

The Rufford Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford 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	Nisarg Prakash
Project title	Monitoring Otter Populations and Combating Poaching through Stakeholder Population
RSG reference	11354-1
Reporting period	March 2012 to May 2013
Amount of grant	£5904
Your email address	nisargprakash@gmail.com
Date of this report	15 th 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
To identify otter populations (occupancy) along the entire stretch of the Cauvery river, using a combination of questionnaires and visual sign-based surveys		Yes		Interviews and questionnaire survey completed. Visual, sign-based surveys partly complete.
To identify and map potential threats to otters along the entire stretch		Yes		Identified threats in 250 km through interviews and questionnaires. Have verified and identified additional threats in 125 km through raft-based survey
To verify the effectiveness of protected areas in conserving a riverine specialist like the smooth-coated otter	No			Low water conditions in river, and delay in securing research permits to enter protected areas

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

Setbacks during the survey

1. Only 125 km completed so far because of low rainfall in the last 2 years (2011 and 2012), drought-like conditions and low water levels.
2. Threats to otters are very complex and multi-layered. Cannot be answered by one single conservation programme but needs engagement at different levels and with different stakeholders, from the grassroots to government departments.
3. Survey of the river stretch within the wildlife sanctuary yet to be initiated due to lack of research permits

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

1. Otter sign survey completed in 125 km out of the 250 km unprotected stretch of river. All threats in the 125 km stretch identified and mapped. Have also identified a number of otter holts (dens) and otter "hotspots" where conservation measures need to be urgently implemented.
2. Social perception and conflict surveys completed throughout the unprotected stretch (250 km). More than 70% of the villages visited reported incidents of otter poaching. Recorded on camera traps, for the first time, the presence of elusive small-clawed otters

(*Aonyx cinerea*) much lower down the river in riparian-deciduous forests whereas earlier reports considered them to inhabit hill streams in evergreen forests. As this is a Schedule I species in India's Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the occurrence of the species may help secure this particular river stretch from ecologically damaging activities.

3. Pilot version of an android application for collecting otter-related data (ecology, conflict and threats) being tested in field, along with an internet interface (developed in collaboration with Indian Institute of Science <http://otter-app.appspot.com/>). Identified a network of stakeholders (mostly fishermen, but also anglers and angling clubs), who encounter otters regularly and are willing to work on a conservation program.

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

Have identified a network of fishermen throughout the unprotected stretch of river who are willing to work on conservation initiatives to safeguard otters as well as help with keeping otter poachers at bay. They have not benefited directly from the project yet since this is too short a period to see these effects, but we have initiated a dialogue with the Fisheries Department from which they stand to benefit. Angling clubs are willing to work with our team to help protect river stretches outside protected areas.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Certainly, the raft-based survey will resume after the monsoon and we will cover the remaining river stretch along with the protected area. We have also secured a grant from Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund to extend this project with riverside communities as outreach, awareness and participatory methods.

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

Data collected so far has been shared with a local conservation NGO to help make decisions. We also regularly update the Fisheries Department of new developments on field. The data from this project has formed the basis for our next project being funded by CEPF. We will have a more thorough understanding of the river once the entire survey is completed, especially the stretches we refer to as "otter hotspots".

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

The grant was received in March 2012, and we have used the grant till May 2013. The project started with exploratory surveys along the river. The monsoon is a bad time for field surveys, and hence we mainly carried out the social surveys and conflict assessment during those months. The raft-based field survey could commence only in March (lean season) after logistical delays, but by which our social component was completed, and we had a good understanding regarding the river and people's perceptions.

The anticipated project length was one year. But given conditions along the river, it was hard to keep up to this schedule.

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
Salaries (inc. Acco)	1573	1573	0	
Equipment	1029	717	312	To be used to complete remaining 125 km
Supplies & material (inc. Fuel)	2480	2198	282	Same as above
Communications	92	33	59	Will use balance once final project report is ready
Local travel	200	200	0	
Miscellaneous	530	520	10	
Total	5904	5241	663	

1-pound sterling ~ Rs 77.7.

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

1. Complete the raft-based survey of the remaining 125 km, map otter “hot-spots” and threats.
2. To analyse all data collected in the last 13 months.
3. To strengthen ties with riverside communities and work on a model which helps both fishermen and otters.

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

Only in our meetings with officials, and presentations. The project is still not complete and hence we do not have any materials to show.

11. Any other comments?

We would request permission to complete the remaining stretch at the end of this monsoon. We will use the funds available to us (£663) and are not requesting any additional amount.