

## Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Evidence Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:  
(<https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>)

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 20 pages** in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

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### IWT Challenge Fund (IWTCF) Project Information

Project reference	IWTEV011
Project title	Creating Safe Spaces for Threatened Karoo Succulents
Country/ies	South Africa, Succulent Karoo region
Lead Partner	Endangered Wildlife Trust
Project partner(s)	NA
IWTCF grant value	£98,305.00
Start/end dates of project	1 July 2023 – 30 September 2024
Reporting period (e.g. April 2023-Mar 2024) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	AR1 April 2023 - Mar 2024 (Annual Report 1)
Project Leader name	Zanné Brink (previous Andrew Taylor)
Project website/blog/social media	No specific website, however, see: <a href="https://ewt.org.za/what-we-do/saving-species/wildlife-in-trade/">https://ewt.org.za/what-we-do/saving-species/wildlife-in-trade/</a> <a href="https://ewt.org.za/what-we-do/conserving-habitats/drylands-conservation-programme/">https://ewt.org.za/what-we-do/conserving-habitats/drylands-conservation-programme/</a> <a href="https://ewt.org.za/resources/cpsu-programme/">https://ewt.org.za/resources/cpsu-programme/</a>
Report author(s) and date	Zanné Brink 28/04/2024

### 1. Project summary

The Succulent Karoo is the world's most diverse arid environment (SKEP 2003). This biodiversity hotspot includes >6,000 plant species, of which >40% are endemic. Many succulents have interesting forms (Knoetze 2020) and are highly sought after by plant collectors globally. The COVID-19 pandemic boosted the houseplant industry, with nurseries reporting a sharp increase in trade since 2020.

Resultingly, many rare and endemic succulents have fallen victim to a global wave of poaching (Trenchard, 2021). Targeted plants include *Conophytum* spp. and various species in the genera *Anacampseros*, *Euphorbia*, *Othonna*, *Monsonia*, and *Portulacaria*. Many of these species occur in small, localised populations, where harvesting makes them susceptible to extinction in the wild. Most traded plants are harvested illegally and exported. *Conophytum* species are mainly

exported to Asian countries, while other succulents are mostly sent to Europe, Japan, and the US (Knoetze 2020).

The scale of poaching is devastating. The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) estimates that over 1.5 million succulents have been poached from the Succulent Karoo in the last three years, with confiscated plants increasing by over 250% per annum (Hendricks & Human, 2022). Since 2018, fighting this scourge has become a full-time job for the South African Police Service (SAPS) Stock Theft and Endangered Species Unit (Trenchard, 2021).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily foreign nationals were arrested for possession of plants. However, since strict COVID-19 lockdowns, succulents are harvested by locals because foreigners can no longer access the area. Community members, hard hit by rising unemployment, are hired to collect plants, using GPS coordinates supplied to them to pinpoint populations (Trenchard, 2021).

The Succulent Karoo covers an area of over 111,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which is too large for under-resourced government law enforcement agencies to effectively patrol. In the long term, our proposed Safe Space approach will help fill this gap in enforcement capacity by supporting and empowering landowners/custodians to protect their land from poachers. Although this has yet to be attempted, we envisage the approach will be effective as landowners/custodians are mostly present on their properties and are highly motivated to prevent poaching and other security threats. Safe Spaces will also complement the work of law enforcement officials and protected area security agencies, as we will work in areas at high risk of poaching, mainly outside the protected area network, where succulents and reptiles are mostly located.

We aim to develop a novel approach to address the illegal harvesting of threatened succulents from the Succulent Karoo, South Africa. Our 'Safe Space' model aims to reduce poaching of Conophytum succulents at a pilot site, which if successful, we will replicate more widely. Activities include gathering data on poaching and trade, identifying succulent hotspot priority areas, engaging with land custodians and farmworkers to identify one pilot area ('Safe Space' for vulnerable taxa, developing measures to counter poaching through the empowerment of land custodians, identifying alternative livelihood options, and strategies to reduce gender inequality.

## **2. Project stakeholders/partners**

EWT is the lead partner for the Project.

As part of the project's scope, we are continuing to work with the South African Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) to implement the National Response strategy to ensure objectives as part of the strategy are completed. Local South African Police and Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units are continuously communicated with to ensure information is shared and that continued working relationships are maintained. Additionally, continued communication is maintained with Provincial Conservation Agencies (CapeNature and the Northern Cape Department of Agriculture, Environment Rural Development and Land Reform).

Our project engages with landowners, farm workers, local communities, and other custodians in the Succulent Karoo, to consider how they can contribute to the protection, rather than the exploitation of succulent flora. Increased protection of succulents and reptiles will create umbrella protection for other biodiversity and may generate opportunities for ecotourism and sustainable livelihoods. Letters of support provided at application submission show commitment to collaborating in this space. Further, please refer to contact list for key partners.

## **3. Project progress (See Annexure 1 for table format of progress and Annexure 2 for original approved logframe)**

### **3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities.**

**Output 1: Report detailing species of succulents threatened by IWT, including the drivers, methods, and scale of poaching and trade, and identifying geographic area(s) most suitable for project implementation.**

**Activity 1.1:** *Internal report detailing species of succulents most at risk from poaching and trade in the Succulent Karoo (at least three priority species), as well as the drivers and methods of poaching and trade.*

**Progress:** Meetings and discussions were held with the TRAFFIC project manager (Dominique Prinsloo) relating to data obtained as part of the flora biodiversity crime increases encountered in South Africa and how the Safe Space project is aimed at addressing the development of an approach to address illegal harvesting of succulents. A working relationship is maintained to allow for continued information sharing (data sharing agreement with TRAFFIC to access information). Through TRAFFIC, information has been obtained from numerous sources, including open-source data on succulent cases, interviews with private landowners and protected area managers (state and private), and information derived from court cases. We continue to gather information through focused interviews with private landowners, community role players (Law Enforcement, Education Department, Churches, Private Sector entrepreneurs and Judicial officials), and Government Officials directly involved with Protected Areas Management and Provincial Reserves to confirm current species most at risk of poaching and trade, along with drivers and methods of poaching and trade.

