

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: 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 2023

Project reference	25-007
Project title	Protecting Yap's biodiversity and livelihoods through invasive alien species removal
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Federated States of Micronesia
Lead partner	Island Conservation
Partner(s)	Ulithi Falalop Community Action Program (UFCAP) One People One Reef (OPOR)
Project leader	Tommy Hall
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	April 2023 – Sep 2023 (HYR 6)
Project website/blog/social media	www.islandconservation.org www.onepeopleonereef.org

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

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E 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.

After several years of delays and having successfully completed preparations for rodent and monitor lizard eradication, including community outreach and biosecurity training, the partnership was finally able to begin implementing the eradication at Ulithi Atoll in April 2023. A blended team of Island Conservation (IC) staff, New Zealand Department of Conservation (DOC) staff, and local personnel completed the rodent eradication on Loosiep by hand-spreading rodent bait across the whole island, using a 25 x 25 metre grid to ensure even bait distribution. Baiting was then repeated after two weeks to ensure that all rats, including juveniles, had the opportunity to consume bait. The team also monitored the availability of bait to rodents, an indication of the efficacy of the baiting operation. Results of this monitoring give us a high degree of confidence that the rodent eradication will be successful. To date, there have been no reports of rodent sightings since the second bait application. There is a surveillance plan in place to ensure early detection and rapid response if rats are found to persist on the island. Due to rodent breeding biology, the success of the rodent eradication cannot be confirmed until just before the close of this project (March 2024).

The monitor lizard eradication was initiated as soon as the rat eradication was complete. The team conducted visual surveys along transects for monitor lizards each morning for five days after starting the baiting operation for monitor lizards. Whereas prior to starting monitor lizard removal, staff detected an average of seven individuals per transect, within three days of

baiting, this number dropped to zero. Similarly, we found 100% mortality in telemetry-tracked individuals. Anecdotal reports from community members gardening on Loosiep indicate that monitor lizards are no longer observed on the island.

The local team continues to bait Loosiep on a monthly basis, targeting surviving adult monitor lizards and smaller sub-adult lizards. A network of motion-sensing trail cameras was deployed across the island and will be maintained to inform our understanding of eradication progress at the end of 2023 and help us determine what resources are needed to succeed (beyond the scope of this grant). The team will continue to treat the island monthly if possible, or as resources and conditions allow. There are plans in progress for IC to travel to Ulithi to: work with the team to evaluate status of the monitor and rat eradication, and complete biosecurity planning workshops with each community on the four inhabited islands.

The community has initiated the food garden program and portions of the islands have been planted with food crops, including coconut, breadfruit, plantains, sweet potato, lime, lemon, and tea leaf plants. Reports from the initial harvests are good and there have been no signs of damage to crops from rats. The partnership is in conversation about future potential eradication projects for the atoll and other outer islands of Yap. Community support for the project remains very strong.

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.

Travel between the United States and Yap and Yap State and Ulithi has been the partnership's main hurdle. A large Typhoon struck Guam in May that impacted travel across the region; flights through Guam were cancelled and the community on Ulithi recommended postponing field work. Our partner organization One People One Reef (OPOR) was initially hindered by the typhoon in their efforts to resume community outreach and engagement. Then, in July and August both IC and OPOR were impacted by staffing issues at the local (and only) airline that services Ulithi which forced the airline to temporarily shut down. OPOR worked with Ulithi Falalop Community Action Program (UFCAP) to remotely complete a portion of their marine monitoring objectives. The planned community engagement and in-person workshops were impacted, however. Staffing issues at the airline have since been resolved and travel has resumed. Plans are in development to complete outstanding work with the community over the next six months.

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:	Yes (but not in relation to these issues)
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes
Change request reference if known:	Not known

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: ██████████

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 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4c. If yes, then you need to 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. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes 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 BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

None.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**