

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	Himani Kala
Project title	Environmental Awareness and Habitat Restoration as an Effective Tool for Conserving White-naped Tit (<i>Parus nuchalis</i>) in Southern Aravalli hills, Rajasthan, India
RSG reference	10992-2
Reporting period	April 2012 to April 2013
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	monal.birds@gmail.com and monalbirds@yahoo.co.in
Date of this report	10 th May 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
Assessment of Resource Use/Extraction			✓	The activity was carried out in six target villages (Rajpur, Mandigarh, Sumer, Lampi, Ghanerao & Desuri) in the surroundings of thorn forest habitat in Kumbhalgarh WLS to assess the major natural resource used from the thorn forest habitat. The villagers were mostly open and gave appropriate and precise responses, however there were some exceptions. In addition, another village known as Bheegi Bawdi, part of Sadri town, which had large number of livestock was also assessed.
Preparation of Resource Availability and Use Maps			✓	The map showing the locations and the direction of movement to access the thorn forest habitat, by the local communities of the study villages to collect fuel wood, fodder or for grazing and other resources, was prepared based on the drawings made on the ground (manual GIS) by the respective villagers during the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise. This was then redone through GIS.
Habitat Improvement and Development of Fuel-wood and Fodder plot		✓		This objective, however was achieved to the extent of more than 85%, the remaining less than 15% was not achieved during the study due to very late monsoon in the year 2012 and mainly due to shortage of time or shortness of the potential period the model restoration was not completed in Desuri village. All preparation for developing the plot in the Desuri village was done but due to insufficient rains there was only partial success. In this activity, Common and grazing lands of the study villages, habitats which needed to be improved were identified, land was prepared (shallow ploughing, fencing) and seeds of fodder grass species mainly indigenous or native variety was procured. As mentioned above model fuel-wood and fodder plots were developed fully in five villages, while in the sixth (Desuri), it was achieved only partially, the reason for which is given above. Above all building

				confidence among local communities was found to be one of the major requirement and needed more time so as to convince the locals on the restoration of their land and managing the resources within their village lands.
Environmental Education Programme			✓	This programme included extensive group discussion, meetings with different stakeholders, training, workshop on restoration, managing, monitoring and sustainable use of the resources. It also involved creating awareness on the significance of WNT and its habitat. The success story of this project was that one of the main stakeholders i.e. Rajasthan State Forest Department, under whom all the forests from where locals collect resources fall, has taken this as an important intervention and conservation action and included the fuel wood and fodder development activity in their upcoming management plan, which is prescribed for the next 10 years (2013-14 to 2023-24). This was discussed and agreed by the RSFD at the end of the Workshop held to share the RSG project details. Local communities including school kids also showed greater enthusiasm over the conservation of the vulnerable white-naped tit and its thorn forest habitat, after knowing that this species is also fully dependent on the thorn forest like them.

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

The major problem occurred during model fuel-plot and fodder plot development. This was in terms of confidence building among local communities. Though we have been working in this area for the past 6 years but still when it comes to giving their grazing land (Village Gauchar* – *Gauchar is a local term used for the grazing lands and wastelands) for experimental and model restoration, which would benefit their fodder and fuel-wood (long-term benefit) requirement, still they showed hesitance in providing their grazing land for any purpose whether it is beneficial or not. In addition, there has always been a communication gap as well as conflict issue among respective forest department and local communities, saying that when the land is given it would not be returned. Hence it becomes an issue of distrust on using grazing lands (Gauchar) for any use, whether it is beneficial for the local communities or not. Further, it becomes more aggravated as the respective department ban local communities on using their own grazing land for a certain period of time for the sake of conservation activities. However, this was also managed by constantly discussing and explaining what a model plot means and how we would be doing it.

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

Major outcomes of this project were:

- ❖ We were able to develop at least five model fodder and two fuel-wood plots in five target villages out of six. However, in the sixth village also restoration was done it was not complete due to time constraint, mainly the potential rainy period (rains was late and short in 2012). All the villages were just on the fringe of the thorn forest habitat, an abode for endemic and vulnerable white-naped tit. Local communities have become aware of significance of its presence in their area and also the potential for regeneration of fodder grass species in their grazing land (which they left as wasteland and were highly degraded due to overgrazing). Further they have also started thinking that they need to follow few management principles so that these lands can be productive, despite knowing the fact that the monsoon is unpredictable.
- ❖ The second most significant outcome was the addition of this conservation action (restoring grazing lands for meeting fodder and fuel wood needs of villagers) in Rajasthan State Forest Department (RSFD) management plan for the next 10 year (2013-14 to 2023-24). As part of species specific conservation strategies for conserving the vulnerable white-naped tit (*Parus nuchalis*), in addition to reducing pressure from forest by developing fodder and fuel wood for the villagers living along the fringes of the thorn forest habitat, the RSFD has also included provisioning of artificial nest boxes in the thorn forest habitat (a model action carried out as part of the first RSG), and finally creation of environmental awareness in terms of producing eco-guides to let others know about the significance of the white-naped tit and its thorn forest habitat.
- ❖ We were able to involve local communities and built confidence among them, which helped in the protection of model fodder and fuel-wood plots. Their involvement at this stage was significant. The main enthusiasm had come from school kids and youths of the area, whom we can call the future brigade for conserving the white-naped tit and its thorn forest habitat along with all other biodiversity.

