

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

**Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.**

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	<i>This should be the project reference provided in your offer paperwork and not your application number</i>
<b>Project title</b>	Improving livelihoods and protecting biodiversity on Floreana Island, Galápagos
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Galápagos, Ecuador
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Durrell)
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Island Conservation (IC); Jocotoco Foundation; Galápagos National Park Directive (GNPD), Galápagos Conservation Trust (GCT), Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, (MAG) Universität Wien (UW)
<b>Project leader</b>	Jeff Dawson
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 October 2024 HYR3
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	

**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).**

**Output 1:** Finch mitigation activities were concluded in Y2 and reported in ARY2. Post-release monitoring of finches undertaken in February/March showed minimal to no detrimental effects of time in captivity. Further less-intensive post-release surveys were undertaken on Floreana over 2 weeks in August. Conditions were not ideal due to the thick vegetation cover making identifying rings difficult, but a number of released finches were identified in both the lowlands and highlands. A full post-release survey will be undertaken in Q4 of this year.

This period in August also allowed stock to be taken of bird recovery more broadly. Paint-billed crakes were observed in the highlands, indicating either survival or re-colonisation post baiting. Galapagos doves (previously absent from Floreana) and dark-billed cuckoos were frequently observed, including juvenile Galapagos doves which have not been seen on Floreana for decades. Full bird census will be conducted in Jan-Feb 2025.

Results of the 2024 reptile survey were available in May and showed encounter rates for both lava lizards and geckos to be higher than pre-eradication baseline in 2023 (report sent alongside this report). A caveat for these figures is that 2023 was an El Niño year so terrestrial

species would have experienced increased breeding so likely contributed to the observations alongside the removal of predators. Further post-eradication surveys in 2025 and 2026 will help elucidate the impact of the eradication on reptile populations

In Y2, IC established baseline data for monitoring how the terrestrial restoration efforts to remove invasive species will impact the surrounding marine ecosystems and the wildlife that call them home. These surveys were repeated in July 2024 (post-eradication, one year from baseline) and are currently being processed and analysed.

Short-eared owl mitigation is still ongoing with 65 owls held in aviaries on Santa Cruz with daily husbandry ongoing.

**Output 2:** No activities undertaken related to this during this period. Planned for Q4 Jan-Mar 2025

**Output 3:** During the first and second quarters of Y3, farmers started using the irrigation system installed by Jocototo during Y1 and Y2 in response to drought conditions. In the recent months, lack of rainfall made water harvesting for agriculture difficult. As a result, the local government of Galapagos declared an emergency status for the agricultural sector. However, with support from the Agricultural Ministry and the Parish Council, farmers in Floreana were able to access adequate water by transporting it from the desalination plant located in the Port. This assistance allowed them to meet their water needs. Additionally, farmers are now motivated to improve water management and increase agricultural productivity. They recognize that these irrigation systems help boost crop yields and encourage sustainable farming practices on the island.



**Figure 1:** Irrigation system installed in cilantro, tomatoes and lettuce crops in Mrs. Rocío Eguez farm, Highlands of Floreana island post rodent and feral cat eradication. September, 2024 (Left); Irrigation system located in cilantro, tomatoes, lettuce and cabbages crops in Mr. Vicente Ramírez farm, Highlands of Floreana island post rodent and feral cat eradication. September, 2024 (Right)

Jocotoco have been assisting the Verde Floreana organization in restructuring its board. Once the new board is established, Jocotoco will convene official meetings to designate the recipients and collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture to provide technical assistance for the exchanges on the “Floreana” experience and acquire ideas for improving commercialization of their products with agricultural sectors of Santa Cruz and San Cristobal Islands (Activity 3.7)

**Output 4:** Farmers have continued express a solid intention to persist with silage to secure an adequate feed supply for their livestock during challenging periods, particularly droughts. They are awaiting optimal grass growth and improved weather conditions to resume the application of proven techniques that are expected to yield enhancements in their production systems.

According to Y2 farmer surveys, the area dedicated to corn crops has increased by approximately 40%. Farmers now recognize the importance of being prepared to face adverse conditions and expect a better harvest than usual due to the absence of rodents on their farms.



Figure 2: Corn plantation in Mrs. Cecilia Salgado farm. October, 2024 (Left); New corn plantation at different stages of growth, farm of Mr. Max Freire. October, 2024 (Right)

So far during Y3 farmers capitalized on high-quality fruit to manufacture passion fruit pulp, a process now more accessible due to eliminating the risk of encountering fruit damaged by rodent bites (since the eradication there has been zero instances of rodent damage). Despite being a year of low citrus production, the crop surpassed last year's, enabling the sale of fresh or processed products, thereby significantly reducing losses and increasing income for the sector. During the last meeting conducted in October, Floreana Verde association deliberated on the ongoing improvement and implementation of various crop management practices to minimize losses.

Furthermore, cassava a pivotal crop, and other crops previously affected by rats, exhibited higher yields, resulting in improved animal feed and prompting some farmers to contemplate new plantings due to the successful primary pest (rodent) control. Planned corn crops will be utilized in a corn dryer to feed poultry for several months.

Floreana Verde aims to convene monthly to discuss various matters, including corn drying procedures. While awaiting the corn harvest to commence implementing proper storage procedures, the goal is to trial an effective method to generate additional income. The aspiration is to become proficient managers of the association and secure superior markets.

**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.**

**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:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

No

Change Request reference if known: N/A

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)**

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 2025)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend:

**4c. If you expect and 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.

**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 to your project 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?**

No

**6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.** If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

## Checklist for submission

### For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)

Have you **responded to any additional feedback** (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.

N/A

If not already submitted, have you attached your **risk register**?

### For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)

Have you responded to **feedback from your latest Annual Report Review**? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.

Yes

### For All Projects

Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a> .	Yes
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes