

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	Fidelis Akunke Atuo
Project title	Trade on avian body parts: implication for biodiversity conservation in South-east Nigeria
RSG reference	14094-1
Reporting period	February 2014 – January 2015
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	Fidelis.atuo@okstate.edu
Date of this report	31 st January 2015

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
Assessing the socio-economic drivers of the trade on avian body parts			X	We completed questionnaire surveys in all of the 21 communities selected for this study and obtained information on social and economic factors that promote the killing of birds in the region. Common drivers included: demand for birds feathers during traditional ceremonies; perceived medicinal value of feathers and bones (e.g. bones and feathers of great-blue turaco are believed to cure tuberculosis); and increased demand for the head and feet of all species of eagles, vultures, parrots and turacos by traders mainly from northern and western Nigeria.
Investigate the frequency of trade on avian body parts in south-east Nigeria			x	We obtained information on reported frequency of bird persecution by asking respondents if they have witnessed or participated in the killing of any bird species in the last 3 years. Respondents also gave estimates of the number of times they have witnessed or sold any body parts themselves.
Identify bird species most vulnerable to trade on avian body parts			x	Information on the most frequently traded species were collected from respondents. The hooded vulture <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i> was the most prevalent species.
Strategic conservation awareness campaign		x		We completed conservation awareness meetings in all selected communities. During conservation meetings, we discussed the vital roles birds play in the ecosystem and the danger of losing species. We addressed issues such as the need to balance cultural needs with biodiversity. We worked with focused groups (mainly age grades and some village clubs) in organising and implementing community awareness meetings. The involvement of these focus groups was important in the acceptance of our project by local people and aided in the spread of our conservation message within the communities. We were unable to complete our television talk show as proposed due to technical problems at the Cross River Broadcasting Cooperation (CRBC).

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

- A major challenge was the identification of persecuted species to the species level. Most villages across our study area could hardly identify birds beyond the 'morphospecies' level (i.e. a typological 'species' that can only be identified as eagle, hornbills or parrot) on their own. For example, among the Boki tribe, all vultures are referred to as *Angulu* (scavenger of human remains), while most species of eagles are generally referred to as *Lanyo*. Identifying birds to the species level thus required a great deal of effort. We achieved this through detailed descriptions of bird's morphology, using photos from field guides (Birds of Western Africa by Borrow and Demey 2008), playing bird calls and often listening to respondents mimic the call of targeted species.
- We were unable to complete our television talk show as proposed due to technical problems at the Cross River Broadcasting Cooperation (CRBC). The talk show has been rescheduled for April 2015.
- There were expectations among community elders in terms of social and economic benefits. Some communities expected the project to provide monetary rewards or livelihood options as an alternative to selling bird body parts. Community meetings with chiefs and other community leaders were used as an avenue to clarify such misunderstandings.

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

- ❖ We identified an array of social and economic factors that promote the persecution of birds in the Cross River region of south-east Nigeria. Some of these factors included rapid population growth which increased human pressure on most wildlife species, and a general decline in the population of big games which make birds an alternative source of protein and the selling of body parts a lucrative addition to the bush meat trade. Specific socio-economic drivers included: large household size (number of wives and children); low average monthly income; and perceived personal need for avian body parts. A greater problem beyond the social and economic drivers of this menace is the belief among local people that bird species whose body parts are not in demand today may become relevant in the nearest future. Therefore it pays to collect body parts of any species and as many species as you can in the hope that it would be demanded by the buyers in the future. This has made every bird species in the region a likely candidate for the trade.
- ❖ Findings from our study suggest that trade on bird body parts is currently pervasive in the region. Ninety-four percent of the respondents in our study have witness the sale of an avian body part in the last two years alone, while 66 % have sold an avian part. Traded body parts were fairly similar across species and included head, feet, bones and feathers. However, the value of each body part differ depending on the species. Eagle and vulture heads were the most valuable parts selling between 700 - 2000 naira (about US\$ 4 - 12). The martial eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* was identified as the most sought after species, while body parts of the hooded vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*) were the most frequently sold. Seventy-four percent of all respondents across our study sites have reportedly witness or traded a hooded vulture's body part. Other species whose body parts are in high demand included all species of diurnal raptors (especially species in the family *accipitridae*), African grey parrot, and all hornbill species, turacos and owls' species.