Information obtained reiterated that the change in the species being targeted was from numerous plant families, but most of the targeted plants do fall within the *Conophytum* family. A species list was developed and securely maintained within the EWT online systems.

**Activity 1.2:** *By the end of month 5, develop recommendations for protecting succulents using the Succulents the Karoo Safe Space.*

**Progress:** A priority-setting exercise was completed to address information received from all data sources, as mentioned in Activity 1.1. Threatened and Near Threatened species richness for flora (succulents) as well as reptile data was overlaid with policing and compliance layers, infrastructure maps such as roads and Protected Areas layers to allow for all data to be considered as part of a suitability map that indicates areas to be considered as the most suitable for the proposed Karoo Succulent Safe Space. A priority-setting exercise using ArcGIS was used to inform the proposed project area.

**Activity 1.3:** *During months 1-6, identify two potential Safe Spaces that target IWT species ( $\geq 3$  succulents).*

**Progress:** The priority setting map, as discussed in points 1.1 and 1.2, was presented to the Provincial Biodiversity Investigating Forum (PBIF), where all partners (of the National Response Strategy and Action Plan) are present to discuss outcomes and potential safe space options, including potentially allowing for a focus to be on two areas. One focus is to incorporate an area with a high impact due to flora biodiversity crime, and one area is currently less heavily impacted but where trends are increasing. The Karoo Safe Space project was well received in the PBIF, and proposals were made to target landowners in two different geographical areas with different current impacts experienced to allow for maximum input as part of the evidence-gathering process. The PBIF confirmed their willingness to participate in this project.

**Activity 1.4:** *By month 8, ground-truth the presence/absence of target species at the potential Safe Spaces using expert engagement. This will help determine the suitability of potential Safe Spaces as a pilot site.*

**Progress:** One of the sites indicated to be willing to participate in the Safe Space project will be visited by a botanist and a risk assessor to allow for ground truthing to be completed. The site has a high impact due to flora biodiversity crime and has numerous small communities located within the heavily impacted area. Information is required from the specialists to provide the final recommendations as part of the project. Due to the phenology of the succulent plants, ground truthing can only be completed once the flowering season commences, as the identified succulent species are distinguishable by their flowers. A change request was submitted and approved for the specialist surveys to be conducted between months 9 and 11.

## **Output 2: Engagement of key stakeholders willing to participate in a Karoo Safe Space project.**

**Activity 2.1:** *During months 7-10, identify landowners to engage with within the identified target Safe Space area, introduce the concept to them, and assess their willingness to participate in implementing the idea.*

**Progress:** As part of Activity 1.3, four different areas were targeted, and informal engagements were held within three of these potential Safe Space areas to introduce the concept and assess the willingness of stakeholders to implement the Safe Space approach. Meetings were held with Farmers' Associations and interested landowners. The Safe Space project concept was shared at all three meetings. Two of the targeted areas indicated a willingness to participate. Thus far, there is strong support for the Safe Space approach, which we believe will allow for solid collaboration to develop the Safe Space plan. Formal agreements will be established with landowners/land custodians to enable further actions to be completed.

**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 and needs, natural resources 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 woman and youth.*

**Progress:** The EWT team held an internal workshop where we discussed and planned our approach to the situational analysis and social interviews. An application was submitted to the ethics committee (independent EWT Social Ethics Committee) in November 2023, which was approved on 31 January 2024, allowing interviews to be conducted with adult individuals (Annexure 9). To determine the social dynamics around succulent poaching, group-specific questionnaires, translated and available in English and Afrikaans, have been developed targeting the general community (GC), key community role-players (RP) and industry experts (IE). Questionnaires have been structured to determine the following:

- The depth of knowledge around succulents and their value.
- The extent and status of succulent poaching activity.
- Key drivers of succulent poaching.
- Markets for succulents.
- Level of compliance and enforcement protecting succulents.
- Solutions to succulent poaching.
- Sentiment regarding poaching of succulents.
- Socio-economic conditions and local, sustainable livelihood requirements and opportunities to be explored.

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

**Progress:** 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 Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and SANBI. A progress meeting for the NRSAP was held at the beginning of October 2023, followed by two workshops aimed at "Safeguarding the Succulent Economy" on 31 January 2024 and 6 March 2024. We attended all workshops to allow forward planning and collaboration between various organisations and the implementation of NRSAP. Within the targeted Safe Space area, we have been engaging formally and informally with Provincial Conservation Agencies, SAPS STES Units and private stakeholders to inform them of our plans. We are often invited to a Western Cape Provincial Biodiversity Investigating Forum (PBIF) organised by the Western Cape SAPS STES Units and Cape Nature, SANParks and SANBI. The forum has indicated strong support for our Safe Space project, and they have participated in activities 1.4 and 2.2, as stated above.

