



Department
for Environment
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Department
for International
Development



Darwin Plus: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2015)

Project Ref No	DPLUS030
Project Title	Building systems and capacity to monitor and conserve BVI's flora
Country(ies)	British Virgin Islands
Lead Organisation	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (Kew)
Partner(s)	National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI)
Project Leader	<i>Martin Hamilton</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>HYR1</i>
Project website	NPTVI Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/NPTVI); Storify (https://storify.com/KewUKOTs/building-systems-and)

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (max 500 words).

Following initial discussions of the project steering group to develop the training programme, project activities began with a training visit to Puerto Rico for NPTVI staff member, Natasha Harrigan, organised and overseen by Kew specialists. During the training visit to Puerto Rico, Natasha visited herbaria at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez and DRNA offices in San Juan. These herbaria hold important Caribbean region and Puerto Rican Bank botanical collections that enabled initial training in herbarium techniques and database management to be provided. Field visits that included plant identification and monitoring training took place in the Guánica State Forest, Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge, Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge and the El Yunque National Forest, providing a great opportunity for Natasha to study the regional flora, observe good management of protected areas and see restoration projects for threatened plant species.

The Puerto Rico visit was immediately followed by a workshop in BVI for the project partners (representing UK, UKOTs and SIDs) to share knowledge and expertise. The BVI visit also included a project planning meeting and further training with all the project partners present. Training in BVI provided the opportunity for more NPTVI staff to get involved in the project and receive field training in plant identification and monitoring. Protected areas in BVI were visited and management practices were discussed in relation to Puerto Rican protected areas. During the field visits, plant species of conservation concern were recorded and the team made two remarkable discoveries:

BVI endemic and Critically Endangered shrub, *Calyptrotrichia kiaerskovii*, was re-discovered on the island of Tortola within the Sage Mountain National Park. The species was first described from Tortola in 1895; however, it had not been seen here again until the project team's find in June 2015. This is an extraordinary discovery that extends the species known range from the Gorda Peak National Park, on the island of Virgin Gorda.

The project team also discovered a new population of the shrub, *Calyptrotrichia thomasiana*, a Virgin Islands endemic that is also threatened with extinction.

NPTVI staff member, Natasha Harrigan, travelled to Kew for a training visit in Sept-Oct 2015. She was fully trained in Brahm's software use and field data collection protocol implementation by Kew specialists. Natasha was also provided training in correct watering techniques as well as pest and disease (P&D)

monitoring of plants in cultivation. She had the opportunity to undertake basic nursery maintenance, including P&D control. Natasha was introduced to nursery management, including hygiene and biosecurity. Further experience was gained in herbarium use for plant identification. Kew provided plant identification books, external hard drive with BVI image catalogue, botanical literature, software manuals, updated field data collection files and protocol.

The project has got off to a great start with all partners working together to deliver this important project. By harnessing international and regional expertise, this project will strengthen local capacity and develop the botanical collections, resources and data systems in BVI to enable long-term plant conservation and habitat management. **See Appendix 1: DPLUS030 Storify compilation April-October 2015.**

2a. 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 (max 300 words).

Departure of a NPTVI staff member prior to the start of the project (for higher education in the UK) that was expected to be heavily involved in project required the steering committee to re-evaluate the training programme as the new member of staff recruited did not have the requisite IT skills and experience to undertake the planned overseas training. As such, it was agreed that a greater amount of training would happen in BVI for more NPTVI staff members than previously anticipated. This has resulted in a positive outcome through broader engagement of the NPTVI staff. More specialists visiting BVI to work directly with NPTVI staff has generated more interest locally in the project and enabled new discoveries to be made. A drought period in Q1 and Q2 has decreased the amount of collections to date; however, we don't feel that this will impact the project overall. This will be monitored closely.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement? *N/A*

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance: No

3a. 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: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. 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 and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be: *N/A*

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

None.

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: DPLUSXXX Darwin Half Year Report**