

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. 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	Martina Küsters
Project title	Distribution and conservation status of the black-footed cat <i>Felis nigripes</i> in Namibia
RSG reference	12347-1
Reporting period	November 2012 – November 2013
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	kusters.m@hotmail.com or bfcats@mail.com
Date of this report	10th December 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 study the distribution of the black-footed cat <i>Felis nigripes</i> in Namibia.		X		Distribution records have been received throughout Namibia and distribution can now be studied on a more fine-scale level, starting at the farms where cats occur.
To raise awareness for the black-footed cat and to educate on their ecological importance, biodiversity and conservation needs, especially on farmlands.		X		Awareness cannot be measured nor but substantial responses and interest has been shown from the farming community and wider public.
To study the conservation status of the black-footed cat by determining tolerance of the species and to identify threats		X		Through consultation and collection of information from the farming community, some threats have been identified that will need to be incorporated in future awareness and information dissemination. Efforts should be made to enhance the protection status under the Namibian Nature Conservation Ordinance.
To identify suitable study areas for a future field study on the ecology (i.e. habitat and population density) and biology of the species in Namibia.			X	Four farms in southern Namibia (and the neighbouring farms) have been identified as suitable study areas. Neighbouring farms and farms in the larger areas have reported seeing black-footed cats, presenting distribution at a regional scale.


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


Although 195 total trap nights were operated, no black-footed cats were caught. During the farm surveys, no black-footed cats were seen. However, through extensive consultation with the farmers, I am confident that the cats occur on the farms. The farmers will continue to record sightings (area, time and date).


It has been a challenge to reach as many farmers as practically possible. Through the assistance of the Namibian Agricultural Union, a survey email was distributed to their approximately 3000 members. Newspaper articles in multiple languages and the awareness posters displayed throughout Namibia have been the most effective tool to reach the farming community and wider general public.

As anticipated, several distribution records received were of the similar African wild cat. Awareness has been the main focus of this project, to inform and educate farmers and the wider public on the existence of the black-footed cat and its distinguishing features. I have made considerable effort to enhance the credibility of records and establish that a record was in fact of a black-footed cat. If this could not be done, the record noted yet not incorporated in the distribution data.

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

 Through extensive media and consultation, the farming community and wider general public has become more aware of the black-footed cat and its rare and restricted distribution.

 Through the activities of this project, farms have been identified on which black-footed cats are known to occur and on which future research activities can continue.

 A partnership has been established with the Black-footed Cat Working Group. As a result, I have the opportunity to study black-footed cats in South Africa. This will allow me to gain experience and knowledge to further develop the project in Namibia.

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

All awareness and education material was targeted to reach the farming community and as a result, many farmers have become aware and interested in the species, its conservation needs and how to better protect black-footed cats from unintentional mortality. This has enabled empowered them with the knowledge of the species, its habitat and its ecological importance. The farmers are very interested in getting involved in conservation programmes and to assist in research activities. Long-term benefits are a conservation-wise farming community with an emphasis on biodiversity conservation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. The project will continue to raise awareness for black-footed cats in Namibia through media and radio and will continue to collect distribution data. Sightings of cats will be monitored on the surveyed farms to establish frequency of sightings and areas of occupancy.

Through collecting information on tolerance and perception of the species, it has become clear that the species is not well known and rarely seen, often misidentified or confused with other similar carnivores, is occasionally killed unintentionally and is not a protected species in Namibia. There is a need to collaborate with the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism to develop species protection plan and have the black-footed cat declared a 'protected species' under the Nature Conservation Ordinance (Ordinance No. 19 of 1974). For example, the aardwolf is a protected species in Namibia; farmers know this and conserve them.

I will track and monitor radio-collared black-footed cats in South Africa during 2014 to learn more about their habitat, movement patterns, biology and ecology in order to apply this knowledge to future research on the species in Namibia. This forms an important part of the project, to build on the partnership with the Black-footed Cat Working Group (BFCWG), build capacity, gain invaluable experience and to develop a similar study to the work by the BFCWG in South Africa in Namibia.

