Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Annual Report

1. Darwin Project Information

Project Ref. Number	*162/12/010*
Project title	*Empowering the People of Tristan da Cunha to Implement the CBD*
Country(ies)	*Tristan da Cunha, South Atlantic*
UK Contractor	*Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*
Partner Organisations	*Tristan Island Government, University of Cape Town, Birdlife South Africa*
Grant Value	*£154,117*
Start/Finishing dates	*1May 2003 to 31March 2006*
Reporting period	*1 May 2003 to 31 March 2004* *Report 1*
Project Website	*N/A – due to communication constraints on Tristan*
Authors, Date	*Alison Rothwell, Paul Tyler, James Glass, Sarah Sanders and Adrian Oates* *27 April 2004*

2. Project Background

The Tristan da Cunha Islands consist of four volcanic islands, which lie in the centre of the South Atlantic about 2,800km from South Africa and 3,200km from the nearest point of South America. It is only accessible infrequently by boat, and is probably the world's most remote inhabited island. See Annex 4.

The biodiversity of Tristan is unique and of global importance. Because of its isolation, many of the species are endemic – of the 21 breeding bird species 11 are endemic, and there are 20 plant species endemic to Tristan da Cunha.

Conservation attention has concentrated on the uninhabited islands of Gough and Inaccessible. It has focused on one aspect of the Convention on Biological Diversity, i.e. the conservation of biodiversity rather than the sustainable use of components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits. The important global biodiversity of the other islands, Tristan and Nightingale, has been comparatively neglected.

At present, the main threats to the wildlife of Tristan are from introduced species and seabird mortality as a result of fisheries bycatch. The endemic spectacled petrel is categorised as critically endangered, the three breeding species of albatross are endangered and a further nine species are classified as vulnerable.

The Tristan population is small (280 residents at present) and so there is limited capacity to carry out conservation work in the islands. Most conservation work to date has been carried out by personnel from South Africa and the UK, mainly through universities.

The main problem this project aims to address is that the wildlife of Tristan is of global importance and is significantly threatened, and there is little manpower and expertise in Tristan to carry out the work necessary to conserve the biodiversity of the islands. At the same time, there is an urgent need to diversify the economic base of Tristan.

The rich wealth of biodiversity presents opportunities to Tristan. There is potential to increase tourism, particularly wildlife tourism. The project aims to assist Tristan in maximising the benefits to be gained from conserving its natural assets and thus contribute to strengthening Tristan's economy.

3. Project Purpose and Outputs

The purpose of the project is to increase local people's control, ownership and involvement in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in Tristan da Cunha. The outputs of the project are:

1. The knowledge of biodiversity is sufficient for good management.
2. Conservation priorities identified on grounds of livelihoods as well as science.
3. Capacity to manage and monitor biodiversity is enhanced.
4. A programme of work to actively conserve and manage key species and habitats is started.
5. Project aims and results disseminated primarily locally but also internationally.

See logframe attached as Annex 1. The project outputs have not been amended since the start of the project.

4. Progress

History

This is the first year of the project. The project arose from discussions between James Glass, Head of Tristan da Cunha Natural Resources Department and Jim Stevenson, RSPB Global Programmes Officer, when James was visiting the UK. RSPB and the Tristan da Cunha Island Council subsequently developed the proposal over the email, with the help of Peter Ryan, Cape Town University, responsible for much of the ornithological research that had previously been carried out on Tristan.

Progress to date

A summary of progress towards achieving the results and their indicators is included in the logframe attached as Annex 1. The first eleven months of the project have gone well and the project milestones identified for this period have largely been achieved. Project staff have been appointed and most of the activities planned for the first field season of the project have been carried out.

0. A project management structure is established

A project management committee was established during the project planning stage, the members of which are Geoff Hilton, RSPB, Peter Ryan, University of Cape Town and Aldo Berruti, BirdLife South Africa. Jim Stevenson was subsequently replaced as Country Programmes Manager for the Overseas Territories by Sarah Sanders, who took over as Project Leader.

Project staff were recruited and equipment procured in theUK. In the original project proposal it was envisaged a socio-economist would visit Tristan for the first season. However, given there are only 300 people on Tristan it could be perceived as patronising to send in a person for a few months to conduct a study. Since a Project Manager was appointed, experienced in working with small island communities and prepared to spend most of their time on Tristan until December 2005, it was agreed with Darwin (25/04/03) they would take responsibility for exploring socio-economic issues. This would mean two field researchers to undertake the biological surveys for each of the two seasons. One was recruited externally to undertake the habitat mapping. In slight variance to the original proposal but to ensure maximal local involvement the second was covered locally by a team of 9 people. Although more complicated to manage it has proved a tremendous success on the project.

