

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

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	<i>IWTE0V17</i>
<b>Project title</b>	World Wild Web: Understanding Online Illegal Wildlife Trade in Brazil
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Brazil
<b>Lead partner</b>	RENCTAS - Brazilian Network to Fight the Trafficking of Wild Animals
<b>Partner(s)</b>	IUCN, Northumbria University, University of Amazon
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Thiago Vargas da Costa</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR1</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<i>N/A (pleased see motivation below)</i>

### **Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable.**

"World Wide Web: Understanding Online Illegal Wildlife Trade in Brazil" officially started on 01-04-23 and this report covers the months of April to end of September.

RENCTAS is monitoring IWTE0V17 by activity according to the logframe. This has been implemented by Tiago Carvalho, our new Project Assistant intern, from late May to July. We register every action that is taken to develop the project's activities through Monday.com and an online form. For example, once the first 1.000 random wildlife trafficking online posts were gathered, we filled a form related to the activity "1.1 Monitoring activities carried out by RENCTAS with UNAMA", registering everything that was done and disaggregating data according to the SMART Indicators logframe.

**Over the last 6 months we have worked on the following activities as predicted by IWTE0V17's Implementation Timetable for Q1 and Q2 of Year 1. These first two quarters of the project have also been used to structure monitoring, project management and to align with partner institutions to start developing the activities hereby reported.**

#### ***1.1 Monitoring activities carried out by Renctas with UNAMA.***

RENCTAS has collected 1.000 messages/ads following the species, state/region, gender of the supplier/consumer criterias from May to September. The second 1.000 random posts are already being sought alongside UNAMA since October, according to the Implementation Timetable schedule for this first year.

We have also planned a meeting with the Northumbria University later on this year in which we will plan the article methodologies, schedule, and create the templates for the data gathering and analysis.

RENTAS has already developed the data analysis chart after collecting the first 1.000 posts divided according to predetermined criteria. We have also begun to monitor the international wildlife trafficking of the Spix's and Lear's macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*), after analysing the critical endangerment scenario that these species are currently suffering.

### **3.1 Guidelines planning with IUCN:**

After the kick-off meeting, RENTAS has been in constant dialogue with the coordinator of the IUCN Species Group (Spiders). We are currently discussing the methodological approach that guide the next steps. We expect to have the group fully implemented by the end of this year, in Q3, when we are expected to start writing the guidelines.

After a kick-off meeting with IUCN and agreement on qualitative criteria and standards for the guidelines, we will plan work schedules and deadlines. A consultation will be carried out with the members of the IUCN species group for the previous survey of methodological approaches in use, as well as main challenges and solutions faced in the monitoring of the IWT by the consulted members.

Renctas will also lead the official creation of a IUCN Task Force on Monitoring Illegal Wildlife trade, which will be a specialists group composed of experts that integrate the IUCN Species Survival Commission, as a result of this activity that has started.

#### **In addition to the predicted activities, we have also carried out:**

In relation to the illegal trade in Lear's Macaws, we established contact with the Surinamese government to obtain more information about a seizure of 29 Lear's Macaws, informed the Brazilian authorities about this seizure, carried out a study on the possible routes used by traffickers, including a survey of private airports throughout Brazil. We spoke to several different sources and police officers to map out possible land routes that might be used by the traffickers.

We made a general survey of all the information available on the internet and WhatsApp groups. We even obtained a video showing 6 specimens of the Lear's Macaw in a small cage, which we believe to be part of the ones seized in Suriname. We also filed a lawsuit with the federal public prosecutor's office asking for an investigation to be launched into the activities of international wildlife traffickers operating in the region where the Lear's Macaw occurs. We have established a partnership with the federal prosecutor's office so that RENTAS can carry out the survey and provide the necessary data to expand the investigation and guarantee the best results.

We have also made a formal request to the public prosecutor's office to force Brazil's environmental enforcement agencies (ICMbio and IBAMA) to implement an emergency enforcement plan to protect Lear's Macaws during the species' breeding season, which began last September and runs until February, because according to RENTAS' online surveys, international traffickers are planning to capture even more nestlings during this period.

RENTAS' monitoring also identified a transfer of 24 Spix's Macaws and 4 Lear's Macaws that took place in February this year between a private breeder in Germany and a private zoo in India. With this information, RENTAS expanded its investigation and discovered that there is a CITES recommendation to authorise trade in these species. This issue will be debated at a meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in November. RENTAS believes that if this recommendation is adopted, the level of threat to these two species will increase greatly, since it is impossible to maintain efficient control over these transactions. With this information, RENTAS has once again called on Brazil's federal public prosecutor's office to act to ensure that the Brazilian authorities will make an effort at the next CITES meeting to prevent this recommendation from being approved. In the same lawsuit, RENTAS asked the federal prosecutor's office to open another investigation into the activities of the German breeding facility in Brazil, since it

participates in the government's program to protect these species. The RENTAS investigation found that this German breeding facility has connections with a Lebanese mafia operating in Germany and that the owner of this breeding facility has a criminal past, having already been arrested for extortion and kidnapping. Employees of this breeding facility have also been cited in previous investigations as being involved in wildlife trafficking. At the moment, we continue to collaborate with the Brazilian authorities in the investigation of these cases with the aim of strengthening the protection of these species in the wild.

Some international news articles reported on rencas' work on this subject, such as <https://www.cbs17.com/business/press-releases/ein-presswire/664161418/threat-un-to-vote-on-proposal-that-could-authorize-international-trade-in-endangered-brazilian-macaws/>

**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.**

There have been no unexpected developments up until this moment. The only changes built were the implementation of the monitoring methodology by activities, which has produced a positive impact on the project development and management.

**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: **No**

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

Actual spend: £ ██████████

**4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**4c. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully.** Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree to 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 other issues aside from the ones considered above.