### **Output 3: Innovative and scalable Karoo Safe Space plan (using an improved evidence-based that consolidates the threats to illegally traded species, with law enforcement/custodian – and community engagement).**

*Activity 3.1: During month 13, conduct a multi-stakeholder SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis workshop with all stakeholders to determine the feasibility of operationalising the target area as a Karoo Safe Space.*

**Status:** Not started yet.

*Activity 3.2: During months 14-15, finalise and disseminate written plans to operationalise the Karoo Safe Space concept, including a plan to address gender inequalities. These plans will be submitted as a funding application to the UK IWT Stage 11 for a Main Project.*

**Status:** Not started yet.

## **3.2 Progress towards Project Outputs**

**Output 1:** Report detailing species of succulents threatened by IWT, including the drivers, methods, and scale of poaching and trade and identifying geographic area(s) most suitable for project implementation.

**Progress:** No changes to the output were requested, but a financial timeline change was requested in November 2023 (Annexure 4) by the former Project Lead, Dr Andrew Taylor, to allow for the budget realignment of dates for the project year against the IWT financial year during November 2023 (Q2-4 in year 1 and Q1-3 in year 2). The financial timeline change was due to a misalignment with the Funder Financial year. We indicated that our project would start in July 2023 and last 15 months. It was initially thought that the project would run concurrently with the EWT financial year, which begins in July and runs until June of the following year (Q1-4). And not as per the Funder financial year, which would be from the beginning of Q2 in year 1 (July 2023) to the end of Q3 in year 2 (September 2024). Dr Andrew Taylor resigned in December 2023, and I was appointed in January 2024. On familiarisation myself with the project, I realised that according to the project deliverables, the Funder year 1 Q4 was applicable and not as was planned from the beginning of the project timeline to have the field verification done in winter months (Q4 based on our project year instead of the UK financial year timelines). A second change request was submitted on the realisation of this discrepancy to allow for the ground truthing intervention to be extended into the autumn to the winter period, an optimal time to complete biodiversity and species assessments for arid regions/biota. This second change request also included the staff changes that occurred (Lead manager and Financial Manager). This change request was subsequently approved in March 2024 (Annexure 5).

### **Output 1 indicators**

#### **1.1.1 The distribution of a report to participating stakeholders and the IWT Fund.**

The information gathered from stakeholders and partners informed the development of a baseline from which to work and to participate with various other strategies implemented, such as the National Response Strategy and Action Plan, which is aimed at working on the Succulent Economy. Additional information is expected to be received as part of Output 2, as well as ground-truthing by specialists to be completed after this current reporting period (late autumn to early winter in the southern Hemisphere). A list of key succulent Safe Space contacts is included as means of verification for progress (Annexure 6). Once all relevant information is collected, a report which includes specifics of the pilot intervention will be submitted.

#### **1.2.1 List of succulent species recommended for protection through an IWT Fund Main Grant.**

All data obtained up to date from partners such as TRAFFIC is stored in a secure database to prevent exploitation. A list of species has been developed but cannot be shared due to the sensitivity of the information, however metadata is provided as an Annexure 7 (this is not to be published or distributed).

### **1.3.1 Report detailing the distribution of species and IWT Threats.**

A sensitivity distribution map (Annexure 8) was developed to inform potential Safe Space project sites. Through this map, a botanical and risk assessment survey will be completed to inform the final recommendations to be addressed as part of a Safe Space Main Grant application.

### **1.4.1 Ground truthing report.**

A botanical and risk assessment is scheduled to be completed per the change request submitted in January 2024 and approved in April 2024. Once specialist studies have been completed, this report will inform the workshops to be held with stakeholders and land custodians within the designated geographical area.

## **Output 2: Engagement of key stakeholders willing to participate in a Karoo Safe Space project.**

**Progress:** No Changes to the output were requested. As indicated in Output 1 progress reporting, a financial timeline change was requested and approved, impacting when specialist ground-truthing can be completed.

## **Output 2 indicators**

### **2.1.1 MOU signed between the EWT and participating land custodians.**

**Progress:** Meetings have been held with various land custodians in three different geographical areas to allow for the Safe Space concept to be known and allow awareness. We have been contacted by two of the three areas in which they are interested in participating in the Safe Space Project and have provided preliminary consent. All participants will sign written MOU, and a consent form (Annexure 9) to form part of the Safe Space project.

### **2.2.1 Report detailing findings of the situational analysis.**

The situational analysis is currently in the process of being completed through numerous interviews being conducted with various willing participants. The interviews were ethically approved in January 2024 (Annexure 10). The targeted audience includes General Community members, Role Players and Industry Experts. The interviews, making use of the developed questionnaires, commenced in February 2024. A convenience data sampling approach is used because of the geographic extent of the study area and dispersed communities. Data is being captured electronically through a Survey 123 app and converted into categorical data within an Excel spreadsheet. Questionnaires have been developed in English and Afrikaans. The questionnaires are also developed for key role players, the general community, and experts (available on request). The number of questionnaires collected will be determined by data saturation. Data saturation is the point in continuous data collection where no new information is being collected, and any additional data will only serve to confirm the emerging understanding. A data triangulation approach will be used to analyse data from the various study groups.

Once the situational analysis of socio-economic conditions, natural resource use, and knowledge of succulent poaching has been conducted, the findings will be used to help develop a proposal for a pilot safe space, including potential interventions to improve socio-economic conditions.

