



**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	<i>DPLUS195</i>
Project title	Protecting Seabirds Across Borders
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ascension Island, South Atlantic Ocean
Lead Organisation	Ascension Island Government (AIG)
Partner(s)	BirdLife International (BI) Global Fishing Watch (GFW) Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
Project Leader	<i>Tiffany Simpson (AIG)</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR3</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>N/A</i>

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.

1.1 Collate previous seabird tracking data from Ascension and St Helena.

An additional 30 GLS tracks collected between 2011-2015 from 30 sooty terns have been successfully uploaded to the Tracking database online

<https://data.seabirdtracking.org/dataset/2466>.

1.3 Download and store data from satellite tags

Currently one of the 41 Masked Boobies and seven of the 19 Frigatebirds tagged during the 2024/2025 season are still actively transmitting data. We plan to still collect tracking data from the remaining active tags whilst funds for satellite time allow to provide as much information on seabird movements as possible. A draft version of the data collected so far has been uploaded: <https://data.seabirdtracking.org/dataset/2479> and <https://data.seabirdtracking.org/dataset/2480>. This will be replaced with the final datasets after the final loggers stop transmitting locations.

3.2 Undertake final analysis of all seabird tracking and fishing data.

Progress on analysis of existing seabird tracking data and fishing data. Analysis of the temporal variation and correlation between different months and years in the fishing effort data supplied by Global Fishing Watch (see supporting information entitled 'DPLUS195_GFWanalysis_Oct25').

4.3 Publicise projects through accessible social media output and public events on Ascension

4 Facebook social media posts have been published since the last reporting period (Appendix 1).

During the UN Oceans Conference held in Nice, France (9-13th June 2025), BirdLife International's CEO Martin Harper held an event on "Connectivity and Collaboration: science and policy for accelerating marine biodiversity protection across ocean flyways". Martin introduced the [marine flyways framework](#) and discussed on-going efforts of the BirdLife Marine Programme across the Atlantic Ocean Flyway. The DPLUS195 project was mentioned during his presentation along with project partners logos incorporated in his slideshow (Appendix 2 and 3).

Ascension Island Marine Festival took place on 20th September 2025 at the Pierhead. The event was attended by ~150 people and showcased the broad range of science that Ascension Island Conservation team undertake to protect and conserve the MPA. This included a display on the DPLUS195 project (Appendix 4).

A public notice has also been distributed on Ascension Island entitled "Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction". It includes details of the role the DPLUS195 project will have in global marine conservation. This was also published on the Ascension Island Government website- [Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction: Ascension Island's role in Global Marine Conservation – Ascension Island Government](#) as well as AIG social media platforms.

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.

Feedback from the Y2AR and the NIRAS monitoring review in July this year highlighted several potential issues with the current project outcome and indicators. Notably that given the nature of ICCAT, realistically AIG is one voice of many that can make recommendations for change but unlikely to directly influence international fisheries management. Stakeholders have therefore reviewed the project log frame as per recommendations to refine project outcomes, outputs and activities. It is hoped that the accompanying change request once approved will enhance the projects alignment with the scope of work planned.

Additionally, the date of the ICCAT Ecosystems Group meeting (revised Output 4.2) has yet to be confirmed but is expected to be held in May 2026. The NIRAS review recommended that should it fall outside of the project timeframe an additional change request to extend the reporting deadline will be needed. Although stakeholders were aware of the uncertainty it was not previously identified as a potential problem and has now been added to the risk register (see attached).

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:	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.