Initial meetings of the project manager and project leader were conducted at RSPB. The Project Manager met with as many UK stakeholders as possible before departing for South Africa and hence to Tristan.

A Cape Town workshop was held in August 03. This was attended by the South African members of the project management committee, the project manager and leader, South African biologists who had worked in Tristan da Cunha previously and also two employees of the Tristan Government who were in Cape Town at the time. See Annex 4 for more information.

The project team were unavoidably delayed in reaching Tristan, the result of which was to limit the number of seabird species for which monitoring programmes could be initiated. These will now be conducted in the second field season. The NPOA for albatrosses and petrels has not been drafted, as a result of a delay in the ratification of the ACAP.

The project reported regularly to the project steering committee in the UK and South Africa, and a project advisory group was established in Tristan. This comprised of the project manager, Tristan Administrator, Chief Islander, Head of Natural Resources Department and two Tristan Conservation Officers. Meetings of this advisory committee were held regularly at the start of the project, although one of the problems encountered was that the Administrator was away from the island for significant periods of time and whilst on the island was reluctant to attend meetings. Given that the project was frequently discussed with the Chief Islander, Head of NRD and the Conservation Officers on an informal basis, the lack of regular meetings of this group was not a significant impediment to the project at this stage. It is hoped that the new Administrator appointed in April 2004 will take a more active role in the project, and the project manager has already taken steps to achieve a good working relationship.

1. The knowledge of biodiversity is sufficient for good management.

A desk study was undertaken in the UK, South Africa and Tristan to establish a collection of published and unpublished papers on the natural history of Tristan da Cunha. Areas where information is incomplete or lacking were identified, and the means of collecting this information were discussed. This project will complete some of the gaps in biodiversity information, and will identify those areas of research, which are necessary but will require separately funded projects.

Published literature on the habitats of Tristan has been collated and reviewed, and the methodology for conducting the habitat survey was agreed with the project management committee. Habitat types were classified according to a modification of the vegetation types, identified by Wace and Holdgate (1958). The different habitats were mapped using GPS and fixed point photography and the results mapped into a GIS using MapInfo software. The UK project fieldworker carried out the fieldwork, with help from the team of Tristanian trainee fieldworkers who also acted as guides. Habitats were found to be largely altitude dependent, although localised variations are often found due to the aspect, gradient, moisture and degree of shelter provided by the terrain. See Annex 2 for maps compiled and Annex 5 for fieldwork reports. The habitat maps will now form the basis of further work in Tristan – in particular they will be used to monitor the spread of introduced species, which is one of the major threats to the biodiversity of Tristan da Cunha.

Monitoring of key bird and plant species was initiated. Priority was given to those species that are of global importance and are threatened. Note analysis on this season's fieldwork is still underway so only preliminary observations are presented. See Annex 5 for fieldwork reports.

Yellow-nosed albatross study plots with marked nests, for the purpose of monitoring population changes, have been established on Tristan and Nightingale. These have been recorded using GPS, and the ringing data is stored on a database. Previous unpublished data on this species has been accessed from records on Tristan and in the UK, and this has also been recorded in the database. Initial analysis indicates the numbers on Nightingale have declined dramatically since the study conducted in 1951. This could be due a reduction in their breeding site, i.e area of ponds. On Tristan, it appears productivity has declined by half compared to previous years. This could be a one off event caused by severe rainfall, which resulted in many nests being washed away. Data needs to be compared with another site, for example Gough.

Rockhopper penguin colonies have been mapped and an estimate of productivity made at the rookeries on Tristan. Initial analysis indicates the numbers and productivity are higher than those in 94 and 95.

Surveys of burrow-nesting petrels and shearwaters were carried out on Nightingale and Tristan using published methodologies to establish the presence of breeding species and develop a baseline for future study. It appears the numbers of petrels and shearwaters have dramatically declined on Tristan but survey methods need to be refined.

Particular emphasis was placed on the problem of invasive species, which have a potentially serious negative effect on the native wildlife and agricultural productivity. Discussions were held with the Tristan Agriculture department to identify common areas of concern, in particular introduced species which are likely to be of most concern to both agriculture and nature conservation. A list of introduced species and possible control methods has been started, but not yet completed, and the most invasive introduced species have been mapped where possible. See Annex 7 for introduced species list.

