

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	Pete Hancock
Project title	Determining the movements of the globally threatened Lappet-faced Vulture relative to the Makgadikgadi Pans Important Bird Area (IBA), Botswana.
RSG reference	10886-1
Reporting period	1/1/12 to 31/12/12
Amount of grant	£5685
Your email address	birdlifemaun@gmail.com
Date of this report	25/1/13

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
Capturing lappet-faced vultures and fitting satellite transmitters			Fully achieved	The original methodology and location chosen were not suitable; however, once we had perfected an alternative capture method, the birds were successfully caught, even in relatively difficult areas e.g. Makgadikgadi.
Info on distribution and movements			Fully achieved	Although the data obtained are quite unexpected insofar as the birds move across international borders, the information is very good.
Identification of actual/potential threats		Partially achieved		Information is still coming in on threats to this species, nevertheless completely unexpected threats have already emerged e.g. the birds have dangerously high blood lead levels.
Recommendations for the improved conservation of the species		Partially achieved		We hypothesised that the birds would be relatively safe in the huge Makgadikgadi Pans complex; the fact that they move hundreds of km beyond its boundaries (and those of Botswana) means that they are subject to huge unforeseen risks. Developing appropriate recommendations is now more challenging and will need to be broader than the local community focus originally envisaged – they will need to encompass other range states. This is ongoing.

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

The first challenge encountered was with the recommended capture method and locality: The walk-in trap used by other vulture researchers proved unsuitable, and the birds in the Makgadikgadi were exceptionally shy. We finally used a cannon net in an area where the birds were less shy until we had perfected the technique, and then returned to implement it in the Makgadikgadi.

A major challenge that has arisen is that the birds move very widely, crossing international borders. We are liaising with colleagues in Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa to develop transboundary conservation measures.

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

- We have learnt how to capture lappet-faced vultures and fit satellite transmitters;

- We have good data on the birds' movements that we can use for planning conservation action;
- We have several trained local citizens involved in vulture conservation work (see below).

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

Local communities have been less involved in the project than originally envisaged due to the realisation that the vultures move way beyond protected areas and their neighbouring communities. Talks have been given to people in Controlled Hunting Area CT 11, adjacent to Makgadikgadi Pans National Park, particularly on the issue of vulture poisoning.

Several local citizens have participated in all stages of the project from field capture of birds to data handling and analysis. Although we have not yet identified which of these colleagues will continue formally with the project for a higher degree, it is still our intention to have a full-time local student on the project.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The first phase of the project, capturing the birds and fitting transmitters and obtaining preliminary data on movements and threats, has been successfully completed. However, this is just the beginning. We plan to expand the satellite tracking work to Central Kalahari and Khutse Game Reserves and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to improve our data (our sample size is currently small) – this we will be doing during March and May of this year. Most importantly we intend to investigate further - and address - the issue of high blood lead levels in the birds. The involvement of a full-time MSc student in the project is a high priority and we are investigating some funding options at present. We also need to develop cross-boundary conservation plans with colleagues in the southern African region.

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

Some of the results have already been publicised on the RSG website, the BirdLife Botswana blog, BirdLife electronic newsletters such as Birds and People and the BirdLife Africa Partnership e-news. Articles will also be written for popular magazines such as African Birdlife. However, most importantly, vulture conservationists in southern Africa will be reached through the annual Birds of Prey Programme workshop during mid-2013.

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

The RSG funds were used to catalyse this project and were a short-term (1 year) strategic intervention to test some preliminary hypotheses. It is anticipated that aspects of this project will continue for at least five years – addressing the important issues raised so far (e.g. threats from lead, trans-boundary conservation issues) will not be easy and will take time.

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.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Materials for walk-in trap	0	37.35	+37.35	Due to difficulties with the walk-in trap, we made essential modifications (only to find that the trap still was not satisfactory).
Baits for trap	100	174.70	+74.70	We could not habituate the vultures to the trap.
Field travel for capture	1200	1,255.80	+55.80	We had to spend more time in the field than anticipated.
Subsistence during capture	1200	1,284.00	+84.00	We had to spend more time in the field than anticipated.
Consumables including rings and tags	100	121.70	+21.70	Price of tags had increased.
Data processing and storage	240	232.30	-7.70	
GIS specialist	600	611.35	+11.35	
Travel for ground-truthing	300	268.80	-31.20	Colleagues in Namibia helped with ground-truthing of birds there.
Subsistence during ground-truthing	300	292.75	-7.25	
Travel and subsistence for advocacy	750	428.50	+321.50	A whole new trans-boundary approach is needed in order to conserve these birds; original plans are now obsolete.
Presentations to decision-makers	570	562.75	-7.25	
Stationery	150	172.00	+22.50	Overspent due to Laserjet printing of brochures.
Other advocacy materials	150	148.50	-1.50	
Postage	25	26.20	+1.20	
Total	5685	5616.70		

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

The most important next step is to engage vulture conservationists from throughout southern Africa to draft a Species Action Plan for the lappet-faced vulture, for Southern Africa (not a national plan for Botswana as previously envisaged). The lappet-faced vulture's future can only be secured by co-ordinated conservation action across national boundaries, irrespective of the actual threats faced by the species.

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?

I used the RGS logo to accompany articles written in the BirdLife Botswana e-newsletter 'Birds and People'. I also used it on project reports made to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks.

11. Any other comments?

Without the financial intervention of Rufford Small Grants, this project would not have been as successful as it has been. The RSG played a catalytic role which enabled us to initiate the project and home in on key issues affecting the survival of the lappet-faced and other vultures in southern Africa. Thank you RSG!