



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

Project reference	DPLUS107
Project title	Community supported multispecies invasive vertebrate control on St Helena
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
Lead organisation	Saint Helena National Trust
Partner(s)	St Helena Government Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate (ENRP), including Agriculture and Natural Resource Division (ANRD) and Environmental Management Division (EMD) INBIMA Invasive Bird management The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Project leader	<i>Michael Jervois (Director)</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>HYR2</i>
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/SHnationaltrust https://www.facebook.com/communityforests

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).

There have been some staff changes within the Project: James Fantom (Project Manager) resigned in early April 2021 and Kyle Joshua (Field Officer) resigned in July 2021. Marjorie Fowler was recruited to the role of Project Manager in late May and Ashley Furniss' previously employed as the projects Field Assistant was promoted to that of Vertebrate Field Officer. Recruitment to replace the Field Assistant also took place in August for which Nico Benjamin was successful for the post.

In June 2021 the Trust took on 3 work experience students for 6 weeks, one of which – Clifton Yon - has returned as an apprentice under the apprenticeship work scheme for a year (Until September 2022). The project now is back up to full strength.

During this time we have made the following progress:-

1.1 Identify and survey myna roosts and undertake counts and 1.3 Undertake population estimate of mynas on St Helena from roost counts.

An updated survey was under taken in late June to mid-September at the original 13 roost sites across the island, (Castle gardens, Brewery yard, The Playground, Briars, Mulberry Gut, Fishes Valley, Springbok, Rock Rose, Lower Sandy Bay, Below Colins Bar, West Lodge, Farm Buildings and Myrtle Grove) whereby each roost site was visited 3 times and yielded the result of an estimated population of 6338 birds, giving an average of 488 birds per roost site. There is at present 3 newly confirmed roosts (The Hooper, Green Hill and nr High Hill). Four roosts (Friars, Bell stone, Banyan and Powell Valley) are currently under investigation. There will be a

total of 19 roosting sites on island if they are confirmed

1.2 Map key myna roosts.

All original and confirmed Myna roost sites have been recorded with GPS and a map produced