2. Conservation priorities identified on grounds of livelihoods as well as science.

In agreement with Darwin, a change was made to the implementation arrangements whereby the project manager carried out the socio-economic work on Tristan, which enabled local fieldworkers to be employed by the project. Much of the socio-economic research was carried out by one to one meetings with key individuals, and as many other islanders as possible. See Annex 4 for socio-economic report.

Meetings were held with all heads of government departments, with particular emphasis on those departments that will be involved in implementing the CBD, namely the Natural Resources, Agriculture and Education departments. Presentations about the project and the Biodiversity Action Plan were made to the Tristan Island Council and the council members were given the opportunity to discuss the project and input into the project work plan.

3. Capacity to manage and monitor biodiversity is enhanced.

Posters advertising for volunteers to work with the project as trainee fieldworkers were placed on noticeboards around the settlement. Individuals identified by the Head of the Natural Resources Department that may be interested in doing fieldwork were approached to take part in the project. Particular efforts were made to recruit those individuals who would be most likely to be involved in carrying out biodiversity conservation work on Tristan in the long term.

A total of nine fieldworkers were recruited to the project, and the training was given in the form of on the job instruction and discussion. The fieldwork was carried out in groups of no more than five, so that it was possible for a UK member of the project team to give training in use of equipment and survey and monitoring techniques.

Training was given to key individuals on the use of the satellite email system and the GIS software.

4. A programme of work to actively conserve and manage key species and habitats is started.

Within less than a year, the project has been instrumental in producing a proposal for a conservation management project on Nightingale, which has been granted Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) funding.

Assistance has been given to other projects that are planned to take place on Tristan during the next year including the removal of flax from Inaccessible and a census of the Spectacled Petrel. The project has also been able to give information necessary to other South Atlantic project proposals, namely the EU South Atlantic Invasives project, and the Falklands Conservation Seabird Monitoring project.

5. Project aims and results disseminated primarily locally but also internationally.

Information on the project has been disseminated in Tristan by means of informal meetings and a newsletter that was sent to each household. Lectures about the project were given on visiting cruise ships and discussions were held with visitors who had a particular interest in wildlife.

A timetable for the next reporting period is presented as Annex 2.

5. Actions taken in response to previous reviews

N/A

6. Partnerships

Host Country

The partnership between the RSPB and the Tristan Natural Resources Department is working very well. The RSPB Project Manager and the Head of the Tristan Natural Resources Department have been working very closely together on the project and have established a good working relationship. Members of staff from other departments on Tristan have also been involved in the project, and have willingly helped in various ways – for instance, the Treasury department staff have helped with the payments for fieldwork guides, boat hire etc.

The Tristan Government have been kept closely informed about the project, and two members of the Island Council are working with the project as trainee fieldworkers. The Chief Islander, Anne Green, has also been closely involved in the project, including participation in the Cape Town workshop, and has made many positive contributions to the project. She has been Acting Administrator for much of the time that the project team have been working on Tristan, and as such has facilitated a considerable amount of help from the Tristan Government.

Due to the remoteness of Tristan da Cunha, the Darwin project has been a focal point for local information for other Tristan conservation projects that are planned for the near future – the FCO funded flax removal project for Nightingale and Inaccessible and the Spectacled Petrel census on Inaccessible. The project was also able to give advice to the Tristan Government when consulted on other projects and organisations involved in biodiversity conservation.

Collaboration with other Institutions and Projects

One of the difficulties was the problem of communication between Tristan and the UK and South Africa. Email via a satellite link is not always possible, and the system does not allow attachments to be sent with emails. So once on Tristan there were some difficulties in maintaining close contact with UK and South African partners. The contacts that were made in person in the UK and South Africa will be re-established now that the Project Manager is back in the UK for four months.

In the UK

The project has established a link with the Tristan Association and has been able to help with a request for information from the Association. The Tristan association has been kept informed about the project.

The project has been represented at the South Atlantic Working Group, and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum has been kept informed about the project. The project team on Tristan were able to help the UKOTCF with a review of Ramsar sites.

In South Africa

Peter Ryan at Cape Town University provided useful background material and suggestions for fieldwork at a series of meetings in Cape Town including the workshop, and has been kept in touch with the project on Tristan via email.

BirdLife South Africa has been kept up to date with the project via a series of reports to the Project Management Committee. Since communications to South Africa were a challenge, their support to the project was less than planned in the original project proposal.

