

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: 31st 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 including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	<i>DPR10S2\1020</i>
Project title	A cross-UKOT camera network to enhance marine predator conservation
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	British Antarctic Territory, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Ascension Island, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
Lead Organisation	Oxford Brookes University
Partner(s)	Ascension Island Government Antarctic Research Trust (Falklands) British Antarctic Survey (Antarctica) Gibraltar Botanic Gardens Montserrat National Trust and Government of Montserrat Department of the Environment SGSSI Government
Project leader	<i>Tom Hart</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<u>https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/penguintom79/seabird</u>

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.

Output 1. Marine species health index guidelines established to support the development of partners conservation priorities and UKOTs conservation policy

Activity	Progress to date
1.1 Sign a memorandum of understanding with all the OTs involved.	✓
1.2 Train field staff to maintain camera network and fly drone safely and legally.	✓
1.3 Run timelapse camera over selected species and sites for at least 2 consecutive years.	<p>1.3 is achieved for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, British Antarctic Territory, Falkland Islands and any other year recorded during this project will be additional.</p> <p>Both Montserrat and Ascension Islands now have one year recorded by timelapse camera.</p> <p>This activity has proven challenging in Gibraltar where the cameras are not yet in place. We are dependent on a third party identified late in the project and who has yet to approve the camera deployment.</p>
1.4 Conduct a drone survey over each species colonies for at least 2 consecutive years.	<p>At least 2 consecutive years of drone survey conducted for the Falkland Islands, British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Ascension Island.</p> <p>Surveys are in progress for Montserrat and Gibraltar.</p> <p>The Gibraltar staff need extra training due to the nature of Gibraltar island. They are in the process of being trained for their GVC accreditation to comply with CAA requirements to conduct seabird drone survey overpopulated areas.</p>
1.5 Historical records collected and processed.	Historical records have been collected for Montserrat and Gibraltar
1.6 Project data processed via citizen science platforms (i.e., Penguin Watch, Seal Watch, Seabird Watch).	<p>Project data has been processed for British Antarctic Territory, Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.</p> <p>Project data has yet to be processed for Montserrat, Ascension Island.</p> <p>No data collected yet for Gibraltar.</p>
1.7 Raw and processed data (including distribution maps) uploaded on data portal and existing repositories.	Not completed yet.

1.8 Health index guidelines discussed at workshop 1 and revised at workshop 2 following local partner feedback.	We are in the process of creating a seabird monitoring working group within UKOTCF (UKOT Conservation Forum). This will be the first task of the group.
1.9 Peer reviewed publications submitted for review (minimum of three publications during the lifespan of the project).	Not completed yet.
1.10 Research brief sent to key stakeholders for each significant project findings.	Not completed yet.
1.11 Conduct comprehensive reviews of OT conservation strategy and legislations.	Not completed yet.
1.12 Conduct interviews with partner organisations.	Not completed yet.

Output 2. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool development for data processing to speed up access to evidence made accessible in the time frame of the project

Activity	Progress to date
2.1 Finalise the coding and testing of the AI recognition algorithm on Seabird Watch existing data for shags, cormorants, and boobies.	90% complete. This is also being tested on new penguin species like the Southern Rockhopper penguin (<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>). We have finalised the update of the coding including moving from XXX to Python coding to smoothen the data processing pipeline (increase accessibility).
2.2 Code and start testing a new recognition algorithm for Sooty tern using data collected from Ascension and Montserrat during the first two years of the project.	70% complete. We have developed a partnership with Oxford University Engineering Department (Andrew Zisserman and Niki Amini-Naieni) who have a functioning AI to identify birds in minutes (no mixed colonies). We are working on editing the code to also identify chicks and eggs.
2.3 Challenging project data processed using the algorithm to refine its training.	This is largely done. We are validating this now.
2.4 Produce progress reports to steering committee.	Not currently relevant. We have been delayed in finding the best format for a committee.
2.5 Sign a data agreement with partners.	Not completed yet.

