

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	IWTEV011
Project title	Creating Safe Spaces for Threatened Karoo Succulents
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	South Africa, Succulent Karoo region
Lead partner	Endangered Wildlife Trust
Partner(s)	NA
Project leader	Andrew Taylor
Report date and number	HYR1 31 October 2023
Project website/blog/social media	No specific website, however see: https://ewt.org.za/what-we-do/saving-species/wildlife-in-trade/ https://ewt.org.za/what-we-do/conserving-habitats/drylands-conservation-programme/ https://ewt.org.za/resources/cpsu-programme/

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).

Our project started on 1 July 2023 so this report represents progress over a 3-month period. We are mostly on-track with our activities and timelines so far. The only activity that we planned to complete by the end of September 2023 was Activity 1.1, while we were also due to start Activity 1.2. Although the remaining activities were only due to start after September, we have already initiated some of them, as described below.

Activity 1.1: During months 1–3, engage with TRAFFIC to identify the nature, trends, and logistics of succulent poaching, and establish key species threatened by harvesting (as a recipient of an IWT R8 Award, TRAFFIC agreed to share information with us). The indicator for this activity is an internal written report detailing species of succulents most at risk from poaching and trade in the Succulent Karoo, as well as the drivers and methods of poaching.

Progress: We have met with the TRAFFIC project manager (Dominique Prinsloo) to discuss the kinds of data they have obtained so far that is relevant to our project. The feedback TRAFFIC has provided has been informative for our work and has been corroborated by engagements with other stakeholders (see below), confirming that we are on the right track. We have signed a data sharing agreement with TRAFFIC to access information that they have been provided by other parties and anticipate obtaining that soon.

TRAFFIC have taken a multi-pronged approach to gathering information, including using open-source data on succulent cases, interviews with private landowners and protected area managers (state and private), and gathering information derived from court cases. These all have their challenges, however. Interviews with private landowners can be difficult to initiate because obtaining contact information is difficult due to our national POPIA laws (Protection of Private Information Act) and because landowners are cautious about talking to anyone about succulents, even legitimate organisations like TRAFFIC. There have been cases when

poaching incidents have occurred soon after researchers have done surveys on private land, suggesting that information is being leaked somehow. We have assisted TRAFFIC by arranging interviews with landowners known to our Drylands Conservation Programme team, who work extensively in the Klein Karoo.

We have obtained additional data from multiple alternative sources as well. These include EWT owned spatial data such as Biodiversity Stewardship shapefiles that identify private protected areas, locations of threatened reptiles (a taxonomic group that is threatened by trade and that will be protected under our safe space), and a no-go mapping tool (an Environmental Screening Tool created by the EWT that maps threatened species and identifies areas of significant biodiversity impact for species of conservation concern).

We have also obtained geographic distribution data for threatened succulent species from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF); Succulent biodiversity hotspots from Professor Andy Young (succulent expert from the UK); Succulent poacher arrest and seizure data provided by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the South African Police Service Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units (SAPS STES); and standard opensource shapefiles for vegetation types, roads, and state protected areas.

We are a stakeholder member of the National Response Strategy and Action Plan (NRSAP) for succulents in South Africa, a collaboration run jointly by the Dept. of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and SANBI. A progress meeting for the NRSAP was held at the beginning of October 2023, which we participated in.

At the end of September 2023, the entire EWT succulent safe space team met in Montagu in the Klein Karoo to hold a planning meeting for our upcoming ethics application (see below) and to spend some time in the field to get a better sense of the area.

Activity 1.2: During months 3–5, develop a priority species list for illegally traded succulents using a priority setting exercise, as defined by the Conservation Standards

Progress: This is underway. We will conduct a priority setting exercise using ArcGIS and all the spatial data collected.

Activity 1.3: Not started yet

Activity 1.4: Not started yet

Activity 2.1: During months 7–10, identify land custodians to engage with within the identified target Safe Space area, introduce the concept to and assess willingness to participate in implementing the Safe Space idea.

Progress: This is not due to start before January 2024, however, our Drylands Conservation team have already started engaging informally with landowners in one of our potential safe space areas. So far there is strong support for the safe space idea and we believe that this will be a good region to develop the safe space plan.

Activity 2.2: During months 7–12, identify relevant community groups (e.g., farmworkers and their families), conduct a situational analysis to assess socio-economic conditions, natural resource use, knowledge of succulent poaching, and disaggregate gender differences for all these factors and develop options for future interventions to improve socio-economic conditions for women and youth.

Progress: This is not due to start before January 2024 and we cannot start the process until we have obtained ethics approval from our independent EWT Social Ethics Committee. During the field trip to Montagu mentioned above, the EWT team held an internal workshop where we discussed and planned our approach to the situational analysis and social interviews. We will submit an application to the ethics committee in November 2023 and plan to start the interviews in February 2024.

Activity 2.3: During months 7–12, identify relevant institutional law enforcement and nature conservation partners, and private security operators (e.g. farm watch groups).

Progress: This is not due to start before January 2024, but we have been engaging informally with SAPS STES Units to inform them of our plans. We were invited to a Western Cape Provincial Biodiversity Investigators' Forum which is organised by the Western Cape SAPS

STES Units as well as Cape Nature and SANParks. The forum has indicated strong support for our safe space project.

Activity 3.1: Not started yet

Activity 3.2: Not started yet

We have further developed our logical framework, mapped our existing indicators to IWTC standard indicators as far as possible, and also developed a structured M&E plan. These are all included in Annexure 1.

It has been challenging to map our existing indicators to five core standard indicators as requested by IWTC. This is mainly because our project is an evidence project in which we are not directly intervening in counter-succulent poaching or sustainable livelihoods, but rather planning an approach that will pilot these things. We would welcome feedback from IWTC on our standard indicator mapping.

So far our existing indicators are still relevant and our assumptions are holding true.

Brief observations so far:

- Succulent poaching levels are escalating and law enforcement is stretched
- It is difficult to determine the origins of poached succulents that have been seized
- Although the main area for poaching is the Northern Cape, there is evidence of poaching in the Klein Karoo, where we already have a presence on the ground
- We are considering developing plans for two potential safe space sites

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.

We have not encountered any notable problems or unexpected developments.

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:

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

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

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?

No

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**