**Pre-application Information for Scientific Expeditions**

Prior to submitting an application for a scientific expedition to the British Indian Ocean Territory Administration (BIOTA), applicants should be aware of the following:

1. Entry requirements

All scientific expedition participants permitted entry to BIOT are subject to BIOT’s laws whilst in Territory. Prior to entry, as well as compliance with customs and immigration requirements, applicants should be aware of laws which regulate impacts to natural resources, for example:

* The Protections and Preservation of Wild Life Ordinance 1970, together with the regulations issued pursuant to this ordinance. These include:
* The Green Turtles Protection Regulations 1968
* The Strict Nature Reserve Regulations 1998
* The Wild Life Protection Regulations 2003
* The Diego Garcia Conservation (Restricted Area) Ordinance 1994
* The Prevention of Oil Pollution Ordinance 1994
* The British Indian Ocean Territory Waters (Regulation of Activities) Ordinance 1997
* The Visitors and Visiting Vessels Ordinance 2006
* The Fisheries (Conservation and Management) Ordinance 2007
* The Waters (Regulation of Activities) Ordinance 1997

These Ordinances require that specific permission is required before undertaking activities such as:

* Entering any part of the Territory
* Anchoring (of any vessel)
* Diving
* Accessing the Diego Garcia Restricted Area[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Accessing the Strict Nature Reserves, including adjacent waters out to 3nm
* Taking biological samples (from live or dead flora and fauna)
* Removing biological material from the Territory
* Handling any wild animal
* Survey or research on the seabed

Applicants must identify their intention to undertake these activities in their initial application to BIOTA. BIOTA cannot guarantee that requests to undertake such activities subsequent to the issue of a permit to enter BIOT will be supported.

2. Medical provision

Scientific expeditions are expected to be self-sufficient, including in relation to medical provision and support. A permit will not be issued to a scientific expedition unless all participants have provided proof of adequate personal insurance that covers medical evacuation and repatriation, at a minimum of $100,000 per person. Scientific expeditions working in the Outer Islands must have a sufficiently equipped support vessel in attendance, or in reasonably close proximity, able to respond at all times.

3. Accessing the Territory

It is possible to enter BIOT for scientific purposes via the following routes:

* By sea; participants may use a private or commercial vessel. Proof of sufficient vessel insurance, including wreck removal insurance must be provided, before a permit will be issued.
* By air; participants may travel from Bahrain to Diego Garcia. Flight costs are circa $1,000 one-way.

4. Weather

DG has a tropical climate with high humidity and average temperatures of 30ºC (86ºF) during the day, dropping to 21ºC (70ºF) at night. DG is also the wettest island in the Indian Ocean.

5. Scientific survey restrictions

Applicants should identify in their initial application if they intend to use the following in Territory and the specific locations of intended use:

* Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), including drones.

BIOTA reserve the right to restrict ROV activity within 3nm of the Special Nature Reserves and will not permit ROV use on the island of Diego Garcia.

Applicants seeking to leave any research equipment in situ beyond the length of their visit must provide full details and, where appropriate, a plan for subsequent removal. A deposit may be required against the possible costs of removal of abandoned scientific equipment.

6. CITES permissions

BIOTA does not authorise the export of any species which is listed in Appendices I, II or III of the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna[[2]](#footnote-2).

It is the responsibility of the applicant to seek authorisation for any necessary CITES permissions (i.e. for the export of corals) from the UK Government[[3]](#footnote-3) prior to your expedition. BIOTA may provide a letter of support for any CITES application, on request.

7. Data-sharing conditions

All scientific expeditions permitted to undertake work in BIOT must complete an expedition report within 3 months of the end-date of the expedition and this must be provided to BIOTA for consideration to publish on the BIOT website. Any parts of the report, which are not suitable for this early release, should be provided in an appendix to the report.

The report should include:

1. A brief summary of the expedition highlighting any major observations or findings.
2. An assessment of the extent to which the objectives have been achieved.
3. A detailed report on activities (including locations)
4. Scientific conclusions
5. Timetable for full data processing and further reporting

Although not obligatory, expeditions are encouraged to provide any observations or conclusions relevant to the conservation management of BIOT. We would also welcome a few photos that highlight your expedition that could be published on the website.

8. Biosecurity

Applicants must be aware that they are operating in a unique location. The highest standards of biosecurity are expected Entry to the Strict Nature Reserves (including the surrounding waters out to 3nm) is not permitted unless specific permission has been granted.

9. Invoicing

Applicants must provide a named person and their contact details (email, phone and address) to which any invoices (including for Bahrain-Diego Garcia flights) recouping costs incurred during the expedition will be sent.

10. Deposit

All expeditions will be required to provide a deposit of £500 per person (of which £50 is a non-refundable administration fee) per expedition, which will be held until receipt of the scientific report. This will be fully refundable (except for the admin fee), unless costs are incurred by BIOTA during the course of the expedition which are not discharged (e.g. flight costs, kit transportation costs, damage to BIOTA kit etc).

**Scientific Expeditions to the British Indian Ocean Territory:**

**Application Form**

Applicants must provide the following information six months prior to the start date of an expedition if access involves entry by any expedition member through the island of Diego Garcia and three months in advance of the expedition start date if entry is independent of Diego Garcia to BIOTAdmin@fco.gov.uk. Applicants and all participants must hold a valid passport with no less than six months validity remaining at the date of departure from BIOT.

