant pathologist to St Helena is currently being investigated. Despite the restrictions on the available work force this year, additional activities have included improvements to signage deterring public access, the commencement of a water storage facility and the continued pruning back of hybrid rebonies (*Trochetiopsis x benjaminii*).

2. Assessment of effectiveness of shade canopy at enhancing re-establishment of cloud forest on open ground

The shade canopy, which has now been abandoned, has been replaced by solid wind-breaks which have proved resistant to the winter's gales and appear to be very important in allowing the newly-planted trees to establish.

3. Colony of spiky yellow woodlice established in captivity

No further actions have been possible this year. The plan is expected to continue in 2016.

5. Biodiversity inventory and Habitat Action Plan produced for the Dell

No further actions have been possible this year. The plan is expected to continue in 2016.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments 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.

No operational difficulties have emerged other than the minor issues discussed in Section 1.

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 no/yes, in Mar 2014 (month/yr)

Formal change request submitted: no/yes, in... Mar 2014 (month/yr)

Received confirmation of change acceptance no/yes in...Apr 2014...(month/yr)

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No See Q4.

If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Due to the forced project reorganization, changes will be necessary to the budget. We are currently reviewing these and will be in contact as soon as possible.

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 or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with LTS International directly.