### **2.3.1 Letters of support received from law enforcement, nature conservation institutions, and private security operators.**

At the time of our proposal submission to IWT, we received letters of support from Cape Nature, TRAFFIC, DFFE, and Agri SA. Preliminary meetings were held with Provincial Conservation Agencies, Law Enforcement, SAPS Stock Theft and Endangered Species Unit, the Provincial Biodiversity Investigation Forum, Farmers Associations and the Department of Agriculture, who have all provided principal support to the pilot project. We continue to collaborate towards a common goal.

**Output 3: Innovative and scalable Karoo Safe Space plan (using an improved evidence-based that consolidates the threats to illegally traded species, with law enforcement/custodian – and community engagement).**

**Progress:** No Changes to the output were requested. As indicated in Output 1 progress reporting, a financial timeline change was requested and approved, impacting when specialist ground-truthing will be completed. This output will be implemented outside of the first financial year and will be captured in the final report. This Output is scheduled to be completed in months 13 – 15. This report covers the period from months 1–8.

**Output 3 indicators**

**3.1.1 Workshop attendance register.**

Planned to take place in months 13-15.

**3.1.2 Report received by the UK IWTC (and other stakeholders).**

Planned to take place in months 13-15.

**3.2.1 Written plans for a Karoo Safe Space disseminated to all participating stakeholders (as defined through activities 3.1–3.2).**

Planned to take place in months 13-15.

**3.2.2 Proposal submitted to the UK IWTC Round 11, detailing the implementation of a Karoo Safe Space as a Main Project that could be scaled up should it prove successful in reducing succulent IWT.**

Planned to take place in months 13-15.

**3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

**Outcome:**

An innovative intervention developed, addressing a gap in current approaches to illegal succulent trade, by identifying “Karoo Safe Space” to safeguard these spaces against succulent poaching.

**Progress:** The project is currently underway, with numerous social studies being completed while working with land custodians to ensure understanding and awareness are raised in a wider area to combat biodiversity crime within their geographic area and, more specifically, on their private properties. Areas targeted for information gathering include areas with high biodiversity crime currently encountered as well as areas where no to little biodiversity crime is currently reported. Land custodians and local authorities have all indicated a willingness to participate. All risk assessment, as well as ground-truthing, is planned to commence within the South African autumn to winter period to inform the multi-stakeholder SWOT analysis workshop. Once this activity is completed, the outcome indicators can be reported. At this stage, we believe we are on track to meet the desired outcome of the project. If this changes, we will appropriately amend steps to best achieve the desired outcome.

**Outcome Indicators:**

**0.1.1** Final report to IWTC and other stakeholders that includes a full detailed work plan and costing for a pilot intervention (maps and sites).

Status: In progress.

**0.1.2** All data obtained are captured in a secure database.

Status: In progress. Currently completed on the EWT network and will be maintained and updated as information becomes available.

**0.1.3** Written undertaking from security/nature conservation stakeholders to participate in the pilot project.

Status: In progress. This activity has been done in principle, but written confirmation will be obtained.

#### 0.2.1 Application through IWTC Stage 11 for a Main Project.

Status: Not started.

### 3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

**Output assumption 1:** Landowners and communities buy- into the project.

**Comment:** The project is being well received in numerous areas, by landowners as well as residents and organisations involved with flora biodiversity crime combatting.

**Output assumption 2:** Security/nature conservation stakeholders buy into the project.

**Comment:** This initiative is supported by local Law Enforcement as well as Conservation Agencies who are kept up to date as well as participate in the social studies being conducted.

**Output assumption 3:** We can leverage funding, based on the strength of this project, to action it.

**Comment:** It is believed that through the multi-stakeholder SWOT analysis workshop that is scheduled, a strong project proposal will be developed for submission for a main grant application.

**Output 1 assumption:** Empirical data is available on succulent species threatened by poaching and trade in the Succulent Karoo.

**Comment:** Data has been obtained and shared from numerous organizations and law enforcement pertaining to actual criminal cases where succulent plants were seized.

**Output 1 assumption:** TRAFFIC has identified succulent species and locations by the start of the project.

**Comment:** Data has been shared and received which has informed the mapping used as part of the planning for the safe space geographical area.

**Output 1 assumption:** Species experts and nurseries willing to supply information.

**Comment:** Species experts have shared information with TRAFFIC, which was shared with the project. Additional information is forthcoming and collaborates already received information.

**Output 1 assumption:** Experts have accurate, up-to-date knowledge of the distributions of priority succulent species and/or IWT threats.

**Comment:** Flora monitoring is completed by SANBI, and data is shared as part of the National Response Strategy and Action Plan.

**Output 1 assumption:** All data obtained can be stored in a secure database to prevent exploitation.

**Comment:** The Endangered Wildlife Trust has an online system where data is stored, and data agreements are completed when information is requested.

**Output 2 assumption:** Experts and land custodians are prepared to share their knowledge about species distributions with the project team.

**Comment:** This has been positive as working relationships have been forged with numerous landowners and land custodians in various areas.

**Output 2 assumption:** Landowners/custodians care enough about preventing IWT and rural security more generally to participate.

**Comment:** This is found to be true as landowners/custodians want to protect the flora *in-situ* and request assistance to prevent biodiversity crime from escalating.



**Output 2 assumption:** Landowners/custodians allow field surveys on properties.

**Comment:** This has been positively encountered and field surveys are currently scheduled to start in May-June 2024.

**Output 2 assumption:** Landowners/custodians are committed to implementing measures to detect and stop poachers.

**Comment:** Numerous activities are currently implemented to ensure safety and to combat biodiversity crime within their areas.

**Output 2 assumption:** Landowners/custodians have sufficient time and resources to implement recommended measures.

**Comment:** Through the development of recommendations, it is envisaged that the Safe Space pilot project would allow for additional resources to assist within the vast areas where biodiversity crime is taking place with novel techniques or approaches to implement.

