



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2021)

Project reference	Darwin Plus116
Project title	Falklands wetlands and aquatic habitats: baselines for monitoring future change
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Falkland Islands
Lead organisation	South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI)
Partner(s)	Falkland Island Government (FIG) – Environment Department (within Directorate of Policy and Economic Development) UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UK CEH) (Prof. Chris D. Evans) University College London (UCL) – Geography (Prof. Julian R. Thomson) Emeritus Prof. Roger J. Flower (Independent consultant) David Stroud (Independent consultant)
Project leader	Tara Pelembe Report prepared by Dr Steffi Carter
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2 31 st October 2021
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.south-atlantic-research.org/research/terrestrialscience/falklands-wetlands-and-aquatic-habitats-baselines-for-monitoring-future-change/ SAERI Twitter: @SAERI_FI SAERI Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/S4ERI/ SAERI blogs: https://www.south-atlantic-research.org/news/

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).

Logical Framework

Output 1 (An effective, efficient and accountable project management system established): PMG meetings were held every 3 months, the meeting notes are available on the [project website](#). All other required activities and associated measurable indicators were completed in the previous project year (Indicator 1.1)

Output 2 (Existing baseline data mined and collated and data gaps identified and prioritised): No relevant outputs for this reporting period.

Output 3 (Priority data gaps addressed through fieldwork): The field season data base and webGIS have been updated with the data from the first field season. The webGIS can be viewed here (Indicator 3.6). This was the only task scheduled for this reporting period. Planning and preparations for other log frame activities have been happening. A fieldwork programme has been scheduled and the necessary planning arrangements have been made (Indicator 3.5). The PMG have agreed that the Symposium will be a one-way event early in 2022, during which project partners will give presentations either virtually or in person. The date is still to be finalised and will depend on some project partners' travels to the Falklands (Indicator 3.4).

Output 4 (Indicators established, capacity in indicator monitoring built and policy recommendations made):

At the last PMG meeting in early October the PMG has agreed on a timeline to deliver these outputs. Indicators will be selected once the second field season is completed (Indicator 4.1) and long term monitoring recommendations will be established during the next PMG meeting in January 2022 (Indicator 4.2). This will then be followed by staff training to ensure long-term post-project legacy (Indicator 4.3). Recommendations for a Wetlands Action Plan will be drafted during another PMG meeting in February (Indicator 4.4). A final stakeholder talk will take place in March 2021 just before the project is completed (Indicator 4.5).

Overall Progress

The project is progressing as expected. The upcoming fieldwork programme is planned out and a volunteer field assistant has been recruited. A delivery programme for all major post-fieldwork tasks has also been drafted to ensure that all deliverables will be completed before the project ends.

Outreach activities were an important area of focus during this reporting period. In early April 2021, SAERI hosted a year 10 work experience student for one week, during which the student spent two days with the PM in the field and in the lab. Social media [summary is here](#).

Also in April 2021, the PM visited the Mount Pleasant Complex (MPC) – the Ministry of Defence base on the Islands – for an evening talk on the Wetlands Project as well as the Soil Mapping Project Darwin Plus 083. The PM also returned to MPC on a Saturday morning for a 'pond dipping' event for families. Social media [summary is here](#).

In the beginning of July 2021, Farmer's Week presented the chance to engage with the general public as well as land owners and land managers. On the first day of Farmer's Week, the 'Expo' took place at which SAERI had a stall that included live freshwater invertebrates (which were released afterwards) and an ID challenge for children as well as background information on the project. A few days later, the PM gave a presentation on the project to members of the Rural Business Association. She also encouraged a discussion on 'ditching practises', presented examples of UK peatland restoration within the ditching context, and ran a questionnaire on 'ditching practises'. See Figure 1 for Farmer's Week highlights.

An article on the project as well as the results of the ditching survey were published in the September / October 2021 edition of 'The Wool Press' (a publication aimed at land owners, produced by the Department of Agriculture, Figure 2).

The PM has also jointly organised and held a public Falklands peatland interest group with Falklands Conservation. The group meets informally during the Falklands' lunch hour with the chance for overseas and camp participants to dial in virtually. One or two presentations are given, which is followed by discussions afterwards. Two meetings have been held – July and October 2021 – and the PM gave a presentation on greenhouse gas flux measurements in the Falklands for the second meeting (Figure 3).

The PM was also involved in organising and carrying out of engagement with the local senior school. Year 7 students had an afternoon in the field comparing the biodiversity of rocky shores with sandy shores to earn their 'Crest Bronze Award' – UK scheme for student work in STEM subjects. Social media [summary is here](#).



Figure 1: Farmer's Week Expo (left and centre), Farmer's Week presentation (right).

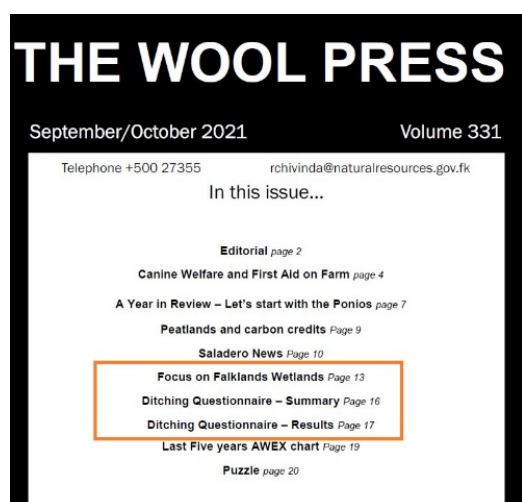


Figure 2: The Wool Press September / October 2021 contents with the Wetlands articles highlighted.



Figure 3: Falklands Peatland Interest Group Meeting on 19 October 2021 with the PM presenting (left image).

Additionally, a comprehensive amount of work was carried out on the environmental DNA (eDNA) element of the project. In the original project bid, the possibility of eDNA work was mentioned but it was unclear to what extent this would be possible. No deliverables related to eDNA work are included in the project log frame. The PM secured additional funding from the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust and the local John Cheek Trust to implement an eDNA pilot project on

freshwater invertebrates. Fieldwork to gather samples for eDNA analysis took place in July and August 2021. The PM took these samples to Swansea University with whom SAERI is collaborating; a report is expected to be produced by Swansea University before the end of 2021. Please see Figure 4 for fieldwork highlights.



Figure 4: PM collecting water samples (left), black-necked swans on Sand Pond, MPC (centre), field assistant Bree Forrer filtering water samples.

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.

The project has not encountered any problems or unexpected developments over the last 6 months that are not COVID-19 related.

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 project partners were scheduled to visit the Falklands for fieldwork in the 2020/21 austral summer, which had to be postponed due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The travel funds were subsequently moved into the current project year through a change request, anticipating that project partners to be able to visit in the 2021/22 austral summer. The Falkland Islands still require all visitors to quarantine upon arrival for a minimum of five, which can be extended to ten days. This means that a visit to the Falklands is still a challenge. Two out of four project partners have said that they will not be able to visit for the 2021/22 austral summer field work under these circumstances, one project partner intends to visit and one project partner hopes to visit but is still unsure whether this will be possible. This means that at the time of writing this report, there is an anticipated underspend in the Travel and Subsistence line. There will be no change to the timetable. We would like to move these funds into different budget lines for so that they can benefit the project in different ways. We have not discussed this with LTS yet because this situation has only arisen very recently and we are still unsure what the exact amount is that we would like to move. The situation will be clearer in the beginning of November and we intend to discuss this with LTS at the earliest opportunity, and submit a subsequent change request.

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/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?

No.

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**