

Darwin Plus: Final Report

Darwin Plus Project Information

Project reference	DPLUS141
Project title	Habitat restoration and wise use for Akrotiri and Cape Pyla
Territory(ies)	Cyprus - Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia
Lead Organisation	BirdLife Cyprus
Project partner(s)	Terra Cypria - The Cyprus Conservation Foundation Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas Administration - Environment Department (SBAA ED) Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Darwin Plus Grant value	£342,150.00
Start/end date of project	01/07/2021 - 30/06/2024
Project Leader name	Martin [REDACTED] (On June 15 th 2024, Martin [REDACTED] unexpectedly passed away. He was greatly involved in the success of this project as a project leader through the duration of the whole project and in the writing of this report at the initial stages). BirdLife Cyprus Acting Director: Melpo Apostolidou Project Coordinator: Phoebe Vayanou
Project website	https://visitakrotiri.cy/
Report author(s) and date	Martin [REDACTED], Phoebe [REDACTED], Athina [REDACTED], Zoe [REDACTED], Panagiotis [REDACTED] – 31 st July 2024

1 Project Summary

The DPLUS141 project “Habitat restoration and wise use for Akrotiri and Cape Pyla” aimed to protect and restore key wildlife habitats within the Cyprus SBAs, focusing on Akrotiri wetlands and native scrub on Cape Pyla (Dhekelia). It aimed also to increase opportunities for the Akrotiri community to benefit from living in a protected natural area, specifically through supporting the long-term economic viability of cattle grazing, as a sustainable conservation tool and through the promotion of the area as a wildlife-friendly tourism destination, increasing at the same time the public awareness on the environmental value of the area.

Akrotiri Peninsula and Cape Pyla are recognized and designated for their biodiversity importance. The effective management of these areas -something this project was designed to significantly enhance- can make a significant contribution to efforts to conserve biodiversity in Cyprus. Akrotiri Peninsula has been identified as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, following recognized BirdLife International criteria, and the wetlands on the peninsula enjoy protected status under SBA Ordinances – equivalent to Natura 2000 legislation (both as SCI and SPA). The Akrotiri wetlands are also characterized as a RAMSAR site (wetlands of international importance). Cape Pyla is designated as protected for its habitat value and for key flora and fauna under SBA Ordinances – equivalent to Natura 2000 legislation (as SCI). Though enjoying legal protection, the reality on the ground is that both areas urgently need conservation action allied with management for wise use. There is increasing visitor pressure (especially at Akrotiri), insufficient practical and on-going conservation management and growing pressure for development. Most areas are heavily disturbed by vehicle traffic -especially off-road- and excess amounts of litter. On the Akrotiri Peninsula in particular, access and traffic need to be managed in order to protect and restore important wildlife species and habitats. At the same time, the expansion of reeds at the marshes has resulted in loss of biodiversity and has obstructed the views for visitors and nature lovers. The need for a balanced management is identified both in the BirdLife Cyprus 2014 IBA

inventory and in the SBAA management plans for the protected sites. Cattle grazing at Akrotiri marsh can do wonders for managing the reeds, but its economic viability needs to be enhanced. At the same time, threatened plant species need targeted actions to boost their populations. Last but not least, invasive acacia remains hard-to-tackle, especially on Cape Pyla, where acacia thickets are also used by illegal bird trappers. Removal of Acacia will pave the way for the return of native scrub. Low, thorny and dense native scrub (Phrygana) is -unlike Acacia- entirely unsuitable for creation of ‘runs’ for the setting of illegal mist nets. Alien Acacia, on the other hand, which grows in dense, tall, soft-leaved thickets, is ideal for the creation of such net runs.

The project aimed to address these problems through targeted habitat and visitor management actions and increase of public awareness in order to contribute to long-term sustainable management for key sites at Akrotiri and Cape Pyla. At the same time, the project actions aimed to benefit the local Akrotiri community and the wider public in Cyprus, through biodiversity conservation actions allied with promotion of wildlife-friendly tourism on the peninsula, thus also enhancing ecosystem services and promoting this alternative tourism to the area during “quieter” touristic periods.



Map 1: Location of the Project: Akrotiri Peninsula (*left*) and Cape Pyla (*right*)

2 Project Partnerships

The project from the start and through all its duration has involved all key partners for the design and implementation of its activities.

BirdLife Cyprus (BL) has been the lead partner of the project and responsible for the implementation of the majority of actions and for the overall project management, coordination and full overview of project implementation, while BL was also responsible for overseeing project spending and financial management. The organisation has been building on existing experience and knowledge both in project management related to the protection and restoration of wetlands, as well as on the knowledge and experience of the project area (threats, needs, opportunities) and related stakeholders.

Terra Cypria - The Cyprus Conservation Foundation (TC), through its long-term involvement in wetland inventory and efforts for the protection of the island’s wetlands, has gained great experience on the wetlands of the island and especially the most important ones, including Akrotiri. In 2021-2022, TC ran a MAVA-funded project focusing on management actions on Akrotiri Peninsula. This included reed clearances at Zakaki marsh (related to output 2 of the project), construction of a bird screen with bird species information signs in Zakaki marsh (related to output 5 of the project) and access management actions in Lady’s mile (related to output 4 of the project). All these actions complemented Darwin project’s actions and helped in the further implementation of key project activities, such as the access management plan and actions in Akrotiri Peninsula and the reed clearances in Zakaki Marsh.

The Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas Administration - Environment Department (SBAA ED) has been acting as a link between the project and the local communities and stakeholders. Additionally, the statutory knowledge of administrative processes within the SBAs, as well as the ecological understanding of the local areas contributed to more targeted implementation of actions within the legal, statutory and policy framework of the SBAs. Finally, the statutory role of the SBAA ED was crucial in aspects where decisions for management actions needed to be implemented.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) through its extensive experience in wetland management in terms of ecology and conservation, has been contributing to these project outputs. RSPB experts also visited the project site from the UK during Autumn 2022. RSPB's role was key in the decision-making process for the management of reeds at Zakaki Marsh (Lake Makria) (output 2 of the project), as well as management of Akrotiri Marsh (output 3 of the project) and suggestions about the viewing screens in Lady's mile area (part of output 5 of the project).

All project partners have been involved in decision making and moving the project forward. Project partners in Cyprus (BL, TC and SBAA ED) had regular meetings – both formal, such as Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings and informal, such as one-to-one meetings for specific actions, as well as site and field visits to plan actions ahead and take decisions. The RSPB was involved through online meetings to update on the project progress, as well as their onsite visit, providing valuable advice and support in relevant project actions. Further to all the above, there was regular communication through emails and telephone, as well as online calls when necessary. All project Partners were involved in the preparation and/or review of this report.

Other key stakeholders have also been involved in project planning and decision-making since the start of the project and throughout its duration; and by the end of the project stronger and trustful partnerships and collaborations have been achieved that brought together not only stakeholders and the Project Partners/ Darwin Plus project team, but also created a more cooperative dynamic amongst stakeholders, as it is explained in the next paragraphs. This contributed to a great extent to project progress and successful results, both during and continuing post project, as stakeholders' involvement, agreement and cooperation is a key factor towards this direction. The main stakeholders that were involved and consulted through the project are:

- Department of Forests (Republic of Cyprus) (FD)
 - Involved through numerous meetings and discussions for a number of project actions. Specifically, input for planning and permissions on output 1 (Acacia management), output 3 (Akrotiri marsh) mainly on plant species protection actions and grazing needs, consultation on output 4 (access management), output 5 (ecotourism opportunities) though co-decision of walking trails and information signs.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (MARDE)
 - Involved through a systematic consultation schedule (together with other stakeholders, such as ARI, CUT, Graziers) for the support of the local Cyprus cattle breed. During March 2024, Darwin team and MARDE co-organised a one-day conference for the local Cyprus cattle breed - closely related to Output 3 of the project (Akrotiri marsh).
- Agricultural Research Institute (Republic of Cyprus) (ARI)
 - Involved through various meetings and discussions for planning output 1 (Acacia management) and providing support in the Cape Pyla field experiment (acacia seed counting and seed viability tests). Also, cooperation was established for output 3 (Akrotiri Marsh), mainly on plant species protection actions (seeds storage in ARI seed bank).
- Department of Agriculture (Republic of Cyprus) (DA)
 - Involved through a systematic consultation schedule (together with other stakeholders, such as ARI, CUT, Graziers) for the support of the local Cyprus cattle breed and specifically through promotion of its beef (output 3 of the project – Akrotiri Marsh).
- Game and Fauna Service (Republic of Cyprus) (GFS)
 - Involved through consultations (written and meetings) in planning the implementation of reed management in Zakaki Marsh (output 2 of the project), for monthly bird

monitoring (output 4 of the project/ access management) and for action 5.6 (viewing screens) to decide on the best location/ design etc.

- Akrotiri Community Council (ACC)
 - The president of the ACC was kept informed on project actions and remained through the project very supportive. Close cooperation has been established, mainly for output 5 (ecotourism actions), e.g. the Akrotiri Spring Festival, output 4 (access management) and various issues on output 3 (Akrotiri Marsh).
- Sewerage Board of Limassol – Amathus (SBLA)
 - Involved through numerous meetings mainly for output 2 (Zakaki marsh) in order to achieve better coordination of actions related to reed clearances, as well as information on the hydrological regime of the lake and in the establishment of an agreed management regime for Zakaki Marsh after the project end.
- Cyprus University of Technology (CUT)
 - Involved through a systematic consultation schedule (together with other stakeholders, such as DA, ARI, Graziers) for the support of the local Cyprus cattle breed and specifically through promotion of its beef (output 3 of the project - Akrotiri Marsh). The CUT is running a program on the genetic analysis of the local cow breed, as well as on the qualitative characteristics of the beef. These provided input to the beef marketing study of this project (output 3).
- Graziers in Akrotiri Marsh
 - Involved through very frequent communication (meetings, field visits, phone calls, etc) in all aspects relating to Akrotiri Marsh and beef marketing plan. The small group of active graziers were absolutely critical stakeholders to have 'on side' in order to achieve sustainability for grazing management at Akrotiri Marsh (output 3 of the project).
- Ypsonas Municipality (after June 2024 - it is re-named to West Limassol Municipality)
 - After local government restructuring (June 2024) Akrotiri community falls under the West Limassol Municipality. Thus, it was very important to involve West Limassol Municipality in various project activities, since the Municipality will be involved in the decision making for various project related aspects from now on. West Limassol Municipality was involved in the organisation of the 2nd Akrotiri Spring Festival (action 5.4), was informed and involved for various issues on Akrotiri Marsh (output 3) and also the Mayor participated in the educational trip to Kerkin Lake (outputs 3 – Akrotiri Marsh and 5 – Ecotourism).
- Cyprus Institute (CI)
 - The CI is running a program on the historical, cultural and economic significance of the local the genetic analysis of the local cattle breed and this is inter-related to output 3 of the project (Akrotiri Marsh). Close cooperation and synergies were established through the project, such as co-organisation of one-day conference for the local Cyprus cattle breed in the premises of CI and participation of the Darwin Team in upcoming documentary by CI on that subject.
- Environment Department (Republic of Cyprus) (ED)
 - ED was involved in the project though mainly presenting and discussing the progress and results of Acacia management in Cape Pyla (Output 1) in various meetings, since they are responsible for the invasive species in the RoC.

Additionally to the above, a 2-day workshop, entitled “Akrotiri Peninsula - Biotic & Abiotic Monitoring, Status & Trends”, took place at the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre on December 2022. The objective of the workshop was to share, through presentations and discussion, the monitoring activities that take place on Akrotiri Peninsula by different stakeholders, departments, scientists and experts. In the frame of this workshop, many actors in the area came together (please refer to section 3 and Annex 5.1 for a more detailed description on this event). This event proved to be very important in bringing closer all the stakeholders and appreciating the need for improved information, knowledge sharing and coordination in order for the actors involved in research, protection, conservation and management

efforts of the area to have a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the environmental synergies and to more efficiently identify any potential issues.

Moreover, during March 2024, Darwin team and MARDE co-organised a one-day conference for the local Cyprus cattle breed, with the support of CI. The aim of the conference was to bring together all stakeholders involved in the protection and promotion of the local cattle breed through various projects, research, funding, etc., to present their actions and activities. The Technical Schools of the Ministry of Education carried out the cooking of the local cattle meet. A facilitated discussion followed with the objective to create synergies, potential collaborations and providing direction for future steps (Annex 5.2).

Finally, a key step in which the project contributed to a great extent was the formation of Akrotiri Marsh Management Committee. Since the start of the DPLUS141 project, the site was suffering from a lack of active management including significant needs for improved coordination and on-going management by the relevant authorities and stakeholders. In order to facilitate the formulation and implementation of better management of this key site, the Darwin team drafted (at the beginning of 2022), a proposal for priority site management actions as a tool for consultation with all involved stakeholders. On October 2023, the SBAA ED took the initiative to set up and coordinate Akrotiri Marsh Management Committee, where all key stakeholders are included and the aim is to co-decide on all management aspects of the Marsh. The Committee had its 1st meeting on October 2023 and since then various meetings and efforts have been made towards this direction. The DPLUS141 project team and partners provided important input and facilitation towards this arrangement. This is a very positive step for the management of Akrotiri Marsh that will continue after the end of the project.

3 Project Achievements

3.1 Outputs

Horizontal Activities

The main horizontal activities that were carried out during the project, are as follows:

- 1. Project Steering Committee Meetings - 09/2021, 01/2022, 06/2022, 11/2022, 07/2023, 07/2024:** Every few months Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings took place, where all involved team members from the Project Partners participated. Progress update, discussion and exchange of ideas and thoughts on various project issues and next steps were discussed (more detailed information was provided in previous project annual reports). In total the PSC met six times during the project.
- 2. Final Project Meeting - 07/2024:** The Final Project Meeting took place on 17th of July 2024, where all Project Partners and Key Stakeholders participated in order to present all project actions and achievements, key results and recommendations, as well as needs for the future (pl. refer to Annex 5.2 for more information - *the presentation done during the 2-hour meeting is in Greek, to facilitate better communication amongst all stakeholders and for this reason is not included in the Annex*).
- 3. Scoping/ progress meetings** with project partners and stakeholders, **field visits** to the project target areas were taking place at least twice every week.
- 4. Financial organisation** of the project (templates, time sheets, expenses recording, monitoring, etc) within and amongst the Project Partners.
- 5. Organisation of a 2-day workshop**, titled: **“Akrotiri Peninsula - Biotic & Abiotic Monitoring, Status & Trends”**, at the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre on the 8th and 9th of December 2022 (more detailed information in Annex 5.1).

The workshop agenda included presentations about terrestrial and marine fauna and flora, habitats and ecosystems and abiotic parameters (groundwater, inland surface and marine water, rainwater).

The objective of the workshop was to share, through presentations and discussion, all the monitoring activities that take place in Akrotiri Peninsula by different stakeholders, departments, scientists and experts. Various researchers, scientists and stakeholders attended the workshop and presented the research and monitoring projects and on-going monitoring work undertaken within the Akrotiri Peninsula terrestrial and marine area, such as:

- SBAA Environment Department, Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre, Joint Services Health Unit, British Forces Cyprus

- Departments/Services from the Republic of Cyprus, such as the Department of Environment, the Department of Forests, Game and Fauna Service, the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research, the Water Development Department, the Sewerage Board of Limassol and Amathus, etc.
- Academic & Research Institutes from National and International Universities and Research Centers and Environmental Consulting Companies, such as University of Cyprus, Cyprus University of Technology, the Cyprus Institute, Open University of Cyprus, Marine and Environmental Research (MER) Lab, CMMI Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute, Pedagogical Institute, etc.
- Non-Governmental Organisations and other Scientific Groups, such as BirdLife Cyprus, Terra Cypria, Enalia Physis Environmental Research Centre, Cyprus Environment Foundation, Cyprus Dragonfly Study Group, etc.

6. Participation in the EUROPARC Conference 2023 in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands (03-06/10/2023). This conference was focused on protected areas management and protection, where the thematic and the sessions of the conference were directly related to almost all aspects of the DPLUS141 project. In the conference, Phoebe Vayanou (Project Coordinator) and Zoe Makridou (Project Conservation & Communication Officer) participated. During the conference, we presented the two Darwin Plus Projects: DPLUS034 “Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs” and DPLUS 141 “Habitat Restoration & Wise Use for Akrotiri & Cape Pyla” in the form of a poster (Annex 5.3). Participants in the conference shared the knowledge gained among the rest of project team and partners.

7. Promotion of the Project through Social Media, Press Releases, Newspaper articles and relevant TV shows: Throughout the project, the project team and partners promoted the aims, actions and results of the project through various communication channels. This proved important in the awareness of the project’s objectives (pl. refer to Section 9 and Annex 5.13).

In the following paragraphs, the progress against the project’s logframe, the changes achieved and the main activities are described. Commentating on the project’s indicators is made in the text [in blue colour](#) and where needed in the relevant Annexes.

Output 1. Support for sustainable management of invasive *Acacia saligna*, with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla

There is information available on how to remove Acacia plants, mainly through chemical treatment protocols, but there is insufficient and scattered information on Acacia post clearance habitat restoration. A. saligna has naturalized in Cyprus and it is one of the most serious invasive species in Cyprus, threatening many natural habitats and agricultural land. In Cape Pyla acacia thickets are also used by illegal bird trappers. Limited research and field trials have been made on how to restore habitats after Acacia clearance has been carried out and to prevent or minimise its re-establishment. The main objective of this Output was to identify and test on the field methods for the sustainable management of invasive Acacia saligna, with a focus on acacia post-clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla.