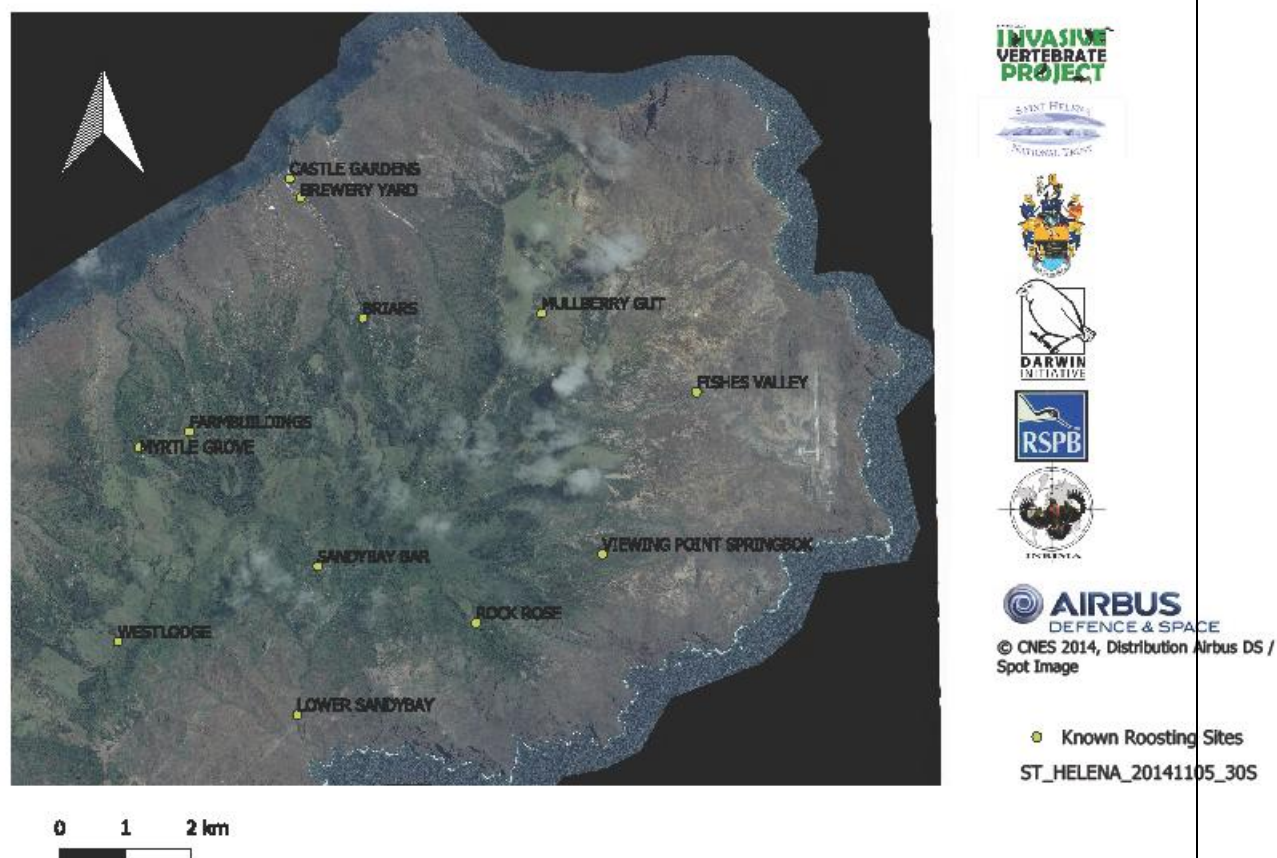


Figure 1: Map of Myna roosts

Next step is to identify from the counts which sites and the 'key' (larger) sites and a map made to show this.

1.4 Survey for rabbits, building on previous work.

Rabbit trapping has been taken place in the 3 conservation sites (Man and horse, Millennium Forest and Deadwood) but without much success. Different types of bait have been used to attract the rabbits into the traps, but proved unsuccessful. 114 rabbits have been caught, only 38 within the projects conservation areas, the remainder by the public. They have been dispatched humanely and given to members the community for food. 23 traps have been loaned to members of the public in particular farmers to protect their agricultural produce. At present approximately 90 rabbits have been caught and humanely dispatched.

1.5 Deploy tracking tunnels and camera traps at the 3 project specified locations(Deadwood, Man & Horse and Millennium Forest) for detecting rats, cats and rabbits. 1.7 Establish rat baseline densities and monitor in key sites. 1.8 Establish cat density estimate and monitor in key sites

Our methodologies have been updated and sent to the steering group for comments as stated in need for revision in the year 1 annual report. Camera traps and tracking tunnels have been deployed in all 3 conservation areas; alternating fortnightly between sites for detecting sightings of project key species including the Wirebird. The camera traps have detected a total of 67 cats at these sites from April 2021 (18 Man & Horse, 9 Deadwood and 40 Millennium Forest).

Tracking tunnels have been deployed in the 3 conservation sites (Man & Horse, Millennium Forest and Deadwood). The detection rate for this 6 month period shows a decline in rats.

2.1 Order equipment.

All of the equipment and materials that had been ordered in November 2020 for trap building arrived in February and March 2021. The project team has identified that it is necessary to order more rabbit traps due to the number of requests from the community for the traps which will improve our catch rate.

2.2 Build specialist myna / rabbit traps and 2.6 Visit by myna specialist, providing training and intense trapping in agreed sites.

A video has been produced by the myna specialist Susana Saavedra (INBIMA) in June 2021, the project team has watched and provided feedback and is currently waiting on the finalised version. It has been very time consuming to watch and we have been unable to download this video due to the slowness of the internet available on island. Ashley Furniss (Field Officer) has transcribed the trap instructions from the video and are preparing to build the traps in readiness arrival of Susana in January 2022.

2.7 Deploy myna, rabbit and cat traps in agreed sites and 2.10 Maintain records of location, date and number of target vertebrates trapped and humanely destroyed

Cat traps were deployed and set in the locations that cats were detected. During this reporting period 32 feral cats (3 from Man & Horse, 24 from Millennium Forest and 5 from Deadwood) within the conservation areas, have been caught and euthanized whilst 3 kittens have been rehoused.

2.8 Install rat bait stations and regularly rebaiting, recording bait used/ replenished

Bait stations were deployed at both Man & Horse and Millennium Forest, the location's determined by our Tracking Tunnel data that July 21 and August 21 with bait setting in ADA fields and Ropery Field (34 stations in July, 50 in August and 54 in September). The last two months was the busy period for the bait stations.

3.1 Establish site monitoring protocols

Site monitoring protocols not produced; aim to be completed by December 2021 with approval of the steering group.

3.6 Monitor vertebrate presence/abundance on control and comparable sites/

In the 3 conservation sites (Deadwood, Millennium forest and Man & Horse) rabbits, rats and cats are being continually monitored.

4.2 Recruit trapping volunteers from the community, including farmers, syndicate members and land owners/managers and 4.3 Run community trapping information sessions and workshops.

The project had 5 pop-up stalls set up around the island (Longwood, Sandy Bay, Half Tree Hollow, Jamestown and Levelwood) during the month of September 2021, promoting the Project. Approximately 60 people had a view of the project and staff members were on hand to explain all about the programme.

Over 30+ volunteers from the community have signed up to assist the project staff with trapping of either rabbits, cats and mynas. Some volunteers have past experience in handling and

deploying traps whilst there are some that are new to the practise. One-to-one training has been given to volunteers and further training will be provided soon upon arrival of the Myna specialist to include myna trapping.