**Output 3 assumption:** We can successfully identify project risks to be addressed before implementation of a follow-up pilot project and mitigate them accordingly.

**Comment:** The multi-stakeholder SWOT analysis workshop is aimed at addressing this output. With full assessments and feedback from the situational assessments, it is envisaged that all factors and mitigation actions can be addressed to inform the main grant application.

**Output 3 assumption:** Using an improved evidence base, the intervention we have designed provides a strong case to trigger funding support for a Pilot Study

**Comment:** This assumption holds true.

### **3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on illegal wildlife trade and poverty reduction**

Our current project is an evidence project, so we do not anticipate impacts on poverty reduction during this project, but we have engaged with farmworkers and their families to better understand their socio-economic needs and gather information to build a picture of natural resource use as well as looking at current socio-economic impacts within their lives. We recognise that women and children in South Africa have limited access to material or political power, basic amenities, employment opportunities and quality education, but also that gender inequality is not well understood in the region of the country we wish to work in.

To overcome this lack of knowledge and find ways to improve gender equality, we are engaging with farmworkers/local community members and their families to better understand their needs and gather information to build a picture of natural resource use and compliance, disaggregated by gender. We aim to identify local women champions during our engagements, which could support future project implementation. We will expand and strengthen our explanation of how we will approach poverty reduction in our main pilot Safe Space application, which we will link to our current efforts to reduce gender inequality. We believe that poverty isn't only about money, but also about quality of life. Where possible, we aim to improve the quality of life within areas where biodiversity crime is active.

## **4. Thematic focus**

The project addresses the theme of "Strengthening law enforcement" by complementing the efforts of law enforcement agencies through the 'Safe Space' model. By empowering landowners and custodians to protect their land from poachers, the project helps create a network of protected areas where succulents are safe, *in situ*, from illegal harvesting.

This approach can strengthen law enforcement efforts by reducing the need for them to cover vast areas and by creating a community-led deterrent to poaching. Additionally, by gathering data on poaching activities and working closely with law enforcement agencies, the project can help inform and improve law enforcement strategies in the region.

The project aims to gather data on poaching and trade, identify succulent hotspot priority areas, engage with land custodians and farm workers, and develop measures to counter poaching through the empowerment of land custodians. These actions directly support the goal of developing sustainable livelihoods for people affected by illegal wildlife trade. While the project is still in its early stages and the evidence of its impact may not yet be fully available, the proposed approach aligns well with the objectives of the IWT Challenge Fund, and the pillars of action agreed upon by global leaders at the IWT Conference Series. Through strengthening our partnership with law enforcement and other role players, we are able to share resources and better understand drivers of flora biodiversity crime.

## 5. Impact on species in focus

Our current project is an evidence project aimed at the collection of data to inform a main grant application. Close to 650 indigenous and endemic plant taxonomic groups have been impacted due to biodiversity crime to date. Different types of succulent plants (incl. *Mesembryanthemums* of which *Conophytum* species are known), as well as geophytes (bulb species), are targeted within South Africa, as the plants are prized for their alluring characteristics and rarity. The *Conophytum* genus, in particular, has been hard hit, pushing most of the species in this genus to critically endangered levels. The challenge of the illegal harvesting and trade in plants is one of the biggest biodiversity challenges facing the country. The Succulent Karoo is a global biodiversity hotspot, and South Africa has a key responsibility to protect this spectacular biodiversity that is found nowhere else in the world. The evidence project is aimed at finding a solution to address flora biodiversity crime in a particular area, which if successful, could be replicated to be implemented in other areas where biodiversity crime occurs.

## 6. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

Our current project is an evidence project, so we do not anticipate impacts on poverty reduction during this project, however this project will gather evidence into which interventions could create sustainable impact. We have engaged with farmworkers and their families to better understand their socio-economic needs and gather information to build a picture of natural resource use as well as looking at current socio-economic impacts within their lives. We recognise that women and children in South Africa have limited access to material or political power, basic amenities, employment opportunities and quality education, but also that gender inequality is not well understood in the region of the country we wish to work.

## 7. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board <sup>1</sup> .	83.3% females (field staff (3 of 3); financial staff (1 of 2); senior project manager (1 of 1)).
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women <sup>2</sup> .	No project partners as part of this project.

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
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<sup>1</sup> A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

<sup>2</sup> Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

<b>Not yet sensitive</b>	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
<b>Sensitive</b>	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses the basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups, and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	<b>X</b>
<b>Empowering</b>	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
<b>Transformative</b>	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

Our current project is an evidence project, but we have engaged with farmworkers and their families to better understand their socio-economic needs and gather information to build a picture of the current socio-economic impacts within their lives. The project team is aimed at considering the gendered and socio-cultural differences that exist between individuals and various social groups encountered as part of this project. All interactions are completed to allow for social inclusion and participation to allow for all views to be captured and understood in their own home language.

## **8. Monitoring and evaluation**

EWT has a robust monitoring and evaluating system in place where staff actively make use of the software program Miradi to report on progress on indicators of projects. The project is reported monthly which is reviewed by EWT senior staff. During March, the project was presented to the EWT Management team, and this further allowed for internal progress reporting based on the project deliverables. The Drylands Conservation Programme (DCP) team members participate in the implementation of the Safe Space project, and weekly programme meetings are held where the project is discussed to allow for feedback to be given based on the log frame or, where necessary, to discuss challenges and potential amendments that need to be implemented. This allows for further internal discussions to plan and implement the situational analysis.