This was achieved through a) a thorough literature review on the various methods and approaches used internationally for restoring natural vegetation and limiting regrowth of Acacia, resulting in a selection of methods to test on the field in Cape Pyla, b) design and implementation of field trials of these selected methods, which were evaluated according to vegetation surveys before, during and after the experiment, as well as seed viability assessment and c) clear assessments of the efficacy of the trialled methods and future recommendations, according to the results of the field experiments.

The recommendations clearly show needs for further work, since acacia management is a process that needs long-term effort due to its invasive character (number of seeds, regeneration rates, adaptiveness, etc). It is suggested that the more sustainable methods of revegetation/ overplanting of indigenous plant species and grazing can be effective in combination to systematic chemical treatment and with a long-term plan of implementation. The need of systematic monitoring and a feedback loop on successes and pitfalls is really important.

Through all the above procedure, the project team carried out extensive consultations with relevant stakeholders (FD, ED, SBAA).

Summary of Activities - Indicators

1.1 Literature Review: The literature review on the post Acacia clearance approaches and methods for restoring natural vegetation and limiting regrowth of Acacia has been completed. In the framework of this action, discussions, meetings and emails were exchanged with local and international experts, in order to learn from their experience and share thoughts. Various methods have been analysed and a pre-selection of those has been made to test in Cape Pyla in suitable field experimental plots (Soil solarization at varying intensities, Chemical Treatment, Grazing Management, Revegetation).

Measurable Indicator --> 1.1 Practical post Acacia clearance restoration proposals drawn up based on review of up to date restoration techniques by December 2021.

Means of Verification --> 1.1 Production of restoration plan report to include specific and applicable recommendations for trials.

The literature review/ restoration plan can be found in Annex 5.4 of this report.

1.2 Field trials: During and after the completion of the literature review, various meetings/ discussions took place with relevant experts and stakeholders to share experience and thoughts on methodologies and experimental field trial plots design. At the same time, a number of meetings were held with SBAA to discuss permitting procedure for establishing experimental plots and with the local community, to ensure they are informed of the experimental field setting. Despite all the above groundwork, on April 2022 an email was received from the SBAA Area Office, detailing the preconditions required in order to start the field experiment in Cape Pyla. One of these was the securing of Public Liability Insurance (PLI) cover worth £500,000 by BirdLife for this project action. This precondition was never mentioned during the proposal preparation stage, nor during consultations during the first months of the project. To address this issue, a great effort was made by the Project Team to obtain the PLI through contacting a large number of insurance companies in Cyprus and abroad. We also discussed with the SBAA if it was possible to remove or change this pre-condition (lower PLI cover sum). None of these options were possible. After months of efforts, we were able to obtain the PLI in November 2022 from an insurance company based abroad, through a broker in Cyprus. Due to this unexpected complication, during the months April to November 2022, no concrete progress was made on the ground on action 1.2. That said, since December 2022 - as soon as we got the PLI, the field experiment was set up, without significantly jeopardising its implementation schedule or expected results. Budget-wise, there was some unspent costs within the financial year 2023-2024, but these were communicated with the Darwin team, through a change request form, which was approved.

The experimental design for the trial plots was finalised, considering repeatability and robustness of collected data, but also practicality and achievability. Two field experiments were set up, as follows:

- Experiment A: 1- Effectiveness of grazing in Acacia post-clearance management and 2- Effectiveness of revegetation combined with chemical treatment follow ups - 16 trial plots of 100m² (10*10m) each, were established. Duration: January → December 2023

- Experiment B: 1- Effectiveness of Soil Solarisation (SH) with two and three plastic sheets and 2- Effectiveness of Soil Solarization (SH) without soil preparation" - 16 trial plots of 16m² (4*4m) were established. Duration: July → August 2023

Within each of the trial plots, and prior to any treatment/activity, baseline vegetation surveys were conducted, which were repeated during and after the experimental trials.

Additionally, for Experiment B seeds were collected before and after the experiment to test their viability. This was tested by ARI.

The experimental design on Cape Pyla is presented in detail in Annex 5.5 of this Report.

Based on our surveys, it was shown that 88% reduction of acacia seedlings was achieved with chemical treatment, 75% with the combination of revegetation and chemical treatment and 22% with grazing. In terms of the soil solarisation (SH) approach, a 34% reduction was achieved at the high intensity SH plots, 70% reduction at the medium intensity SH plots and 71% at the low intensity SH plots. The reference point to calculate the reduction, is the number of acacia individuals prior the treatments. It is noted that grazing and revegetation act as complementary tools for the management of acacia post clearance. They provide the conditions to suppress the growth and reduce the production of seeds, they are sustainable and a means of pre-invasion restoration. Even though the results of the soil

solarisation approach, support the activation of the seed bank and enable the easier removal of seedlings, these can be only considered as preliminary, due to the small size of the dataset.

Measurable Indicator --> 1.2 Plots identified and trials (treatment & control) carried out for restoration activities identified under 1.1 by December 2023.

1.2.1. Significant reduction of acacia re-growth on trial treatment plots compared with control plots by the end of the project.

Means of Verification --> 1.2 Photos & plans of at least two plot pairs (of minimum 50 x 50m size) established on Cape Pyla for trialling of at least two different management actions to be carried out.

1.2.1. Records of before and after vegetation cover surveys carried out on experimental plots

The experimental design on Cape Pyla is presented in detail in Annex 5.5 of this Report, which includes photos, plans and implementation of trial plots, as well as records of before and after vegetation cover surveys carried out on experimental plots.

1.3 Recommendations for replication and/or further work:

The results of the restoration/acacia control trials are described above, as well as in the relevant report in Annex 5.5, which includes clear assessments of the efficacy of the trialled methods and recommendations for replication and/or further work. Engagement with stakeholders (FD, ED, SBAA) was achieved through various meetings throughout the duration of the project and the results of the field trial methods and relevant recommendations were also presented and thoroughly discussed in the Final Project meeting in July 2024.

In summary, it is recommended that a combination of the sustainable approaches of a) revegetation of indigenous species, that acts as a means of restoration, along with b) controlled grazing, that supports retaining mosaic of vegetation types in an area, should be combined with the chemical treatment of acacia, which was found to be the most effective method for the post acacia management. The long-term effectiveness of the approaches, is directly linked to planning over a long period of time, monitoring and re-evaluating.

Measurable Indicator --> 1.3 Proposing recommendations on next steps and replicability for trialled acacia management methods by the end of the project.

Means of Verification --> 1.3 Report with reviews of trial management methods written up, with clear recommendations on next steps and replicability.

The experimental design on Cape Pyla is presented in detail in Annex 5.5 of this Report, which includes reviews of trial management methods with clear recommendations on next steps and replicability.

1.4 Monitoring of illegal mist netting levels: The programme for monitoring illegal mist netting levels by BirdLife Cyprus with RSPB support continues. The results are found in Annex 5.6.

In 2016, the Sovereign Base Area Administration and Police put pressure on illegal mistnetting using a combination of different tactics, after years of lobbying from BL and RSPB. Apart from a new, more effective anti-poaching unit on the ground, ambushing sites and catching trappers in the act, the SBA police began removing illegal irrigation pipes from within the Acacia plantations of Cape Pyla. This has resulted in many acacias to die, thus rendering the once lush green habitat as un-usable and unsuitable for trapping purposes. As well as this, the SBA police and administration adopted a partnership approach with environmental NGO's, namely BirdLife Cyprus, RSPB and Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) to facilitate a better exchange of information between the partners and help to stop illegal bird trapping within the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (Cape Pyla area). Several high-powered drones were commissioned for use in aerial reconnaissance and to support police enforcement on the ground. The RSPB began a close collaboration with the SBA police and with police support installed covert surveillance cameras at trapping locations within the ESBA, particularly Cape Pyla. This led to the apprehension and conviction of multiple bird trappers since 2016. As well as these measures, court punishments were increased and made more severe. In addition, wildfires in 2019 and 2020 also affected areas with high density of acacia. Since 2016 when these new measures were put in place, mist netting levels within the SBA areas have significantly declined over the years. In-fact, no mistnetting activity has been recorded within the Cape Pyla SAC area in the last five years. The Darwin

Plus project indirectly contributed further to this effort by providing clear recommendations on ways to manage invasive acacia, with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla, as well as the physical presence of the field team undertaking the acacia management experiments. *In relation to the 5% reduction of trapping levels per year compared to 2020 levels, the results continue to show no illegal trapping activity within the SAC, something that is a result of the multiparameter efforts, as explained above.*

Measurable Indicator --> 1.4 Support for ongoing efforts to prevent illegal bird trapping activity on Cape Pyla – trapping levels continue to decrease, by 5% per year compared to 2020 levels.

Means of Verification --> 1.4 Field data from systematic monitoring of illegal bird trapping (from ongoing BirdLife Cyprus programme), showing continued low bird trapping levels and effective enforcement.

The monitoring results of illegal mist netting levels by BirdLife Cyprus are presented in Annex 5.6.

Output 2. Reed management solutions successfully piloted at Zakaki Marsh (or Markia Lake)

Zakaki Marsh has been taken over by reeds in recent years and lost habitat diversity and the open pool area that was important for key bird species, such as Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca and Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus (both qualifying species for the Akrotiri SPA). Changes in both quantity and quality of water draining into the marsh from Limassol town were believed to be the cause for the reed 'take-over', but there was no clear hydrological regime picture for both the quantity and quality of water draining into the marsh.

The main objective of this Output was to understand the hydrological regime of Zakaki Marsh, both quantitative and qualitative and according to that and the ecological needs of the site, especially for the qualifying species, to propose reed management solutions.

This was achieved by a) the elaboration of a comprehensive hydrological study that identified the hydrological regime of Zakaki marsh both qualitative and quantitative, b) ecological assessment and proposal of management options with habitat restoration as a target, with the needs of target species as a key indicator and with key stakeholders' engagement throughout the process. These resulted in an agreed plan of action, ready to be implemented (incl. design, cost, specific actions/ steps and allocation of responsibilities). At the same time, annual reed clearances took place and monthly bird counts have taken place to monitor the the priority species and other birds using the wetland.

Summary of Activities - Indicators

2.1 Hydrological study & management recommendations: The hydrological study, elaborated by external consultants (I.A.CO Environmental & Water Consultants Ltd), was completed and provided a clear identification and description of the hydrological regime of Zakaki Marsh. Based on the results of the hydrological study, an ecological assessment and review of management options was carried out by the Darwin Team and Partners (especially with the input of RSPB experts), with habitat restoration as a target, based on the needs of target species as a key indicator. During the elaboration of the study, meetings with the SBLA took place to discuss the management of the Lake. A workshop with all relevant stakeholders was organised on June 2023 to present and discuss the findings of the hydrological study and the management recommendations in order to agree on the way forward. Further to that, consequent meetings took place amongst main stakeholders (SBLA, GFS, SBAA ED, BL, TC) within April – May 2024, where the planned actions were agreed, designed and the costs estimated and it was decided that they will be implemented either in September 2024 or September 2025, according to SBLA tender procedures. The aim of these actions is to create small habitats within the marsh that are a) suitable for key species (i.e. swallow and deeper pools, excavation of reed rhizomes), b) more sustainable in terms of maintenance and c) at the same time maintain reeds that filter the water that ends up in Akrotiri main Salt Lake. September was considered the right time to implement these reed management actions due to suitability for birds (no breeding or intense migratory activity) and at the same time due to low water levels, which facilitates the management works required.

Measurable Indicator --> 2.1. Comprehensive review of water management issues at the Marsh (including field testing of water quality and water flow assessment), with recommendations for long-term reed management by December 2022.

Means of Verification --> 2.1 Reed management report containing clear recommendations for actions.

The hydrological study and the agreed plan-of-action are presented in Annex 5.7 of this report.

2.2 Mechanical reed clearance: Reed clearance in front of the existing hide at the marsh took place on September 2021, February 2022, February 2023, November 2023 and is also planned for September 2024, which is after the project end date. However, it must be said that the annual or bi-annual reed clearance with manual cutting is a method that has proven to be non-effective -cost and maintenance-wise- and also it is unlikely to benefit the target species at the scale currently undertaken. The reeds grow quickly after their cutting (within 3-4 months). For the project duration, this was taking place since it contributed to the support of maintaining an open habitat for the species using the marsh and at the same time to have clear views from the hide, since no other agreed course of action was in place. This knowledge proved important in order to initiate the procedure to find alternative sustainable reed management methods. Thus, the results of the project (activities 2.1/ 2.2) and relevant extensive consultations with all key stakeholders, facilitated the elaboration and after-project-implementation of a longer-term solution for the reed management, as described in activity 2.1 and Annex 5.7 in detail.

In relation to the indicator set for this activity, reduction of reeds through reed clearance through the project was indeed achieved on target areas of the marsh, but this is temporary, since reeds grow again. However, the works that will be undertaken based on the agreed plan-of-action (activity 2.1) will definitely achieve this indicator with longer term results - this is considered a long-term success for the biodiversity of this site.

Measurable Indicator --> 2.2 Reed-bed managed (reduced in extent by at least 20%) on target areas of the marsh by the end of the project.

Means of Verification --> 2.2 Before and after photos of Marsh area, showing at least 20% reduction in reed cover in target areas.

Before and after reed clearance photos of Marsh area Annex 5.8 of this Report.

2.3 Monthly bird counts: Bird counts at Zakaki Marsh have taken place every month to monitor the occurrence and numbers of the priority species *Aythya nyroca* and *Himantopus himantopus* and also of other birds (resident or migrant visitors) using the wetland. Based on the monitoring results and in relation to the indicator set for this activity, no increase is observed for either species. Records from non-systematic birdwatching data show declines during the period 2012-2021, while records from targeted monthly waterbird surveys since 2014 show no records of *Aythya nyroca* since 2020 and no records of *Himantopus himantopus* since 2019, with the exception of an outlying large count of 71 individuals in the outflow area during the autumn migration period of 2022. The habitat at Zakaki Marsh has changed substantially over the course of the last 10-20 years, resulting in the site now being unsuitable for breeding *Aythya nyroca* and *Himantopus himantopus*. The DPLUS141 project focused on understanding the causes behind the changing hydrology of the Lake, with management actions planned and agreed for future implementation within 2024 or 2025. Monitoring of the site will continue during and following the proposed habitat management actions, which will hopefully result in improvements for the priority breeding bird species.

Measurable Indicator --> 2.3 Increase in occurrence of priority breeding bird species at Marsh: *Aythya nyroca* & *Himantopus himantopus* by at least 20% by project end.

Means of Verification --> 2.3 Records of bird species at marsh, including *A.nyroca* and *H.himantopus*, showing 'before and after' numbers.

The bird monitoring results and relevant analyses are presented in detail in Annex 5.9 of this Report.

Output 3. Sustainability established for conservation cattle grazing at Akrotiri Marsh

The main objective of Output 3 was to contribute to the sustainable management of Akrotiri Marsh. After the implementation of DPLUS034 project (2015-2017) "Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs", which had successfully restored this important site, there was a clear need for better on-going management of the area, in order to address various issues in Akrotiri Marsh. The site was suffering from an almost complete lack of active management, besides what was done by the cows and graziers. Additionally, the economic viability of conservation grazing on Akrotiri Marsh needs support, because currently it is not a financially sustainable activity and is over-dependant on subsidies from the government. Moreover, the Marsh is important for rare plant species. The target plant species population needs reinforcement and protection in the marsh and the storage of genetic material from key plant species in the marsh is desirable in order to help in future conservation actions.

This project aimed to contribute to improved and sustainable management of the marsh through the following main activities: a) Renewing close cooperation with the Akrotiri graziers, but also with all other involved stakeholders in order to facilitate implementation of more sustainable and agreed management solutions and grazing practices, b) Various other actions that complemented and contributed towards the better management of the site c) Supporting the economic viability of conservation grazing by promotion of Akrotiri Marsh beef through a Marketing Strategy and Plan, d) Conservation actions for Akrotiri Marsh rare plant species. Although at the initial stages of the project, various difficulties were faced, such as reluctance of cooperation, lack of trust and non-willingness of the key stakeholders for contributing to the management of the site, the project resulted in significant positive contribution and important steps towards the sustainable management of Akrotiri Marsh, as it will be described in the following paragraphs.