7 volunteers assist with myna roost surveys.

5.1 Undertake public awareness events, including getting feedback

During the past few weeks, pop-up stalls were hosts at various venues around the Island to promote the Vertebrate Control project. The community of the island had the opportunity to speak to the team on various issues that affected them the most. It was very encouraging when the community were giving the team ideas and support us with this project. Several members inform the team of possible myna roosting sites and this now is under investigation.

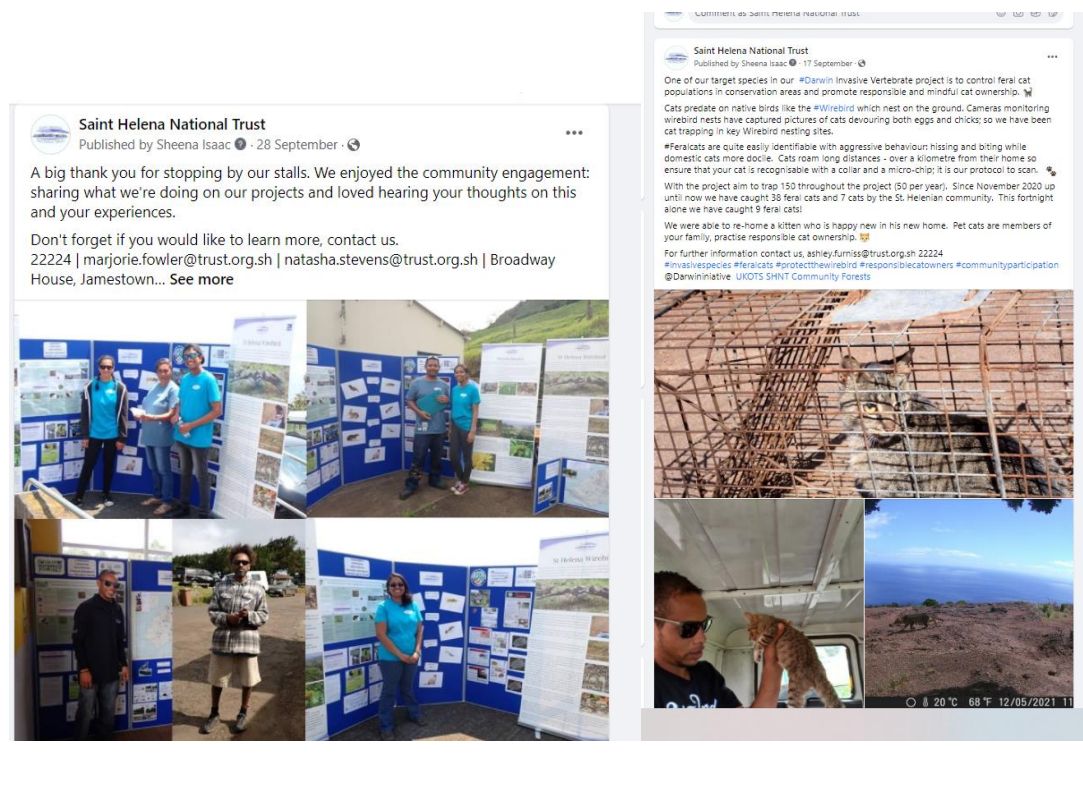
Two radio interviews were held during this term. The first one host by (Marjorie Fowler and Dennis Leo) were to inform the community of the pop-up stalls that were going around the island and the second one hosted by (Marjorie fowler and Ashley Furniss) was on the topic of Myna's. Feedback from the community on the Myna interview was a mixture of feelings and some was for the culling and some was against the idea.

5.2 Promotion by myna specialist, including local media articles and appearance.

One newspaper article was produced by the specialist (Susana Saavedra) on her role within the project and her assistance with the trapping of Mynas.

5.3 Undertake monthly social media

Work on social media is progressing steadily, to date there have been a total of 3 social media posts.



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.

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions that was enforced on St Helena early in the year, it was not possible for the myna specialist to come to the Island then, however attempts was made for

her to come in September for approximately 81 days. However, due to the flight schedules this was not possible. Specialist feels that she needs to be carried out her task of culling 3000 myna in the allotment time, however this not possible due to flights being fully booked and finances do not cover a long visit to St Helena. The target can still be reached as the purpose of her visit is also to train the project staff in myna trapping and culling techniques.

The setback for the project is the delay in getting the myna specialist to the island meaning training is behind for project staff, partners organisations (SHG) and general public.

Due to Covid-19 situation it has been advised against staff travelling overseas, therefore we have not been able to undertake activity 4.8 Participate in international conference or workshops.

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: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/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. 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?

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 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. 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**