

## Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

<b>Project Ref. No.</b>	18-017
<b>Project Title</b>	Developing knowledge to eradicate house mice from UK OT islands
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Tristan da Cunha, Falklands and South Georgia
<b>UK Organisation</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	Conservation Department Tristan da Cunha (CD-TDC), Falklands Conservation (FC), The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Dr Richard Cuthbert (RSPB)
<b>Report date</b>	31 October 2011
<b>Report No.</b>	Half year report number 2
<b>Project website</b>	To be established on the RSPB's website

### 1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

Planned project activities in normal type, activities undertaken in *italics*

*Activities 1.1-1.3 completed in Year 1*

- 1.4 Produce report identifying key outstanding issues and develop work plans to address these  
*A report on the key outstanding issues is being prepared, and plans to tackle remaining areas were discussed with operational managers during the RSPB's recent rat eradication work on Henderson Island, Pitcairn Islands.*
- 2.1 Develop and agree research plans for Steeple Jason with FC and WCS  
*Research plans were agreed with FC and WCS for the summer field season. Plans for the winter field season to be developed in 2012.*
- 2.2 Carry out one summer and one winter field season of research on Steeple Jason  
*Summer field season completed in Jan/Feb 2011, winter field season postponed from July 2011 to July 2012.*
- 2.3 Produce and disseminate research reports from fieldwork  
*The findings of the summer fieldwork have been written up as a report and shared with project partners, work is in progress in writing these results up for submission to a journal*
- 2.4 Incorporate research findings into Feasibility Assessment and produce Draft Operational Plan for mice eradication on Steeple Jason  
*A feasibility assessment and draft operational plan have not yet been developed, but the former will be produced during Year 2*
- 3.1 Develop and agree research plans with partners in South Georgia Government and with South Georgia Heritage Trust  
*Face to face meetings and Skype meetings have recently (June and October) taken place with SGHT and SGG and research plans for March 2012 have been agreed*
- 3.2 Recruit field biologists to work alongside on mice ecology and bait acceptance trials  
*A team of 4 biologists (2 based in the Falklands) have been identified for the forth-coming field season on South Georgia in March 2012*
- 3.3 Organise permits, logistical support and equipment for field research  
*Flights have been booked to the Falklands, berths arranged on the fisheries patrol vessel (the Pharos) and field equipment is currently being sourced.*
- 4.1 Organise training for Tristan Conservation Department on helicopter safety and bait loading  
*The project's change of plan (to not undertake a trial aerial bait drop on Gough Island) has meant that delivering helicopter training and bait-loading training to personnel from Tristan Conservation Department have had to be postponed. We are currently looking at ways to incorporate this training, either during visits of TCD staff to South Africa or the UK, or during the relief voyage to Gough Island in September 2012 when a South African helicopter company and machines will be present and operating.*

- 4.2 Establish remote networks for bi-monthly updates between the project partners to collaborate on project planning  
*Formal bi-monthly networks have yet to be developed, however informal contact and discussions between partners are taking place on a regular basis*
- 4.3 Produce educational materials and mouse game for use by UKOT children and visitors, disseminate materials to OTs  
*The "mouse game" was designed in Year 1 and over 1000 games have now been printed and distributed to partners in the UKOTs including Tristan da Cunha and the Falklands.*

**2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments 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.**

There have been no notable problems in the last 6 months, however a decision was made to postpone fieldwork on Steeple Jason from July/August 2011 to the same period in 2012. The reasons for this postponement were twofold, firstly plans to undertake the mice fieldwork in collaboration with USA researchers studying the ecology of striated caracara and the potential vulnerability of this species to poisoning (a key risk factor for any operation on Steeple Jason) fell through when the latter research team were unable to secure funding, and secondly the project manager was involved in the RSPB's rat eradication operation on Henderson Island for 3 months (from July-September 2011). As a result this work has been delayed until July/August 2012 in order to allow sufficient time in planning and preparation. Lessons learned from the Henderson Island operation will be of direct relevance to the planning and management of this Darwin Project and enabled key contacts to be established with operational managers, GIS specialists and helicopter operators undertaking eradication programmes.

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

No

**Discussed with LTS:** No                      no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

**Formal change request submitted:** No    no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

**Received confirmation of change acceptance**                      no/yes in.....(month/yr)

**3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?**

Yes                          No    \*

\* We are currently finalising the cost of the ship support for the fieldwork on South Georgia during early 2012 and if there are savings on this due to the time of the charter there could be an underspend in 2011-2012 financial year. These costs will be finalised by mid-November and we will immediately write to the Darwin Initiative if an underspend is going to occur.

**If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.**

**Estimated carryforward request:**    £

**4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**    Not applicable.