Summary of Activities - Indicators

3.1 Management of cattle grazing & 3.5 Increase engagement of local graziers: These two activities are grouped together in this report since they are inter-related, have many synergies, as well as common indicator. The actions that took place and how these contributed to a positive change in the management regime of Akrotiri Marsh are the following:

- Review and update the grazing capacity levels that were set in the grazing capacity study under the DPLUS034 project (pl. refer to Annex 5.10). This was achieved by updating the vegetation cover (through drone videos, photos and numerous field visits) and the updated number of animals currently in the marsh (through data of Veterinary Services and information from graziers). The results of this analysis indicate that grazing density in Akrotiri Marsh is higher than the objectives set for long-term grazing density, but the aspirational target for wet grassland habitat versus saltmarsh and reedbed has not been reached yet. This is due to a combination of factors, mainly non-adaptive and managed grazing and existence of areas that are not reachable by cattle (too much water or dense reeds), resulting in areas that are over-grazed and areas that need more grazing. Thus, it is proposed that the number of animals at the marsh are retained for short/medium-term timeframe and through managed grazing to reach towards the aspirational target for wet grassland/reedbed and then re-evaluate. This is one of the issues that the Akrotiri Marsh Management Committee will closely monitor.
- Formulation of a management scheme proposal with priority site management actions to be used as a tool for consultation with all involved stakeholders (beginning of 2022). On October 2023, the SBAA Environment Department initiated the procedure to formulate Akrotiri Marsh Management Committee with clear roles and responsibilities by inviting all stakeholders in a meeting to discuss the management needs and the involvement of the different stakeholders. The project team facilitated the organisation of this meeting and since then the project team and partners remain in close communication and cooperation in order to assist and advise the various steps, engaging fully with this process. This is a very positive step towards sustainable management of the marsh.
- Ongoing meetings, discussions and field visits took place during the course of the project to discuss issues, needs, solutions, while building and renewing close cooperation with various stakeholders such as Akrotiri Council, Graziers, Department of Forests, Water Development Department, etc.
- Actions that contribute to better on-going management of the site. BirdLife Cyprus drew on own funds to cover urgent repairs to the fencing of the marsh for health and safety reasons (December

2021 – January 2022). This was done to support the graziers, as part of “bridge-building” efforts. In line with this, the cost of cleaning Marsh drainage channels from reeds was also covered (September 2022) to aid better drainage of the area. These actions took place by own funds (BirdLife Cyprus), but complement the efforts of the project.

- Organisation by BirdLife Cyprus, with own funds and thanks to RSPB support, of a trip to Lake Kerkini, in Northern Greece (March 2023) with the aim to visit a designated environmentally protected area in order to understand and explore how this area has been promoted and has developed to become a top eco-tourism and birding destination, as well as the promotion of the local meat products from water buffalo. This trip had many synergies with the Akrotiri Marsh and its stakeholders. The participants were Akrotiri Marsh graziers, the Mayor of nearby Ypsonas Municipality, two environment wardens of the SBAA ED and BirdLife Cyprus team representatives.
- Organisation of a trip to Epping Forest, UK (May 2024) to learn more about the fenceless grazing technology by visiting a site where it has been used extensively, to build knowledge towards ongoing conservation management efforts at Akrotiri Marsh. This relatively new, collar-based technology - which gets around the need for fencing - has great potential as a tool in adaptive grazing, which can be used as an effective and sustainable tool for reed management. Akrotiri Marsh could benefit from the implementation of fenceless grazing. With this in mind, we reached out to managers of the Epping Forest in the UK, a 3,200Ha site that spans from East London to Essex, where the collar-based technology has been used since 2010 on cattle that graze this site. This two-day visit by project partners (BirdLife Cyprus and SBAA ED) gave us the opportunity to learn from the extensive experience at Epping Forest and make valuable contacts to address issues during testing of collars at the Marsh cattle.

All the above actions, coupled with activities 3.2 Marketing plan for wildlife-friendly Akrotiri Marsh beef and 3.3 – 3.4 Ex-situ and in-situ actions for conservation of Akrotiri Marsh flora (see below for more details) greatly contributed to a) better knowledge and understanding of the system, b) building collaborations with all stakeholders that by project end became strong and trustful partnerships and relationships that created a more cooperative dynamic amongst all stakeholders, c) implementation of conservation and management actions, d) capacity building and e) overall better management of the marsh. One of the big successes is the formulation -towards the end of the project- of Akrotiri Marsh Management Committee, with the coordination of SBAA ED and the participation and involvement of all stakeholders.

In relation to the indicator set, based on the results of the updated grazing capacity, but also on the maturity of on-going and adaptive management of the marsh, the number of graziers is not as important per se, as is the achievement of “hands-on” management and adaptive grazing. There are still important steps to be done towards this direction, but we strongly believe that through DPLUS141 project, a solid base has been set.

Measurable Indicator --> 3.4 By project end, increase number of graziers maintaining animals at the marsh from the current 5 to 7.

Means of Verification --> 3.4 Number of graziers involved in project actions and keeping Cyprus cows on Akrotiri Marsh.

The updated grazing capacity report is in Annex 5.10.

3.2. Marketing plan for wildlife-friendly Akrotiri Marsh beef:

The Marketing Strategy and Plan, written in Greek for better communication with all stakeholders and esp. graziers, includes a detailed market research analysis, swat analysis and it proposes the Strategy and Action Plan for 1st year of implementation, together with the concept representation (brand name, logo, key visual). During the formulation of the marketing plan, a systematic consultation schedule (together with other stakeholders, such as MARDE, DA, ARI, Graziers, CUT) for the support of the local Cyprus cattle breed, and specifically through promotion of its beef, took place. It was decided, that the Marketing Plan will be drafted for the local Cypriot cattle breed as a whole (not just Akrotiri Marsh cows), because in this way the product can be more recognisable to the market (more animals than only in the marsh). However, the plan includes a sub-section for the free range Akrotiri Marsh cattle.

The final Marketing Plan was presented to the graziers in September 2023, who welcomed the outcome and communications tools. We remain in close communication with them to support and guide them - where needed- towards implementation of this plan.

Additionally, during March 2024, Darwin team and MARDE co-organised a one-day conference for the local Cyprus cattle breed, with the support of CI. The aim of the conference was to bring together all stakeholders involved in the protection and promotion of the local cattle breed through various projects, research, funding, etc., to present their actions and activities. The Marketing Strategy and Plan was also presented during this conference, discussed and the outcome was received by all stakeholders with a very positive response. A facilitated discussion followed with the objective to create synergies, potential collaborations and providing direction for future steps (Annex 5.2).

Measurable Indicator --> 3.1 Marketing plan for wildlife-friendly Akrotiri Marsh beef drawn up and agreed with cattle herders by March 2023.

Means of Verification --> 3.1 Marketing study document produced, with clear recommendations for marketing actions and next steps.

The presentation of the Marketing Strategy and Plan (in Greek) and the graphic design work can be found in Annex 5.11 of this report.

3.3 & 3.4 Ex-situ and in-situ actions for conservation of Akrotiri Marsh flora:

All conservation actions taken for the four target Red List flora species at Akrotiri Marsh (*Mentha aquatica*, *Euphorbia hisruta*, *Ipomoea sagittata*, *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*), are presented in detail in Annex 5.12. In summary, the conservation actions included:

1) Monitoring – Population recording – Mapping:

- a. Monitoring took place at each species optimum period and each species population was estimated as mature individuals, but also as area covered in m². The boundaries of the extent of occurrence of each taxon were mapped. For all four species, updated distributions and population sizes were provided in the context of DPLUS141 project. Overall, the cover and population size of the target species -with the exception of *Mentha aquatica*- has increased manyfold, following implementation of the project's conservation actions, overarching the project's targets and indicators of change. In relation to *M. aquatica*, some locations that were previously recorded to host the species, were not confirmed, thus consequently, narrowed its extent of occurrence. Moreover, reinforcing the population with seeds, was not proved effective. Additionally, a number of plants were successfully introduced in an area outside the Akrotiri Marsh (their number was not included in the indicators of change).
- b. A monitoring plan for assessing population size and species habitat quality of the four target species was prepared, along with a population monitoring protocol to be used after-project.

2) In situ conservation actions: Overall, a total of 20 in situ conservation actions related to the 4 target plant taxa, were implemented which include:

- a. Plant reinforcement (4 actions) → For all four target species, local reinforcement actions took place, by planting seeds and individuals from the active collections to Akrotiri Marsh.
- b. Introduction to new areas (5 actions) → All four target species were introduced to new areas (plant micro-reserve), depending on the local conditions and their ecological requirements.
- c. Management measures in the form of protective fences establishment (5 actions) → Fenced areas were installed at Akrotiri Marsh for the protection of all four target species from grazing and trampling.
- d. Managed grazing by controlled access (3 actions) → The access of cattle herds in areas where the target species are observed and fenced, was regulated during the flowering and seeding period of the target species, thus permitting a complete reproduction cycle and limiting herbivory, but at the same time allowing the beneficial effects of grazing in the marsh.
- e. Selective removal of competing or invasive taxa (2 actions) → *Rubus sanctus* expanding stands, were selectively removed in late winter, to allow space for the more heliophilic plants such as *M. aquatica* and *I. sagittata*. Selective removal of the invasive alien species *Acacia saligna* was applied at the populations of *M. aquatica* and *E. hirsuta*, established ex-situ, at the Eucalyptus forest.

- f. Restoring natural vegetation (1 action) → Removed the tamarisk thickets, that slowly expand, replacing wet grasslands, that provide fodder for the cattle.
- 3) Ex- situ conservation actions
- a. Seed banking → A total of 8 germplasm accessions (seed lots) collected from the 4 target taxa were submitted to ARI. In summary, the following seeds were preserved at ARI genebank: 25 seeds of *M. aquatica*, 5500 of *E. hirsuta*, 23 seeds of *I. sagittata*, 6000 seeds of *S. tabernaemontani*.
 - b. Plant production → A total of around 500 plants were propagated (corresponding to the 4 target taxa) at the nurseries of the Department of Forests at Fasouri and Athalassa. The plants were made available for in situ conservation actions: reinforcement, introduction, but also during outreach activities, during which plant pods were given to the public along with information on the species conservation.

Measurable Indicator --> 3.2 Seed bank established for key marsh plant species by March 2024.

3.3 By project end, cover of target plant species has increased in marsh (by 25-50%)

Means of Verification --> 3.2 Photos and records of seed bank species.

3.3 Vegetation cover surveys at start and end of action.

Annex 5.12 presents in detail Akrotiri Marsh Plant conservation actions, including seed bank depositions (documentation and photos) & vegetation cover surveys results and targets achieved.

Output 4. Reduced disturbance to key wildlife species, including birds and marine reptiles, through the implementation of an access management plan for sensitive Akrotiri habitats

In Akrotiri Peninsula, there is increasing visitor pressure, since most areas are heavily disturbed by vehicle traffic -especially off-road- and excess amounts of litter. This results in disturbance of key species, trampling, habitat fragmentation and loss. The main objective of this Output was to design a targeted Access Management Plan for the area, but also implement access management actions, which contribute to more sustainable and wise use of Akrotiri Peninsula.

4.1 Akrotiri Access Management Plan:

Akrotiri Access Management Plan was elaborated in a stepwise approach: a) a spatial mapping exercise including all the different layers needed (i.e. sensitive wildlife areas, access routes, parking areas, recreational areas and facilities, administration boundaries, proposed developments, areas of interest, etc), b) initial consultations with SBAA stakeholders, c) field visits and d) elaboration of the Management Plan and further consultation with all involved stakeholders in order to reach to the agreed [Final Access Management Plan \(March 2023\) \(Annex 5.14\)](#).

At the same time, after consultation with all relevant stakeholders, [a number of access management measures/ actions, as prescribed in the Access Management Plan, took place in the Lady's mile area and eucalyptus forest area during February – March 2023 and November 2023 – March 2024 \(Annex 5.14\)](#). These include installation of gate bars, barriers, creation of soil embankments, placement of rocks to designate parking and prevent access, rubbish collection, installation of information signs, etc. All these actions restricted vehicle access to sensitive habitats and were also combined with the designation of walking trails (output 5). The access by cars in the areas that we worked on led to various unwanted (and also in many cases illegal) activities, like:

- Off road driving that results in:
 - Habitat & flora species trampling
 - Habitat fragmentation and loss
 - Disturbance to birds and specially to ground nesting birds
- Poaching
- Waste dumping (including dumping of large pieces of garbage)
- Fires

These actions are very important for the protection of key habitats from access disturbance to species and habitats and for the prevention of littering.

In Lady's mile the area (~ 290 ha) that was protected, includes breeding and feeding grounds for designation and other birds (e.g. Kentish plover) and other species (reptiles and invertebrates), as well as the following three habitats:

- 5420: Cisto-Micromerietea phrygana
- 1420: Mediterranean halophilous scrubs (*Arthrocnemum fruticosum*)
- 5212+5420: Arborecent matorral with *Juniperus* spp. (*Juniperus phoenicea*) and Cisto-Micromerietea phrygana

Additionally, due to the ban of vehicle access, around 3ha of the above habitats will be left undisturbed to return to their natural condition.

Eucalyptus forest, even though it is dominated by introduced Eucalypt and Acacia species, has acquired a certain conservation value within the Akrotiri Peninsula. It has come to serve as a roosting and nesting ground, especially for birds of prey during autumn migration. Large flocks of European Honey Buzzards and other raptors, as well as hundreds of Bee-eaters, can be observed in and around the Eucalyptus Forest at this time of year. Beyond its significance for birds, the forest plays a vital role in supporting rare and threatened plant species. Through the management access actions, disturbance to these species has been greatly reduced, as well as waste dumping and setting of fires.

Additionally to the above, it must be noted that during 2021-2022 project partner Terra Cypria implemented in collaboration with SBAA ED various access management actions in Lady's mile area through a MAVA-funded MedIsWetII project (access restrictions to cars, surveillance cameras, signs). These actions were a very important starting point to the access management procedures and stakeholder consultations and are complimentary to those of our project. Thus, through both projects a lot of progress was achieved to manage and control mainly vehicle access and protect key species and habitats.

4.2. Bird monitoring: Monitoring of birds (occurrence, numbers and breeding activity) is taking place on a monthly basis (Annex 5.9 for relevant results and analyses).

In relation to the project indicators, agreed access management actions took place during 2021-2022 (MAVA-funded MedIsWetII project by TC/ SBAA ED) and during 02-03/2023 and 11/2023 to 03/2024 (DPLUS141 project). The results of the birds monitoring program (Annex 5.9) reveal maintenance or even increase of numbers of key migrant and breeding bird species (*Himantopus himantopus*, *Charadrius alexandrinus*, *Egretta garzetta*) in Lady's Mile area based on before and after comparisons, apart from *Phoenicopterus roseus* where reductions over time are evident across seasons and might be attributed to changes in water/habitat quality due to anthropogenic, environmental and climatic changes/ threats. Occurrence and abundance of *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Lady's Mile pools show relatively stable numbers over the last years. Before and after comparisons show no large differences before and after in either Lady's Mile or the Salt Lake, except with an increase in the numbers during spring migration after compared with before and a decrease in numbers during the breeding period at the Salt Lake.

4.3 Turtle nesting monitoring: Monitoring of turtle nesting was done by the SBAA ED during the breeding summer season (Annex 5.15 for relevant results for years 2020-2023).

The number of turtle nest counts in Lady's Mile beach (2023: 6, 2022: 6, 2021: 12, 2020: 26) are too few to make secure conclusions, although they tend to show a decrease. Access management actions in the frame of DPLUS141, secured no vehicle access to the beach, something that is very positive for both turtle nesting success, as well as sand dunes restoration, which is positively evident. However, turtle nesting in Lady's Mile beach is greatly impacted by the operation of restaurants/clubs on the beach that have music and lights during the night hours, as well as umbrellas/ sunbeds on the beach, without adhering to current legislation.

Measurable Indicator --> 4.1 Phase I of management plan implemented by end 2nd project year (most sensitive sites protected through limitation of access), allowing for maintenance of numbers of key migrant and breeding bird species at key wetland sites by project end. (Annexes 5.14 & 5.9)

4.2 Phase I of management plan implemented by end 2nd project year (most sensitive sites protected through limitation of access), allowing for maintenance of numbers of marine turtle nests on key beaches by project end (Annexes 5.14 & 5.15).

Means of Verification --> 4.1 Results of targeted bird surveys during migration, wintering and breeding periods, showing 'before and after' numbers (Annex 5.9).

4.2. Records of occurrence & number of *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Lady's Mile pools (Annex 5.9).

4.3 Records of turtle nest counts on key beaches (Annex 5.15).

Output 5. Eco-tourism opportunities enhanced within Akrotiri Peninsula, benefiting in particular the approx. 900 local residents of Akrotiri community

The main objective of this Output is to increase public awareness on the environmental & cultural importance & value of Akrotiri Peninsula & at the same time to promote wildlife-friendly tourism on the peninsula, thus also enhancing ecosystem services, increasing the benefits to the local community & promote this alternative tourism to the area during "quieter" touristic periods, i.e. early spring & winter.

5.1 Automatic visitor counters: Automatic visitor counters have been installed at the three bird hides in Akrotiri in July 2022 and results have been collected every month. For the duration of the recording period (Oct. 22 to Jun. 24), the number of visits was 68 573 in total in all three hides. According to the results, weekends attract more visitors in the area (on Sundays the average is ~50 visits and the maximum is ~290 visits) and the season with higher visitation is spring, followed by autumn. A detailed analysis of the results is found in Annex 5.16 of this report. This information is collected for the first time in the area and it is very useful for understanding visitation patterns and for management purposes.

5.2 Website for visitors in Akrotiri: The aim of this activity was to set-up a dedicated website promoting Akrotiri Peninsula as a wildlife-watching destination. The website acts as the main promotional tool for tourism, through which visitors are able to find information on where to go and what to see and at the same time promote awareness of the environmental and cultural value of the area. The website has been online since March 2023 (<https://visitakrotiri.cy>) in Greek and English.



Based on google analytics, there are 2500 unique users of the site from March 2023 to June 2024, mainly from Cyprus, but also UK, US, Greece, Germany etc. After the end of the project, the site will be managed by BirdLife Cyprus and Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre.

