



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	DPLUS188
Project title	Hungry humpbacks: measuring seasonal foraging intensity at South Georgia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	South Georgia
Lead Organisation	British Antarctic Survey
Partner(s)	Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI), Aarhus University, University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC), Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), and South Georgia Heritage Trust / Friends of South Georgia Island
Project Leader	Dr. Jennifer Jackson
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	October 2025 HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/hungry-humpbacks/ , Instagram: @wildwaterwhales

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 monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) 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.

The following progress was made against the Outputs between April and September 2025:

Output 1: Trends in humpback whale body condition and mass across the feeding season for adults, mothers, calves and juveniles

This output is nearly complete after the additional 2025 field season. All biological samples from the 2025 field season were sent to the UK aboard the Sir David Attenborough (SDA) and

arrived in August 2025. The South Georgia field team report was finalised and shared on the BAS website [here](#).

PL Jackson aims to complete the genetic identification of whale sex from the 2025 field season before the next reporting period.

After PL Jackson secured additional funding from SGHT and FOSGI, PP Carroll progressed the whale age measurement using epigenetic methods for the 2024 season biopsy samples in September 2025. Full analysis will be included in the next reporting period.

An additional hormone analysis of all the Brazilian samples was completed by Dr Daniela Mello from the University of São Paulo in September 2025. Full analysis will be included in the next reporting period.

Output 2: Trend in humpback whale diving rates across the feeding season

As discussed in the previous report, due to weather challenges, this output will only be partly completed. Dive rate data are only available from one individual from the summer period (provided to the project by PP Zerbini). This individual is being analysed by PP Kennedy to estimate summer-only dive rates at South Georgia. PL Jackson, Kennedy, Zerbini and Friedlaender met to discuss and agree an analytical approach for this which will be jointly implemented using available data from the Antarctic Peninsula as a comparison.

Output 3: Season-specific krill consumption rates used in CCAMLR Sub-Area 48.3 Krill Risk Assessment

This output remains on track, with data from the 2025 field season to be incorporated into the draft bioenergetic model. PP Christiansen's analysis update (Annex 1) is shared [here](#).

Output 4. Spatial habitat use at SG by humpback whales in winter used in CCAMLR Sub-Area 48.3 Krill Risk Assessment

As discussed above, there are no new tracking data available for humpback whales from this project. However we have agreed to use the available data collected during this and previous DPLUS projects to contribute to the Area 48.3 Krill Risk Assessment in summer and winter as comprehensively as possible with the staff time for PP Warwick Evans. This includes sighting and tracking data from surveys conducted by DPLUS057, DPLUS149, DPLUS205 and the current projects. It will be used to create a distribution model for 2019, 2020, 2023 and 2024. It will be combined with the krill consumption estimates from Output 1 to plot a spatial distribution of krill consumption by humpback whales in CCAMLR Area 48.3, which will input into the spatial overlap analysis for 48.3 conducted in early 2026.

Output 5: Project Management and Monitoring

The project webpage is up to date with field and meeting reports and images <https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/hungry-humpbacks/>.

The Wild Water Whales Instagram account has been updated with UAV videos from the end of the 2025 South Georgia season and the additional field work conducted from the RRS Sir David Attenborough off Signy Research Station in April.

The project partner's meeting was held on 21 July 2025. Meeting minutes can be found [here](#).

PL Jackson, PM Martin and PP Kershaw gave a presentation about D+205 and D+188 as part of the PP South Georgia Heritage Trust/Friends of South Georgia Island "Whale of a [Weekend](#)" Festival in Dundee, 26-29 June. PP Landau, Neil and Stowe attended, and there were opportunities to share updates about D+188 during the weekend.

PP Jackson gave a talk about the Hungry Humpbacks project results to the [South Georgia Association](#) on 5 July.

PM Martin participated in the [Creative](#) Tuition Collective Student session on 24 July. She presented the students with a challenge to increase engagement with a younger, non-science audience for D+ 188 and D+ 205 projects. The Science Manager's feedback said this session was one of the students' favourites.

PM Martin wrote a newsletter article for the South Georgia Association's May [newsletter](#).

PM Martin has regular meetings with PP Gregory from GSGSSI to discuss project progress.

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.

The project team reviewed available satellite tracks of humpback whales generated by previous science projects in Brazil, to see if there are any humpback whale satellite tracks that visited South Georgia and were of sufficiently high resolution that they can help us complete Output 2 analysis of whale dive rates across the season. We only identified one whale available through this process which means we cannot fully deliver Output 2; we have data to measure whale dive rates in summer, but not through until winter.

[REDACTED] we will do our best to generate insights with the single whale dataset available to us.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i>	

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

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 2026)?

[REDACTED]

4c. If you expect an 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, and not later than 31st December. 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 BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Suspicion or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk
No
6. Project risk management 6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.
N/A
6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months? <div style="background-color: black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>
Suspicion or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk
7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.
Thank you for the positive feedback on our last report. There were no points raised for specific response so we do not add anything here.