

## Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus

### Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

**If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.**

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

**Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.**

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	<i>DPLUS162</i>
<b>Project title</b>	Characterising the biodiversity of selected offshore seamounts to improve management
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Cayman Islands
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Central Caribbean Marine Institute
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Cayman Islands Department of Environment, Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Dr. Gretchen Goodbody-Gringley</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>Oct. 31, 2024 HYR3</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://reefresearch.org/what-we-do/research/resilience/#1694527144024-72d9e99a-3de7">https://reefresearch.org/what-we-do/research/resilience/#1694527144024-72d9e99a-3de7</a>

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

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

Over the previous reporting period we have completed a significant portion of our proposed deliverables. These efforts focused primarily on Pickle Bank seamount, for which the completed suite of sample collection has been completed (Fig. 1). This included fish surveys, imagery, and collection of samples for eDNA. In addition, we leveraged matching funds to also collect samples for genetic connectivity assessments and generate an initial bathymetric mapping of the seamount. Specific outputs to which activities contributed to over the last reporting period are outlined below.

- 1.1 12 in situ fish surveys completed at Pickle Bank
- 1.2 Bathymetric mosaic created of Pickle Bank (Fig. 2)
- 1.3 Fish data analysed for Pickle Bank (Fig. 3)
- 1.4 Water and sediment samples collected from Pickle Bank
- 1.7 Data consolidated and paper published (Le Gall et al. 2024; attached)

**2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

Despite not being able to procure an appropriate liveaboard for the Pickle Bank Expedition, we were able to find a suitable vessel that could get us to the seamount on day trips. This required extremely long days with 4-hour runs to and from. Yet, we were able to complete 10 dives on the seamount and complete our data collection. Due to weather delays with all of the expeditions associated with the project we were required to roll over some funds from year 2 to year 3 to ensure we could complete the project deliverables

**3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with NIRAS:	Yes
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)**  
**Actual spend:**

**4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2025)?**  
 Yes  No

**4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully.** Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

**If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

**NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.**

**5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

No. We feel the management, monitoring and procedures are clearly outlined, reminders are timely and helpful, and BCF is responsive and helpful.

**6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.** If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

The education module has been requested in the next annual report. Our team is currently finalizing that module for inclusion.

Evidence of commitment by the CIG will be included in the final report.

## Checklist for submission

**For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)**

Have you **responded to any additional feedback** (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.

If not already submitted, have you attached your **risk register**?

**For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)**

Have you responded to **feedback from your latest Annual Report Review**? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.

**For All Projects**

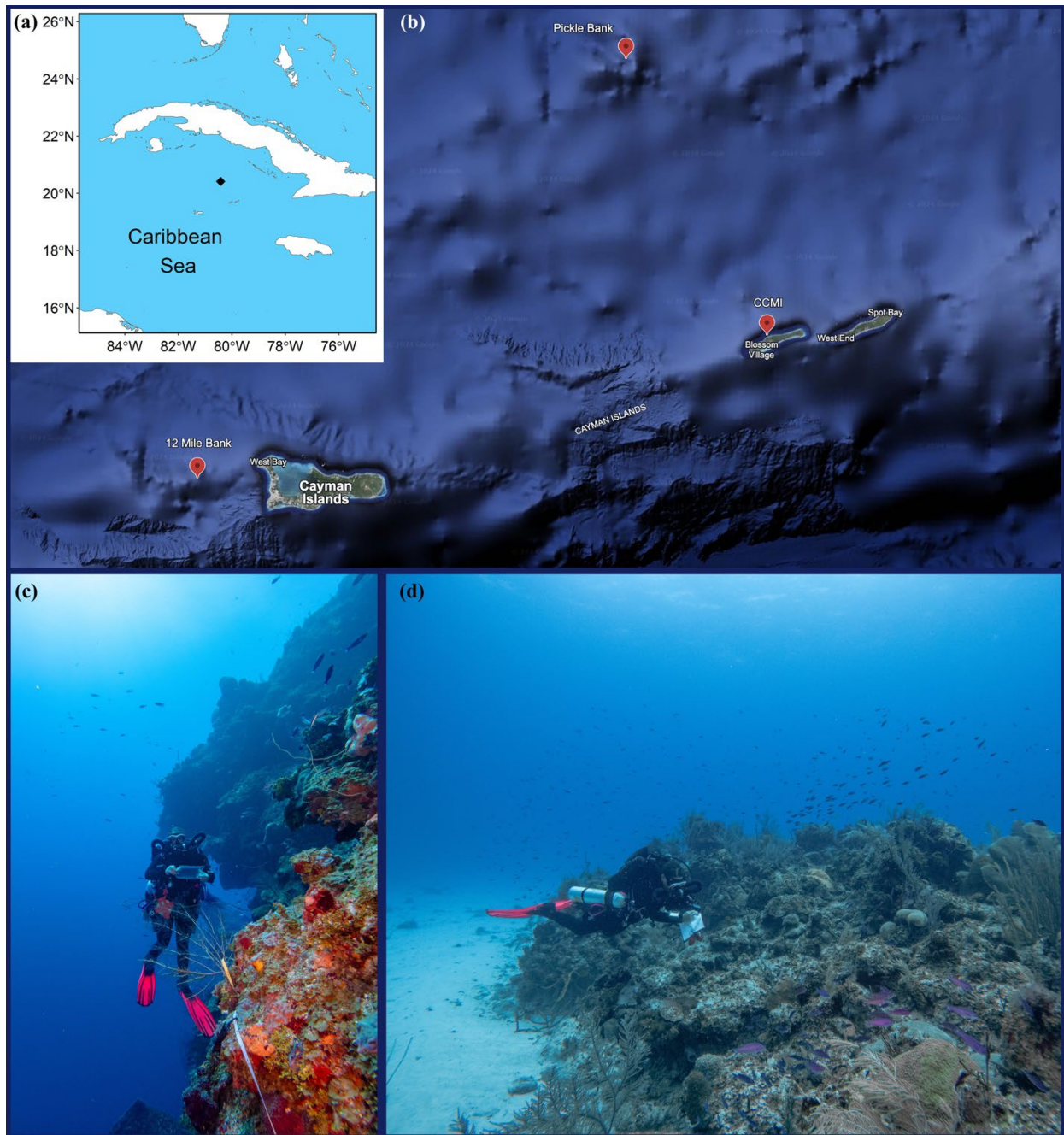
Include your **project reference** in the subject line of submission email.