5.3 Wildlife camera set up in Akrotiri Salt Lake: This action turned out to be impossible to carry out for reasons relating to the sensitive military status of the area and the extremely complex and lengthy permitting process that would be involved. After an approved change request, the wildlife camera budget was reallocated to a) visitor counters (additional budget needed) and b) to actions implementing the Akrotiri Access Management Plan.

5.4 Akrotiri Spring Festival: Organisation of two Akrotiri Spring Festivals took place on the weekend of 13-14 of May 2023 and on Sunday 12 of May 2024. During both Spring Festivals, visitors had the opportunity to participate in activities such as bird ringing, bird watching, fun educational games and crafts for families, hiking, basketry workshops, etc. at various locations on Akrotiri Peninsula. Registration forms were used to some activities and also during the festival days, the responsible person for each activity was counting the participants' number. Both Festivals were very successful events, with around 500 participants each. Additionally, both Festivals had participation in the

organisation, but also during the festival days by the local community. The program of the Festivals, which have been widely advertised, together with a selection of photos are on Annex 5.17 of this report. The videos from the two Akrotiri Spring Festivals can be found on:

May 2023 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHshvkGUBjQ&t=5s>

May 2024 - <https://youtu.be/ycmK6eyYkXw>

5.5 Walking trails: Three potential hiking trails were identified by the Darwin Project team and sent to SBAA for consultation in May 2022. In July 2022, the SBAA informed the Darwin project team that it had been decided not to approve them because of security concerns raised by British Forces Cyprus. The project team asked for re-examination based on ways to address safety challenges and identification of suitable areas that do not create safety issues. Through many consultations with the SBAA, it was decided that [two of the three trails originally proposed can go ahead](#). Through an approved financial change request in 11/2022, the relevant funds for the trails were moved in the 2023-2024 financial year. [The two trails have been designated with directional signs, an information sign explaining points of interest and wildlife species that can be observed and designated parking area at the start of the trail. All the information about the walking trails can be found in Annex 5.18 of this report.](#)

5.6 Bird viewing Screens: After many consultations within the project team/ partners, as well as with other stakeholders (SBAA, land owners, i.e. Merras Zakakiou, Game and Fauna Service), it was decided to [design and construct one bird viewing & visitor information structure at the beginning of Lady's mile road](#). This bird viewing & visitor information structure is at a key location at the beginning of the protected area and the much-visited area of Lady's Mile, that offers visitors views to sea gulls and flamingos and at the same time promotes the environmental importance of the area (please refer to Annex 5.19 for location, design and photos).

5.7 Production of Akrotiri promotional video: Through an approved change request (07/2023) this action was changed from "*Production of Akrotiri visitors' wildlife guide in form of a mobile application*" to the [production of a short video/ promotional spot to highlight and promote Akrotiri Peninsula as an ecotourism and wildlife-watching destination](#). This video was and will be used, amongst others, by Project Partners, the Akrotiri Community and the West Limassol Municipality, to promote an alternative tourism and visitation pattern to the area. We took advantage of filming during different seasons (autumn, winter and spring) to highlight the beauty of the area all year round. This video spot has been promoted in social media, but also efforts are made to promote it through partnership with the RoC Deputy Ministry of Tourism, Cyprus Airports and in International Fairs. It can be found on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBMVRhA2yJ0>

Measurable Indicator --> 5.1 Dedicated Akrotiri eco-tourism website (set up by March 2022) has at least 2,000 visits by project end.

~~5.2 Salt Lake wildlife camera in operation by September 2022.~~ --> [removed through approved change request](#)

5.3 Holding of two Akrotiri nature festivals, in Spring 2023 and Spring 2024 with at least 100 participants attend each.

5.4 Three Akrotiri walking routes established by project end (first route set up by end September 2022).

5.5 Viewing screens set up for Lady's Mile Pools by end 2023.

~~5.6 Akrotiri visitors' wildlife guide produced (in mobile application form).~~ --> [changed through approved change request to Akrotiri promotional video.](#)

Means of Verification --> 5.1 Website Statistics/Google Analytics. ([Action 5.2 description](#))

~~5.2 Visits to Salt Lake wildlife cam live stream (on website).~~

5.3 Visitor counts for hides and other visitor infrastructure; visits to dedicated Akrotiri eco-tourism website and eco-tourism festivals ([Actions 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4 description, Annex 5.16 and 5.17](#))

5.4 Pictures of nature festival events and info on attendees/ticket sales. ([Action 5.4 description, Annex 5.17](#))

5.5 Pictures and maps of established walking routes ([Action 5.5 description, Annex 5.18](#))

5.6 Pictures of erected viewing screens ([Action 5.6 description, Annex 5.19](#))

~~5.7 Wildlife guide mobile app~~ [Action 5.7 description/ youtube link](#)

3.2 Outcome

Project Outcome: Key wetland and scrub habitat restored in Cyprus SBAs, with long-term nature conservation gains secured through enhanced, low-impact visitor use, with associated gains for wildlife tourism.

We consider that this project achieved to a great extent its main outcome, since all the actions related to the protection and conservation of key wetland and scrub habitats and related species have been successfully implemented, coupled with low-impact visitor use through access management plan and actions and increased awareness of the environmental value of the area and promotion of the area as an alternative nature-based tourism destination. These were complimented by building strong, trustful and long-term relationships amongst key stakeholders and the local community related to the project's areas. All these are analysed in more detail in the next table, as well as in the relevant sections of this report and Annexes.

Baseline Condition – Intended Outcome	Change recorded by end of project (June 2024)	Indicator	Source of evidence
Output 1. Support for sustainable management of invasive <i>Acacia saligna</i>, with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla			
<p>There is information available on how to remove <i>Acacia</i> plants, mainly through chemical treatment protocols, but there is insufficient and scattered information on <i>Acacia</i> post clearance habitat restoration. <i>A. saligna</i> has naturalized in Cyprus and it is one of the most serious invasive species in Cyprus, threatening many natural habitats, invading forests, maquis, garigue, phrygana, marshy areas and agricultural land. Limited research and field trials have been made on how to restore habitats after <i>Acacia</i> clearance and prevent or minimise re-establishment of <i>Acacia</i>.</p>	<p>a) A thorough literature review on the various methods and approaches used internationally for restoring natural vegetation and limiting regrowth of <i>Acacia</i>, resulting in a selection of methods to test on the field in Cape Pyla was elaborated</p> <p>b) Design and implementation of field trials of these selected methods took place which were evaluated according to vegetation surveys before, during and after the experiment, as well as seed viability assessment</p> <p>c) Clear assessments of the efficacy of the trialled methods and recommendations for replication and/or further work, according to the results of the field experiments are proposed.</p> <p>These recommendations show clearly needs for further work, since acacia management is a process that needs long term effort. A combination of more sustainable methods (such as managed grazing & revegetation/ overplanting of indigenous plant species) can be effective in combination of systematic chemical treatment and with a long-term plan of implementation.</p>	<p>Assessment of management & restoration methods for post <i>Acacia</i> clearance based on trial treatment plots and vegetation survey results at Cape Pyla with recommendations for replication and/or further work by the end of the project.</p> <p>Achieved – Annex 5.5.</p>	<p>Report document with vegetation survey results for Cape Pyla trial plots (before & after) and with reviews of trial management methods written up, with clear recommendations on next steps and replicability by the end of the project.</p> <p>Annex 5.5</p>
Output 2. Reed management solutions successfully piloted at Zakaki Marsh			
<p>Zakaki Marsh has been taken over by reeds in recent years and lost habitat diversity and the open pool area. No clear hydrological regime picture for both the quantity and quality of water draining into the marsh.</p>	<p>a) Elaboration of a comprehensive hydrological study that identified the hydrological regime of Zakaki marsh both qualitative and quantitative.</p> <p>b) Ecological assessment and proposal of management options with habitat restoration as a target, with the needs of target species as a key indicator and</p>	<p>Zakaki marsh reed-bed management report agreed by key stakeholders by December 2022.</p> <p>Achieved.</p> <p>Agreed plan of action with all key</p>	<p>Zakaki marsh reed-bed management report document.</p> <p>Annex 5.7</p>

Baseline Condition – Intended Outcome	Change recorded by end of project (June 2024)	Indicator	Source of evidence
Site is dominated by reeds with little diversity, esp. for priority breeding bird species.	with key stakeholders' engagement throughout the process.	stakeholders, ready to be implemented (incl. design, cost, specific actions/ steps and allocation of responsibilities) – Annex 5.7	
Output 3. Sustainability established for conservation cattle grazing at Akrotiri Marsh, through expert input on grazing levels, preparation of a marketing study for Akrotiri Marsh 'eco-beef' and both in situ and ex situ conservation actions for key marsh flora species, building on progress achieved under the DPLUS034 project (2015-2017).			
Akrotiri Marsh, since the start of the project, was suffering from an almost complete lack of active management, save that done by the cows and graziers, but also grazing is done in an unmanaged way. Additionally, the economic viability of conservation grazing on Akrotiri Marsh needed support, because currently it is not a financially sustainable activity and is over-dependant on subsidies from the government. Moreover, the Marsh is important for rare plant species. The target plant species population needs reinforcement and protection in the marsh and the storage of genetic material from key plant species in the marsh is desirable in order to help in future conservation actions.	<p>a) Close cooperation with the Akrotiri graziers, but also with all other involved stakeholders was renewed in order to facilitate implementation of better management solutions and sustainable grazing practices,</p> <p>b) Various other actions that complemented and contributed towards the better management of the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update of the grazing capacity levels • Formulation of a management scheme proposal with priority site management actions to be used as a tool for consultation with all involved stakeholders – Facilitation in the setting up of Akrotiri Marsh Management Committee • Repairs to the fencing and cleaning drainage channels from reeds • Capacity building trips to Lake Kerkini, in Northern Greece and Epping Forest London. <p>c) Support of the economic viability of conservation grazing by promotion of Akrotiri Marsh beef through a Marketing Strategy and Plan</p> <p>d) Conservation actions for Akrotiri Marsh rare plant species resulting in multi-magnitude increase in population size and extent of occurrence.</p>	<p>Sustainability for cattle grazing management at Akrotiri Marsh, through the achievement of the number of cattle to be within the limits recommended by grazing capacity study drawn up under the DPLUS034 project: 1–1.75 Eurostat Livestock Units (LSU) per ha by the end of the project.</p> <p>The results from the updated grazing capacity indicate that grazing density in Akrotiri Marsh is higher than the objectives set for long-term grazing density. However, the aspirational target for wet grassland habitat versus saltmarsh & reedbed has not been reached yet. (see section 3.1/ Annex 1 and 5.10 for more details)</p>	<p>Cattle head counts and age structure estimation to assess proximity to target density of 1–1.75 Eurostat Livestock Units (LSU) per ha. Annex 5.10: Updated grazing capacity study for Akrotiri Marsh</p>
Output 4. Reduced disturbance to key wildlife species, including birds and marine reptiles, through the implementation of an access management plan for sensitive Akrotiri habitats			
The levels of disturbance to key wild life species and their habitats are high, due to uncontrolled	a) Access management plan has been finalised and agreed with key stakeholders.	Agreed Akrotiri Access Management Plan	Akrotiri access management plan and implemented actions.

Baseline Condition – Intended Outcome	Change recorded by end of project (June 2024)	Indicator	Source of evidence
<p>access in most parts of Akrotiri Peninsula. Most areas are heavily disturbed by vehicle traffic - especially off-road- and excess amounts of litter. This results in disturbance of key species, trampling, habitat fragmentation and loss.</p>	<p>b) A number of access management measures/ actions, as prescribed in the Access Management Plan, took place in the Lady’s mile area and eucalyptus forest area during February – March 2023 and November 2023 – March 2024. These include installation of gate bars, barriers, creation of soil embankments, placement of rocks to designate parking and prevent access, rubbish collection, installation of information signs, etc. All these actions managed access by car to sensitive habitats and were also combined with the designation of walking trails (output 5). In Lady’s mile the area that was protected is ~ 290 ha and ~3 ha will be slowly restored. In Eucalyptus forest the area that was protected contributes to reduced disturbance to birds such as European Honey Buzzards and other raptors, as well as Bee-eaters</p>	<p>by key stakeholders, including relevant map, by December 2023. Achieved. Annex 5.14</p>	<p>Annex 5.14</p>
<p>Output 5. Eco-tourism opportunities enhanced within Akrotiri Peninsula</p>			
<p>The area offers great potential for ecotourism, but still this sector is largely unknown and has not been promoted for the Akrotiri Peninsula. Additionally, many visitors of the area still were not familiar with the environmental and cultural importance and value of Akrotiri Peninsula.</p>	<p>a) Automatic visitor counters have been installed at the three bird hides in Akrotiri and results are been collected every month, showing increased visitation to bird watching facilities. b) A dedicated website promoting Akrotiri Peninsula as a wildlife-watching destination has been online since March 2023, and based on google analytics, there are 2500 unique users of the site from March 2023 to June 2024. c) Organisation of two Akrotiri Spring Festivals took place (May 2023 and May 2024), both of which were very successful events, with around 500 participants each. d) Two hiking trails have been designated and promoted with directional signs, an information sign and designated parking area at the start of the trail. e) A bird viewing & visitor information structure at a key location at the beginning of the protected area and the much-visited area of Lady’s Mile has been set up, that offers visitors views to sea gulls and flamingos and at the same</p>	<p>Increased visitors within the range of 20-30% to Akrotiri wildlife-watching facilities (hides and paths) by project end. Baseline to be set by mid-2022 (as currently unknown). Achieved. There was an increase in visitation in all days of the week compared to the baseline data from 17,6% to 31,1%. - Annex 5.16</p>	<p>Record of visitor numbers to Akrotiri area wildlife-watching hides, paths (use of automatic visitor counters) Annex 5.16</p>

Baseline Condition – Intended Outcome	Change recorded by end of project (June 2024)	Indicator	Source of evidence
	time promotes the environmental importance of the area. f) A short video/ promotional spot has been produced that highlights and promotes Akrotiri Peninsula as an ecotourism and wildlife-watching destination.		
Detailed sustainability plan in place and agreed by Cyprus SBAs for target sites and project actions with clear recommendations.			Detailed 'after-project' sustainability plan document with clear recommendations and course of future action. Annex 5.20

3.3 Monitoring of assumptions

Important Assumptions	Monitoring of assumptions/ Mitigating risks
Outcome: Key wetland and scrub habitat restored in Cyprus SBAs, with long-term nature conservation gains secured through enhanced, low-impact visitor use, with associated gains for wildlife tourism	
1. Building and road development does not seriously impact on project target sites and habitats. 2. COVID-19 pandemic does not severely limit the carrying out of events, project meetings & site visits.	1. This assumption was monitored through project engagement of the project Partners with the planning process for non-military development in the SBAs through various meetings along this process. 2. This assumption was overcome within 2021 using tele-conferencing and virtual events as alternatives as needed, and also by taking all required safety measures in all events involving public participation.
Output 1: Support for sustainable management of invasive <i>Acacia saligna</i> , with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla	
1. Fire event does not impact on study plots during project period.	1. This risk was managed by observing fire safety and following fire prevention procedures on identified study plots.
Output 2: Reed management solutions successfully piloted at Zakaki Marsh	
1. Analysis of water regime and reed-bed dynamics allows clear management actions to be proposed and trialed 2. Cooperation secured from the local Sewerage Board (SBLA), which manages the Marsh.	1. The best available practice was used for the hydrological study by local experts (IACO Ltd) with long experience both in international standards and methods, but also in the local conditions. At the same time, RSPB through its extensive experience in wetland management in terms of ecology and conservation, has greatly and mainly contributed to the proposed management actions for Zakaki Marsh. 2. The cooperation with SBLA was excellent through several meetings in order to achieve better coordination of actions related to reed clearances, as well as information on the hydrological regime of the lake and mainly in the establishment and implementation of an agreed management regime for Zakaki Marsh after the project end.
Output 3: Sustainability established for conservation cattle grazing at Akrotiri Marsh, through expert input on grazing levels, preparation of a marketing study for Akrotiri Marsh 'eco-beef' and both in situ and ex situ conservation actions for key marsh flora species, building on progress achieved under the DPLUS034 project (2015-2017)	
1. Cooperation of Akrotiri Marsh cattle graziers secured.	1. Cattle graziers were involved, informed and consulted through the duration of the project through very frequent communication (meetings, field visits, phone calls, etc) in all aspects relating to Akrotiri Marsh and the beef marketing plan. The project end leaves the graziers with stronger relationships with key stakeholders involved in the management of the Marsh (e.g. SBAA ED), more cooperative on implementing better solutions on grazing and also empowered with more knowledge both on beef promotion, as well as with more sustainable vision on marsh grazing.

Important Assumptions	Monitoring of assumptions/ Mitigating risks
Output 4: Reduced disturbance to key wildlife species, including birds and marine reptiles, through the implementation of an access management plan for sensitive Akrotiri habitats	
1. Compatibility achieved with the master plan studies proposed under the SBA Non-military development planning proposals	1. The project team and partners (SBAA ED, BL, TC) were highly engaging within all relevant planning process under the non-military development planning process which ended in 2022 and all proposals/ plans made were in synergy with SBA Non-military development planning proposals.
Output 5: Eco-tourism opportunities enhanced within Akrotiri Peninsula	
1. Cooperation secured from Akrotiri village community and other local communities.	1. Since the very start of the project and throughout its duration, Akrotiri Community Council (ACC), through mainly its president, was kept informed on most project actions and remained through the project very supportive. Close cooperation has been established mainly for ecotourism actions, but also other actions (Akrotiri Marsh, Access Management). At the same time, Municipality of West Limassol was involved in the organisation of the 2 nd Akrotiri Spring Festival, something that is established and is planned to continue after the end of the project.

