



**Darwin Initiative/D+ Project  
Half Year Report  
(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019)**

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS055
<b>Project title</b>	Saving the Iguana Islands of Turks and Caicos
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Turks and Caicos Islands
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	The Turks and Caicos National Trust (TCNT), the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), the Department of Agriculture, Ambergris Facilities Ltd, Institute of Conservation Research San Diego Zoo Global (SDZ), Environmental Health Department
<b>Project leader</b>	Sarah Havery
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	HYR3
<b>Project website/blog/social media etc.</b>	<a href="https://community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/b/biodiversity/posts/world-lizard-day-saving-the-iconic-iguana-islands-of-the-turks-and-caicos">https://community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/b/biodiversity/posts/world-lizard-day-saving-the-iconic-iguana-islands-of-the-turks-and-caicos</a> <a href="https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/welcome-iguana-island-land-where-reptiles-rule">https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/welcome-iguana-island-land-where-reptiles-rule</a> <a href="http://tcnationaltrust.org/news/7814788">http://tcnationaltrust.org/news/7814788</a> TCNT facebook post1 TCNT facebook post 2

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).**

**1. Baseline data established and short-term trends identified for Little Water Cay (LWC) and Big Ambergris Cay (BAC) for iguanas, boas, humans and predators**

1.1 & 1.4 Iguana surveys: Further capture-mark-recapture data was collected for LWC and BAC in July. The analysis and results will be reported in the Final Report and the San Diego Zoo Global's (SDZG) final technical report will be provided as evidence.

1.2 Feral cat monitoring using trail cameras, footprints and scats began in April as part of the synergistic feral cat and black rat eradication project, completed by project stakeholder Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL). Trapping began in May and was completed by July. Econodes (an automated trap alert system) were also trialled but proved ineffective. A total of seven feral cats were caught and euthanised and no cat sign has been observed since July indicating that the eradication effort has been successful.

1.3 Human impact assessments: Another count of iguana road mortality on BAC was completed, bringing the dataset to include five counts over the course of the project. Road mortality has remained high, with >15 dead iguanas found in the most recent count. Recommendations for road mortality mitigation have been written by SDZ and will be submitted to Waterloo Investment Holdings Ltd (the organisation responsible for BAC) in Q3. Further morphological data and blood samples were collected in July at low and high human impact sites. The comparative results will be reported on in the Final Report and the SDZG final technical report will be provided as evidence.

1.4 Annual boa surveys were completed on BAC in July, with a total of 288 caught in 6 nights. Seven boas were equipped with a radio-transmitter to record data on their relative movement and position. The radio-tracking results will be reported on in the Final Report and in the SDZG final technical report.

## **2. Biosecurity/ IAV plans developed, approved and implemented for Little Water Cay and Big Ambergris Cay**

2.1 LWC biosecurity plan: Through the synergistic multi-island feral cat and black rat eradication project including LWC, an all-encompassing biosecurity plan, covering all 10 islands subjected to the eradication effort, has been drafted by WMIL and will be completed in Q3. This biosecurity plan, and more concise versions specific to key stakeholders, has been given to Pine Cay Homeowners Association for feedback and to take forwards. Training from WMIL to the Turks & Caicos National Trust (TCNT) LWC wardens on biosecurity has been completed, and TCNT staff have been leading the biosecurity checks since August. RSPB has drafted a more concise plan specific to LWC, based on this larger reference document, which will be more accessible and specific for the TCNT staff based on LWC. Once finalised, this will be consulted with DoA and DECR in Q3.

2.3 & 2.4 The BAC biosecurity plan has been finalised with feedback incorporated and has been updated using the results of the 2018 BAC rodent assessment (YR2). A BAC Biosecurity Officer job specification has been drafted and will be sent to BAC Homeowners Association in Q3 for their consideration for creating this post.

2.5 & 2.6: Biosecurity policy and biosecurity planning was discussed with the Iguana Island Partnership and other stakeholders during a day workshop in July as part of the wider iguana conservation planning workshop. The need for biosecurity legislation in TCI was identified as the top priority. Links have been made with the GB NNS UKOTs biosecurity project, which has enabled the planned visit of a legal drafter to TCI in December and partners to attend biosecurity training opportunities in the UK. Biosecurity methods and planning, specifically for BAC and the Pine Cay complex (including LWC) was presented to a total of 20 people from TCI partner and stakeholder organisations; including DECR, DoA, EHD, TCNT, Customs, Planning, Ports Authority and three private island managers.

2.7 Signage: Signage for LWC and HMB has been designed and printed and is due to be installed by the end of the project.

2.8 Publicity materials: Through the synergistic EU BEST project, a children's book has been designed and printed on the importance of LWC for iguanas and the impact of invasive species. TCNT and DECR have been promoting the book with schools and at public events.

