

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	James Chantrey Williams
Project title	Capacity building in the Solomon Islands to enhance leatherback sea turtle conservation.
RSG reference	14398-1
Reporting period	One Year (Final)
Amount of grant	£5480
Your email address	jwilliams@mrf-asia.org
Date of this report	20 th November 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
Conducting a site visit and training course			/	Two site visits were made, once in February 2014 for 4 days and again in June 2014 for 1 month.
Establish a monitoring schedule and develop recording and reporting protocols			/	Rangers monitored the beach every night during incoming, high and newly falling tides, this equated to between 8 and 10 hours work a night. Full data collection and methods training was provided and reporting networks between MRF and project coordinators were established.
Establish a follow-up communication process whereby community members can transfer the findings to MRF for analysis and reporting			/	Two computer literate members of The Waihau foundation were identified whom provide the link between the village and MRF.
Provide copies of the final report back to the community to reinforce learning			/	Please find attached a copy of the full report for the project activities during 2014. This is available to all donors, partners and stakeholders.
Develop, alongside the community, the design of a potential long-term monitoring programme.			/	Village elders, Waihau stakeholders, project coordinators and rangers have expressed their desire to fully adopt this project in the coming years and also to conduct further conservational activities of their own.
Determine a suitable development project for the community.			/	The community opted to develop their conservation centre with new timber and fixtures, and improve sanitation with a flushing toilet and septic tank.
Community election of Turtle Rangers and Project Leader			/	The community elected a total of 26 rangers and two coordinators from Waisurione and the neighbouring communities.
Beach walks by rangers every morning to identify individual turtle nests			/	'Off duty' rangers walked the beach every morning to ensure no nests were missed during the night; foot traffic in the mornings is relatively high in the area as people move between neighbouring villages, providing a greater number of people

				opportunistically looking for new nests.
Marking nests and protection using a bamboo grid		/		Grids were constructed and placed, however issues with two individuals (see section 2) meant the grids were removed. No summer nests were poached or dug by dogs despite this and the issue at hand has since been resolved.

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

The completion of the first season of monitoring has highlighted some unforeseen issues that will be addressed in the coming 2015 summer season:

- In June 2014, Malaita experienced unusually higher spring tides than in previous months or years (according to the local people). This resulted in approximately 60-70% of the beach experiencing wave action up to the vegetation line causing earlier laid nests to become inundated by water, preventing the majority of their eggs from developing. Additionally these tides left very little exposed sand in some areas reducing the length of turtle track marks and erasing any signs of nesting almost instantly, this may explain the missed identification of nest LB05. MRF also observed an issue with large scale erosion of the nesting beach, further reducing the number of suitable areas for turtles to nest. As a result MRF are seeking funding to provide further educational reinforcement prior to the 2015 summer nesting season, with emphasis on nest identification, potential threat evaluation and the importance of nest relocation.
- A misunderstanding of the project design and objectives by two members of a neighbouring village resulted in interference with some project activities. The individuals confused the values of this project with past logging activities in the area whereby each village received monetary compensation for the destruction caused by the operation. Despite the individuals family members being rangers they refused to discuss the project, maintaining their uninformed view. As a result rangers were not able to patrol the Ausi side of the beach without being accompanied by an Ausi villager, hampering the consistency and extent of the patrols. Furthermore any bamboo grids placed on Ausi land were destroyed. Recently Waihau have reported that these individuals came forward after the conclusion of this season's activity, seeking reconciliation and reaching a preliminary mutual understanding with the coordinators. Coordinators are now taking a cautious approach to further discussions but remain confident of a positive outcome that will prevent a reoccurrence in 2015.
- The overall numbers of nesting leatherbacks were lower than anticipated based on the communities previous year's observations. This season results show less than 50% of the number of leatherbacks seen between June and September 2013 came ashore this season. Leatherbacks commonly nest only once every few years; therefore it is possible that 2014 represents a gap in the Pacific population. Results from 2015 will help to clarify if there is an issue with the numbers of nesters at this location.