4 Contribution to Darwin Plus Programme Objectives

4.1 Project support to environmental and/or climate outcomes in the UKOTs

The project delivered sustainable conservation management at two very important biodiversity sites, as well as sustainable use of Akrotiri Peninsula (through facilitation of low-impact use by visitors). This benefits biodiversity, ecosystems and Cyprus society in the long-term. More specifically, the impact and change can be broken down as:

1. Invasive *Acacia saligna*: Practical management techniques for Invasive Alien Species were field tested and recommendations made for the restoration of natural habitats on Cape Pyla post *Acacia* removal, with benefits for biodiversity.
2. Reed management at Zakaki Marsh: Both diversification of the site's habitat with biodiversity benefits in the short-term and identification of solutions for long-term management, helping to enhance the ecological value of the marsh in the long-term (aiming increased occurrence of key designation bird species *Aythya nyroca* and *Himantopus himantopus*), with added benefits for human visitors.
3. Sustainable long-term grazing management at Akrotiri Marsh: this has benefits for the local economy (viability of traditional grazing at the marsh) in the medium-to-long-term and builds on and reinforce the biodiversity gains from the restoration of the site achieved under the DPLUS034 project, while broadening them to ensure that priority marsh plant species also benefit.
4. Reduced disturbance at key wildlife sites on Akrotiri Peninsula, with benefits for wildlife (breeding birds, nesting sea turtles, with increased occurrence of *Charadrius alexandrinus* and turtle nests) in both the short and long-term and also for local tourism, as access management plan and actions under the project facilitated disturbance-free enjoyment of wildlife by visitors.
5. Increased eco-tourism opportunities on Akrotiri Peninsula, with medium-to-long-term benefits for the local economy and knock-on benefits for nature conservation in the long-term (alternatives established to mass tourism and associated over-development).

Additionally, the project contributed towards three Conventions:

1. Convention on Biological Diversity

The Akrotiri wetlands complex forms the most important wetland in Cyprus, rich in biodiversity and of unique importance for Cyprus. This project improved the conservation status of key habitats and species by improving the management of these threats. It also contributed to the local economy by helping support development of a more sustainable use of wetlands and promoting ecotourism opportunities within the area. In addition, management of Invasive Alien Species, one of the CBD aims, took place at Cape Pyla with the contribution to the eradication of *Acacia saligna*.

2. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Cyprus is within one of the major bird migration routes across the Mediterranean and Cape Pyla and Akrotiri, especially, are key migration stop-over points (Akrotiri is a raptor migration 'bottleneck' site). The CMS convention specifically mentions the SBA areas of Cyprus as one of the OCT areas of the UK where the convention needs to be applied. 139 Annex I and II CMS species have been recorded in Cyprus and most of them have been recorded within the two project focus areas. Through actions to reduce human disturbance through access management, to control reed expansion at Zakaki Marsh and to promote sustainable conservation cattle grazing, more suitable habitat and disturbance-free space is made available for migrants to stop at Akrotiri. By improving Acacia saligna management, this project built on the partnership approach and SBAA zero tolerance policy to illegal bird trapping of migratory species, while helping restore important habitats affected by this invasive species.

3. RAMSAR Convention

The Akrotiri Wetland complex is one of the two designated RAMSAR areas in Cyprus. We consider all the actions that took place within the area as efforts to conserve and promote the wise use of the wetland thus working in parallel with the mission of the convention.

Regarding local legislation, the project supported the proper implementation of the provisions of the two nature SBAA ordinances: 'The Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Ordinance of 2007' and 'Game and Wild Birds Ordinance 2008'. Specifically, the project supported proper management of sites designated under the provisions of the 2007 and 2008 Ordinances: Akrotiri Peninsula (Akrotiri) and Cape Pyla (Dhekelia). The project also contributed towards delivery of both Cape Pyla and the Akrotiri Management Plans developed by the SBAA, contributing to the Administration's stated aim to "...to encourage good ecological and conservation practice".

Each project activity contributed to improved management, and/or conservation, and/or protection of these two very important protected sites (Akrotiri Peninsula and Cape Pyla) which are in line and contribute towards the above strategic long-term outcomes for the natural environment, conventions and local legislation/ management plans.

4.2 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board ¹ .	50%
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women ² .	100%

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	X
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

The project Steering Committee is made up of 10-12 individuals (some variation of participants for each partner) and 4-6 of these are women, which is a 50% representation. The lead partner, BirdLife Cyprus, has an office team of 16 full-time officers, 12 of whom are women (75%). The project team is led by a

¹ A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

² Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

woman (Phoebe Vayanou) and the other two project officers (Zoe Markidou and Athina Papatheodoulou) are also women (100% representation).

In general, all project partners comply with relevant laws concerning equal opportunity for men and women and non-discrimination. The activities that were promoted during festivals, on social media and under the broader project outreach strategy target both women and men. All project indicators recording physical presence of people monitored gender and show an equal representation. All contractors that were approached to collaborate with large scale work (such as catering events and reed cleaning) were asked to prove their gender equality policy or practices.

5 Monitoring and evaluation

Changes during the project duration:

12.2021 – Other Change: Action 5.3 “Wildlife camera set up in Akrotiri Salt Lake” turned out to be impossible to carry out for reasons relating to the sensitive military status of the area and the extremely complex and lengthy permitting process that would be involved. After an approved change request, the wildlife camera budget was reallocated to a) visitor counts (additional budget needed) and b) to actions implementing the Akrotiri Access Management Plan.

06.2022 – Other Change: Instead of electric fencing (action 3.4) and seed bank establishment expenses, which were not required (action 3.4), the relevant funds were used for establishment of in situ areas for the conservation of plant species, which were fenced by permanent fencing - Reallocation of budget within actions with the same output.

07.2022 – Other Change: Reallocation of some budget between actions 3.2 – Marketing Plan and 5.2 – Website Development within the same financial year, since Marketing Plan required increased budget and Website Development less budget.

11.2022 – Financial Change: For action 5.5 “Akrotiri walking routes” three potential hiking trails were identified by the Darwin Project team and sent to SBAA for consultation in May 2022. In July 2022, the SBAA informed the Darwin project team that it had been decided not to approve them because of security concerns raised by British Forces Cyprus. Through many consultations with the SBAA, it was decided that two of the three trails originally proposed are can go ahead. Through an approved financial change request, the relevant funds for the trails were moved in the 2023-2024 financial year.

11.2022 – Other Change: Approval of a full-time Scientific Officer recruitment under the leading partner, BirdLife Cyprus, instead of two part-time Project Scientific officer posts, under BirdLife Cyprus and Terra Cypria. Additionally, changes to the project team were made.

07.2023 – Other Change: Re-allocation of budget between two project outputs: from Output 1: Management of invasive *Acacia saligna* --> to Output 4: Access management plan. The field experiment for *Acacia* management in Cape Pyla, due to an unavoidable delay in its implementation (as already explained in section 3), had some underspent. At the same time, implementation of on-the-ground access management actions for Akrotiri were very successful and much needed in order to protect and restore a large protected area, important for fauna and flora species and habitats.

07.2023 – Other Change: Action 5.3 was changed from “Production of Akrotiri visitors’ wildlife guide in form of a mobile application” to the production of a short video/ promotional spot to highlight and promote Akrotiri Peninsula as an ecotourism and wildlife-watching destination.

03.2024 – Other Change: Movement of part of the funds from the budget category “Conferences, workshops and seminars” to the budget category “International Travel” in order representatives from the project partners to learn more about the fenceless grazing technology from the experience in Epping Forest, UK.

M&E system set up during the project:

The project team leader, Phoebe Vayanou, had held regular meetings – at least monthly – with the project leader, Martin Hellicar and the BirdLife Cyprus Financial manager, Myria Achilleos, since the project kicked off. This regular contact had served the project well in terms of ensuring:

- i. Sound financial management. Underspend / overspend has been identified in advance of relevant payments and a close watch has been maintained on all project expenditure throughout. Any changes needed have been agreed with the Darwin Plus team, following the required change

request procedure. The Darwin Plus team has approved all relevant requests and the financial side of the project worked smoothly, enabling rather than hindering implementation of project actions.

- ii. Securing of project outcomes. This has been helped by the project having been set up with a set of clear and measurable indicators for delivery of all actions according to the project log frame. This has helped the project team achieve good monitoring and evaluation. The project implementation timetable has been kept to, with only minor deviations that did not affect delivery of outcomes. The timeframe and its management have also served to allow a little bit of 'room' for 'catch-up' where factors, such as the Covid pandemic, or lengthy bureaucratic processes have caused delays.

Another key part of the monitoring & evaluation process was the operation of the Project Steering Group which consists of the Project Leader, Project Coordinator and all project officers and representatives from all project partners. The Steering Group oversaw progress on all actions, plans steps ahead, revised timeframe implementation and reviewed budget spending.

6 Lessons learnt

- Early involvement and continuing communication of stakeholders

One of the main lessons learned is that the project scope, aims and actions must be well and in detail communicated at the early stages of the project with project partners and involved stakeholders in order to decide on the realistic and best way forward in the planning, as well as implementation of actions. This approach helps to avoid administrative “surprises”, and helps secure and establish the appropriate role and involvement of each project partner and stakeholder. In this context, it is also important to maintain also a formal communication for various issues in writing. Maintaining communication and involving all key partners in both the design and implementation phases of the project also helps deliver a project within timeline and in an effective way.

- Early organisation of actions

The implementation of most actions involves some logistical unforeseen parameters, that need to be incorporated into the design and implementation of the project. This requires an early organisation of the implementation of actions, in order to be within the time schedule. However, even with early planning/ organisation, still we had to face some unforeseen challenges, like the requirement of Public Liability Insurance for the Acacia field experiment. This created some delays in our planning, but still we managed to adapt our initial planning without jeopardising the foreseen outcomes of these actions.

- Costing of actions - Adaptive planning

The costing of actions that was estimated in the proposal stage of the project might have some deviations from the actual costing of actions during the detailed design and implementation. This needs some room of adaptive management, early organisation and some degree of logical re-allocation of funds between the different actions, in formal communication (request of change procedure) with the Darwin Plus Team. The flexibility of the Darwin Plus Team on that was very helpful and also contributed in the more successful outcome of the project.

- Managing Expectations

One other lesson learnt was that the expectations of the stakeholders need careful management. The project team tried to communicate the project aims, actions and long-term benefits in a suitable manner, in order to manage expectations. This was important with most stakeholders, but especially with the graziers at Akrotiri Marsh as well as the local communities (Xylophagou at Cape Pyla and Akrotiri village at Akrotiri). It was important to communicate that foreseen changes would not happen overnight and therefore most of the economic benefits to the graziers and local community would need time to become evident.

7 Actions taken in response to Annual Report reviews

Comment 1: *The first-year reviewer queried whether native scrub would be attractive to migrants and hence mist netters. The project commented that Phrygana scrub is 'entirely unsuitable' for creating runs for illegal nets. However, the reviewer wonders whether netters have access to single panel mist nets? because these might be used in such habitat. --> No such activity has been recorded in Cyprus.*

Comment 4: *Professional' drone photos have been taken of the marsh on several occasions; these are included in the Annex, but it would be interesting to learn more about this work, perhaps with the*

*inclusion of a brief summary of the equipment and software employed to generate the images --> The photos were taken with a DJI drone above the Akrotiri Marsh area. The software that was used to edit the pictures was Adobe's Lightroom and Photoshop to stitch together some of the images. This work was really useful to observe changes in vegetation cover for plant conservation actions, esp. for the competitive species like *Rubus sanctus* and *Tamarix sp.*, as well as for the grazing capacity update.*

Comment 5. Outcome indicator 0.6 in the 2022/23 LogFrame states that 'a detailed sustainability plan is in place and agreed by Cyprus SBAs'. However, in the full project LogFrame it indicates that this document will be drawn up after the completion of the project. This should be clarified. --> The agreed sustainability plan is included in Annex 5.20 of this report.

8 Sustainability and Legacy

Engagement in this project reinforced the partnership between NGOs (BirdLife Cyprus, Terra Cypria, the RSPB) and the SBA authority (SBAA Environment Team). Additionally, the project team invested significant time and effort to ensure involvement of key stakeholders in project planning, decision-making and implementation of project actions since the start of the project and throughout its duration. By the end of the project stronger and trustful partnerships and collaborations have been achieved that brought together not only stakeholders and the Project Partners/ Darwin team, but also created a more cooperative dynamic amongst stakeholders. This engagement significantly reinforces the momentum for securing agreed long-term management of key wildlife sites, for which the partnership approach and a level of consensus among involved stakeholders are crucial elements. This formed a strong base for on-going post-project cooperative approach.

Additionally, many actions and achievements of this project are most likely to endure after the end of the project with sustainable benefits post-project:

- On-going implementation of acacia management practices that are more environmentally and financially sustainable (revegetation/ overplanting of indigenous plant species and grazing).
- Agreed -with all key stakeholders- course of action (incl. design, cost, specific actions/ steps and allocation of responsibilities) for the sustainable management of reeds in Zakaki Marsh with long term benefits to the wetland biodiversity.
- Enhancement of the economic viability of conservation grazing by promotion of Akrotiri Marsh beef through a Marketing Strategy and Plan – that is ready to be implemented.
- Establishment of Akrotiri Marsh management committee with clear roles on competencies and responsibilities, under the coordination of the SBAA ED. This leads to more sustainable and cooperative management of this important wetland with long-term benefits to biodiversity and society.
- The implemented access management measures and actions within the project will reduce impacts of disturbance on species and deterioration of habitats and promote restoration of some habitats, while at the same time enabling proactive management for the benefit of key habitats and species.
- The implemented actions related to ecotourism and awareness of the environmental value of the area (e.g. Akrotiri visitors' website, Akrotiri Spring Festival, walking trails, information signs and structures, Akrotiri promotional video spot) will continue post-project life with sustainable benefits to local society and biodiversity.

Finally, the project staff will continue their involvement with the protection and management of the project's areas through other on-going related projects (e.g. Phoebe Vayanou coordinating the project "Biodiversity in Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas: Support for targeted action to secure effective protective management of key wildlife sites" funded by the John Ellerman Foundation UK Overseas Territories Fund, Athina Papatheodoulou involvement in the new Darwin Plus project "Enhancing Resilience of the Akrotiri Salt Lake ecosystem").

9 Darwin Plus Identity

The Darwin Plus identity has been recognised as a distinct project with a clear identity, throughout the project implementation. All stakeholders involved in the project (i.e. RoC Departments, consultants who work for the project, locals, and of course project partners) understood that the project was

funded by the UK Government and that the Darwin Plus provides grants for projects working in UK Overseas Territories (OTs) to support conservation actions.

In all writing communication with stakeholders, the Darwin logo was always included and it was always mentioned that the project is funded by the UK Government through the Darwin Initiative. This is the case also in presentations and meetings with all stakeholders, as well as official project reports.

At the same time, in all promotional actions the Darwin logo was included and the funding source of the project was clearly mentioned – promoted.

All the social media and press releases related to the project are listed in Annex 5.13, where mentioning of Darwin Plus identity is included.

10 Risk Management

The project through its implementation in the first two years faced a considerable number of risks. These were reported in the Y1 and Y2 annual reports. Fortunately, during the last year of the project there were no new risks arisen that were not previously accounted for.

11 Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	No
Have any concerns been investigated in the past 12 months	No
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	Yes: Phoebe [REDACTED]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	No
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding?	Past: 0% Planned: 25% [4]
Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses. <i>Nothing specific as no issues have arisen, but we have decided, as an organisation, in a recent strategy review, to identify ways of securing safeguarding training for our staff.</i>	
Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the lifetime of the project; include topics covered and number of participants. <i>Public and stakeholder events (e.g. local cattle breed conference - 73 participants, festivals - ~500 participants) fostered understanding among diverse groups/ stakeholders, building bridges for peaceful communication.</i>	
Have there been any concerns around Health, Safety and Security of your staff over the lifetime of the project? If yes, please outline how this was resolved. No	

12 Finance and administration

12.1 Project expenditure

2023- 2024

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Consultancy costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Overhead Costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Travel and subsistence	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Operating Costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Capital items	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Others	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
TOTAL	118,500.00	116,881.11		

* Change in original budget though approved Financial Change (11.2022) – Transfer of funds from 2022-23 to 2023-24 financial year.