- ❖ Strategic community based conservation awareness is an important tool for effective protection of biodiversity across the globe. In this study, we held conservation awareness meetings in 21 communities across Cross River State with an average attendance of 23 community leaders during each meeting. During meetings, we discussed the potential dangers of biodiversity loss and advocated for community regulations to curb the rate at which birds are currently persecuted. We distributed 1800 posters bearing conservation messages against trade on avian body parts. Posters were distributed during community meetings and during house to house questionnaire surveys. The poster was design using images and symbols to convey our conservation message in the simplest way to an audience that is predominately unable to read. To ensure complete awareness, some posters were placed in centralized public areas where most of the villagers can access them. So far, we received verbal assurance from four communities (Butatong, Okwa, Kubong, and Okwabang) on community regulations that will discourage trade on wildlife body parts.

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

In recognition of the influence of traditional institutions on the effectiveness of grassroots conservation education, we worked closely with village chiefs, community elders and focused groups in organising and implementing conservation awareness meetings. Each of the surveyed communities provided at least two members to assist our team as paid guides during field surveys. Working shoulder-to-shoulder with our project team members, these guides gained first-hand knowledge on the dangers of biodiversity loss and were able to share their experiences with other community members during community conservation awareness meetings. They also promised to become ambassadors of our conservation message within their communities beyond the duration of this project.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We plan to build on the achievements recorded during this phase of the project by initiating a long term conservation education scheme that will involve the local people and traditional institutions as an integral part of conservation activities and decisions in the region. There is also a need to provide training and support for the local people on livelihood options as an alternative to selling wildlife body parts. These areas will form the focus of our project in the future.

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

Findings will primarily be published in peer-reviewed journals. One manuscript is currently in preparation to be submitted to the journal of Bird Conservation International. An abstract of our findings has already been submitted for an oral presentation in the forthcoming 27th International Congress for Conservation Biology/European Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB/ECCB) scheduled for 2nd – 6th August 2015 in Montpellier – France. We also anticipate public presentations at professional meetings of the Ecological Society of Nigeria and the Pan Africa Ornithological Congress. A copy of our final report will be shared with the Cross River State Forestry Commission (the Cross River State government agency responsible for managing wildlife outside of the Cross River National Park) and other NGOs working in the region.

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 project duration was 11 months: February 2014 to January 2015

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
communication	200	140	60	The budget for communication was cut down to offset the cost of unbudgeted items
Digital Camera	400	400	0	
Accommodation for team members during field work £200 x 3people x 4months	2400	2400	0	
Food for team members during field work £5 x 3people x 10days x4months	600	600	0	
Food for field assistants £5 x 2people x 10days x 4months	400	400	0	
Monthly transport cost (local taxis and motor bikes) £40 x 3people x 4months	480	480	0	
Printing of conservation awareness posters (2000 copies)	700	700	0	
Allowance for 2 field assistants work £5 x 3people x 10days x 4months	400	400	0	
Community meeting	105	105	0	
Meeting with focused groups		148	148	This activity was not budgeted for but was suggested by one of the reviewers as a replacement for school visits.
School visits	105	0	105	
Television talk show	200	165	35	Arrangements are completed for this activity
Bank charges	10	60	50	We under estimated bank charges
Total	6000	5998	2	

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

The next step will be to plan a second phase of this project which will include:

- Strategic community-based conservation awareness campaign across the Cross River region.
- Develop modalities for training and supporting local people on livelihood options as an alternative to selling avian body parts.
- Meeting and sharing results with government agencies (The Cross River Forestry Commission and the Cross River National Park) and other conservation NGOs working in the region. During these meetings, we will specifically explore the possibility of future collaborations in order to develop an integrated approach that would mitigate the menace of biodiversity loss in the region.
- Conduct a reconnaissance survey to measure levels of knowledge, attitude and behaviour of people living around our study area. This will be significant in measuring the impact of this preliminary phase of our project.

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?

The Rufford Foundation logo featured prominently in all conservation posters that were distributed during our awareness campaigns. We also acknowledged the Rufford Foundation as the sole funder of our project during meetings with community leaders and focused groups. Further acknowledgement of the support received from the Rufford Foundation will be made during the TV talk show scheduled for April 2015, in publications and presentations that will come from this study.