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

As mentioned above that local communities / the villagers were little hesitant in the beginning mainly in terms of providing 10 ha for developing model plot in their grazing land but later they developed confidence to the level that local people in all six target villages had actively participated in the discussion, planning and later in developing and protecting the model fodder and fuel wood plot developed. The grass or fodder seed and fuel wood species selected for growing in the model plot was suggested by the locals. In some cases were involved in getting seeds; digging pits for the plantation along with the labourers, and complete involvement in the focus group discussion. This is very crucial as the resource developed is a community resource.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I would like to continue this with the help of the Rufford Small Grant Foundation; basically to build more confidence among local communities so that it would be possible to conserve a larger extent of thorn forest habitat. Further as this bird has a fragmented distribution, if I could raise more funds, I would work towards carrying out an extensive ecological study through ringing or marking the birds mainly to know how much area each bird needs, what are the other habitat requirements and the threats faced that hinders its survival and finally would definitely work on the development

of the corridors for long-distance movement for this species to conserve its gene bank otherwise this species would have an isolated population that would have more, mainly try to create a large continuous habitat at a landscape level, with the involvement of the local community. As part of involving local communities, would like to carry out an intensive environmental education and awareness program among the local communities and other stake holders living inside and outside the thorn forest and the adjoining forest in southern Aravalli hills which holds a considerable population of this endemic and threatened species.

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

As part of this project, seven workshops were conducted involving the stake holders' i.e. local communities, forest managers and school kids. Project was discussed at "Conference for Rufford Foundation India Grantees" which was held in New Delhi, India, in April 2013. The major findings of the project were shared in print media (national as well as regional languages) too. These findings will also be used to write popular articles in the local news papers, semi-scientific magazines and journals and publish in scientific journals and these results will also be presented in national and international symposia and conferences so that more people can get to know about the project and conservation work done involving local communities under this project, which is an effort to conserve a endemic and vulnerable white-naped tit.

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

Since the project started in April 2012, and the funds were used over a year (April 2012 to April 2013), we had very less time for confidence building, which is very crucial for any type of work that involves local communities. Since focus group discussion and household surveys using a set questionnaire, was to be done to know the resource availability and use pattern, that is important for developing the model plot, as rains starts by mid-June, and all model plot development depends on monsoon activity, some of the household surveys had to be done after the model restoration plot work. The questionnaire survey and Focus Group Discussion actually serves to build confidence among people and also get an idea of native and indigenous fodder and fuel-wood species that are used in the area. This being an arid to semi-arid area, where local community predominantly depend on rains for cultivation, development of model plots suffered to some extent. However, through hectic field schedules, we were able to achieve what we expected, during this time frame.

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	Budget Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Desk Study	20	20	0	
Collecting information on distribution from villagers	30	30	0	
Cost of hiring vehicles	1100	1100	0	
Field stays (lodging and boarding expenses)	1110	1050	60	The balance amount of £60 sterling was used in supporting the local assistant, who was also trained to monitor the plots.

Support for local field assistants (one)	500	560		Adjusted from above
Preparation of maps using manual GIS and field surveys and finally by importing to GIS domain	150	90	0	The balance amount of £90 sterling was used in development of the fodder and fuelwood plot.
Development of Fuel-wood and fodder plot 10 ha each in each village (involve series of meetings and discussions with the local communities of the identified villages, which would also be part of awareness) (Section III & IV will be done simultaneously)	2640	2640	0	The balance amount from mapping part and the amount under this head was used in repairing the fence and strengthened them for this year's monsoon. It is expected that the available grass seed bank would germinate again in the plots, which would be known as these plots would be monitoring this year also.
Training Workshop on habitat improvement, restoration, development and monitoring restored plots along with conservation issues of white-naped tit and thorn forest lower field staff of Forest Department and few selected local persons from the six villages and its adjacent forest areas.	200	200	0	One work shop each in all six villages and one involving all Forest managers were held, in addition to other regular village meetings. The workshop involved sharing of knowledge and discussing also the management and resource sharing principles.
Awareness campaigns	150	150	0	The amount was used in eight schools in education and awareness program, in addition to that were carried out time to time in the target villages
Stationary and Final Report preparation	100	100	0	1£sterling = 75.4 INR

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

Next step would be to know about the general ecology of the species, like marking individuals to know about the social organisation, movement, habitat use and other conservation problems. Further also assess the possibility of development of the corridors for long-distance movement of this species that is highly important for conserving its gene bank, as this species is still under heavy pressure in terms of habitat fragmentation and loss in most part of its distribution range. Otherwise this species still are at the risk of extinction from the wild because it is having very narrow and fragmented distribution, and if proper conservation action are not taken then this species may disappear from the wild. Apart from that a follow-up project to carry out an intensive environmental education and awareness programme among the local communities and other stakeholders living inside and outside the thorn forest and the adjoining forest in southern Aravalli hills which holds a considerable population of this endemic and threatened species is also of high priority. All this are very important for a long-term survival of this 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?

Yes, I have used RSGF logo in posters, presentation and workshops that were used to spread awareness among all the stakeholders, and now locals and the managers are aware about RSG foundations conservation agenda.

11. Any other comments?

I sincerely thank Rufford Small Grant Foundation for the supporting my efforts in conserving this highly vulnerable birds species and its habitat, which is closely linked with the survival of the local communities. Looking forward to working with RSG in future also.