Staff employed (Name and position)	Cost (£)
Phoebe Vayanou - Project Coordinator	
Athena Papatheodoulou - Project Scientific Officer	
Zoe Makridou - Project conservation & communications officer	
Panayiotis Georgiou - Project conservation & communications officer	
TOTAL	

Consultancy – description and breakdown of costs	Cost (£)
Design and printing of maps (Terra Cypria)	
Popi Pissouriou design signs inv0526 (07/03/2024)	
Andreas christou installation of sign and info boards inv. 4 (20-03-2024)	
Andreas christou installation of sign and info boards inv. 3 (06-03-2024)	
Rod Rod ltd design signs inv.19267 (27.03.24)	
Maria Siakalli Translation of information signs inv.1(31/01/24)	
Popi Pissouriou design signs inv0523 (31/01/2024)	
Panagiotis Georgiou - graphic designer travelling form (01/03/24)	
TOTAL	£2900

Capital items – description	Cost (£)
Eviprides Andreou (Fence Akrotiri Marsh)	
Andreas Christou-Construction works (Viewing screen Lady's Mile)	
Andreas Christou-Reeds at bird hide (Viewing screen Lady's Mile)	
Avgoustinos Demosthenous- Bird hide (Viewing screen Lady's Mile)	
Earthbound-Seagull design and development (Viewing screen Lady's Mile)	
JMX trading- wooden information board (Signposting & information boards, Terra Cypria)	
Alpha signs - printing (Signposting & information boards, Terra Cypria)	
A. Demosthenous - wooden information board (Signposting & informatio boards, Terra Cypria)	
TOTAL	

Other items – description	Cost (£)
Antonis Vorkas- Ploughing, irrigation at Cape Pyla (Management Cape Pyla acacia eradication study plots)	
Pantelis Tofalis- Grazing at Cape Pyla (Management Cape Pyla acacia eradication study plots)	
E4C Ltd-Tire management (Management Cape Pyla acacia eradication study plots)	
Andreas Christou (Seed Bank establishment costs)	
District Administration Office- Restoration work and access management (Access management actions Akrotiri)	
Andreas Christou (Seed Bank establishment costs)	
Mpakas- Brass Pad 40mm (Access management actions Akrotiri)	
Mpakas- Brass Pad 40mm (Access management actions Akrotiri)	
Kousetis- Bramble removal (Seed Bank establishment costs)	
Eviprides- Fence (Seed Bank establishment costs)	
Andreas Christou- barrier (Access management actions Akrotiri)	
Andreas Christou- barrier (Access management actions Akrotiri)	
Christakis Christou- Earthworks (Access management actions Akrotiri)	

Other items – description	Cost (£)
Christakis Christou- Earthworks (Access management actions Akrotiri)	
Andreas Christou- Sign placement (Access management actions Akrotiri)	
Treehouse films ltd (Visit Akrotiri promotional video spot app)	
Treehouse films ltd (Visit Akrotiri promotional video spot app)	
Zara Der Arakelian graphic design (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Zara Der Arakelian graphic design (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Bird focus, Marine plywood nesting boxes (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Zara Der Arakelian graphic design (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Ensimi print, print T-shirt for the festival (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Zoltan Tolgesy, ringing demonstration (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Signway, Printing and sales flying banner (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Maria Polly basket weaving (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Myria Stasouli, Apollon Hiking Tour (Akrotiri festival costs)	
S.A Coaches buses for the trip (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Elli tzirakli, event for the butterflies of the night (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Michaella Moysi, bird ringing (Akrotiri festival costs)	
M.A. solutions copy centre (printing flyers) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Emma Louise, photographic coverage (Akrotiri festival costs)	
CC Treehouse films ltd (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Zoe Makridou consumables for the festival (Akrotiri festival costs)	
TOTAL	23,522.62

2024- 2025

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others				
Audit costs				
TOTAL	33,850	33,269.52		

* Change in original budget though approved Other Change (03.2024) – Transfer of funds (██████) from budget category “Conferences, workshops and seminars” to the budget category “International Travel”.

Staff employed (Name and position)	Cost (£)
Phoebe Vayanou - Project Coordinator	
Athena Papatheodoulou - Project Scientific Officer	
Panayiotis Georgiou - Project conservation & communications officer	
TOTAL	£14,893.54

Other items – description	Cost (£)
Evripides Andreou, fencing (seed bank establishment costs)	
Evripides Andreou fencing (seed bank establishment costs)	
Andreas travelling - 16-04/2024 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Ouranias travelling- 16-04-2024 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Sodexo cleaning services- inv.9900784880 (Akrotiri festival costs)	

Other items – description	Cost (£)
Phoebe Vayanou staff food cost 12-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Phoebe Vayabou travelling 16-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Antaia Christou travelling- 16-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Melpo Apostolidou - travelling 14-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Christia Alexandrou travelling 13-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Miria Achilleos travelling .13-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Ander's Gray travelling 16-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Maria Papaevripidou travelling and crafts 13-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Orestis Kargotis travelling 24-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
S.A Coaches buses invoice.2673(12-05-24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Zoltan Tolgyesi ringing inv.110(11-05-24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Birdfocus marine plywood inv.150 (31/05/24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Enisimi prints-T-shirts inv.2791 (02-05-24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Katerina Prokopi cyanotype inv.47 13-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Christodoulou Nikolletta-forest school activities inv.2024-10 (16-05-24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
CC Treehouse films- video inv.61(13/05/24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Emma Louise photography inv.1042/2024 (16.05.24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Maria Polli- basket weaving, invoice157144 (12-05-24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Maria Papaevripidou 23-04-24 craft supplies (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Zara Der Arakelian graphic design invoice 004TC (23/04/240 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Vasiliou Craft and stationery inv.8194(24-04-24) (Akrotiri festival costs)	
Martin travelling 13-05-24 (Akrotiri festival costs)	
TOTAL	£7,072.86

12.2 Additional funds or in-kind contributions secured

Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project	Total (£)
Staff cost (BirdLife Cyprus, Terra Cypria, RSPB)	
Christakis Christou – Akrotiri Marsh Drainage Channels Clearance (from BirdLife Cyprus funds - 100K4Nature Campaign)	
Evrripides Andreou – Akrotiri Marsh fencing repairs (from BirdLife Cyprus funds - 100K4Nature Campaign)	
Capacity Building Trip to Kerkini Lake, Greece (RSPB funds)	
TOTAL	49,984

Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project	Total (£)
“Biodiversity in Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas: Support for targeted action to secure effective protective management of key wildlife sites” funded by the John Ellerman Foundation UK Overseas Territories Fund, RSPB, BirdLife Cyprus	
TOTAL	

12.3 Value for Money

By testing and promoting more sustainable methods for the long-term management of *Acacia saligna*, such as revegetation/ overplanting of indigenous plant species and grazing, in combination to systematic chemical treatment, a) a significant financial resource associated with the management of this species is saved, b) this species extent is reduced and at the same time c) prospects of restoring

favourable condition and achieving native habitat types following removal are improved. Improving Acacia removal also supports the ongoing zero-tolerance policy to illegal bird trapping and will potentially reduce wider resource implications associated with this issue in the SBAs.

Additionally, the combination approach of reed bed management, through agreed further course of action (Zakaki Marsh) with significantly more sustainable maintenance needs and improved results and at the same time improving and promoting grazing management (Akrotiri Marsh) within the Akrotiri wetlands significantly reduces cost of management interventions in the future.

Moreover, access management measures and actions reduce impacts of disturbance on species, while at the same time linking to activities that support wider eco-tourism, recreation and community requirements. The access management actions that we implemented through the project in Akrotiri Peninsula enable resources, such as wardens and site managers to shift from reactive to proactive management for the benefit of key habitats and species.

Finally, the project through the promotion of ecotourism in Akrotiri and at the same time the support of the financial aspects of grazing significantly helped to establish a base to help local communities develop their green economy.

13 Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

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14 OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat to publish the content of this section (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

Image, Video or Graphic Information:

File Type (Image/ Video/ Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption, country and credit	Online accounts to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received
Image	DPLUS141_1	Bird Ringing at Akrotiri Spring Festival, Cyprus © Emma Louise Photography	facebook/birdlifecyprus twitter/birdlifecyprus instagram/birdlifecyprus Instagram/terracypria	Yes
Image	DPLUS141_2	Lady's Mile Walking Trail at Akrotiri Peninsula, Cyprus © Emma Louise Photography	linkedin/Terra Cypria facebook/Terra Cypria	Yes
Image	DPLUS141_3	Lady's Mile Walking Trail at Akrotiri Peninsula, Cyprus © Emma Louise Photography		Yes
Image	DPLUS141_4	Basketry, a traditional activity with cultural and environmental benefits, at Akrotiri Peninsula Cyprus © Emma Louise Photography		Yes
Image	DPLUS141_5	Learning about moths at Akrotiri Spring Festival, Cyprus © Emma Louise Photography		yes

Video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBMvrhA2yJ0	Visit Akrotiri Peninsula – an all year-round destination for nature lovers, Cyprus © Treehouse Films		Yes
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Annex 1 Report of progress and achievements against logframe for the life of the project

Project summary	Progress and achievements
<p>Impact Improved conservation status for key habitats and priority species in Cyprus, with replicable management approaches developed and socio-economic gains through enhancement of alternative, sustainable tourism focusing on nature and wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cape Pyla --> Input towards knowledge building on how to restore habitats after Acacia clearance and prevent or minimise re-establishment of Acacia, through field trials and specific recommendations. • Zakaki Marsh --> Comprehensive hydrological and ecological study of Zakaki Marsh that resulted in an agreed action plan with all key stakeholders, ready to be implemented (incl. design, cost, specific actions/ steps and allocation of responsibilities). This will result in creation of habitats for the birds target species. • Akrotiri Marsh --> Input towards more sustainable management of the marsh, by bringing all stakeholders closer, building capacity, facilitation in setting up of Akrotiri Marsh Management Committee and providing a management scheme proposal with priority site management actions. Additionally, the economic viability of conservation grazing was supported by the promotion of Akrotiri Marsh beef through a Marketing Strategy and Plan. At the same time, the conservation actions for Akrotiri Marsh rare plant species resulted in multi-magnitude increase in population size and extent of occurrence. • Access Management --> Formulation of access management plan and implementation of access management actions that resulted in the protection of an area of ~ 290 ha from habitat & species disturbance and degradation and an area of ~3 ha gradual restoration (Lady's Mile) and an area of reduced disturbance to birds, such as European Honey Buzzards and other raptors, as well as Bee-eaters (Eucalyptus forest). • Promotion of ecotourism --> Various actions implemented successfully which increased public awareness on the environmental and cultural importance and value of Akrotiri Peninsula and at the same time promoted wildlife-friendly tourism on the peninsula, thus also enhancing ecosystem services, increasing the benefits to the local community and promote this alternative tourism to the area during "quieter" touristic periods.
<p>Outcome --> Key wetland and scrub habitat restored in Cyprus SBAs, with long-term nature conservation gains secured through enhanced, low-impact visitor use, with associated gains for wildlife tourism.</p>	
<p>Outcome Indicator 0.1 - Assessment of management & restoration methods for post Acacia clearance based on trial treatment plots and vegetation survey results at Cape Pyla with recommendations for replication and/or further work by the end of the project</p>	<p>--> Report document with vegetation survey results for Cape Pyla trial plots (before & after) and with reviews of trial management methods written up, with clear recommendations on next steps and replicability by the end of the project (see section 3 and Annex 5.5).</p>
<p>Outcome Indicator 0.2 - Zakaki marsh reed-bed management report agreed by key stakeholders by December 2022</p>	<p>--> Zakaki marsh reed-bed management report document (see section 3 and Annex 5.7). Agreed plan of action with all key stakeholders, ready to be implemented (incl. design, cost, specific actions/ steps, implementation timeframe and allocation of responsibilities)</p>

<p>Outcome Indicator 0.3 - Sustainability for cattle grazing management at Akrotiri Marsh, through the achievement of the number of cattle to be within the limits recommended by grazing capacity study drawn up under the DPLUS034 project: 1–1.75 Eurostat Livestock Units (LSU) per ha by the end of the project.</p>	<p>--> Cattle head counts and age structure estimation to assess proximity to target density of 1–1.75 Eurostat Livestock Units (LSU) per ha. (see section 3 and Annex 5.10). A review and update of the grazing capacity levels that were set in the grazing capacity study under the DPLUS034 project were made (pl. refer to Annex 5.10). This was achieved by updating the vegetation cover (through drone videos, photos and numerous field visits) and the updated number of animals currently in the marsh (through data of Veterinary Services and information from graziers). The results of this analysis indicate that grazing density in Akrotiri Marsh is higher than the objectives set for long-term grazing density, but the aspirational target for wet grassland habitat versus saltmarsh and reedbed has not been reached yet. This is due to a combination of factors, mainly non-adaptive and managed grazing and existence of areas that are not reachable by cattle (too much water or dense reeds), resulting in areas that are over-grazed and areas that need more grazing. Thus, it is proposed that the number of animals at the marsh are retained for short/ medium-term timeframe and through managed grazing to reach towards the aspirational target for wet grassland/reedbed and then re-evaluate.</p>
<p>Outcome Indicator 0.4 - Agreed Akrotiri Access Management Plan by key stakeholders, including relevant map, by December 2023.</p>	<p>--> Akrotiri access management plan and actions (see section 3 and Annex 5.14). Agreed Akrotiri Access Management Plan was elaborated in a stepwise approach and at the same time, after consultation with all relevant stakeholders, a number of access management measures/ actions, as prescribed in the Access Management Plan, took place in the Lady’s mile area and eucalyptus forest area during February – March 2023 and November 2023 – March 2024).</p>
<p>Outcome Indicator 0.5 - Increased visitors within the range of 20-30% to Akrotiri wildlife-watching facilities (hides and paths) by project end. Baseline to be set by mid-2022 (as currently unknown).</p>	<p>--> Record of visitor numbers to Akrotiri area wildlife-watching hides, paths (use of automatic visitor counters) (see section 3 and Annex 5.16). There was an increase in visitation in all days of the week compared to the baseline data from 17,6% to 31,1%.</p>
<p>Outcome Indicator 0.6 - Detailed sustainability plan in place and agreed by Cyprus SBAs for target sites and project actions with clear recommendations and course of future action by the end of the project.</p>	<p>--> Detailed ‘after-project’ sustainability plan document with clear recommendations and course of future action (Annex 5.20)</p>
<p>Output 1 - Support for sustainable management of invasive Acacia saligna, with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla</p>	
<p>Output indicator 1.1 - Practical post Acacia clearance restoration proposals drawn up based on review of up to date restoration techniques by December 2021.</p>	<p>The literature review/ restoration plan can be found in Annex 5.4 of this report.</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.2 - Plots identified and trials (treatment & control) carried out for restoration activities identified under 1.1 by December 2023. Output indicator 1.2.1 - Significant reduction of acacia re-growth on trial treatment plots compared with control plots by the end of the project.</p>	<p>The experimental design on Cape Pyla is presented in detail in Annex 5.5 of this Report, which includes photos and plans of trial plots, as well as records of before and after vegetation cover surveys carried out on experimental plots. Based on our surveys, it was shown that 88% reduction of acacia seedlings was achieved with chemical treatment, 75% with the combination of revegetation and chemical treatment and 22% with grazing. In terms of the soil solarisation (SH) approach, a 34%</p>

	reduction was achieved at the high intensity SH plots, 70% reduction at the medium intensity SH plots and 71% at the low intensity SH plots. The reference point to calculate the reduction, is the number of acacia individuals prior the treatments.
Output indicator 1.3 - Proposing recommendations on next steps and replicability for trialled acacia management methods by the end of the project.	The experimental design on Cape Pyla is presented in detail in Annex 5.5 of this Report, which includes reviews of trial management methods with clear recommendations on next steps and replicability. It is recommended that a combination of the sustainable approaches of a) revegetation of indigenous species, that acts as a means of restoration, along with b) controlled grazing, that supports retaining mosaic of vegetation types in an area, should be combined with the chemical treatment of acacia, which was found to be the most effective method for the post acacia management. The long-term effectiveness of the approaches, is directly linked to planning over a long period of time, monitoring and re-evaluating.
Output indicator 1.4 - Support for ongoing efforts to prevent illegal bird trapping activity on Cape Pyla – trapping levels continue to decrease, by 5% per year compared to 2020 levels.	The monitoring results of illegal mist netting levels by BirdLife Cyprus are presented in detail in Annex 5.6 of this Report. The results continue to show no illegal trapping activity within the SAC, something that is a result of multiparameter efforts, as explained in Section 3 and Annex 5.6.
Output 2 - Reed management solutions successfully piloted at Zakaki Marsh	
Output indicator 2.1 - Comprehensive review of water management issues at the Marsh (including field testing of water quality and water flow assessment), with recommendations for long-term reed management by December 2022.	The hydrological study, the recommendations of the reed management and the agreed plan-of-action are presented in Annex 5.7 of this report.
Output indicator 2.2 - Reed-bed managed (reduced in extent by at least 20%) on target areas of the marsh by the end of the project.	Before and after reed clearance photos of Marsh area Annex 5.8 of this Report. Reduction of reeds through reed clearance through the project duration was indeed achieved on target areas of the marsh, but this was temporary, since reeds grow again quickly. However, the works that will be undertaken based on the agreed plan-of-action (activity 2.1) will definitely achieve this indicator with longer term results and this is considered a long-term success for the biodiversity of this site.
Output indicator 2.3 - Increase in occurrence of priority breeding bird species at Marsh: <i>Aythya nyroca</i> & <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> by at least 20% by project end.	The bird monitoring results are presented in detail in Annex 5.9 of this Report. Based on the monitoring results and in relation to the indicator set for this activity, no increase is observed for either species. Records from non-systematic birdwatching data show declines during the period 2012-2021, while records from targeted monthly waterbird surveys since 2014 show no records of <i>Aythya nyroca</i> since 2020 and no records of <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> since 2019, with the exception of an outlying large count of 71 individuals in the outflow area during the autumn migration period of 2022. The habitat at Zakaki Marsh has changed substantially over the course of the last 10-20 years, resulting in the site now being unsuitable for breeding <i>Aythya nyroca</i> and <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> . The DPLUS141 project focused on understanding the causes behind the changing hydrology of the Lake, with management actions planned and agreed

