

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.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

Your name	Dr. Esther van der Meer
Project title	Surveying the unknown: determining cheetah presence, connectivity and levels of human cheetah conflict in northwest Zimbabwe
RSG reference	11974-1
Reporting period	August 2012-August 2013
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	esther@cheetahzimbabwe.org
Date of this report	6 th August 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
1) Determine cheetah presence or absence in the study area		Partially achieved		In 2012 we lost a full field season due to unexpected delays with our paperwork (the result of pre-election caution). In 2013 we had to pause our field work prior to, and immediately after elections as it is not advisable to interview people in the communal areas during the campaigning period. As a result we have so far been able to cover 75% of the survey area, the coming 2 months we will cover the remaining 25%. The information we have collected so far is extensive and encouraging, cheetahs seem to occur in large parts of the study area (see also attached report). Until we have covered the study area 100% we have only partially achieved the goals related to the questionnaire-based survey.
2) Collect pictures in an ID date base to assist with estimating populations			Fully achieved	Thanks to our PR campaign many people have send us sightings and pictures of cheetahs throughout Zimbabwe. Since the start of our project we have collected 768 sightings, 239 of these sightings were accompanied by a total of 2664 pictures. From these pictures we have been able to identify 49 adult cheetahs. Although the collection of sightings and pictures will be ongoing we have set up the ID database and the information we have collected will assist with estimating populations in areas with enough pictures, e.g. Hwange National Park.
3) Determine where corridors exist and where there is a potential for transboundary movement		Partially achieved		See explanation objective 1. These analysis will be carried out as soon as we have collected all the information from the study area.
4) Determine the level of knowledge of cheetahs		Partially achieved		See explanation objective 1. So far the level of knowledge is encouragingly high. Preliminary results show that 96% of the people interviewed correctly identified a cheetah and most were able to correctly

				answer questions in relation to cheetah ecology.
5) Determine the attitude of people towards cheetahs		Partially achieved		See explanation objective 1. Preliminary results show that 92% of the people interviewed feels positive about cheetahs, 86% would like to have more cheetahs in the study area.
6) Determine the level of human cheetah conflict		Partially achieved		See explanation objective 1. Ever since the start of the project we have followed up on three cases of livestock predation by cheetahs. Within our questionnaire based survey we have so far found no cases of human cheetah conflict nor have we found any conflict reports with the various authorities (Campfire, National Parks, Police etc.)
7) Help build capacity in (cheetah) conservation			Fully achieved	We are officially affiliated to the department of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management of the University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo. This collaboration has resulted in several students gaining experience in cheetah conservation within our project. We will certainly continue this collaboration and in future hope to engage local students in MSc and potentially PhD projects.
8) Advise the local authorities on how to improve the conservation strategy of cheetahs		Partially achieved		See explanation objective 1. We are officially collaborating with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. Although we are in regular contact with the ecologists at the head office, and the various field offices, about cheetah related issues (e.g. cheetah conflict, CITES, cheetah distribution), and we have reported preliminary results to the ecologists in the field offices covered with the survey, we will only be able to give extensive advice once we have finalized our survey.
9) Identify areas where there is a need to set up research/education programmes		Partially achieved		See explanation objective 1. So far there seems to be no need for extensive education programmes to solve human-cheetah conflict. There are several areas where research programs would be beneficial but we can only draw conclusions on where research/education programmes are most needed once we have finished the survey.

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

In 2012 we lost a full field season due to unexpected delays with our paperwork (the result of pre-election caution). In 2013 we had to pause our field work prior to, and immediately after, elections as it is not advisable to interview people in the communal areas during the campaigning period. We tackled these difficulties by changing our field work schedule accordingly, instead focussing on generating PR for the project, setting up collaborations with several Zimbabwean organisations to facilitate data sharing, and making use of the time we had to spend out of the country by visiting our colleagues at Cheetah Conservation Fund Namibia and Cheetah Conservation Botswana.

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

The last country wide cheetah assessment in Zimbabwe was conducted 15 years ago, therefore all information we collect is important. It is therefore hard to sum up the most important outcomes of the project, personally I think it is most important that:

- (1) Our extensive PR campaign has renewed interest in the cheetahs of Zimbabwe, people know about the cheetahs and our project, resulting in an overwhelming response to our request for sightings and pictures, and the authorities approaching us in cases of cheetah conflict.
- (2) We have been able to collect lots of information on the species from known, but also many unknown areas, that in time will contribute to the improvement of both the national and regional conservation strategy of the species.
- (3) Although small scale, we have been able to build capacity in (cheetah) conservation by offering several young Zimbabwean students a chance to gain experience within our project (it is interesting to note that we have more students approaching us for attachments than we, due to the small team and logistic limitations, can currently handle. Hopefully in future we will be able to offer more attachment places).