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

The results of this project (distribution data and possible conservation threats) have been shared with the BFCWG, the species specialist group who further awareness and research for this rare cat species, bringing together multidisciplinary expertise on the species' biology.

Throughout the 2013, I have written multiple articles, held radio talks, sent out information and survey emails and have kept all farmers and members of the public informed of the project's activities and results. And will continue to raise awareness in order to establish a long-term interest in the species in Namibia.

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

RSG funds were used from November 2012 to November 2013, as anticipated and planned.

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.

An exchange rate of 13.05 Sterling Pounds (£) to the Namibian Dollar (N\$) was used to calculate the budget (as per approved budget).

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Transport & fuel - 4x4 vehicle rental = 1724 - Fuel = 1300	1494	2909	+ 1416	Transport costs were high and covered a substantial part of the funds. A vehicle for fieldwork could not be sourced; hence a 4x4 was rented to survey farms. Fuel is equally expensive, as long distances had to be travelled to reach the farms.
Stipend for researcher - Accommodation = 177 - Food = 513	2320	690	- 1630	Accommodation and food expenses were less than expected, as on most farms I did not pay for accommodation. Difference amount was used to pay for transport and equipment instead.
Equipment & supplies - Equipment (camera traps & spotlight) = 1465 - GPS unit & other = 826	1895	2100	+ 205	Due to the high exchange rate and weak Namibian dollar to the US dollar, only 3 camera traps were purchased. A GPS unit and other were also much higher due to the weak Namibian dollar.
Telecommunication/ Communication costs	46	186	+ 140	Telecommunication (telephone and internet) costs were higher than expected and were an important component of the project.

Awareness posters and educational material	3	194	+ 191	More funds were needed for having awareness material printed, especially to
Total	5999	6079	+ 80	Additional funds were covered by private donations.

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

- i. I will be working as the field technician for the BFCWG during 2014, which will allow me to gain experience in the tracking and monitoring of radio-collared cats in South Africa, important for the project in Namibia. Also, it will enable me to gain knowledge of the species and factors affecting its distribution and conservation status.
- ii. Pursue a Master's programme, possibly on dispersal patterns of young and roaming adult black-footed cats or other parameters of spatial ecology on farmlands (i.e. factors affecting species populations at the landscape level).
- iii. Continue to raise awareness for black-footed cats in Namibia and collect distribution records.
- iv. Continue to study possible conservation threats that may keep population density low.
- v. To collaborate and consult with the Ministry of Environment & Tourism on possible conservation action and consult with the authorities to have the species declared a 'protected species' in Namibia.
- vi. Collaborate with the BFCWG on collecting regional distribution data of the black-footed cat and co-ordinate a capture field trip to Namibia in the next couple of years.

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 Rufford Small Grant Foundation was acknowledged (both in words and/or by using the logo) in all publications and awareness material that appeared in questionnaire and awareness emails, newspaper articles (n=4), magazines (n=1), newsletters (n=2), radio interviews (n=2), posters, presentations and project updates.

11. Any other comments?

More data is needed on the distribution of the black-footed cat in southern Africa and it is planned to continue work on this rare, possibly endangered wild cat species. Populations are restricted and patchy and possibly decreasing due to poorly understood threats affecting survival, dispersal and distribution. I hope to apply for a 2nd Grant from the Rufford Small Grant Foundation for work on black-footed cats in South Africa in order to apply the gained knowledge to the project in Namibia. I would like to thank the RSG Foundation for supporting the objectives of this project and funding its research activities. Dr Sliwa and the BFCWG and its members are thanked for inviting me to assist in the capture field trip in November 2014 and for the opportunity to gain more knowledge on this unique species.

This rare species of wild cat should be seen and conserved as a flagship species of our unique arid regions of southern Africa.