	for future implementation within 2024 or 2025. Monitoring of the site will continue during and following the proposed habitat management actions, which will hopefully result in improvements for the priority breeding bird species.
Output 3 - Sustainability established for conservation cattle grazing at Akrotiri Marsh, through expert input on grazing levels, preparation of a marketing study for Akrotiri March ‘eco-beef’ and both in situ and ex situ conservation actions for key marsh flora species, building on progress achieved under the DPLUS034 project (2015-2017).	
Output indicator 3.1 - Marketing plan for wildlife-friendly Akrotiri Marsh beef drawn up and agreed with cattle herders by March 2023.	The Marketing Strategy and Plan, written in Greek for better communication with all stakeholders and esp. graziers, includes a detailed market research analysis, swat analysis and it proposes the Strategy and Action Plan for 1 st year of implementation, together with the concept representation (brand name, logo, key visual) (Annex 5.11 of this report). The final Marketing Plan was presented to the graziers in September 2023, who welcomed the outcome and communications tools.
Output indicator 3.2 - Seed bank established for key marsh plant species by March 2024.	Annex 5.12 presents Akrotiri Marsh Plant conservation actions, including seed bank depositions (documentation and photos). A total of 8 germplasm accessions (seed lots) collected from the 4 target taxa were submitted to ARI. In summary the following seeds were preserved at ARI genebank: 25 seeds of <i>M. aquatica</i> , 5500 of <i>E. hirsuta</i> , 23 seeds of <i>I. sagittata</i> , 6000 seeds of <i>S. tabernaemontani</i> .
Output indicator 3.3 - By project end, cover of target plant species has increased in marsh (by 25-50%).	Annex 5.12 presents Akrotiri Marsh Plant conservation actions, including vegetation cover surveys results and targets achieved. Overall, the cover and population size of the target species -with the exception of <i>Mentha aquatica</i> - has increased manyfold, following implementation of the project’s conservation actions, overarching the project’s targets and indicators of change.
Output indicator 3.4 - By project end, increase number of graziers maintaining animals at the marsh from the current 5 to 7.	Review and update the grazing capacity levels that were set in the grazing capacity study under the DPLUS034 project. This was achieved by updating the vegetation cover (through drone videos and photos and through field visits) and the number of animals currently in the marsh (through data of Veterinary Services and information from graziers). The results of this analysis indicate that grazing density in Akrotiri Marsh is higher than the objectives set for long-term grazing density, but the aspirational target for wet grassland habitat versus saltmarsh and reedbed has not been reached yet. This is due to a combination of factors, mainly non-adaptive and managed grazing and existence of areas that are not reachable by cattle (too much water or dense reeds), resulting in areas that are over-grazed and areas that need more grazing. Thus, it is proposed that the number of animals at the marsh are retained for short/ medium-term timeframe and through managed grazing to reach towards the aspirational target for wet grassland/reedbed and then re-evaluate. More information on Annex 5.10.
Output 4 - Reduced disturbance to key wildlife species, including birds and marine reptiles, through the implementation of an access management plan for sensitive Akrotiri habitats.	

<p>Output indicator 4.1 - Phase I of management plan implemented by end 2nd project year (most sensitive sites protected through limitation of access), allowing for maintenance of numbers of key migrant and breeding bird species at key wetland sites by project end.</p>	<p>Monitoring of birds (occurrence, numbers and breeding activity) is taking place on a monthly basis (Annex 5.9 for relevant results). The results of the birds monitoring program (Annex 5.9) reveal maintenance or even increase of numbers of key migrant and breeding bird species (<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>, <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>, <i>Egretta garzetta</i>) in Lady's Mile area based on before and after comparisons, apart from <i>Phoenicopus roseus</i> where reductions over time are evident across seasons and might be attributed to changes in water/habitat quality due to anthropogenic, environmental and climatic changes/ threats. Occurrence and abundance of <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> at Lady's Mile pools show relatively stable numbers over the last years. Before and after comparisons show no large differences before and after in either Lady's Mile or the Salt Lake, except with an increase in the numbers during spring migration after compared with before and a decrease in numbers during the breeding period at the Salt Lake.</p>
<p>Output indicator 4.2 - Phase I of management plan implemented by end 2nd project year (most sensitive sites protected through limitation of access), allowing for maintenance of numbers of marine turtle nests on key beaches by project end.</p>	<p>Monitoring of turtle nesting was done by the SBAA ED during the breeding summer season (Annex 5.15 for relevant results for years 2020-2023). The number of turtle nest counts in Lady's Mile beach (2023: 6, 2022: 6, 2021: 12, 2020: 26) are too few to make secure conclusions, although they tend to show a decrease. Access management actions in the frame of DPLUS141, secured no vehicle access to the beach, something that is very positive for both turtle nesting success, as well as sand dunes restoration, the positive difference in which is evident. However, turtle nesting in Lady's Mile beach is greatly impacted by the operation of restaurants/clubs on the beach that have music and lights during the night hours, as well as umbrellas/ sunbeds on the beach, without adhering to current legislation.</p>
<p>Output 5 - Eco-tourism opportunities enhanced within Akrotiri Peninsula</p>	
<p>Output indicator 5.1 - Dedicated Akrotiri eco-tourism website (set up by March 2022) has at least 2,000 visits by project end</p>	<p>The website has been online since March 2023 (https://visitakrotiri.cy) in Greek and English. Based on google analytics, there are 2500 unique users of the site from March 2023 to June 2024, mainly from Cyprus, but also UK, US, Greece, Germany etc.</p>
<p>Output indicator 5.2 - Salt Lake wildlife camera in operation by September 2022 --> changed through approved change request to a) visitor counts (additional budget needed) and b) to actions implementing the Akrotiri Access Management Plan.</p>	
<p>Output indicator 5.3 - Holding of two Akrotiri nature festivals, in Spring 2023 and Spring 2024 with at least 100 participants attend each.</p>	<p>Organisation of two Akrotiri Spring Festivals took place on the weekend of 13-14 of May 2023 and on Sunday 12 of May 2024 Both Festivals were very successful events, with around 500 participants each. The program of the Festivals, which have been widely advertised, together with a selection of photos are on Annex 5.17 of this report. The videos from the two Akrotiri Spring Festivals can be found on: May 2023 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHshvkGUbJQ&t=5s May 2024 - https://youtu.be/ycmK6eyYkXw</p>

<p>Output indicator 5.4 - Three Akrotiri walking routes established by project end (first route set up by end September 2022).</p>	<p>Three potential hiking trails were identified by the Darwin Project team and sent to SBAA for consultation in May 2022. In July 2022, the SBAA informed the Darwin project team that it had been decided not to approve them because of security concerns raised by British Forces Cyprus. The Darwin team asked for re-examination based on ways to address safety challenges and identification of suitable areas that do not create safety issues. Through many consultations with the SBAA, it was decided that two of the three trails originally proposed can go ahead. Through an approved financial change request in 11/2022, the relevant funds for the trails were moved in the 2023-2024 financial year. The two trails have been designated with directional signs, an information sign explaining points of interest and wildlife species that can be observed and designated parking area at the start of the trail. All the information about the walking trails can be found in Annex 5.18 of this report.</p>
<p>Output indicator 5.5 - Viewing screens set up for Lady's Mile Pools by end 2023</p>	<p>The bird viewing screen & visitor information structure is at a key location at the beginning of the protected area and the much-visited area of Lady's Mile, that offers visitors views to sea gulls and flamingos and at the same time promotes the environmental importance of the area (pl. refer to Annex 5.19 for more information).</p>
<p>Output indicator 5.6 - Akrotiri visitors' wildlife guide produced (in mobile application form) --> changed through approved change request to Akrotiri promotional video.</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBMVrhA2yJ0</p>

Annex 2 Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: Improved conservation status for key habitats and priority species in Cyprus, with replicable management approaches developed and socio-economic gains through enhancement of alternative, sustainable tourism focusing on nature and wildlife.			
Outcome: Key wetland and scrub habitat restored in Cyprus SBAs, with long-term nature conservation gains secured through enhanced, low-impact visitor use, with associated gains for wildlife tourism.	0.1 Assessment of management & restoration methods for post Acacia clearance based on trial treatment plots and vegetation survey results at Cape Pyla with recommendations for replication and/or further work by the end of the project. 0.2 Zakaki marsh reed-bed management report agreed by key stakeholders by December 2022. 0.3 Sustainability for cattle grazing management at Akrotiri Marsh, through the achievement of the number of cattle to be within the limits recommended by grazing capacity study drawn up under the DPLUS034 project: 1–1.75 Eurostat Livestock Units (LSU) per ha by the end of the project. 0.4 Agreed Akrotiri Access Management Plan by key stakeholders, including relevant map, by December 2023. 0.5 Increased visitors within the range of 20-30% to Akrotiri wildlife-watching facilities (hides and paths) by project end. Baseline to be set by mid-2022 (as currently unknown). 0.6 Detailed sustainability plan in place and agreed by Cyprus SBAs for target sites and project actions with clear recommendations and course of future action by the end of the project.	0.1 Report document with vegetation survey results for Cape Pyla trial plots (before & after) and with reviews of trial management methods written up, with clear recommendations on next steps and replicability by the end of the project. 0.2 Zakaki marsh reed-bed management report document. 0.3 Cattle head counts and age structure estimation to assess proximity to target density of 1–1.75 Eurostat Livestock Units (LSU) per ha. 0.4 Akrotiri access management plan document. 0.5 Record of visitor numbers to Akrotiri area wildlife-watching hides, paths (use of automatic 'foot-fall' recording pads) 0.6 Detailed 'after-project' sustainability plan document with clear recommendations and course of future action.	1. Building and road development does not seriously impact on project target sites and habitats. [This risk will be managed through project engagement with the planning process for non-military development in the SBAs]. 2. COVID-19 pandemic does not severely limit the carrying out of events, project meetings & site visits [This risk will be limited by using tele-conferencing and virtual events as alternatives as needed, and also by timetabling all events involving public participation in 2023 and 2024, when pandemic should be more under control]
Outputs: 1. Support for sustainable management of invasive <i>Acacia saligna</i> , with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla	1.1 Practical post Acacia clearance restoration proposals drawn up based on review of up to date restoration techniques by December 2021. 1.2 Plots identified and trials (treatment & control) carried out for restoration activities identified under 1.1 by December 2023.	1.1 Production of restoration plan report to include specific and applicable recommendations for trials (see 1.2.) 1.2 Photos & plans of at least two plot pairs (of minimum 50 x 50m size) established on Cape Pyla for trialling of at least two different management actions to be carried out on	Fire event does not impact on study plots during project period. [This risk will be managed by observing fire safety and fire prevention procedures on identified study plots]

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
	<p>1.2.1. Significant reduction of acacia re-growth on trial treatment plots compared with control plots by the end of the project.</p> <p>1.3 Proposing recommendations on next steps and replicability for trialled acacia management methods by the end of the project.</p> <p>1.4 Support for ongoing efforts to prevent illegal bird trapping activity on Cape Pyla – trapping levels continue to decrease, by 5% per year compared to 2020 levels.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Records of before and after vegetation cover surveys carried out on experimental plots</p> <p>1.3 Report with reviews of trial management methods written up, with clear recommendations on next steps and replicability</p> <p>1.4 Field data from systematic monitoring of illegal bird trapping (from ongoing BirdLife Cyprus programme), showing continued low bird trapping levels and effective enforcement</p>	
2. Reed management solutions successfully piloted at Zakaki Marsh	<p>2.1. Comprehensive review of water management issues at the Marsh (including field testing of water quality and water flow assessment), with recommendations for long-term reed management by December 2022.</p> <p>2.2. Reed-bed managed (reduced in extent by at least 20%) on target areas of the marsh by the end of the project.</p> <p>2.3. Increase in occurrence of priority breeding bird species at Marsh: <i>Aythya nyroca</i> & <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> by at least 20% by project end.</p>	<p>2.1. Reed management report containing clear recommendations for actions.</p> <p>2.2. Before and after photos of Marsh area, showing at least 20% reduction in reed cover in target areas.</p> <p>2.3. Records of bird species at marsh, including <i>A.nyroca</i> and <i>H.himantopus</i>, showing ‘before and after’ numbers.</p>	<p>1. Analysis of water regime and reed-bed dynamics allows clear management actions to be proposed and trialed. [Risk to be managed by following best available practice for such studies, drawing on international experience]</p> <p>2. Cooperation secured from the local Sewerage Board, which manages the Marsh. [Risk to be managed by building on existing good working relationship between project partners and the Sewerage Board]</p>
3. Sustainability established for conservation cattle grazing at Akrotiri Marsh, through expert input on grazing levels, preparation of a marketing study for Akrotiri Marsh ‘eco-beef’ and both <i>in situ</i> and <i>ex situ</i> conservation actions for key marsh flora species, building on	<p>2.1. Marketing plan for wildlife-friendly Akrotiri Marsh beef drawn up and agreed with cattle herders by March 2023.</p> <p>2.2. Seed bank established for key marsh plant species by March 2024.</p> <p>2.3. By project end, cover of target plant species has increased in marsh (by 25-50%).</p> <p>2.4. By project end, increase number of graziers maintaining animals at the marsh from the current 5 to 7.</p>	<p>3.1. Marketing study document produced, with clear recommendations for marketing actions and next steps.</p> <p>3.2. Photos and records of seed bank species.</p> <p>3.3. Vegetation cover surveys at start and end of action.</p> <p>3.4. Number of graziers involved in project actions and keeping Cyprus cows on Akrotiri Marsh.</p>	<p>Cooperation of Akrotiri Marsh cattle graziers secured.</p> <p>[Risk to be managed by building on existing good working relationship between project partners and the graziers, generated by the DPLUS034 project]</p>

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
progress achieved under the DPLUS034 project (2015-2017).			
4. Reduced disturbance to key wildlife species, including birds and marine reptiles, through the implementation of an access management plan for sensitive Akrotiri habitats	<p>4.1. Phase I of management plan implemented by end 2nd project year (most sensitive sites protected through limitation of access), allowing for maintenance of numbers of key migrant and breeding bird species at key wetland sites by project end.</p> <p>4.2. Phase I of management plan implemented by end 2nd project year (most sensitive sites protected through limitation of access), allowing for maintenance of numbers of marine turtle nests on key beaches by project end.</p>	<p>4.1. Results of targeted bird surveys during migration, wintering and breeding periods, showing 'before and after' numbers</p> <p>4.2. Records of occurrence and number of <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> at Lady's Mile pools site</p> <p>4.3. Records of turtle nest counts on key beaches.</p>	<p>Compatibility achieved with the master plan studies proposed under the SBA Non-military development planning proposals.</p> <p>[Risk will be managed by project team engaging with relevant planning process under the non-military development planning process]</p>
5. Eco-tourism opportunities enhanced within Akrotiri Peninsula.	<p>5.1. Dedicated Akrotiri eco-tourism website (set up by March 2023) has at least 2,000 visits by project end.</p> <p>5.2. Salt Lake wildlife camera in operation by September 2022.</p> <p>5.3. Holding of two Akrotiri nature festivals, in Spring 2023 and Spring 2024 with at least 100 participants attend each.</p> <p>5.4. Three Akrotiri walking routes established by project end (first route set up by end September 2023).</p> <p>5.5. Viewing screens set up for Lady's Mile Pools by end 2023.</p> <p>5.6. Akrotiri visitors' wildlife guide produced (in mobile application form). --> Production of a short video/ promotional spot to highlight and promote Akrotiri Peninsula as an ecotourism and wildlife-watching destination</p>	<p>5.1. Website Statistics/Google Analytics.</p> <p>5.2. Visits to Salt Lake wildlife cam live stream (on website).</p> <p>5.3. Visitor counts for hides and other visitor infrastructure; visits to dedicated Akrotiri eco-tourism website and eco-tourism festivals</p> <p>5.4. Pictures of nature festival events and info on attendees/ticket sales.</p> <p>5.5. Pictures and maps of established walking routes</p> <p>5.6. Pictures of erected viewing screens</p> <p>5.7. Short video/ promotional spot to highlight and promote Akrotiri Peninsula</p>	<p>Cooperation secured from Akrotiri village community and other local communities.</p> <p>[Risk to be managed by building on existing good working relationship between project partners and the graziers, generated by the DPLUS034 project]</p>