2.9 & 2.10: South Dock rodent control: A workshop was held with new project partner, Environmental Health Department (EHD), on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and the initial rodent control set up was established at South Dock (the main international port in TCI) in July. The newly trained EHD team have been continuing to implement IPM since and has been sharing the data with RSPB for feedback. DPLUS055 has been able to provide this team with much needed equipment, such as a GPS, rodenticide, and rodent monitoring tools which will be utilised beyond the project timeframe.

## **3. Restoration/protection strategy for offshore islands following 'rapid survey' for reptiles and rodents.**

3.1 Offshore island surveys: Following the surveys completed in 2017, five of the islands were included in the feral cat and black rat eradication effort. In total, feral cat and black rat eradication was completed across 10 islands, increasing the amount of cat and rat free habitat for iguanas by about a third. Water Cay, an uninhabited privately-owned island due for development, has been recognised by the Iguana Islands Partnership as a high risk for the long-term benefits of this conservation effort, therefore efforts are being made to establish a direct contact with the investment company responsible for Water Cay to ensure that biosecurity is included in any future development.

3.2 The iguana conservation planning workshop was held in July over three days. Day 1 focussed on the Species Action Planning and was attended by the Minister for Tourism and Environment. Day 2 was specifically on biosecurity and Day 3 was specifically on education

and tourism. The results of the workshop have been written into a draft SAP which is currently out for consultation from the partnership. Once finalised, it will be signed off by the IUCN Iguana Specialist Group.

3.4 Additional iguana surveys were completed on Lizard and Bird Cays to provide further baseline data to determine the impact of rats on iguanas. Capture-Mark-Recapture data was collected. All islands subjected to the eradication effort now have baseline iguana data, except for Water Cay which will be surveyed in Q4.

#### **4. Capacity and efficacy of personnel with the project team (in TCI and the UK) to implement essential monitoring and biosecurity activities to address invasive vertebrates increased**

4.1 Skill sharing: An MoU was signed between EHD and RSPB officially bringing EHD into the Iguana Islands Partnership. RSPB provided training on Integrated Pest Management (see 2.9 & 2.10). TCNT staff joined WMIL staff on a regular basis during the eradication and joined SDZG and WMIL on fieldwork activities. DoA visited the WMIL team on Pine Cay.

4.2 Feedback was received from attendees of the SAP workshop in July. An Operational Review was held for the Pine Cay Save the Iguana Project in September allowing all partners to provide feedback.

Further funding applications have been submitted to the Iguana Islands Foundation for a citizen science project and increasing public awareness on biosecurity, and an application has been submitted to the Darwin Plus initiative to further strengthen the capacity in TCI to deliver its' biosecurity ambitions; which has been successful with Stage 1.

#### **5. Project managed and monitored effectively**

5.2 A project team skype call was held in June. All partners were visited and engaged with the SAP workshop in July. Partnership participated in the Operational Review of the eradication in September.

5.3. Technical and financial reporting from TCNT and SDZG have arrived on time.

5.4. Project team and management met at the SAP workshop which involved planning for future activities. Individual partner meetings were held with the project leader in July.

#### **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.**

SDZG are still investigating human-iguana interactions but, due to the need to expand the suite of biochemical tests between low and high human impact sites, this will not be fully completed by Q4. A draft of the work completed during DPLUS055, outlining the key results, will be produced as evidence but it is likely that more data is needed beyond the scope of this project in order to have enough data for publication.

Ethlyn Gibbs-Williams left Turks & Caicos National Trust in July, and Winema Sanders-Penn, TCNT's new Director, has now joined the project team. Introduction meetings were held with Winema in July, and Della Higgs has remained as TCNT's project manager so engagement with the project has been maintained.

The LWC biosecurity plan has evolved in light of the multi-island biosecurity plan, covering all 10 islands subjected to the eradication effort, being prepared. Therefore, we decided to adapt the previous draft of the LWC biosecurity plan to reflect the wider biosecurity plan, and shape this into a more concise format for TCNT specifically for LWC. For the same reason, there has also been a delay in the submission of a cabinet paper around biosecurity. This has resulted in a shift in the timings of these outputs, but they will be delivered before the end of the project.

The new partnership with Environmental Health Department (EHD) has progressed well in the last 6 months. The budget allocated for a training workshop was not needed as EHD were able to host this. Therefore, we wish to use the project funds available to purchase more rodenticide

for EHD to continue setting up effective rodent control at South Dock, as their supplies are already allocated elsewhere.

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

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance N/A

**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.** 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, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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

N/A

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R25 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**