The project has established a link with the South African Marine Coastal Management, which has supplied advice on marine survey work and educational materials that could be adapted for use on Tristan.

A meeting was held in Cape Town with Sam Peterson, a representative of the Save the Albatross Campaign, and as a result the project was able to distribute campaign literature on Tristan and to fishing boats working in Tristan waters.

Koos Roux, of the National Botanical Institute in Cape Town, provided much valuable information on the botany of Tristan, suggestions of how to compile a plant atlas and offered to identify samples from Tristan that could not be identified in situ. The project has kept him informed of findings of particular species in Tristan.

7. Impact and Sustainability

This project must be unique in that the entire population of the territory in which the project is taking place is aware of the project. Every family on the island is involved in the project, as a result of concerted efforts being made to involve as many people as possible in one capacity or another.

The interest in the project increased throughout the first field season, with the result that the number of fieldworkers involved in the training programme increased from 6 in the first instance, to 9 by the end of the season. Other Tristanians who were not interested in doing the fieldwork have become involved in the project in support roles, and several are involved in the project through their jobs, for instance the schoolteachers are involved in setting up wildlife educational projects.

The exit strategy has been discussed from the very start of the project on Tristan, and it is something that the whole project team are constantly aware of. It is particularly important on Tristan because of the communication difficulties and the remoteness of the island, which make it very difficult for RSPB to be involved in following up the project. It is hoped James Glass, Head of the Natural Resources Department will visit the UK with Alison Rothwell in 2005 to build links with external organisations. It will be almost entirely the responsibility of the Tristan Natural Resources Department to continue to implement the Biodiversity Action Plan.

8. Post-Project Follow up Activities

- ***N/A***

9. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination

Outputs not or only partially achieved:

The arrival of the project manager and fieldworker in Tristan was delayed unavoidably as the SA research vessel they were travelling on was involved in an anti-poaching mission in the South Atlantic, and this prevented early season monitoring of selected sea bird colonies from being carried out.

The project hoped to provide a season's fieldwork training for 10 islanders, but only 9 people volunteered for fieldwork training. It is likely that it will be possible to increase this to 10 fieldworkers during the course of the next field season.

The Project Implementation Timetable listed a draft National Plan of Action for albatrosses and petrels to be produced by March 04. This assumed that the ratification of the Agreement on Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels by Tristan da Cunha would be completed by this time – in fact this has not yet happened. Further research is required to produce the NPOA for albatrosses and petrels, but it is hoped that this will be completed before the end of the project.

A project leaflet, designed primarily for visitors to Tristan, is under preparation and will be completed by July.

Dissemination Activities

The only newspaper published and distributed in Tristan is the Tristan Times, and as no editions of this have been produced since the project started in Tristan it was not possible to publish an article about the project in the host country.

The annual newsletter for stakeholders in South Africa, other Overseas Territories and the UK has not yet been produced (16A & 16C), but will be finalised and distributed in May 2004.

An environmental journalist is due to visit Tristan in September 2004 to contribute to output 15A, national press releases in South Africa.

Because of the unique situation on Tristan, information about the project and about the biodiversity of the islands has been disseminated to the whole population, mainly by meetings with individuals and small groups. A newsletter was produced for distribution to all households. The dissemination activities will continue after the project, to be carried out by the Natural Resources and Education Departments.

Communication constraints on Tristan has meant it was not possible to set up a project website. It is planned to utilise other existing websites such as SARTMA and RSPB to disseminate information on the project.

Table 1. Project Outputs (According to Standard Output Measures)

Code No.	Quantity	Description
5	9	Persons have received a season's fieldwork training including use of GPS, recording data on GIS, health and safety, seabird ringing, surveying and monitoring
6A	280	The entire community on Tristan has participated to some extent in project meetings, events, excursions etc.
8	29	Project Manager and 1 field worker spent 1 field season (25 weeks) on Tristan and 4 weeks in South Africa
14A	1	Workshop held in Cape Town, 28 August 2003, to discuss the project with key stakeholders in South Africa
15C	1	A short publicity article has been prepared for Birds Magazine.
16B	100	Newsletters distributed to every household on Tristan
22	4	At present 4 study plots have been established for the monitoring of the yellow-nosed albatross population. This will be increased during the 04/05 field season.
23	Total = £ 10,595.14	RSPB, BirdLife and University of CapeTown Support