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Activities (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)			
Output 1. Support for sustainable management of invasive <i>Acacia saligna</i>, with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration on Cape Pyla			
1.1	Review of scientific and other published literature on approaches and methods for restoring natural vegetation and limiting regrowth of <i>Acacia saligna</i> following the clearance of invasive acacia bushes from scrubland habitat. Groundwork on this has already been carried out (pre-project) by the SBA Environment Department team and this will be expanded and completed to arrive at a set of clear recommendations. Drawing on these recommendations, two specific restoration methods will be selected to be the subject of practical trials on the ground on Cape Pyla, in areas that have been cleared of acacia bushes by the SBA authorities over recent years. Examples of the kind of methods that might be trialled include dense planting ('over-planting') with typical Mediterranean scrub species native to Cyprus or heavy grazing by goats.		
1.2	The (minimum of) two selected restoration/acacia control trials will each involve a pair of suitable, similar plots (treatment & control) of approx. 50x50m size for each method to be tested. The trials will then run for two years, involving activities (to be confirmed based on review under 1.1.) such as planting native scrub species or controlled grazing by goats on the 'treatment' plot while the 'control' plot is left untouched.		
	1.2.1. Vegetation surveys will be carried out on all plots before the treatment begins and again at the end of the two-year trial period.		
1.3	The results of the restoration/acacia control trials will be written up in a relevant report, which will include clear assessments of the efficacy of the trialled methods and recommendations for replication and/or further work. Engagement with stakeholders will enable development of a plan for habitat restoration at Cape Pyla to benefit biodiversity as well as the local communities.		
1.4	Removal and control of acacia on Cape Pyla is important in the on-going effort to end illegal bird trapping, as <i>Acacia saligna</i> was widely planted and maintained (watered) on the Cape by trappers in order to create ideal vegetation stands for the setting of illegal mist nets. Thanks to increased enforcement and acacia clearance efforts, the levels of mist net use on the Cape have been reduced dramatically in recent years. The presence of project staff in the area for the restoration trials will act as an added deterrent against the return of trappers to the Cape. In parallel to the trials of restoration/acacia control, BirdLife Cyprus, in cooperation with the SBA Police, will continue the programme for monitoring of illegal mist netting levels that has been carried out since 2002 by BirdLife Cyprus with RSPB support. The results from systematic monitoring (carried out each spring, winter and autumn) will show if trapping levels remain low or are even reduced by the end of the project and the restoration trials.		
Output 2. Reed management solutions successfully piloted at Zakaki Marsh			
2.1.	Comprehensive review of water management issues at Zakaki Marsh, including water sampling. The Marsh has been taken over by reeds in recent years and lost habitat diversity and the open pool area that was important for key bird species such as Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i> and Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> (both qualifying species for the Akrotiri Special protection Area for birds). Changes in both the quantity and quality of water draining into the marsh from Limassol town are believed by local experts to be the cause for the reed 'take-over' at the site. This action will seek to get to the bottom of this issue through the carrying out of a hydrological study (external consultant) looking at the inputs and outputs from the marsh system and the quality of water inflows (nutrient levels, dissolved oxygen levels, etc). This activity will involve sampling of inflow and outflow water in different seasons and the monitoring of marsh water levels, in order to build a relevant hydrological regime picture. Based on the findings of the hydrological study, and drawing on expertise from the RSPB and others (such as the Cyprus Environment department) a set of recommendations for long-term reed management at Zakaki Marsh will be drawn up.		
2.2.	Zakaki Marsh Reed-bed management. With the target of reducing the extent of dense reeds by at least 25% in target areas by project end. Reed clearance to be undertaken by mechanical work both under this project but also under the MAVA-funded MedIsWetII project, which project partner Terra Cypria is involved in and which includes management actions at the marsh that are complimentary to those of our project. Reed clearance will be focused on the area in front of the existing hide at the marsh, both because this will enhance visitor use and because this area was regularly used (including for breeding) by the target species <i>Aythya nyroca</i> and <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> in the past.		
2.3.	Monthly bird counts at Zakaki Marsh to monitor the occurrence, numbers and breeding activity of the priority species <i>Aythya nyroca</i> and <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> and also of other birds (resident or migrant visitors) using the wetland.		
Output 3. Sustainability established for conservation cattle grazing at Akrotiri Marsh			

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
<p>3.1.</p> <p>3.2.</p> <p>3.3.</p> <p>3.4.</p> <p>3.5.</p>	<p>Management of cattle grazing on Akrotiri Marsh, building on the work done under the DPLUS034 project (2015-2017). Working with the Akrotiri Marsh graziers to meet a target, by project end, for the number of Cyprus breed cattle on Akrotiri Marsh to be within the limits recommended by grazing capacity study drawn up under DPLUS034: 1–1.75 Eurostat Livestock Units (LSU) per ha. This action will involve renewing close work with the Akrotiri graziers, providing advice and support in achieving conservation management goals while also supporting the economic viability of grazing on the Marsh (see 3.2). Under this action, new movable electric fencing units will be purchased for use by graziers in cattle management (targeted grazing; keeping some areas grazing-free). Current cattle density on the Marsh is higher than is ideal in the long-term. However, as there are still areas of dense reed alongside the more open wet grassland, this is probably useful in the short-term, provided livestock can be encouraged to ingress into the reed bed and transition the reed habitat into grassland habitat. Therefore, it is considered desirable to maintain a livestock grazing density in the range 1.75-3.00 LSU/ha in the short-term. Grazing levels will be reviewed at project start and then at regular intervals and recalculated to take into account changes in the balance between wet grassland and reed bed. In the longer-term, the grazing pressure will be brought down to 1.0-1.75 LSU/ha. An aspirational target for wet grassland habitat could be 50-60ha (of the total ca.118ha Akrotiri Marsh area), retaining 15ha of wet marsh and 43-53ha of reed bed.</p> <p>Preparation of Marketing plan for wildlife-friendly Akrotiri Marsh beef. The economic viability of conservation grazing on Akrotiri Marsh will be supported by exploring and identifying, with expert support (hired consultant), the possibilities for marketing beef from Akrotiri Marsh cattle as healthy, organic, wildlife-friendly, 'happy' and genuinely local (Cyprus breed) will be explored, in collaboration with the graziers. A marketing plan will be drawn up and agreed with cattle herders, with the aim of maximising income opportunities from Akrotiri beef sales. In parallel to this, the project team will also continue an ongoing effort to secure EU CAP funding (through the Cyprus Strategic Plan for 2023-2027) through the development and implementation, in cooperation with the Cyprus Agriculture Department, of a targeted agri-environment scheme for support of wildlife-friendly grazing at Akrotiri Marsh.</p> <p><i>Ex-situ</i> actions for conservation of Akrotiri Marsh flora, including establishment of seed bank for key marsh plant species, to be housed at the Akrotiri Environmental Education Center (AEEC). Management actions focused on Red Book plants in the marsh: collect seeds of <i>Euphorbia hirsute</i> and <i>Ipomoea sagittata</i>, in order to conserve in seed banks and plant in botanic garden at the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre, run by the SBAA.</p> <p><i>In-situ</i> actions for conservation of Akrotiri Marsh flora. Targeted fencing of key marsh areas on a permanent or seasonal basis to establish the required grazing regime for key plant species. Installing electric fence around sensitive areas to protect from grazing. Management actions focused on Red Book plants in the marsh: <i>Euphorbia hirsute</i>, <i>Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani</i> and <i>Mentha aquatica</i>. These priority species will also be planted in suitable new areas. Target for cover of these species to have increased by 25-50% by project end. Targeted vegetation surveys will be carried out at the marsh, to monitor progress.</p> <p>Through actions 3.1 and 3.2, increase engagement of local graziers in the management of the marsh and in maintaining Cyprus cows on the site. We will aim both to increase the engagement of the existing graziers and to increase the number of graziers keeping livestock on site, from the current 5 to 7. \</p>		
<p>Output 4. Reduced disturbance to key wildlife species, including birds and marine reptiles, through the implementation of an access management plan for sensitive Akrotiri habitats</p> <p>4.1.</p>	<p>Development of Akrotiri Access Management Plan, including relevant map, and consultation with key stakeholders to achieve consensus for its implementation. Preparation of map of sensitive wildlife areas for key wetlands (such as nesting/resting/feeding areas for birds and habitats of Red Book plants), with the aim of ensuring these are kept free of visitor disturbance all year round or at specific (defined) times of the year, as appropriate for the species concerned. Map safe access routes for visitors (separately for vehicles, bicycles and walkers), plus parking areas, recreational areas (existing restaurants/cafes) and facilities for enhancing disturbance-free visitor viewing of wildlife (existing hides, new screens and information signs). Plan for implementing access plan established in coordination with relevant authorities (including plan for blocking off existing routes through sensitive wildlife areas, where needed). Consultation meetings with relevant authorities to set agreed milestones for implementation of the access management plan. Organisation of workshop by project partners to present to key stakeholders (local community, SBAA authorities, local birdwatchers, local walking groups, hunters, etc.) the draft access management plan for Akrotiri, plus follow-up consultation to achieve consensus. Akrotiri Access Management Plan to be implemented in a staggered manner, focusing first on reducing disturbance in most threatened sites (such as Lady's Mile lagoons and dunes).</p>		

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
4.2.	Through staggered implementation of access management, numbers of key migrant and breeding bird species at key wetland sites are at least maintained in the short-term (project duration) and increase in medium-to-long term (after project end). Targeted bird surveys during migration, wintering and breeding periods, showing 'before and after' numbers for key bird species (will continue after project end to assess longer-term results). Records of occurrence and number of Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> at Lady's Mile pools taken as a key indicator for that sensitive site, for example.		
4.3.	Again through staggered implementation of access management, numbers of marine turtle nests on key nesting beaches are at least maintained in the short-term (project duration) and increase in medium-to-long term (after project end). Turtle nest counts on key beaches to assess this (will continue after project end to assess longer-term results).		
Output 5. Eco-tourism opportunities enhanced within Akrotiri Peninsula, benefiting in particular the approx. 900 local residents of Akrotiri community			
5.1.	Monitoring of visitor numbers to Akrotiri wildlife facilities (hides, paths) to assess effectiveness of project efforts to promote the area for eco-tourism. Use of automatic 'foot-fall' recording pads to record visits to birdwatching hides and walking paths. The baseline will be determined in year 1 of the project, as it is currently unknown. Target is to have doubled visitor numbers to selected facilities by project end.		
5.2.	Design and setting-up of a dedicated website promoting Akrotiri Peninsula as a wildlife-watching destination. The website will be the main promotional tool for tourism, through which visitors will be able to find information on where to go and what to see and also information to help them book accommodation locally. The website would be set up under the project and managed for the project duration by the project team. A training element will be included to ensure that, after the project end, the management and running of the website can be taken over by the Akrotiri community in cooperation with the AEEC. The AEEC will be the focal point for receiving visitors before they disperse to the target areas of interest on the Peninsula.		
5.3.	Wildlife camera set up in Akrotiri Salt Lake to provide close-up views of Flamingos <i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i> and other visiting water birds, with images sent to the eco-tourism website (5.2).		
5.4.	Planning, preparation, promotion and execution of two spring 'Akrotiri Festivals' to highlight the areas rich natural and cultural heritage. These will be multi-faceted spring events including guided birdwatching and orchid tours, presentations on local wildlife, basket-weaving workshop, traditional dance and art workshops and children's events, to take place in Akrotiri village and the surrounding areas.		
5.5.	Three Two Akrotiri walking routes established. Identification of three accessible and low-disturbance routes (for the wildlife) on the peninsula and preparation of electronic maps for these (made available on website above and app below), plus along-the-route signposting. There are currently no such routes on the peninsula.		
5.6.	Viewing screens set up for Lady's Mile Pools. Screens with accompanying information signs set up at key points along the Eastern side of the lagoons, to provide disturbance-free (for the birds) viewing opportunities. Location for screens decided in consultation with local birdwatchers. Information signs to carry information about the area and its wildlife, including a simple map showing the best 'birding' spots and access routes to them.		
5.7.	Production of Akrotiri visitors' wildlife guide in form of a mobile application. The free App will include birdwatching & orchid spotting information and walking routes (action 5.5). A simple to use and attractive and focusing on birdwatching opportunities at key wetlands and also in the wider area of the Peninsula, and including information on access to sites (tied in with access management plan)- Production of a short video/ promotional spot to highlight and promote Akrotiri Peninsula as an ecotourism and wildlife-watching destination		

Annex 3 Standard Indicators

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

DPLUS Indicator number	Name of indicator using original wording	Name of Indicator after adjusting wording to align with DPLUS Standard Indicators	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total
DPLUS-B01	2.1 Comprehensive review of water management issues at the Marsh (including field testing of water quality and water flow assessment), with recommendations for long-term reed management by December 2022. 0.4 Agreed Akrotiri Access Management Plan by key stakeholders, including relevant map, by December 2023. 0.6 Detailed sustainability plan in place and agreed by Cyprus SBAs for target sites and project actions with clear recommendations and course of future action by the end of the project.	Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed.	Number	English Marsh & Protected Area Marsh management plan + Access Management Plan for habitat protection/restoration	0	0		3
DPLUS-C01	1.3 Proposing recommendations on next steps and replicability for trialled acacia management methods by the end of the project.	Number of best practice guides and products knowledge published and endorsed.	Number	Knowledge/practice area (Acacia management – post clearance) – Invasive species	0	0		1
DPLUS-C11	5.1. Dedicated Akrotiri eco-tourism website (set up by March 2022) has at least 2,000 visits by project end.	Average monthly number of Website Visitors.	Number	Number of unique users	0	<i>Website online in March 2023</i>		2500
DPLUS-C14	1) 08-09/12/2022 – Workshop on Akrotiri Peninsula – Biotic & Abiotic Monitoring, Status & Trends 2) 30/06/2023 – Stakeholder Meeting for Lake Makria (Zakaki Marsh) - Presentation of Hydrological	Number of decision-makers attending briefing events.	Number	a) number of people, b) Genders analysis numbers c) Stakeholders groups	<i>At least 10 stakeholders' meetings (started recording disaggregation facts for year 3)</i>		d) Number of events with decision makers: 5 1) a. N. of people: 92 b. women/ men: 47/45 c. Stakeholders groups: 26 2)	

DPLUS Indicator number	Name of indicator using original wording	Name of Indicator after adjusting wording to align with DPLUS Standard Indicators	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total
	Study Results – Reed Management Recommendations 3) 15/09/2023 – Presentation of Marketing Strategy and Plan to the Local Cattle Breed Breeders 4) 15/03/2024 - Conference on the Local Cattle Breed 5) 17/07/2024 – DPLUS141 Final Project Meeting			d) Number of events with decision makers				a. N. of people: 23 b. women/ men: 13/10 c. Stakeholders groups: 14 3) a. N. of people: 17 b. women/ men: 3/14 c. Stakeholders groups:2 4) a. N. of people:73 b. women/ men:23/50 c. Stakeholders groups:23 5) a. N. of people: 36 b. women/ men: 16/20 c. Stakeholders groups: 23
DPLUS-D04	3.2. Seed bank established for key marsh plant species by March 2024. 3.3. By project end, cover of target plant species has increased in marsh (by 25-50%). 2.3. Increase in occurrence of priority breeding bird species at Marsh: Aythya nyroca & Himantopus himantopus by at least 20% by project end.	Stabilised/ improved species population (relative abundance/ distribution) within the project area.	% Increase; Area (ha or km ²)	Flora (no of seeds and relative abundance/ distribution) Fauna (occurrence)	<i>(Analyse data for reporting disaggregation facts for year 3)</i>			<u>Mentha aquatica</u> % increase population size: 22 % increase extend of occurrence: 0 Seeds deposited in seed bank: 25 <u>Euphorbia hirsuta</u> % increase population size: 170 % increase extend of occurrence: 215 Seeds deposited in seed bank: 5500 <u>Ipomoea sagittata</u> % increase population size: 61 % increase extend of occurrence: 9115 Seeds deposited in seed bank: 23 <u>Schoenoplectus</u> <u>Tabernaemontani</u> % increase population size: 1750 % increase extend of occurrence: 307 Seeds deposited in seed bank: 6000

Table 2 Publications

N/A

Annex 5 Supplementary material

- Annex 5.1: Report on Akrotiri Peninsula Monitoring Workshop
- Annex 5.2: Various Project Overall Meetings and Workshops
- Annex 5.3: Akrotiri Marsh Poster presented in EUROPARC Conference 2023 in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands
- Annex 5.4: Literature Review on Acacia post-clearance management methods
- Annex 5.5: Sustainable management of *Acacia saligna* with a focus on post clearance habitat restoration – field trial in Cape Pyla
- Annex 5.6: Illegal Bird Trapping Monitoring Results in Cape Pyla
- Annex 5.7: Hydrological Study for Makria Lake & A Agreed Action Plan for Reed Management
- Annex 5.8: Photographic Records of Zakaki Marsh (Lake Makria) Reed clearances 2021-2023
- Annex 5.9: Bird Monitoring Results in Akrotiri Peninsula
- Annex 5.10: Grazing Capacity Study of Akrotiri Marsh
- Annex 5.11: Marketing Strategy & Concept Presentation for the beef of local cattle breed
- Annex 5.12: Rare plants of Akrotiri Marsh: Facts & Conservation Actions
- Annex 5.13: Internet, Social Media & Press Releases
- Annex 5.14: Access Management Plan & Actions: Akrotiri Peninsula - Areas of Conservation
- Annex 5.15: Turtle Nest Monitoring Program in Lady's Mile (2020-2023)
- Annex 5.16: Monitoring Akrotiri visitation with Automatic Visitor Counters
- Annex 5.17: Akrotiri Spring Festivals
- Annex 5.18: Walking Trails in Akrotiri
- Annex 5.19: Bird Viewing Structure and Information Point in Lady's Mile
- Annex 5.20: Sustainability Plan for Cape Pyla & Akrotiri Peninsula: Recommendations & Measures

Checklist for submission

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Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	✓
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Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line. All supporting material should be submitted in a way that can be accessed and downloaded as one complete package.	✓
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Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	✓
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	✓
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	✓
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	