

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 | Hasan Arif Rahman |
| Project title | Assessing the status of felids in the North-east Bangladesh with a focus on the clouded leopard (<i>Neofelis nebulosa</i>) as focal species (Pilot study) |
| RSG reference | 14123-1 |
| Reporting period | |
| Amount of grant | £5880 |
| Your email address | hasanrahman.24@gmail.com |
| Date of this report | June 15, 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 status of felids in North-East Bangladesh with focus on clouded leopard | | | x | Though we couldn't confirm the presence of the clouded leopard in the study area, we found other felid presence, and more importantly our pilot study provided us the invaluable insight to develop in depth survey in the entire region. Based on the experience gained in the piloting phase we were able to document the presence of Asiatic golden cat for the first time in the history of the region. We captured the first live photo of Asiatic golden cat from north-east Bangladesh and which is the very first such capture for this species even in the entire country. |
| Document the threat to the conservation felid | | | x | |
| Assess the human felid conflict | | | x | |
| Assess the human attitude toward felid conservation | | | x | |

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

Political instability and severe riot all over the country hampered our field work in the beginning. Numbers of people were killed all over the country, and road communication was affected badly. The field operation was not on the ground till everything came to shape.

Bureaucratic obstacles in importing trap cameras to Bangladesh were one of the problems we faced in the early stage. Government set about 84 % tax for trap cameras, which is pretty high for us, we negotiated with government officials whether it could have been reduced for us. However we were unable to do so. And we had to pay the tax that is set by the government. Because of this we couldn't purchase the numbers of cameras we intended to buy.

Stealing of trap cameras were one of the major problems, we anticipated it and we built theft proof housing for cameras, however sometimes thieves cut down the trees and took the camera away. During the pilot study we lost three of our cameras from the prime location.

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

First of all the project was first of its kind in the region. No study so far concentrated on science based methodology to detect occupancy of felid species in north-east Bangladesh. Through this pilot

study we detected wild felid presence in the region, along with other species. We deployed trap cameras in the Patharia Hill Reserve Forest (PHRF), which encompasses three forest beat (the smallest administrative unit of Bangladesh forest department). PHRF is 60 km² in size. This is first systematic effort to learn about the felid species in PHRF. We used secondary sign survey, and trap cameras to confirm the presence of the felid species. We also interviewed local people to learn about felid-human conflict in the region and to understand their level of knowledge and views toward conservation of wild felids. We detected leopard cat in our trap cameras along with common palm civet, Himalayan porcupine, muntjac, wild elephant, ferret badger, Malayan night heron, etc. Among them elephants and ferret badger were captured in trap camera for the first time in Bangladesh. We also measured the level of human impact in the reserve forest, which will be further analysed to build up occupancy model.

Secondly, based on this pilot study we further improved our methods. Which enabled us to confirm presence of Asiatic golden cat; this is the very first live record from Bangladesh. All the previous records were dead specimen and skin collected from the hunters in south-east Bangladesh.

Finally, on the basis of this pilot project we were able to identify the important habitat of remaining felid species in the region. Though our trap cameras were to capture felid photographs, we photographed wild elephant in our trap cameras first time in the history of Bangladesh. Local people knew about wild elephants using the landscape in both part of Bangladesh and India, however no confirmed document was there.

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

In the piloting stage we hired a local field assistant who guided us through the forest and we train the person in basic field skill of using GPS, compass, setting camera trap and changing memory cards and batteries of trap cameras. This eventually led to build up his capacity to work as professional field assistant in any such study in the area. We also tried to in contact with local community, we informed them about our plan and intention and requested for their support.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The principal investigator of this project is now pursuing graduate school at University of Delaware. He will analyse the data and will try to publish the work in reputed scientific journal. In the meanwhile the team will work in the field in close association with local community to save the felid species and their habitat. Currently we are working on detailed plan of next phase of work.

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

We already started working with local people through a network of schoolchildren, and with the administration to disseminate our knowledge about wild felids in the area. We also published news in CAT NEWS, and will be publishing similar reports and stories in blogs, international reputed periodicals, and online news.

Currently we are working on research paper that we will publish in reputed journal. In future we will organise workshop, bigger campaign, festival in the local area to share the result of the project and to make people aware about importance of wild felids in their forest.

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

We used the RSG fund for 6 months as mentioned in our funding proposal. Though there was delay in the initial stage due to above mentioned reasons (please see question 2), we worked as per our plan.

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 |
|--|-----------------|----------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Salary for field assistant | 400 | 396 | 4 | |
| Lodging | 360 | 396 | 36 | |
| Local transport and fuel | 920 | 990 | 70 | |
| Meals | 1150 | 1188 | 38 | |
| GPS GARMIN GPS MAP 62S | 217 | 231 | 14 | |
| Camera traps | 2190 | 1980 | 210 | Explained in question 2 |
| Battery | 55 | 66 | 11 | |
| SD memory card | 190 | 297 | 107 | |
| Theft proof box | 169 | 99 | 70 | |
| Stationaries (Hardboard, pen, pencil etc.) | 30 | 33 | 3 | |
| Printing (map, questionnaire, data sheet) | 50 | 66 | 16 | |
| Communication (phone and internet) | 100 | 138 | 38 | |
| TOTAL | 5831 | 5880.60 | 49 | |

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

After completing this pilot study we conducted full scale study in the entire north-east Bangladesh with funding from Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, and National Geographic Society Big Cat initiative. We are also working to build up a network of school children, who will work in their community to protect these felid species.

In next step the most important task will be to strengthening this above mentioned network, developing protocol for capturing stray wild cats and safe releasing (Attached CAT news article on juvenile fishing cat is an example), and developing nationwide small cat action plan. In the action plan we will try to synthesise on-going economic development and conserving diminishing felid species in the country.

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 didn't use the RSGF logo in any purpose, however we acknowledged RSGF in CAT NEWS article, and press release, and also all other relevant places.

11. Any other comments?

We thank RSG for their kind support. It would never been possible to carry out this task without the kind contribution of Rufford small grants.

