

## 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**

Grant Recipient Details	
<b>Your name</b>	Damber Bista
<b>Project title</b>	Assessment of Status and Community Based Conservation Initiative of Red Panda ( <i>Ailurus fulgens</i> ) in Kanchenjunga Conservation Area
<b>RSG reference</b>	11262-1
<b>Reporting period</b>	16 April, 2012 – 15 April, 2013
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5693
<b>Your email address</b>	Damber.bista@redpandanetwork.org
<b>Date of this report</b>	26 July, 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
Assess the status, distribution and abundance of red panda within the KCA			Yes	The occupancy of red panda has been recorded from all four Village Development Committees (VDCs) within the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA). An average encounter rate of red panda signs has been recorded to be 3.93/km, which indicates a high abundance within the study area.
Identify the conservation threats to red panda			Yes	The major conservation threats identified within the study area are forest fire; rotational grazing; slash and burn cultivation; predation by dogs, natural dying of ringal bamboo species; and lack of awareness.
Elevate the level of awareness of community on red panda and associated biodiversity			Yes	Altogether four events of sensitisation workshops were organised, one in each Village Development Committee (VDC). Likewise, school outreach event was also conducted within three schools of the project area. It has also been supposed that other people who had been involved directly or indirectly in this project (porters, members of tea houses, herders etc.) were also educated towards red panda conservation in some extent.
Engage the local communities in red panda conservation initiative		Yes		Red panda is one of the flagship species of Kanchenjunga Conservation Area, and the existing tourism could be promoted by linking up this species in the menu of tourism package. Therefore, community people were organised into the red panda conservation committees to leverage this aspect. This achievement has also been taken as the preparatory work for another phase.

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

The bridge across the Gola River in Olaghungola VDC was damaged by heavy floods, and our field team had to spend 5 additional days while getting back from the field. This event also made us to

review our schedule. It was only the hard situation that we encountered throughout the project duration.

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

- Status of red panda within the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area:

The KCA has been found to be harbouring a very good population of red panda. The highest abundance of red panda was observed in Lelep VDC with an encounter rate of 4.9/km followed by Yamphudin VDC (4.7/km), Tapethok VDC (2.8/km) and Olangchungola VDC (1.7/km). The occupancy of red panda in Illadada Kisonma Himchuli Community Forest in Lelep VDC could not be revealed out which was previously recorded with the presence of this species some 5 years ago, and the forest fire caught some 5 years ago has been speculated as the culprit behind it. Similarly, the slash and burn cultivation practices adopted by the locals for Chiraito (*Swertia chirayita*) is another threat to the red panda habitat. An individual red panda was found to be caught by the locals of Lelep in 2011. It indicates towards the lack of awareness amongst the community people towards the conservation of this species. Likewise, the predation by dogs has been confirmed behind the death of four red pandas in Gyabla area of Lelep VDC in 2011. In addition, an ineffective mechanism of security along the northern border area with China has been identified as another threat to this species. It was reported that red panda furs were confiscated from a Nepalese tradesman in the Gola pass in the Kanchanjunga Conservation Area in 2005. The *Arundinaria maling*, major food species of red panda, have also been observed to be died in some patches within the study area.

- Involvement of community:

Altogether three red panda conservation committees were founded one in each VDC excluding Olangchungola VDC. This initiation has been supposed to be a milestone to involve locals by empower them for red panda conservation within their own forest. It will also help enhance the feeling of stewardship towards their forest resources and make them responsible for their conservation.

- Awareness on red panda ecology and conservation importance:

A total number of 88 community people including the members of Conservation Community Forest User Groups, Mother Groups, youths and herders were educated on red panda ecology and conservation importance. Similarly, altogether 175 students of elementary level were sensitised on red panda and biodiversity conservation importance. Almost 10 locals were directly involved during the baseline survey, and their understanding towards red panda ecology, threats and conservation importance had been drastically upgraded.

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

Local people were involved in every activity throughout the project implementation. They were consulted before establishing the blocks within the red panda habitat for their consent so that the feeling of stewardship towards their natural resources strengthened. They were supposed to be benefitted in terms of income generation, awareness enhancement and exposure. Likewise, they were organised together with a common mission for conserving valuable resources of their forest. Furthermore, few of those locals capacity had also been built up as they were trained for conducting baseline survey. Most importantly, they have been well acquainted with the value of conserving red panda and associated biodiversity.

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

I see the local people as the real conservation leaders but there must be some kind of incentive which could motivate them to contribute their maximum towards this endeavour. I am planning to intensify the conservation measures by promoting red panda based ecotourism within the KCA and adjoining two other VDCs (Surumkhim and Kalikhola) outside the protected area. I have some kind of informal talks with the officials of Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Project, District Development Committee, and District Forest Office about this proposal. There is the maximum possibility of collaboration amongst those conservation partners to materialise this project. The successful implementation of this sort of project will ultimately help produce tangible outcomes.

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

A finding disclosure workshop was organised amongst the representatives from various governmental and non-governmental organisations so far at the district headquarters. Likewise, the findings of the project will also be broadcasted via the red panda conservation programme broadcast by a local FM which has been sponsored by Red Panda Network. A final report will be submitted to the relevant organisations including Department of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves, and Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council. Moreover, I will also publish a paper in a peer-reviewed journal.

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

It was previously planned to accomplish the project within 12 months, but it took almost 2 additional months to complete it because of the bridge damage across the Gola River. Therefore, the previously planned schedule had to be slightly modified to adjust with the unexpected circumstance.

## 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
Junior Research Fellow	1560	1560		
Field Assistants	1280	1280		
Porter	180	200	+20	Increment in wage
Accommodation	600	635	+35	Spent more days in the field
Travel	480	525	+45	Increment in fuel price
Communication	50	30	-20	There was no communication facilities in some of the places in the field
Stationery	55	55		
Field Gears	413	430	+17	Increment in prices of the goods in the market

Report preparation	158	158		
Workshops	717	744	+27	More people participated in the events
Miscellaneous	200	155	-45	Unnecessary requirements are avoided
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,693	5772	+79	

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

More than 750 tourists come for trekking and mountaineering expedition within KCA every year. If only a small proportion of those outsiders could be attracted towards red panda (along with some other associated wildlife) watching activity then the community engagement initiative taken during this phase will result some tangible outcomes towards the conservation of red panda. Therefore, it is necessary to promote red panda based ecotourism in an organised way. The Gyabla area of Lelep VDC and Timbung Pokhari Community Forest of Yamphudin VDC have been identified as the most potential locations for this promoting red panda based ecotourism. Likewise, it is also crucial to minimise the conservation threats by adopting appropriate conservation measures in subsequent phase.

### 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?

The RSGF logo was printed on the banners and flex prints used during the workshops. Likewise, the RSGF was acknowledged during each community consultation, workshops, and media -local FM Radio. Furthermore, the RSGF will be acknowledged in the future in any publication related with this project.

### 11. Any other comments?

I am very much honoured to be the grantee of Rufford Small Grant, and hopeful to get further support for involving community people towards the conservation of vulnerable red panda. Finally, I would like to thank you all who have supported to accomplish this project.



Left: Red panda captured by villagers in Lelep VDC. Right: Community consultation during project implementation in Yamphudin VDC.