

The Rufford Foundation

Final Report

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Farah Mukhida
Project title	Monitoring wildlife recovery on a restored Dog Island, Anguilla
RSG reference	12047-1
Reporting period	August 2012-August 2013
Date of this report	29 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
To monitor Dog Island for indications of Black rats			X	Between August 2012 and August 2013, we visited Dog Island every 6 weeks to check the 169 permanent bait stations that had been installed around the perimeter of the island. Volunteers recruited from our membership and the Youth Environmental Society for Anguilla assisted us with this ongoing monitoring activity.
To monitor and assess the status of key wildlife and plant species on Dog Island, post-rat eradication, using standardised protocols		X		Seabirds, terrestrial birds, wetland birds, and lizards were monitored using standardised protocols established with partners (Fauna & Flora International and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds). Dog Island's vegetation (baseline after the rat eradication programme) was also documented (through the compiling of species and species location lists). Initially, we had hoped to exclude feral goats from some sections of the island through the erection of "exclusion fences." While owner of Dog Island was supportive of this initiative at first, he later changed his mind and we were unable to establish fenced-off areas on Dog Island. An article on brown boobies and their foraging behaviour is set to be published in the Journal of Caribbean Birds (J. Bright, L. Soanes, F. Mukhida, R. Brown, J. Millett. Seabird Surveys on Dog Island, Anguilla following eradication of black rats find a globally important population of red-billed tropicbirds (<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>)).
To increase the awareness of the value of Dog Island's biodiversity			X	Our public awareness campaign involved: three radio programmes solely dedicated to the rat eradication programme on Dog Island and follow-up work; countless number of updates on the ANT weekly radio show, ANT facebook page (www.facebook.com/axanationaltrust), and ANT quarterly newsletter; two newspaper articles; a brochure; a sign;

				field trips with students, ANT members, and high level decision-makers; and presentations to schools and at the bi-annual Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds Meeting (held in Grenada in July 2013). We found that people would often ask us about the work on Dog Island when we were running errands for the ANT and even when staff members were out socially. It has had a tremendous amount of press and an exceedingly high level of acceptance by the Anguillian community.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The most significant difficulty with regards to proposed outputs and actual outputs achieved was related to the erection of exclusion fences for goats. While the owner of Dog Island had initially granted his approval, support, and permission to construct these fences, just before we were about to begin the construction phase, he decided that he would rather not have them on the island. This affected our ability to tangibly identify the impacts that feral goats are having on the island. While we were disappointed, we understood his position and we hope that over time, we may be able to convince him of the benefits of understanding the impacts of these animals on island's biodiversity. We continue to try to raise awareness and to foster an even better working relationship with the owner.

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

The three most important outcomes of this project are:

- a. Through our regular monitoring activities, we have confirmed that Dog Island has been rat-free for over 1 year.
- b. We have established an standardised protocol for monitoring Dog Island's fauna and flora (we have replicated the seabird monitoring programme on all of Anguilla's offshore cays and completed full seabird surveys on four of these offshore cays this year with assistance provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds). Our initial survey results have not shown huge differences in biodiversity numbers (although brown booby numbers were significantly lower on all of Anguilla's offshore cays this year but this could be due to a delayed nesting season). Studies indicate that it may be 3-5 years before we see increases in seabird numbers as new clutches will take time to mature and reproduce. With this project, however, we were able to collect baseline data which will be essential as we will need it to determine biodiversity population trends.
- c. The amount of support that the rat eradication project and the monitoring work that we were able to accomplish with funds provided by RSG was significant. Much of the work that we do at the ANT does not have immediate or tangible results. This project allowed us to collect important information, to share information, and to involve stakeholders in the data

collection and learning process. We were especially pleased when high level decision makers and policy influencers agreed to visit Dog Island; they had such a positive and awe-inspiring experience that many agreed that Dog Island is special place and an Anguilla treasure.

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

Local communities (volunteers, ANT members and young people) have assisted with data collection and bait station monitoring. Many of these individuals would not have an opportunity to visit Dog Island because of the travel cost and its distance from the mainland. All individuals were trained in monitoring protocols and were able to better appreciate the biodiversity (and its importance to Anguilla) of the island.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

While we have not observed any rats on the island for over a year, we cannot declare the island rat-free until April 2015 (so long as no rats are observed until then). Continued monitoring of the stations will be required to take place every 6 weeks until April 2015. After April 2015, monitoring will still be required to ensure that rats do not reinvade. We have been able to secure funds from a European Union grant initiative (BEST) through a Royal Society for the Protection of Birds-led project that focuses on invasive alien species. These funds will be used to cover travel costs to Dog Island for another two and a half years. We would like to establish an annual/bi-annual biodiversity monitoring programme for Dog Island (and Anguilla's other offshore cays) and will source funding to support this work. We will continue to raise awareness about this RSG-supported project and the work that we do on Dog Island by using local media and e-mail distribution lists.

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

We have already shared some results through meeting presentations (two presentations were given at the Society for the Conservation and Study of Conservation Birds meeting in Grenada in July 2013), public presentations, the radio, our newsletter, and our Facebook page. We have also established close relationships with other environmental not-for-profit organisations in the region (including a number of United Kingdom Overseas Territories National Trust, the Jost Van Dyke Preservation Society in the British Virgin Islands, and independent individuals involved in environmental management and promotion in neighbouring islands). This network will allow for exchange of ideas, lessons learned, and the development of cross-territory partnership opportunities.

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

This grant was used between August 2012 and August 2013. This time period reflects our anticipated length of the project.

- 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.**
[Intentionally deleted]

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

We will continue to monitor Dog Island to ensure that the island remains rat-free. We would like to continue to monitor its biodiversity annually (but may have to focus monitoring efforts on a biannual basis, depending on funding availability). We would also like to conduct more research on Dog Island's biodiversity (beyond monitoring population changes). Indeed, earlier this year, we received

funding from Darwin Plus through the University of Liverpool to determine foraging patterns of four species of seabirds that nest on Dog Island. Through this research, we hope to gain a better understanding of the linkages between terrestrial and marine conservation and protected areas planning.

**11. 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?**

We published brochures and a sign. The Rufford Foundation logo was used on both. The Rufford Foundation has also been acknowledged in all presentations as an important funding partner.

12. Any other comments?

The Anguilla National Trust is grateful for the funding provided by The Rufford Foundation for this project. These funds allowed us to complete a year's worth of important baseline monitoring work that is critical to measuring the ultimate success of an island restoration project. It also allowed us to generate significant and essential stakeholder and community support. We hope to apply for a follow-up grant that builds on the success of this project.