

**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. 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. 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

<b>Grant Recipient Details</b>	
<b>Your name</b>	Arjun Thapa
<b>Project title</b>	Conservation Status of Red panda ( <i>Ailurus fulgens</i> ) in Gaurishankar Conservation Area, Central Nepal
<b>RSG reference</b>	11230-1
<b>Reporting period</b>	12 March, 2012
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5680
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:thapa.nature@gmail.com">thapa.nature@gmail.com</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	June, 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
Presence/absence distribution status and sign abundance			√	The current project has been successful to confirm the presence of red panda in study area based on visual encounter and target animal's sign (faecal pellets). This project has identified distribution of red panda in nine isolated patches, and assessed the sign abundance in these patches.
Habitat characteristic			√	The project was also able to assess the vegetation analysis (tree and bamboo coverage) of identified red panda habitat along with other environmental variables.
Identify the existing threats			√	The project identified activities like livestock grazing pressure, fuel wood collection, sign of poaching as major anthropogenic threats; which are similar to threats reported from other areas of the country.
Conservation awareness and capacity building		√		Conservation education and awareness programmes were conducted in communities (n=4) and schools (n=4) which were contiguous to identified red panda habitat. During field survey, education and awareness has been spread by producing a special poster focused on conservation of red panda. Also, a total of nine people (three graduate student and six locals) were trained and mobilized during field data collection and community activities in three blocks.

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

There were no serious difficulties during the project period.

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

a. Presence/absence status and sign abundance

The project was successful to confirm the presence/distribution status of red panda in nine isolated patches namely: Tatopani, Listikot, Fulpigkatti in Sindupalchock block; Marbu, Kalinchock, Syama,

Gaurishankar in Dolkha block and Chuchure in Ramechhap block within conservation area. Among these areas, the highest animal sign was encountered in Marbu (5.06/km) and least in Chuchure (1.67/km).

b. Habitat characteristics and threats

Habitat assessment, regarding tree species and bamboo coverage was carried using quadrat sampling (10 m x 10 m size and 1 m x 1 m), that recorded 18 tree species for the whole study sites. Among these, *Abies spectabilis* was found in the highest density while *Acer oblunum* showed the least one. The highest tree species were recorded in the Fulpinkatti (n=17) and least in Chuchure (n=11). *Abies spetabilis*, *Betula utilis*, *Sorbus microphyllus*, *Rhododendron sp.* and *Sorbus cuspidat* were found more frequently in association with bamboo (<50% coverage).

This study identified that red panda is facing anthropogenic threats like livestock grazing pressure, fire wood collection, *Malingo/Malingo* shoot (bamboo shoot) collection, and sign of poaching in study sites. In the intensive study area, livestock is dominated by *Chauri* (a cross breed of Yak *Bos grunniens* and hilly cow *Bos taurus*) and grazing is prevalence in all sites. Seasonally, large herds of livestock are grazed in conservation area impacting the habitat of red panda. Also, tree logged for fire wood (cheese processing factory, hotels), building *Chauri* sheds and roof huts are also threats for red panda habitat. Records of few guns in Chauri shed indicated sign of poaching of wild animals in the study sites. Collection of *Malingo/ malingo* shoot occurred in few study areas which are used as fodder for young livestock, making domestic utensils (baskets), fencing and also as vegetables and pickles. All these factors possessed serious disturbance and destruction in red panda habitat, thus requires conservation measures.

c. Conservation awareness and capacity building

To raise awareness on local people towards red panda, a total of four community programmes were conducted in different areas (Gaurishankar, Marbu, Kalinchock and Ghorthali) that consist of local people and herders. Also, four red panda conservation groups were formed to monitor red panda and to control fuel wood collection, *malingo/malingo* shoot collection, livestock pressure in red panda habitat. Likewise, conservation classes were carried in four schools covering more than 150 students of secondary level. During conservation classes, art and essay competition were conducted among students and also nature conservation clubs were also formed; aiming to run such conservation activities in futures. Much education and awareness has been spread by producing a special flex-poster focused on conservation of red panda. Also, a total of nine peoples (three graduate students and six locals) were trained and mobilised during red panda field data collection and community activities.

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

During this project implementation, six local peoples were trained and hired them as local guide during field work in three different blocks. Additionally, the project raised the conservation awareness and significance of red panda conservation among different groups such as herders, forest user's groups, mother groups and youth clubs in communities, and teachers and students in schools. People of those communities could help for future monitoring as well as contribute their skill to other researcher who is willing to do related research in the same areas. Beside benefit to locals, Mr. Nirmal Sharma, a M. Sc. student in Environmental Science at Goldengate International College, will be submitting a report on community work for his examination of credit course.

## 5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I have plan to work on red panda conservation by developing monitoring protocol, and train locals and empower them as citizen scientist for long term community participatory red panda monitoring in identified habitats.

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

I plan to disseminate the results by attending workshop and conferences through paper or poster presentation. The output and results will also be published in different printed and electronic journals. A report will be disseminated to Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Gaurishankar Conservation Area Office, National Trust for Nature Conservation, District forest office Dolkha and other concerned conservation organizations. Likewise, copy of the report will be made access in central library of Tribhuvan University for the wide use by students and others, who are interested to pursue research in related field. I also plan to put some import information on the websites of Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation. Beside this, a part of field data and conservation education programme will be used by Nirmal Sharma (field associates), MSc student in Environmental Science in Goldengate International Collage for community work credit for his examination.

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

Field survey portions were run timely, however awareness program in few communities and schools were completed lately because of the schools calendar.

## 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
Travel cost	420	450	-30	Fuel prices rises and high cost for local transportation
Food cost	1440	1450	-10	Fluctuation of market price
Lodge cost	600	610	-10	Took more day than estimated day
Local assistant	600	640	-40	More days consumed
Research Associates	720	720	0	
Literatures , Maps, data sheet, Questionnaires	200	200	0	
Outreach Material	350	345	5	Managed in low budget
Community Activities	750	735	15	Managed low cost
School conservation Activities	450	430	20	Managed in low cost
Report production	150	150	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5680</b>	<b>5730</b>	<b>-50</b>	

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

I feel that there is necessity of conservation oriented programmes and long term community participatory monitoring of red panda population and its habitat in the identified areas.

**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?**

Awareness raising materials (flex, poster and banner) were published in Nepali language using RSG and other organization logo. RSGF received publicity during the course of work.

**11. Any other comments?**

I would like to continue research and conservation on this globally threatened species also in the future