Table 2: Publications

Type * (e.g. journal paper, book, manual, CD)	Detail (e.g. title, authors, journal, year, pages)	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. contact address, email address, website)	Cost £
Unpublished Report	Tristan Habitat Fieldwork Report Paul Tyler, 2004	RSPB	Sarah Sanders, RSPB	
Unpublished Report	Tristan Natural Resources Department Fieldwork Report James Glass, 2004	RSPB		

10. Project Expenditure

Table 3: Project expenditure during the reporting period

Item	Budget	Expenditure
Salaries *(specify)*		
Alison Rothwell (Project Manager)		
Local Guides		
Field Workers		
Rent, rates heating lighting etc		
Office administration costs		
Travel and subsistence		
Printing		
Conferences, seminars, etc		
Capital items/equipment		
Others		
Total		

The approved grant-funded budget for the first year of this project was originally agreed at A total of was transferred from this budget to be added to the 04/05 budget, as agreed with the Darwin Secretariat. This transfer included from the Salaries budget line, to increase the number and duration worked of field workers for the 2nd year of the project, and from the Rent, rates... budget line to allow for an extra research fee to be paid to the Island Authorities during the forthcoming year. One other minor change to the original budget occurred, whereby was transferred from Travel and subsistence to the Capital Items budget line to allow additional health and safety equipment to be bought. The Darwin Secretariat also approved this amendment. A variance over 10% of the budget was observed on the Office Costs budget line, where expenditure exceeded budget by 17%. This was due to a large order of stationary paid very close to the end of the financial year. This has been claimed under this years grant, as payment was made during the year, however the items purchased will primarily be used by the project during forthcoming project years. No costs were claimed under the Other Costs budget line. This was because the budgeted items under this category were found not to be required once the project got underway.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons

The project regularly reported to the project management committee in the UK and South Africa, the project leader in the UK and to the project advisory committee in Tristan. Feedback from these groups to the project was acted on accordingly.

One of the obvious indicators of the project achievements is the increasing number of islanders involved in the fieldwork on Tristan. The amount of time that these individuals spent on the project increased from in the order of 1 day a fortnight at the start of the project to whole week periods by the end of the field season.

The number of people approaching the project for information about the biodiversity survey work also increased during the first eight months of the project. This is taken as a

measure of increasing interest in the project and therefore increasing involvement in the process of implementing the CBD.

The satellite communication equipment purchased by the project has already improved communications to Tristan since previously communication was only possible via the Administrator's office. It was used extensively on Tristan to keep UK and South African stakeholders in touch with the project, and is being used at present by the project partners in Tristan to keep in touch with the project manager whilst she is working in the UK.

The most important lessons learned from this year's work are about the logistics of getting to Tristan da Cunha and getting around the islands once there. This is the main constraint on carrying out biodiversity conservation work in Tristan, and now that the project team are familiar with the problems of logistics the second season's fieldwork on Tristan is likely to be much more productive.

The UK project team were also able to learn how the population of Tristan lives on such a remote island and what the priorities are to the islanders. This is something that has never before been achieved by a conservation project on Tristan, and is fundamental to achieving the project purpose.

12. Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period

I agree for ECTF and the Darwin Secretariat to publish the content of this section

The significant achievement of this project has been to map the habitats of the islands of Tristan and Nightingale, and to involve a team from Tristan in this work. The habitats have not been accurately mapped before, and this was only achievable through close collaboration between the UK project staff and fieldworkers from Tristan da Cunha.

The difficulties of executing this piece of work were logistical. In the first instance, Tristan is the world's most remote inhabited island and involves a six-day boat journey to get there. Once there, getting around the uninhabited parts of Tristan and to the neighbouring island of Nightingale is also problematical. Access is by sea, which involves a difficult landing, and then on Tristan any fieldwork on the mountain automatically involves a climb of 2500ft up the sea cliffs before reaching the mountain plateau. The dense woodland adds to the difficulties in many area of Tristan, and it can take hours just to cover a couple of miles.

It took six months with a team of 10 working part time on the project to finally cover all areas of Tristan and Nightingale. The team reached the remote parts of the islands, much to the delight of the islanders, many of who are seeing these areas for the first time. The habitats were mapped using GPS and fixed-point photography in the field, and the information has been stored in a GIS. The habitat maps will now form the basis of further work in Tristan – in particular they will be used to monitor the spread of introduced species, which is one of the major threats to the biodiversity of Tristan da Cunha.