

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	Jigme Dorji
Project title	Community-based Conservation Initiative of White-bellied Heron (<i>Ardea insignis</i>) in Mangdechu valley
RSG reference	12624-1
Reporting period	January 1st to December 31st 2013
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	d_jigme@hotmail.com
Date of this report	January 20, 2014

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
Population monitoring			Achieved	With Fund support from RSG, the population monitoring for white-bellied heron is reinstated after 2 years of gap. The heron population in 2013 was estimated at 18 individuals (range 12-24 individuals). The population trend shows that it is decreasing after starting hydropower projects in Punatsangchhu.
Habitat Assessment			Achieved	The large rivers and lakes with chirpine trees around are found to be preferred habitat for white-bellied heron in Bhutan. They roost and nest only on tall chirpine trees. They need shallow running water to prey in fishes.
Community awareness programme			Achieved	Based on the recommendation of the project review committee, the awareness meeting was held in only Berti village in Mangdechhu basin which consisted of 21 households. The local people were consulted on how to conserve the species in their locality and use it as opportunity for generating income from the ecotourism prospective.
Support to livelihoods of the people			Achieved	The fund from the project supported fishery program in Berti village. The fingerlings were supplied in addition to giving them seed money to establish community based fishery ponds.
Information sharing through different media			Achieved	The short documentary film of less than 7 minute duration was made and printed copies for distribution to key stakeholders and institutions. The posters and brochures were printed and supplied to schools and

				villages. This was found more suitable substitute that having a signboard.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The initial idea of project was to study about the white-bellied heron only in Mangdechhu basin. However, with the recommendation of the review committee, the project area was extended to whole of Bhutan (including Punatsangchhu basin to project site). As such the population assessment and monitoring was difficult as it required large number of people at the different location of the project. The local people of different locality and forestry staff were engaged as research assistant to cover whole area.

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

Although the monitoring of this species has started since 2003, there was often a negligence of proper protocols to collect and share information with the general public. The information mostly remained with the agencies that conducted research or projects. In view of such constraints in the past, the following outcomes are seen as critical in bridging those gaps:

1. Wider information sharing

With fund support from RSG, we are able to reach wider audience and could influence government agencies, institutions and local communities on the immediate need of the conservation. Due to such influence, the species has been listed in the Schedule I of the Forests and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan.

2. Community based fishery in Berti

With nominal fund support from this project in consultation with the local government, the local people of Berti village were convinced to initiate community based fishery to increase their livelihood income and reduce their dependency on fishes from the river. This is a positive attitude change shown by the local communities in response to support from the project.

3. Population monitoring reinstated

In 2011 and 2012, the population was not monitored in Bhutan. With the support from the project, the population was monitored again. This has provided a ground to study population trend before and after the hydropower project started in Bhutan.

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

The local communities from Berti village under Mangdechhu basin was involved in both project formulation as well as the execution of some project activities. Though not community as a whole the individuals from Ada, Nangshina, Zawa, Phochhu, Rukha,

Burichhu and Sunkosh were involved in the monitoring of populations. They are benefitted with the cash incentives of research assistant.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

White-bellied herons in Bhutan is showing rapid decrease in population over the years. As such, there is a need for long term study plan. I would like to study dispersal pattern if funding can be secured from any other sources. This will involve GPS tagging of individuals to track their movement across the season. This will be helpful to secure its habitat in Bhutan during monsoon when most of their habitats remain flooded.

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

A short documentary film on white-bellied heron was documented during the project funding. Few copies have already been printed and distributed to key institutions. I would like to look for more funds to print more and distribute to schools. The documentary film will be translated to Dzongkha language (national language of Bhutan), so that this can be used for both literate and illiterate audience. Similarly the posters and brochures are specifically designed to share information about the species with wider audiences.

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

The fund was used from December 7th 2012 to January 15th 2014. It took little longer than the anticipated length of the project as the study area was extended to whole of Bhutan from Mangdechhu basin.

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
Transportation/mobility cost	1744	1800	-56	The study area was expanded to whole of Bhutan and more travel was required.
Daily subsistence cost for researcher	1860	1950	-90	Additional research assistant were deputed to monitor population in the entire habitat in Bhutan
Community awareness program	541	400	141	The awareness programme was reduced as

				recommended by the review committee.
Support to community livelihoods	600	548	52	The budget was slashed to meet the extra cost of travel and researcher.
Printing of information pamphlets and sign boards	900	900	00	
Stationeries/equipments	352	352	00	
Bank charges	0	5	-5	Bank charges deducted by BNB which was not projected initially.
Total	5997	5960	193-151	= 42

Note: The actual remittance in the bank account is only GBR 5960

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

The long term monitoring of heron population in Bhutan after establishment of hydropower projects will be very crucial for the survival this species. Bhutan should implement the strategy framed by the IUCN SSC Heron Specialist Groups – Inventory and conservation action plan for white-bellied heron.

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?

Yes I used RSGF logo in various media. The presentation, posters, brochures and documentary film all have RSGF logo with proper acknowledgement of funding provided for the study of white-bellied heron.

11. Any other comments?

The current population trend of white-bellied heron in Bhutan is very scary. Since 2010, the population is found decreasing at 2 individuals per year. The government or some organisation should come up with strategic plan to counteract its decreasing population.