Output 3. Online open access web portal to fill critical knowledge gaps in UKOT and improve policymakers access to marine health research evidence

Activity	Progress to date
3.1 Discuss UKOT gaps and evidence needs to agree on portal requirements.	50% complete. Waiting for feedback on initial platform design.
3.2 Write and publish a R package for data access.	90% complete. Waiting for testing and feedback to finalise.
3.3 Design a front-end and application mapping tools back-end for data entry tools (i.e., portal).	90% complete. Waiting for testing and feedback to finalise.
3.4 Publish and promote online database for UKOT marine monitoring data to key stakeholders (i.e., governments,	Not completed yet.

conservation NGOs, researchers, and relevant fishing and tourism industry stakeholders).	
3.5 Conduct user and prospective user survey.	Not completed yet.

Output 4. Establish a cross-UKOTs network aimed at facilitating knowledge exchange, cross training and lowering barriers to marine predator conservation

This output and the subsequent activities have not been delivered the way it was originally intended. The local context (political and environmental) has meant that up until now, it was more adapted to host local workshops, training and consultation. We now aim to create a UKOT seabird monitoring working group within the UKOTCF as this seems to be the best structure to embed a formal group to more strongly guarantee longevity. Most of our UKOT partners, while struggling with time and resources, do attend regular UKOTCF meetings. We have started the discussion with UKOTCF and hope we can finalise this by project end (March 2025).

Activity	Progress to date
4.1 Host a series of workshops (yearly) to first set up and review the network's strategy and terms of reference, provide the training needed to field staff and partners (e.g., drone use, set up and maintenance of camera network) and definition of mechanism for knowledge exchange between participating partners.	This has been achieved locally. No strategy has been developed yet at a committee level.
4.2 Make training resources freely available on project portal.	Training resources has been delivered to local partners and we are looking at the best platform to make it freely available online.
4.3 Designate secondment for steering committee coordinator position.	Not completed.
4.4 Collect updates, success and failures and write a yearly report on the OTs involvement in the project. This report will inform the adaptation of the project strategy from year to year based on lesson learned.	Not completed in a formal format.
4.5 Host regular steering committee meetings and publish progress reports.	Not completed at a committee level.
4.6 Draft UKOT marine monitoring strategy by steering committee.	Not completed yet.

ASSUMPTIONS TO REVIEW:

Output 1. Sufficient data collected for the aggregated evidence to be representative of the key project species populations health.

We may not have sufficient data for all territories due to delay in camera deployment.

Output 4. Selection and retention of qualified volunteer coordinator among member organisations. Practitioners see value in attending and willing to connect and share experience. UKOT governments are willing to start a discussion with project steering

committee (supported by successful project results) on UKOT-wide Marine Monitoring Strategy.

While our partners and local governments perceive the value in connecting and drafting a UKOT-wide monitoring strategy. It has proven challenging for everyone to come together due to time-constraint.

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.

Obtaining the required authorisation and adapting the existing monitoring model (developed in 3 of the 6 territories) has proven more challenging than original planned. Each territories have their own political and environmental challenges as well as significant staff time pressures. We remain confident that the project is a positive addition to boost capacity for seabird monitoring in the UKOTs, however, deploying and organising this network is a slow process that will likely outlive the lifespan of this Darwin Plus project. We are working on a change request to ask for a one-year (no cost) extension, to strengthen the foundation of this network and deliver what was plan for originally. We are also working on a formal territory seabird monitoring network (or working group) within UKOTCF as this seems to be the best platform to guarantee the longevity of this effort. These delays likely means that our outputs, while delivered, will be more modest than originally envision. We will review the SMART indicators accordingly in our change request.

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:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

No

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.

N/A
5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?
What constitutes evidence should be better defined. We have been collecting evidence everywhere but many of this seems to be rejected. Darwin seems to like minutes of meetings but not photographs of activities in the field for example

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.
As per the AR2 review, feedback will also be provided in the AR3 and key issues with the logframe and implementation be addressed in a change request (including update on assumptions above, addressing delays of output 4 delivery, asking for a year (no cost) extension and strengthening a legacy plan for project end).

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st 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 1st 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.	To be responded in AR3 as requested by reviewer
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	✓
Submit to BCFs-Report@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.	✓