## **9. Lessons learnt.**

EWT did apply and get approved a change to the financial timeline for the project (mentioned previously) but has no current plan to submit any further Change Requests.

The project lead position and financial manager position changed during year 1. There was a limited "hand-over" period when the two new employees commenced duties within the EWT organisation (project lead position and Financial Manager) which was particularly challenging. This resulted in some impact on the transferral of historical knowledge of the project and planned activities. The change in the lead position resulted in a small delay in continued implementation of the Safe Space project. The project is based on trust within an area to share information and allow for participation. A change in personnel therefore required a lot of time to get to know land custodians and stakeholders. This has been addressed, and the project has gathered momentum as part of implementation.

Additionally, the phenology of the succulent plants forming the basis of the project, combined with a change in rainfall patterns over the last few years, has impacted the timing when botanical surveys can be completed, which will inform the study. In future, the project scheduling will be better aligned to allow for plant phenology to dictate scheduling with the financial year schedule.

## 10. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

This is the first annual report submitted.

## 11. Risk Management

No new risks have been identified.

A change request was submitted and approved to allow for a financial shift between year 1 and year 2 to allow for specialist studies to be conducted in the late autumn and beginning winter periods to address the phenology of the succulent plants found in arid areas.

## 12. Sustainability and legacy

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 Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and SANBI. A progress meeting for the NRSAP was held at the beginning of October 2023, followed by two workshops aimed at “Safeguarding the Succulent Economy” on 31 January 2024 and 6 March 2024. All workshops were attended by us and participated in to allow for forward planning and collaboration between various organizations and to allow for the implementation of NSRAP. The Safe Space project concept was shared with numerous stakeholders and is often represented at the PBIF to provide updates on activities, maintain interest, and allow collaboration to take place between the various stakeholders.

## 13. IWT Challenge Fund identity

The Safe Space project is presented at meetings using the IWT Challenge Fund logo. A reprint of the IWTEV011 - Newsletter article - Succulent Safe Space was included in the February Conservation Matters, which was shared locally and nationally with EWT partners.

## 14. Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	<b>Yes</b>
Have any concerns been reported in the past 12 months	<b>No</b>
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	<b>Yes/No</b> [ <i>If yes, please provide their name and email</i> ]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	<b>No</b> [ <i>If yes, please provide date and details of training</i> ]
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding? Through internal IT policy implementation and adherence all staff receive monthly engagement. It is also a monthly agenda point in management meetings.	Past: % [and number] Planned: % [and number]
Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses. <b>None to report</b>	
Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so, please specify. <b>No</b>	

Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the past 12 months; include topics covered and number of participants.

**Not applicable**

Have there been any concerns around Health, Safety and Security of your project over the past year? If yes, please outline how this was resolved.

**No**

## 15. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (April 2023-March 2024)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total actual IWTCF Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				Staff changes that occurred during the reporting period has resulted in an underspend. This is being addressed with making use of more staff to implement the project on time.
Consultancy costs				Situational analysis surveys have commenced and some expenditure was captured in March 2024.
Overhead Costs				The full budgeted amount was not received for a 12-month period. The original budget submitted was for 12 months, and not 8 months.
Travel and subsistence				Due to staff changes and the project being implemented by the Drylands Conservation Programme based within the arid regions, this has cut down on travel expenses dramatically
Operating Costs				The resignation of support and lead staff resulted in an underspend. Additionally, the Drylands Conservation Staff are implementing the project
Capital items (see below)				The purchase of computers was completed at a lower cost due to the

				exchange rate at the time of the purchase
Others (see below)				The resignation of support and lead staff resulted in an underspend.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51692.00</b>	<b>38105.37</b>		

**Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)**

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)	N/A		
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices, and the project (£)	N/A		

**16. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere.**

There is none to report.

**17. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.**

*I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).*

During the same period that the Safe Space project was implemented, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) embarked on a project to train three Conservation Canine Unit dogs to detect succulent plants as part of a feasibility study to use scent detection dogs to help combat the growing plant poaching problem. This training has enabled the deployment of the EWT dog teams to detect succulent plants at key locations. This is a first for South Africa, and as far as we know, these dogs are the only detection dogs worldwide specifically being used to help combat plant poaching. The use of scent-detection dogs has great potential for aiding in the protection of our country's rare biodiversity.

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description, country, and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
				Yes / No
				Yes / No
				Yes / No
				Yes / No
				Yes / No

