

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Maddalena Fumagalli
Project title	Samadai Experience: the balance between marine wildlife conservation and dolphin watching industry has been found?
RSG reference	10724
Reporting period	November 2011 – May 2013
Amount of grant	£5978
Your email address	maddalena@hepca.org
Date of this report	30/06/2013

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Population trends, parameters and conservation status described through photo-identification data			x	The data collection has been successfully carried out throughout the project. Moreover, additional surveys were added and supported by HEPCA.
Enhance education and interpretation initiatives			x	Activities we carried out on site targeting Samadai visitors have been very effective. Starting from the end of 2012, we have been supporting and cooperating with HEPCA for the organisation and completion of new initiatives that, although not envisaged in the original project, were in line with the overall aim.
Capacity building			x	We supervised two undergraduate students from Port Said University and carried out training targeting local guides.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The main difficulties we encountered while running this project were mainly related to the socio-political situation Egypt has gone through since the revolution in 2011. This had consequences on the "field" activities with minor disruptions, but mostly on the overall project plan. The instability and change of governmental and non-governmental interlocutors, together with the evolution of HEPCA role in the conservation debate in the Red Sea and the general chequered tourism trends, required us to continuously re-think and adjust our activities to make them as effective as possible in this changeable and unpredictable scenario. In fact, the conditions in which this project was designed were completely different compared to those encountered throughout the project and towards its end: opportunities and openings have progressively increased, the reachable audience has enlarged and HEPCA vision for Samadai has become more and more important, together with the investment the NGO has been willing to devote to the conservation of the site. We have worked to pursue the overall objective of this project (i.e. the enhancement of science and education-based conservation) and this, in certain circumstances, has required a reasoned reconsideration of the activities originally planned to better suit the current scenarios.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

An intense survey schedule that has secured a solid data collection for a robust scientific description of ecology and behaviour of this spinner dolphins population; two students graduating with Bachelor thesis on Samadai spinner dolphins; and a community that has eventually benefitted from a great deal of knowledge before inaccessible: those are, in a nutshell, the most important outcomes of the project.

Data collection. The first and foremost outcome is scientific, with the project allowing a 1-year monitoring that has covered the entire 2011 spinner dolphins post-reproductive season and the entire 2012. Data collected within it have a short-term value for a preliminary original insight into reproduction and calves survival, an important information as mortality within the first year is reported to be very high for many cetacean species. Moreover, this project sets between previous and future research efforts, therefore it also contributes to long-term studies of site fidelity and population trends. For the first time we have a solid dataset that, analysed with the solid historical from 2005 and future ones, can enhance our understanding at both individual and population levels. Studies on cetacean require years of constant and regular effort to produce robust results, this project with the support of RSG and HEPCA hugely contributed to ensure this continuity.

Capacity building. The second most important outcome is the involvement and training of two students from Port Said University pursuing their Bachelor degree in Marine Science. Although the initial idea was to involve more students for shorter periods, we soon realised that longer and more intense internships would have been more beneficial and would have allowed to fully realise the significance of Samadai (ecologically, socially and conservation wise) as well as to confidently master research techniques. One of the students is now pursuing a Master degree on marine mammals' conservation and is an integral part of the team. The positive experience has been instrumental in strengthening the collaboration between HEPCA and Port Said University, shortly after followed by others universities. These were the first two Bachelor theses on Red Sea cetacean-related topics released in Egypt, hopefully indicating a new opening of the national academic and scientific environment to this branch of science.

Education and awareness. The project started reconnecting the community and re-establishing top-down, bottom-up and transversal communication processes. Samadai hosts everyday up to 250 visitors, plus their guides, tour leaders and boat crews, as well as a ranger from the Red Sea Protectorates. This project has been a great opportunity to meet up close with the community that actually runs Samadai on a daily basis, in order to really understand what the managed area is nowadays, how it is perceived and, from there, find strategies to ameliorate the situation. We were pleased to notice increasing participation throughout the project, with 25 captains and guides being interviewed, 500+ visitors briefed by member of our team and more than 40 guides (representing half of the dive centres invited) attending our first workshop on the Samadai case study in May 2012. In 2013, HEPCA has officially taken over the full management of Samadai (previously handled by the Red Sea Protectorates under the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, *Egyptian* Ministry of State For Environmental Affairs). This has triggered a series of marketing, communication and education side-projects that HEPCA endeavoured in collaboration with other partners. Initiatives included the establishment of a new office in Marsa Alam, the launch of a new marketing and communication strategy (including dedicated website and social networks) and the draft of a certification scheme for operators and guides. Training sessions for dive and snorkelling guides started in March 2013: by May 2013, 275 guides from all centres and operators offering Samadai trips had attended the workshops and were given copies of the manuals and educational materials prepared in 2012. Leaflets for visitors were also produced in collaboration with HEPCA and are currently being distributed and translated.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

I believe the major benefit for the community was the creation of a rich two-ways communication flow: an inflow of new, accessible and original knowledge, and an outflow of comments, feedback, questions and daily experiences eventually heard and picked up. This has provided the community

with new knowledge and awareness, but also sense of ownership and responsibility, fundamental for a comprehensive interpretation that is highly likely to enrich a visitor experience and, in turn, provide a solid ground for the understanding and respect of conservation initiatives. Probably the peak of this process coincided with the formal assignment of the site management to HEPCA, an unprecedented success in my opinion. HEPCA aim is now to fully express the Samadai concept (inclusive of its ecological, social and educational components) and promote it as a positive and successful model to replicate in other sites.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, we think of Samadai as a project on the move and the positive collaboration we had so far with HEPCA could turn it into a permanent forge. From a scientific point of view, we aim at continuing monitoring the population and answering more focussed research questions related to spinner dolphins behavioural responses to human impacts, among others. Pilot surveys are already taking place this summer. Education and awareness campaigns involving the local community, visitors and guides have been already launched by HEPCA and will continue support the fruition and perception of the site. Samadai being such a great study area, we aim at involving more students from local university to establish a robust cetacean research unit active in the Red Sea.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