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)</p> <p>Actual spend: XXXXXXXXXX</p>
<p>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)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</p>
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p> <p>Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk</p> <p>n/a</p>
<p>6. Project risk management</p> <p>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.</p> <p>n/a</p>

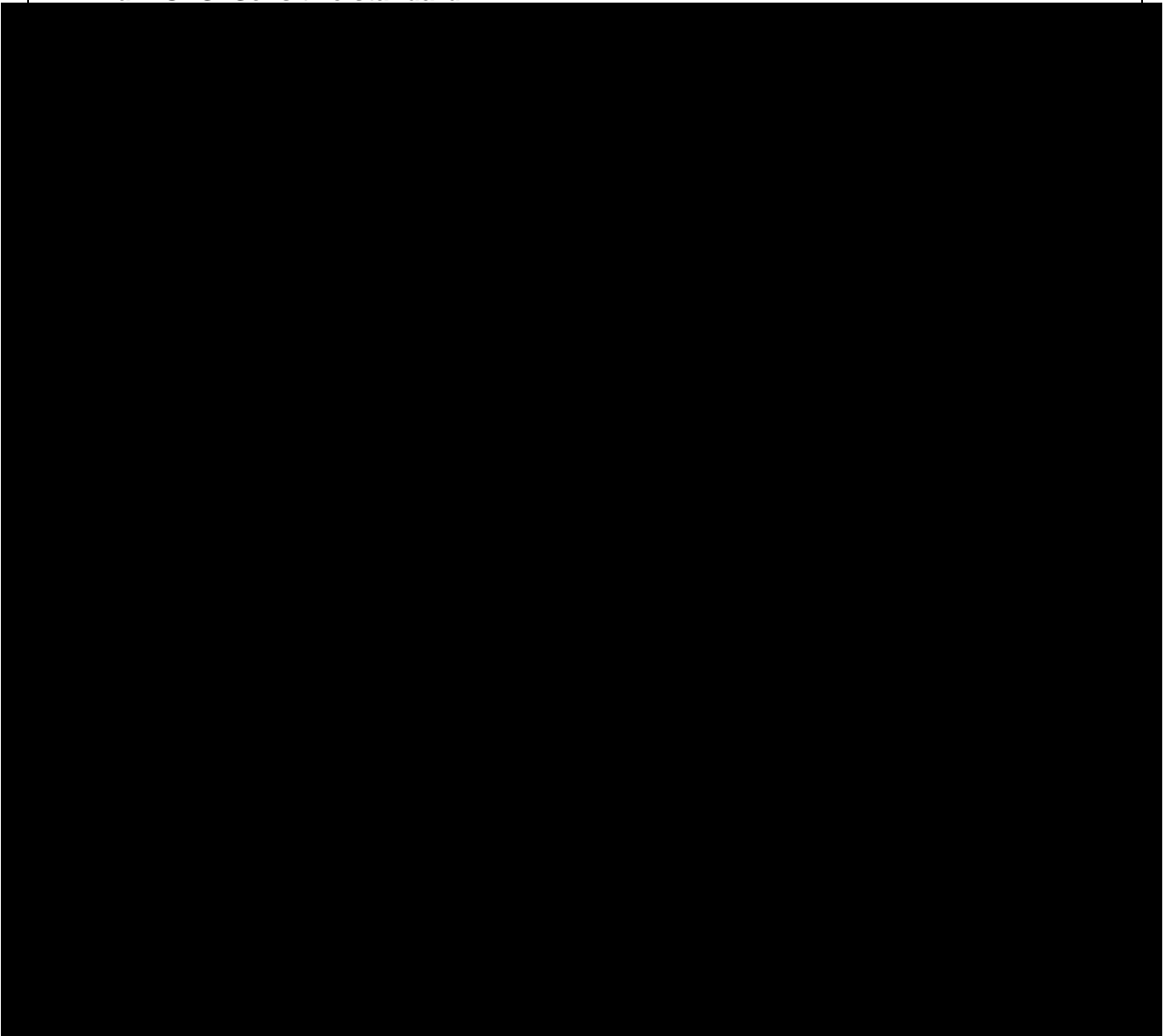
6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please provide further information, ensuring no sensitive data is included within responses.

Suspensions 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.



Checklist for submission

Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate.	X
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	X
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	X
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	x
Submit to <u>BCF-Reports@niras.com</u>	x
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	x