



Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report
(due 31 October 2014)

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| Project Ref No: | 19-028 |
| Project Title | Addressing the threat of invasive species in Pitcairn Overseas Territory |
| Country(ies) | Pitcairn Islands |
| Lead Organisation | RSPB |
| Collaborator(s) | Natural Resources Division (NRD) Pitcairn Island, Te Ipukurea Society (TIS), Wildlife & Conservation Unit BirdLife Pacific |
| Project Leader | <i>John Kelly</i> |
| Report date and number (eg HYR3) | <i>HYR2</i> |
| Project website | <i>n/a</i> |

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

The period April – October 2014 resulted in significant progress towards completing outputs 2, 3 and 4 of this project. A synopsis of work carried out is provided below. Reporting is expected to be completed before the end of December 2014. Under output 1, a genetic analysis of rats collected from Henderson is currently underway. Preliminary results confirm that rats were not likely to be a reintroduction and that the number of surviving rats was in the tens to hundreds. Publication of this work is expected in the coming months.

Significant progress towards securing the required funding for the expedition to Henderson Island has been made during this period. We have received pledges/secured the budget of £235,000 for the scientific programme of work on Henderson and Pitcairn Islands. We are also in discussions with Professor Terry Dawson at Dundee University about possible synergies with the Darwin project 'Developing a sustainable marine and fisheries management plan for the Pitcairn Islands' and supported BugLife in their proposal to the Darwin Initiative 'Establishing an terrestrial invertebrate baseline for the Pitcairn Islands'. A notable advance to our planned expedition is that we are at the early stages of developing a communications plan. Should technologies allow and be available to us, a blog will be established from Henderson. It is also an emerging aspiration to develop a video link up capabilities to the UK with potential to utilise this in communicating with interested media and other outlets. However, the budget required for equipment is approximately £10,000 while the budget required for satellite bandwidth is £1,000 per month. As yet, we have not acquired a budget to cover this cost (please see 2a below).

Synopsis of work April – October (Outputs 2, 3 and 4)

Output 2: *Build capacity in the Pitcairn Islands to maintain the pest free status of Pitcairn, Henderson, Oeno and Ducie Islands.*

Output 3: *The socioeconomic impact of selected invasive species is understood and the feasibility of eradicating rodents and cats from Pitcairn Island is assessed.*

An 18 day field visit by Grant Harper to Pitcairn Island took place during August. The purpose of which was 1) conduct training of relevant staff in biosecurity and biological monitoring; 2) assess biosecurity systems on Pitcairn Island; 3) conduct a survey of inhabitants on views on invasive species and a socio-economic impact of invasive species; and 4) assess feasibility of rat and cat eradication on Pitcairn Island.

- The training programme was well received. Feedback from Michele Christian at the

Natural Resources Division received via the FCO was positive: *'The training provided to the NR Division staff was valuable and I'm pleased to say Grant was very impressed with the amount of knowledge the staff have on bio security matters, obviously there are a couple of things that need to be tightened up which we are currently addressing. The feedback from Grant was very useful and thank you to RSPB. I support future efforts by RSPB in providing training to Pitcairn'*

- Monitoring transects were established for birds, lizards and rats. Depending on costs and availability, these transects will be run seasonally by islanders Carol and Jay Warren.
- The assessment of biosecurity practices resulted in the identification of a number of weaknesses with recommendations to improve biosecurity currently been drafted.
- The feasibility of a possible rat and cat eradication was assessed. The project appears to be feasible, with the township requiring the most attention due to several risks for an eradication, such as alternative food from chickens and fruiting trees.
- The preliminary results from the survey conducted indicates that there is strong support for a rat eradication and slightly less support for a cat eradication, mainly due to issues with possible secondary poisoning of pet cats and the likely explosion in rat numbers should the eradication fail.

A report on this work will be available during December of 2015.

Objective C: ***Eradication benefits shared and capacity built to deliver post rodent eradication monitoring and island restoration studies at two additional partner organisations in the Pacific.***

Ray Pierce and Bill Nagle (Pacific Invasives Initiatives) visited Kiritimati (Christmas Island) during 30 April – 7 May. They facilitated a biosecurity capacity building workshop and scoping of a biosecurity action plan for Kiritimati and Kanton in the Phoenix Islands. The completed action plan will provide guidance to Kiribati as a whole and identify key actions at key sites within the country and activities which should occur in conjunction with trading partners. Practical work at Kiritimati included surveillance of pest-free motu, surveillance and management advice for an existing incursion (yellow crazy ant), workshops to review principles of biosecurity and identify IAS and their likely sources, pathways and arrival points and actions needed to prevent their invasion of Kiribati. This included a site visit to the Kiribati Port Authority complex to evaluate risks and needs for improving local biosecurity. Related work included a community awareness day presented by local government staff to importers. It was noted that significant improvements in resourcing, awareness and attitudes are needed by Kiribati to effectively manage IAS issues.

Ray Pierce, Souad Boudjelas (Pacific Invasive Initiative) and Steve Cranwell (BirdLife Pacific) conducted a field visit to the Cook Islands during 20 – 30 May to assist with conservation planning for two outer islands. The work was in two parts – firstly undertaking a workshop to scope a biosecurity action plan for Suvarrow and secondly to survey Takutea motu as a first step in assisting the Takutea Trust to restore Takutea. The biosecurity workshop involved three days of planning with staff of agencies (Quarantine, Environment, Port, Warehouses) and Te Ipukarea Trust. This planning initially involved a revision of basic biosecurity principles before developing risk assessments for Suvarrow based on the participants' collective knowledge of potential IAS and their sources, pathways and risks of reaching Suvarrow. The final session identified actions needed by agencies to mitigate the chances of IAS incursions at Suvarrow and was followed up with meetings with Port Authority and government agencies. A draft action plan is currently being prepared for input by attendees.

Planning for possible Takutea restoration involved initial meetings with Trustees at Atiu followed by a 3-night survey of Takutea. This involved general surveys of vegetation and birds and targeted surveys of rats and crabs. A further meeting with the Trust was held to consider options for management which ranged from "doing nothing" to rat eradication and strengthening biosecurity. A draft feasibility study for Takutea management is currently being prepared for further discussion between Takutea Trust and TIS.

2a. 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.

Generally not applicable. Project has progressed well and we are currently on target to complete all 2014/15 aspects on time and within budget.

Unfortunately, images from the work on Pitcairn during 2014 are not available due to a corrupt SD card. This issue cannot be rectified.

We are requesting that the Darwin Initiative consider the opportunity to fund satellite equipment and bandwidth required for the 2015 expedition. The expected budget is approximately £16,000 (based on informal discussions with providers). For context, the current Darwin contribution to the expedition is currently £60,000 out of the £235,000 expected budget. For every £1 of Darwin funding, the RSPB has sourced £2.92 of matched funding for this component of our grant. Should we receive a favourable indication of this request, we will prepare a change request to the project plan. Depending on preference, we can schedule purchase in this financial year or early in the next FY.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance n/a

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. 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 and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

n/a

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**