



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31stOctober 2020)

Project reference	DPLUS062
Project title	Securing the future of the Tristan marine environment
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Tristan da Cunha Island Group
Lead organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Partner(s)	Fisheries Department, Tristan Government
Project leader	<i>Andy Schofield</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>HYR4</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>n/a</i>

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

Due to the historic issues with the project and the unforeseen impacts of Covid-19 the decision was made to undertake a significant rescope of project ambition, carry out a needs assessment and present a realistic plan for the future. Over the last 6 months relatively good progress has been made with most effort being directed towards planning for the coming field season and more fieldwork than anticipated due to the good weather:

Output 1 – Improved local capacity

Two consultants with relevant technical skills and experience have been hired and will deliver the training programme on Tristan in the November 2020 to March 2021 field season. Upon arrival the first activity is to evaluate the skill level for data analysis, diving, drone operation, species identification and survey techniques and then develop a training programme responding to the needs of the Fisheries Department. Progress on this output is on track as per project timetable.

Output 2 – Improved fisheries monitoring

Activity 2.1 A method for measuring fishing activity has been developed and the relevant equipment (GPS and temperature loggers) have been purchased and shipped to Tristan with an expected arrival date of mid-November.

Activity 2.2 Two Tristan fisheries observers boarded the MV Geo Searcher on the 7 October 2020, to do an Independent Biomass Lobster Survey and commercial fishing at Gough Island.

The objectives are;

1. To Investigate the mortality rate of tagged lobster
2. To Identify the importance of short-term mortality from the tagging process vs. longer term mortality from the tag wound
3. To Record growth rates for tagged vs. not tagged lobster if moulting occurs in captivity.

During the voyage it was the intention to tag 40 lobsters which would be held in two holding tanks on the vessel, the holding tanks were 1m long 1.2 meters wide and 0.9 meters high and

used to store all live lobster caught on the vessel for a period of 2-3 days. The tags used were T-bar and fish tags, 20 lobsters were tagged with T-bar tags and 20 were tagged with fish tags. An additional holding tank of 40 untagged lobsters would be monitored as a control group, as advised by Cape Town University. Unfortunately, on the day tagging was taking place the Geo Searcher hit a rock and sunk on the 15 October (tristandc.com), resulting in a halt on progress.

Output 3 – Improved information base on Tristan lobster life history and ecology

Activity 3.1 Materials for a new type of mesh-based peuruli have been purchased and are expected to be delivered to Tristan mid-November, and constructed by a technical consultant. Further methodologies are to be trialled (e.g. conducting plankton hauls at night) have been incorporated into the workplan for the coming field season.

Activity 3.2 The Fisheries Department have exceeded the fieldwork delivery in the April to September period; the weather has allowed 5 sea days where 11 BRUV drops have been carried out.

Output 4 – Invasive non-native species impacts

Activity 4.1 Planning is underway for an expedition to Gough to assess for presence of porgy. However, due to the loss of the Geo Searcher it is unclear when this will be able to proceed.

Activity 4.2 In previous years there has been difficulty in obtaining a great enough sample size of porgy for analysis. To increase numbers, we have announced a competition locally to catch porgy with prizes awarded to individuals who submit the most porgy. In the July – September 2020 period, 8 porgy have been submitted and, of these 7 have been analysed using the techniques local staff were trained in by a marine biologist during the 2019/20 field season.

Activity 4.3 The Fisheries Department have surveyed 6 sites at Tristan and 5 at Inaccessible and deployed 11 BRUV drops to assess abundance and distribution of porgy.

Output 5 – Climate change impacts

Activity 5.1-5.2 No progress on these activities between July – September 2020, as per the project timetable.

Activity 5.3 No underwater surveying has been done due to lack of suitably qualified divers on island.

Activity 5.4 Four plankton hauls have been carried out at Tristan. Further equipment is on order.

Activity 5.5 Temperature loggers have been purchased and shipped to Tristan for arrival in mid-November.

Output 6 – Towards MPA establishment

Activity 6.3 We have gained data from 11 BRUV deployments at 11 sites at depths of 9-14 metres. Further depths will be assessed once deep-water housing reaches Tristan in mid-November.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Unexpectedly, the Geo Searcher (a fishing vessel; one of two vessels which services Tristan) went down near Gough on 15 October after striking a rock. Fortunately, no major injuries were sustained. The knock-on impacts are yet to be determined but it is possible that there will be changes to the project timeline and outputs this year as a result of due process, amendments to the sailing schedule and availability of vessels. This incident is most likely to affect the lobster tagging study (Activity 2.2), the expedition to Gough to conduct surveys and obtain data from temperature loggers (Output 4 and 5) and travel to/from the island. At the time of writing, the technical consultants are in Cape Town in quarantine and are scheduled to join the vessel

by 6 November, however, it remains possible that the sailing schedule could disrupt the duration of their stay and limit progress against outputs. Furthermore, at present, there has been no detection of an oil spill and the authorities are working to minimise this. However, should there be an oil spill it will affect all at-sea work. The situation will be much clearer in the coming weeks and a change request submitted with timetable and budgetary changes, should it be required.

Tristan is a challenging environment to operate in; this has been demonstrated during this project time and time again, most recently with a vessel sinking. We have learnt that in order to effectively deliver a project in this environment, it needs to be adaptively managed, with greater project management capacity and more regular communication between partners. In the last 6 months, the RSPB and Tristan Fisheries Department have been working closely together to rescope the project and develop tools and strategies to manage the project. This has been an effective exercise in strengthening the working relationship and we now have a deliverable plan for the project, supported by a project management framework.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The travel restrictions induced by Covid-19 has significantly impacted the project activities in the last 6 months:

- Due to reduced vessel frequency, it has not been possible to obtain required equipment until mid-November 2020. This includes temperature loggers, a GPS, underwater cameras and lights, tools and materials for pueruli traps which, in turn, has delayed activities relating to measuring fishing effort, sea temperature and lobster larval abundance/distribution. The timetable has been adjusted to account for this.
- Due to travel restrictions, it was a challenge to obtain consultants with the required skills and experience within South Africa. The budget was reprofiled to include costs for testing and quarantine facilities for the consultants. At the time of writing, the technical consultants are in quarantine in Cape Town and have tested negative for Covid-19.
- It became highly unlikely that Tristanian staff will be permitted to travel to Cape Town to receive Observer training, or for the Head of the Fisheries Department to travel to the UK for workshops, meetings or drone training. We have requested a project extension and are planning on delivering these activities in 2021/22, subject to approval from Darwin;

Additionally, Andy Schofield, the project leader, accessed the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme furlough from 15 April to 25 September due to childcare circumstances. Therefore Ashleigh Atkinson, in her role as Project Officer, has made up for this lost capacity alongside support from Jonathan Hall.

2c. 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**

Formal change request submitted: **Yes**

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:£

At this time, it is uncertain whether underspend will occur. Should the Geo Searcher incident impact the Gough expedition we estimate underspend, and significantly more should it not be possible to deliver any at-sea work.

Should Covid-related travel restrictions preclude travel from the UK, it is estimated that there will be underspend. Darwin will be informed at the earliest opportunity once further clarity is gained.

We have not included underspend which would be incurred should the change request not be approved by Darwin; this is included in further detail in the correspondence of 15/10/2020.

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

Darwin have been highly flexible and supportive in the delivery on this challenging project.

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 projectschedule/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 **completedreport by email** to 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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**