By collaborating with HEPCA, we had (and still have) open channels with the community and the stakeholders. We used and will keep using all web-based platforms at our disposal (website, Facebook, blog, online forms) to share our results and to solicit direct engagement. Moreover, we will work closely with operators and centres constituting HEPCA network to make sure that information are made widely available to customers. Dolphin protection and best practices at sea have been included in HEPCA educational strategy for local schools and local community to enhance children awareness and participation in conservation initiatives.

Scientific results will be included in two PhD theses, published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at pertinent conferences. Articles have already been published on non-peer reviewed journals (i.e. diving magazines, wildlife magazines, etc) as well as HEPCA newsletters and publications. A popular public copy of scientific reports will be made available on the HEPCA project website and other online resources.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The RSG was used over a period of 18 months, with an extension of 6 months to the original plan. While the fieldwork logistics went according to the plan and, even, was upgraded opening to new research questions, educational and awareness activities were re-planned to better suit the current socio-political scenario.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

The conversion rate is the one used for the proposal that is also similar to the yearly average (1 £ = 9.67 EGP)

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Transfer at sea – speedboat rental	1551	1551	0	RSGF funds were used for six surveys, the five extra were funded by HEPCA.
Transfer on land	517	207	310	The budget allocated for an additional car was not used as HEPCA provided transfers throughout the project.
Equipment – underwater camera	250	706	- 456	Instead of the model presented in the original budget, two underwater cameras were purchased at the beginning of the project. A third one of a higher quality was bought to improve images and video to use in photo-identification and educational materials.
Artwork (100 posters, 100 stickers, 5000 leaflets, 40 manuals and briefing material)	1551	1551	0	Instead of the 40 indicated originally, 100 manuals and 100 8-slide packs were printed and distributed during the workshop in 2012.
Rush guards	155	84	71	After the first training session in the field, we decided to reduce the number of trainees involved, therefore the number of team members.
T-shirt	517	0	517	HEPCA has commissioned a full targeted marketing strategy to external companies that are responsible for creating a whole line of new products, including t-shirts. We reckoned reasonable to suspend this activity.
Workshop and meeting	827	327	500	The workshop in 2012 was kindly hosted by a resort and equipment provided by HEPCA. Events planned in 2013 have taken place at HEPCA premises and all costs were covered by the NGO.
Food expenses	310	251	59	Interns per diem and travel allowance for the duration of the fieldwork.
Accommodation at the station	0	49	-49	Extra accommodation costs expenses
Designer salary	207	355	-148	A designer was independently contracted for the creation of manual and briefing material.

				The salary was higher than anticipated.
Phone and internet	93	93	0	
Proposed new activity: summer surveys	0	804	804	Waiting for approval from RSG. I proposed to use funds available to finance summer fieldwork that is currently underway. This includes vessel rental and contribution for students' participation. The survey is co-funded by the University of Otago (Dunedin, New Zealand).
Total	5978	5174 *	804*	* It does not included pending activity.

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

With a more stable ground and enhanced opportunities of intervention, I think the next crucial step is to formulate a clear, solid and long-term view for the management of the site that includes ecological, social and educational objectives. This should ideally be a concerted effort of local governmental and non-governmental bodies and agencies that we will be happy to support according to our expertise. Moreover, I reckon the strong marketing/communication plan launched to promote this vision should continue and create support for new sustainable conservation solutions to be applied in the region. Evidence from elsewhere in the world suggest that the educational component of dolphin-based tourism is extremely important in visitors' satisfaction: a continuous effort to monitor the site and to communicate acquired knowledge about Samadai and its dolphins can result into a bright example of sustainable tourism, particularly important in a region that is otherwise driven by high volume mass tourism.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, we did. The logo was published on HEPCA website (Samadai project page), printed on the team uniforms, provided on the guidebook and the attached educational material. Links to RSGF website featured in all online material published.

11. Any other comments?

This has been a challenging and intense project with very ambitious goals: I am extremely thankful to everybody at RSG and HEPCA for supporting and promoting our work, especially in the first hardest steps that have created a fertile ground for all activities that have then sprouted.

I believe this project has been a milestone in various people's life: our students were brave enough to accept the challenge and engage in an unexplored field that is now opening them new doors; guides and captains start feeling reconnected to other components of the network and have discovered again the importance of their role in Samadai and in the conservation of natural resources in general; HEPCA's experience and expertise on the topic has become more and more advanced; HEPCA has taken robust measures to promote conservation science; we are greatly enhancing the understanding of this specific population of spinner dolphins. And, concerning myself, I grew and learnt a lot acting as project leader.

I am a great fan of Samadai: from a conservationist point of view, it is just a perfect model accounting for every management and scientific aspects. It is not just too good, it can also be true and the first steps have eventually been taken. This project in collaboration with RSGF and HEPCA has created the conditions to move the first steps in this direction. As mentioned above, our action in Samadai has just begun.