**Annex 4: Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)**



## Annexure 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2023-2024

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Development of an integrated safe spaces approach to illegal succulent harvesting and trade in the Succulent Karoo, to design a pilot project for field testing</p>	<p>This evidence-based project is currently gathering the data needed to design a pilot project to be submitted for funding application that can be scalable and implementable in different geographical areas.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome:</b> An innovative intervention developed, addressing a gap in current approaches to illegal succulent trade, by identifying “Karoo Safe Space” to safeguard these spaces against succulent poaching.</p>		
<p>Outcome indicator 0.1</p> <p>0.1 By Month 15: a detailed intervention report and specific plan finalised that we would use to apply for a Main Project grant from the IWT Fund.</p>	<p>All work currently implemented within the various fields forming part of this Safe Space project is contributing to the information that will feed into this outcome by month 15.</p>	<p>Develop an intervention plan through multistakeholder engagements to ensure the Main Project Grant application is accurate and implementable.</p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.2</p> <p>0.2 Application, through IWT Fund Round 11 (Stage 1 in Aug 2024; Stage 2 in Dec 2024), for a Main Project grant to action a pilot intervention, namely Succulent Safe Space</p>	<p>To be completed for submission in August 2024.</p>	<p>Complete project proposal and submit to IWT Fund Round 11.</p>
<p><b>Output 1: Report detailing species of succulents threatened by IWT, including the drivers, methods, and scale of poaching and trade and identifying geographic area(s) most suitable for project implementation.</b></p>		
<p>Output indicator 1.1 Internal written report completed by Month 3, detailing species of succulents most at risk from poaching and trade in the Succulent Karoo (at least 3 priority species), as well as the drivers and methods of poaching and trade.</p>	<p>Information was gathered from various sources including data gathered by TRAFFIC which included using opensource data on succulent cases, interviews with private landowners and protected area managers (state and private) and verifying the information to ensure accurate data was captured to allow for a sensitivity map to be developed taking into consideration drivers and methods of poaching.</p>	<p>Continuous data collection to ensure that if new trends or drivers emerge, we can fully integrate the information into the proposed main Project Grant.</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.2 By the end of Month 5, recommendations were developed for protecting succulents using the Karoo Safe Spaces approach.</p>	<p>The development of a priority/sensitivity map has allowed for focused discussions (internal and with stakeholders) to take place to identify areas that are presently targeted but also areas which are showing an increase in flora biodiversity crime. Recommendations were provided to the Project Management Team (internal).</p>	<p>Action completed.</p>

Output indicator 1.3 Two potential Safe Spaces identified that target IWT species ( $\geq 3$ succulents) by Month 6.	A decision was reached by the internal Project Management team to target an area on the West Coast and an area within the Little Karoo where there is an escalation in biodiversity crime.	Continue to work with land custodians, landowners, law enforcement and Provincial Nature Reserves to keep communication open and ensure a working relationship.
Output indicator 1.4 One Safe Space identified for project implementation by Month 8. NB: we may develop plans for two different sites.	One Safe Space was identified as a critical area, and another Safe Space was identified to gather information to ensure all aspects of flora biodiversity crime and potential drivers and threats are identified.	Implement situational analysis and gather data from both identified areas.
<b>Output 2.</b> Engagement of key stakeholders willing to participate in a Karoo Safe Space project.		
Output indicator 2.1. All landowners (numbers to be determined once a Safe Space site is identified) in the target Karoo Safe Space (Activity 1.4) provide written consent to participate in the project by Month 10.	Stakeholders within proposed geographical areas have been approached, the concept of the Karoo Safe Space has been shared, and awareness has been raised. Two areas have confirmed their willingness to participate in this project.	Written confirmation from land custodians, landowners, and various Law Enforcement and Provincial Nature Conservation Agencies to be obtained.
Output indicator 2.2. Situational analysis details activities that would help improve farmworkers' socio-economic conditions, particularly women and youth, by Month 12.	Situational analysis is currently implemented by means of ethically approved (internal) surveys, which are captured, evaluated and analysed to inform the current socio-economic situation and potential areas to address to enhance youth, women and disadvantaged individuals' current circumstances in the medium to long term.	Situational analysis is to be completed, and analysis and recommendations are to be determined for discussion in a multi-stakeholder workshop.
Output indicator 2.3. All institutional law enforcement and nature conservation institutions (e.g., CapeNature, SAPS, Northern Cape Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform) and private security operators (e.g., farm watch groups, farm guards, private security companies) in the target Karoo Safe Space provide letters of support, agreeing to participate in the Main project piloting the Safe Space approach by Month 12.	A working collaboration is in place to ensure relevant information is shared to allow for a long-term working relationship to be in place. Through participation in the National Response Strategy and Action Plan, the biodiversity economy is addressed. Through the Provincial Biodiversity Intelligence Forum, strategic partner information sharing allows for the project to be understood. Collaboration, and through the Provincial Biodiversity Intelligence Forum, strategic partner information sharing allows the project to be understood and collaboration to increase.	Written confirmation from land custodians, landowners, and various Law Enforcement and Provincial Nature Conservation Agencies to be obtained.
<b>Output 3.</b> Innovative and scalable Karoo Safe Space plan (using an improved evidence base that consolidates the threats to illegally traded species, with law enforcement activities, landowner/custodian - and community engagement).		
Output indicator 3.1. A report detailing projected risks and opportunities, as identified through a multi-stakeholder SWOT analysis, by Month 13.	Action to still be completed.  The identified safe space area will be ground truther, and a full risk assessment will be completed by an independent security analyst to allow for information to be gathered within	Complete ground truthing and host multi-stakeholder workshops to disseminate information and allow for further

	the actual geographical area. This activity is scheduled to commence in late autumn and begin at the beginning of winter in the southern hemisphere.	analysis of data as obtained through the current Safe Space project.
Output indicator 3.2 By Month 15, written plans for a Karoo Safe Space will be disseminated to all stakeholders for the implementation of a follow-up Pilot Project.	Action to still be completed.	All data obtained are to be captured to feed into the development of a Main Safe Space Project grant submission.