Submit to [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com).

Have you **clearly highlighted any confidential information** within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?

Have you reported against the most **up to date information for your project**?

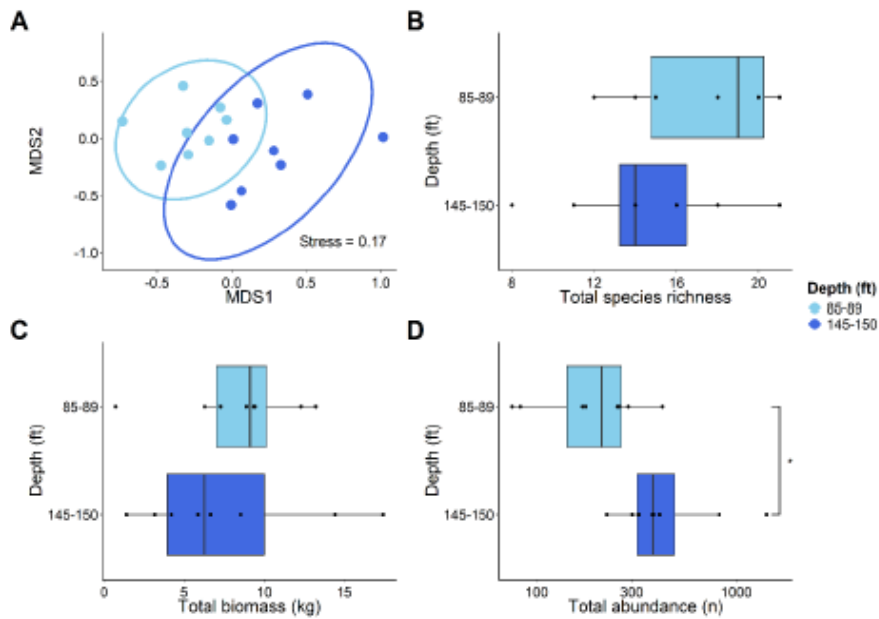
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.



**Fig. 1.** (a) map of the Caribbean Sea showing the location of Pickle Bank. (b) Google Map image of the seafloor showing the proximity of Pickle Bank to CCMI. (c) Goodbody-Gringley conducting fish surveys on the edge of the seamount at 45m depth. (d) Goodbody-Gringley conducting fish surveys on the top of the seamount at 25m depth.



**Fig. 2.** Bathymetric map created using side-scan sonar technology of Pickle Bank, created by Prof. Arthur Trembanis (U. Delaware). Marker indicate the locations of each dive where surveys were conducted.



**Fig. 3.** Comparison of fish community structure at different depths on Pickle Bank Seamount.