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

During our questionnaire-based survey we have visited many areas in which the local communities experience human-carnivore conflict. So far cheetahs have not been the source of this conflict, the conflict is mainly caused by spotted hyenas and lions. When we encounter conflict we explain to the village heads (responsible for 25-35 households) what measures could be taken to reduce this conflict and we leave 'how to live with predators' booklets explaining these measures. In cases where we followed up on reports of conflict with cheetahs we have been able to solve this conflict by visiting the area and discussing the possible solutions (for more details see attached report).

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We are encouraged by the positive response to our project and the wealth of information we have so far been able to collect, and certainly plan to continue our work. In order to be able to adequately conserve the cheetahs of Zimbabwe and give sensible advice on how to improve the conservation strategy of this species, there is a need for a country wide assessment. We therefore plan to expand our population survey throughout the country, starting with the southern part of the country (an area encompassing National Parks, conservancies, and commercial farms that used to harbour a healthy cheetah population) in the year to come.

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

Locally we disseminate our results via regular updates to the National Parks ecologists, Forestry Commission and our conservation colleagues. We also share preliminary results with the public via the popular press, Facebook (facebook.com/CheetahZimbabwe) and our website (www.cheetahzimbabwe.org).

As you might be aware we have regional coordinators who facilitate the implementation of regional conservation plans for cheetah and African wild dog. We are in close communication with the regional coordinator of Southern Africa and are confident that our results will be shared and implemented in the next regional planning session. In order to make sure our results are known to the relevant parties we, once the survey has been concluded, will also present our results to the IUCN Cat Specialist Group.

Once we have finished our (country wide) cheetah population survey we will print a report and spread this as widely as possible. In addition we aim to publish our results in a peer reviewed scientific journal.

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

Our field work commenced in April 2013 and will end in November 2013. Part of the RSG was used prior to April (from receipt in August 2012) to purchase field equipment and print cheetah posters, sighting sheets and sighting booklets. The other part was used during the field work period. We anticipated that we needed a full six months field season to finish our survey in the proposed area. We were hoping to make use of the field season of 2012, due to delays with our paperwork we lost this field season and had to conduct the full survey in the field season of 2013. For this reason we have not been able to finish our work yet and will need another two months to finish the survey in the proposed study area.

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.

Exchange rate used 1 £ = 1.53 \$

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Printing	800	826	-26	
Field equipment	1200	1073	+127	
Food & lodging	2000	1024	+976	We have been able to camp at most places for free, therefore costs for lodging were minimal Due to the previously described delays we still have 2 months of field work remaining in which the funding that is left will be used to purchase food, fuel etc.
Fuel and vehicle maintenance	2000	2135	-135	Due to fluctuations in fuel prices (0.95-1.00 £/L) fuel costs were slightly higher than budgeted for, due to the high number of km's driven for

				the survey we had to service the car more often than anticipated.
TOTAL	6000	5058	+942	Due to previously described delays we still have 2 months of field work ahead of us, we will use the remaining £ 942 to cover the expenses of this two month field trip

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

We as Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe need to continue and expand our questionnaire based survey in order to end up with a complete picture of the cheetah population in Zimbabwe and give sensible advice on how to improve the conservation strategy of this species. It is important that we keep the cheetah momentum we created in Zimbabwe going. We have to continue to work on our PR in order to make sure people keep sending us cheetah information and keep interest in our project. We have set up several fruitful collaborations with colleagues that facilitate the sharing of data. Data that we collect on species other than cheetahs will be shared with colleagues, in return we will receive cheetah data from spoor surveys, camera trap surveys and questionnaire surveys. This type of data sharing does not only allow us to add to our knowledge of the cheetahs of Zimbabwe, it will also allow for comparison of the different methods used for areas where there are sufficient data available. As these type of collaborations are very valuable, we will continue to invest in the existing collaborations and keep our eyes open for possibilities to set up new collaborations.

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?

We used the logo on the 'how to tell the difference' posters. These educational posters explain the difference between cheetahs, leopards and servals. We also used the logo on our website (www.cheetahzimbabwe.org) and in our final report (the RSGF was also mentioned in the annual report).

11. Any other comments?

We would sincerely like to thank the Rufford Small Grants Foundation for the trust they have given us, as a new unknown project, by sponsoring our work.