

## 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>29-017</i>
<b>Project title</b>	<b>Sustainable management of wetlands and grasslands: enhancing biodiversity and livelihoods.</b>
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Nepal
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Bird Conservation Nepal
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve Buffer Zone Management Committee
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Ishana Thapa</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>31 October 2024 (HYR3)</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.birdlifenepal.org">www.birdlifenepal.org</a>

**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).**

An annual planning workshop, bringing together representatives from Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Buffer Zone Management Committee, conservation partners, and local communities (50 participants) was carried out on 4 June 2024. The workshop facilitated a robust discussion, presenting diverse perspectives on progress, challenges, and planned activities for sustainable wetland and grassland management. This collective commitment to safeguarding the rich biodiversity of Koshi Tappu was evident among all stakeholders.

Three interaction meetings were carried out with local stakeholders to deliberate on the achievement of project objectives. These meetings include discussion with Haripur Buffer Zone User Committee (BZUC) on 13 June 2024 and discussion with women-led groups: Urawn Mahila Krishi tatha Bachat Samuha and Koshi Tappu Simsar Bahudeshiya Sahakari Limited on 22 September 2024 and 24 September 2024 respectively. During the meeting with Haripur BZUC, a step forward was taken for the formation of a grassland management subcommittee under the Haripur BZUC. The subcommittee identified approximately 58 hectares of suitable grassland for restoration, which will support habitat improvement for wildlife while providing

sustainable resource management opportunities for the community. Other two meetings focused on community engagement, capacity building, and collaborative planning for sustainable resource management.

Finger-sized fishing was distributed to 220 fishing dependent households to curb pressure on wetlands of the reserve and encourage sustainable fishing and fish farming. This initiative is thought to increase income generation by promoting households to engage in aquaculture, pond management practices and fish farming skills.

Message to raise awareness on importance and conservation of grassland and wetland dependent birds has been continuously aired through awareness program "Panchhi Samrakshan" and awareness jungle by Saptakoshi FM station. In addition to this, three awareness programmes on bird conservation were carried out and celebration of International Vulture Awareness Day was done in various schools of the project area namely: Shree Janta Secondary School, Shishu Jyoti Primary School and Mohan Secondary School on 23 August, 4 September and 5 September 2024 respectively.

Mr. Dilip Khanal has completed his Masters' thesis with the financial and technical support from this project and has submitted his final thesis to BCN.

The project supported build a display centre for handicrafts made from wetland and alien invasive plant species inside Koshi Tappu Wildlife Office premises and handed over to Koshi Tappu Simsar Bahudeshiya Sahakari Limited on 24 September 2024. This display centre is expected to boost the sale of locally crafted handicrafts and provide income opportunities to the Sardar community, which has long depended on weaving as a primary occupation. By promoting the use of invasive plant species in handicraft production, the initiative also contributes to ecological management, turning a challenge into an opportunity for both conservation and community livelihood enhancement.

**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.**

Rainfall and monsoon-season flooding, which started in early June and ended in late September have been the main issues over last six months. The weather condition made it difficult to carry out project activities in planned time.

Despite minor weather delays, the community's enthusiastic response remains positive, with no significant impact on the budget or timeline reported so far.

**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
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Formal Change Request submitted:	No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
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Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

**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.

The comments and queries for the team leader provided in the Year 2 annual report were on Safeguarding to explain the reason that the project did not update its safeguarding policy in the past 12 months and another on output indicator 3.4 to provide the specific number of women who have actively participated in the handicraft's activities to date under this output indicator. It has been asked to address in the next annual report hence this will be covered in the annual report Year 3.

## Checklist for submission

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

Have you <b>responded to any additional feedback</b> (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.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your <b>risk register</b> ?	

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

Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
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### For All Projects

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