All proposals for scientific expeditions to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) will be assessed before permission for them will be granted. Expeditions are encouraged to look at the priorities and proposed actions listed in the Interim Conservation Management Plan and in any subsequent planning documents issued by BIOT. Proposals which deliver the following are particularly encouraged:

1. Quantify (with a robust level of certainty) the status and health of features (species, habitats etc) of the islands and the MPA.
2. Compare features with those occurring in the Indian Ocean or at a wider global level.
3. Offer and test discrete hypotheses which assess the effect of the MPA, using methodologies which will provide rapid results (within a year of data collection);
4. Link to Indian Ocean issues, or global policy and management, for example, also informing international fisheries management strategies, or international efforts to reduce impacts to non-target species (i.e. turtles/birds).
5. Identify when and how they results will be reported. (i.e. quarterly reporting, how data will be shared).
6. Build on historical work which has already quantified features or effects of the MPA.
7. Include scientists from the wider Indian Ocean region, in order to strengthen and promote region-wide understanding.

**APPLICATION FORM**

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| **1. APPLICANT DETAILS** |
| **Name of Applicant**  |  |
| **Organisation** |  |
| **Position within organisation** |  |
| **Postal Address** *(please be aware this will be the address used for invoicing)* |  |
| **Phone** |  |
| **Email** |  |

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| **2. SCIENTIFIC PROPOSAL**  |

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| **2.1 PROPOSED DATES OF ENTRY AND EXIT TO BIOT** |
| **From** | **To**  |
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| **2.2 TRAVEL PLAN***Please indicate your entry route to and from BIOT. If entering by vessel, please note there are a limited number of approved anchorages for scientific expeditions – these are available upon request.*  |
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| **2.3 DETAILS FOR INVOICING** |
| Name of accounts contact |  |
| E-mail address |  |
| Phone number |  |
| Postal address |  |

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| **2.4 DETAILS OF LOGISTIC SUPPORT** |
| Logistic support organisation |  |
| Name of logistics coordinator |  |
| E-mail address of logistics provider |  |
| Name of support vessel |  |

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| **2.5 PLAN OF RESEARCH***Please provide a detailed plan of research indicating hypotheses to be assessed, scientific objectives and intended outcomes, specific methodologies and an indication of what the results will be used for (PhD research, publications etc).* |
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| **2.6 SCHEDULE OF DAILY ACTIVITIES** *Please detail your activities for the entire period of work in BIOT. A daily schedule of activities should be provided.* |
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| *Please tick to indicate if you wish to undertake any of the following activities:* |
| Anchoring (of any vessel) |  |
| Diving |  |
| Taking biological samples (from live or dead flora and fauna) |  |
| Removing biological material from the Territory  |  |
| Handling any wild animal |  |
| Enter a Strict Nature Reserve |  |
| Enter the Diego Garcia Restricted Area |  |
| Use any Remotely Operated Vehicle (including drones) |  |

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| **2.7 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT***Please tick to confirm that all personnel participating in the expedition are able to meet the following environmental requirements:* |
| I will not approach any wild bird closer than 5 m |  |
| I will not intentionally or recklessly engage in any activity that would disturb or harm wild birds |  |
| Any soil or vegetation samples I collect will not impact an area greater than 1 m2 and any minor damage to the immediate environment is likely to recover in < 1 year |  |
| No equipment or other marking devices will be left in the Territory |  |
| I will not bring any hazardous materials into the Territory |  |
| I will not discharge dyes or chemicals into the environment |  |

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| **3. IDENTIFICATION OF PERSONNEL** |

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| **3.1 Please provide a list of all personnel who will be present in BIOT***Please note that all personnel must have at least six months’ validity on their passports at the time of the expedition.* |
| **Name** | **Role** | **Date of birth** | **Nationality** | **Passport number** | **Passport expiry date** |
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| **3.2 For any proposal involving an extended stay on Diego Garcia (more than 2 days), please confirm that all applicants are content to undergo a basic police check and provide the relevant documentation** *(please tick)* |
| * Yes
 | * No
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| **4. Please confirm that the applicant/s will provide an initial summary report on their work 3 months after leaving BIOT, which BIOTA may publish on the BIOT website** *(please tick)* |
| * Yes
 | * No
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| **5.** **Additional information** (*Please provide any further information that may be relevant to your application)* |
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I hereby apply for permission to visit the British Indian Ocean Territory to carry out the research detailed in this application.

I declare that the information given on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and that I have read and understood the guidance for visitors.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

BIOTA will consider your application and respond within 4 weeks to indicate whether you may receive in principle permission. You will then be required to provide the information below. Permits for entry to BIOT will not be issued until the following have been provided:

1. A full risk assessment of all proposed activities.
2. A comprehensive list of any biological samples from BIOT / confirmation of CITES permission (where relevant).
3. Proof of individual insurance for all personnel for MEDEVAC at no less than £100,000 per person.
4. Police check documentation (for extended stays on Diego Garcia).
5. Proof of vessel wreck recovery and clean up insurance.
1. <http://biot.io/environment/terrestrial-protected-areas/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://cites.org/eng/cms/index.php/component/cp/country/GB> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)