## Annexure 2: Project’s full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
<b>Impact:</b> Development of an integrated Safe Spaces approach to illegal succulent harvesting and trade in the Succulent Karoo, to design a pilot project for field testing.			
<b>Outcome:</b> An innovative intervention developed, addressing a gap in current approaches to illegal succulent trade, by identifying “Karoo Safe Space” to safeguard these spaces against succulent poaching.	0.1 By Month 15: a detailed intervention report and specific plan finalised that we would use to apply for a Main Project grant from the IWT Fund.  0.2 Application, through IWT Fund Round 11 (Stage 1 in Aug 2024; Stage 2 in Dec 2024), for a Main Project grant to action a pilot intervention, namely Succulent Safe Space.	0.1.1 Final report to IWTC and other stakeholders which includes a full detailed work plan and costing for a pilot intervention (maps and sites).  0.1.2 All data obtained are captured in a secure database.  0.1.3 Written undertaking from security/nature conservation stakeholders to participate in the pilot project.  0.2.1 Application through IWTC Stage 11 for a Main Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowners and communities buy into the project.</li> <li>• Security/nature conservation stakeholders buy into the project.</li> </ul> We can leverage funding, based on the strength of this project, to action it.
<b>Outputs:</b> 1. Report detailing species of succulents threatened by IWT, including the drivers, methods, and scale of poaching and trade and identifying the geographic area(s) most suitable for project implementation.	1.1 Internal written report completed by Month 3, detailing species of succulents most at risk from poaching and trade in the Succulent Karoo (at least 3 priority species), as well as the drivers and methods of poaching and trade.  1.2 By the end of Month 5, recommendations developed for protecting succulents using the Karoo Safe Spaces approach.  1.3 Two potential Safe Spaces identified that target IWT species (≥3 succulents) by Month 6.  1.4 One Safe Space identified for project implementation by Month 8. NB: we may develop plans for two different sites.	1.1.1 Report distributed to participating stakeholders and the IWT Fund.  1.2.1 List of succulent species recommended for protection through an IWT Fund Main Grant.  1.3.1 Report detailing the distribution of species and IWT threats.  1.4.1 Ground-truthing report.  1.4.2 Final recommendation report with respect to site selection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empirical data is available on succulent species threatened by poaching and trade in the Succulent Karoo.</li> <li>• TRAFFIC has identified succulent species and locations by the start of the project.</li> <li>• Species experts and nurseries willing to supply information.</li> <li>• Experts have accurate, up to date knowledge of the distributions of priority succulent species and/or IWT threats.</li> <li>• All data obtained can be stored in a secure database to prevent exploitation.</li> </ul>
2. Engagement of key stakeholders willing to participate in a Karoo Safe Space project.	2.1 All landowners (numbers to be determined once a Safe Space site in identified) in the target Karoo Safe Space (activity 1.4) provide written consent to participate in the project by Month 10.	2.1.1 MOU signed between the EWT and participating land custodians.  2.2.1 Report detailing findings of the situational analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts and land custodians are prepared to share their knowledge about species distributions with the project team.</li> </ul>

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	<p>2.2 Situational analysis details activities that would help improve socio-economic conditions for farmworkers, with particular reference to women and youth, by Month 12.</p> <p>2.3 All institutional law enforcement and nature conservation institutions (e.g., CapeNature, SAPS, Northern Cape Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform), and private security operators (e.g., farm watch groups, farm guards, private security companies) in the target Karoo Safe Space provide letters of support, agreeing to participate in the Main project piloting the Safe Space approach by Month 12.</p>	<p>2.3.1 Letters of support received from law enforcement, nature conservation institutions, and private security operators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowners/custodians care enough about preventing IWT and rural security more generally to participate.</li> <li>• Landowners/custodians allow field surveys on properties.</li> <li>• Landowners/custodians are committed to implement measures to detect and stop poachers.</li> </ul> <p>Landowners/custodians have sufficient time and resources to implement recommended measures.</p>

<b>Activities</b>
1.1 During months 1–3, engage with TRAFFIC (Southern Africa) 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 will be conducting a trade analysis, including identification of traded succulents and source locations).
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.
1.3 During months 5–6, identify two potential Safe Spaces: Using data from Activities 1.1 and 1.2, we will use spatial mapping tools to identify potential priority sites for consideration as Safe Spaces
1.4 During months 7–10, ground-truth the presence/absence of target species at the potential Safe Spaces using expert engagement. This will help determine the suitability of the potential Safe Spaces as a pilot site.
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.
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.
2.3 During months 7–12, identify relevant institutional law enforcement and nature conservation partners, and private security operators (e.g. farm watch groups).
3.1 During month 13, conduct a multi-stakeholder SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis workshop with all stakeholders to determine the feasibility of operationalising the target area as a Karoo Safe Space. Interventions may include:  3.1.1: Establishing an improved communications and security network between all stakeholders. 3.1.2: Enhancing the existing farm security network.
3.2 During months 14–15, finalise and disseminate written plans to operationalise the Karoo Safe Space concept, including a plan to address gender inequalities. These plans will be submitted as a funding application to the UK IWTC Stage 11 for a Main Project.

## Annexure 3: Standard Indicators

**Table 1 Project Standard Indicators**

IWTCF Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
IWTCF-A01	E.g. Number of people who received training in sustainable livelihood skills	People	Men	N/A				N/A
IWTCF-A01	E.g. Number of new or improved site management plans available and endorsed	Number	Women	N/A				N/A
IWTCF-B02	E.g. Number of new or improved site management plans available and endorsed	Number	New	0			0	1
IWTCF-B02	E.g. Number of new or improved site management plans available and endorsed	Number	improved	N/A				N/A

**Table 2 Publications**

Title	Type (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
N/A						



## Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the <b>correct template</b> (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and <b>deleted the blue guidance text</b> before submission?	x
<b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a> putting the project number in the subject line.	x
<b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a> about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the subject line.	
<b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	x
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 17)?	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	x
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	