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

- The extended local community from three different tribes have gained a thorough understanding of leatherback turtles including their value and importance globally and within the Solomon Islands, resulting in conservation and resource management becoming an ingrained part of their society; preservation and management of almost every resource they possess is now a key concern.
- The local people have become proactive and intend to protect leatherback nests not only during the summer months but also opportunistically throughout the year. Plans are now in place to reduce the use of torches on the nesting beach, allow only rangers on it at night by creating an alternative footpath and making the beach inaccessible to vehicles. Furthermore the work from this project has prompted additional agreements to be made by the three tribal communities to protect other vulnerable indigenous species such as olive ridley turtles and coconut crabs.
- The conservational affinity and self motivation of the community has maximised the impact of this project. The leatherback population will benefit in the long-term from a small group of people doing their part to ensure their continued protection on nesting beaches, as will the many other species of plants and animals that the community are starting to turn their attention to. Waisurione now stands as an example to the surrounding villages who are increasingly gaining interest in their activities. In the coming years this could lead to the spread of conservational activity across the region, amplifying efforts and maximising the benefit to the indigenous species of Malaita.

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

The local community across three tribes (Ausi, Au'vaura and Po'otori) were all fully involved both directly and indirectly in all on the ground activities. Each of the three villages had representatives that contributed to the 26 rangers and the two coordinators were from different villages. Every training session and educational talk was open for anyone to join, with people from the neighbouring villages frequently taking part as word spread; whether they had an active part in the project or not. From this the education and awareness aimed primarily at the rangers and coordinators has spread across the local area to a broad range of people, resulting in a community wide understanding and drive for conservation and resource management.

Additionally working with and handing responsibilities to the Waihu Foundation has increased their understanding of how to operate as an NGO and what it takes to fund and run a project. The development of their conservation centre using the projects development fund (funded by NMFS) will further increase their capacity to serve the community, facilitating conservation and community development projects and providing jobs in the process.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Additional funding has already been secured, ensuring monitoring for the 2015 summer nesting season will go ahead, starting in June; funding for 2016 also looks likely. Plans are to maintain the current effort while adding additional responsibilities such as nest relocation in order to give the rangers the ability to address potential issues regarding nest location and provide a stronger data set in the coming years.

Beyond monetary requirements the conservational ethos of the local community is something that cannot be bought. Combined with their now enhanced understanding of their impacts on the world around them, the likelihood of sustained conservational activities for generations beyond funding is high.

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

A full report detailing this year's activities (attached) will be given to all donors and stakeholders. As subsequent seasons are concluded the data collected will contribute to an ongoing database with the aim to publish any findings globally in a scientific journal.

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 majority of the funds received were used over the course of 5 months. This facilitated activities in February 2014 and between June and September 2014. Funding was used over the intended timescale; determined by the summer months leatherbacks are reported to nest during and the need to prepare the community for the work ahead.

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
Return Flight: Kota Kinabalu - Brisbane	1,052.00	855.28	-196.72
Return Flight: Brisbane - Solomon Islands	1,353.00	1,029.46	-323.54
Domestic Travel Honiara - Waisurione	1,005.00	1,453.56	448.56
Community Contribution for Accommodation	1,269.00	1,277.20	8.20
Community Contribution for Living Costs	801.00	766.32	34.68
Total	5,480.00	5,381.83	98.17

Notes: Expenditure was calculated in USD and converted to GBP at a rate of 0.638601.
Surplus funds contributed towards the community development fund.

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

- Continued monitoring over the coming years is essential to attempt to understand the state of the Pacific leatherback population.
- Coordinators must work closely and cautiously with the previously misinformed individuals to prevent any further disruptions to monitoring.
- Further educational reinforcement is necessary prior to the 2015 summer nesting season, with emphasis on nest identification, potential threat evaluation and the importance of nest relocation. MRF are currently seeking funding to send their conservation officer, James, back to Waisurione in May 2015 to enact this, thus making subsequent years stronger and more focussed.

**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 was used in the aforementioned, attached report where Rufford, amongst other donors were acknowledged for their contribution to this project.

11. Any other comments?

Please refer to the attached project progress report for further information regarding the projects implementation and results for 2014. A selection of supporting photographs have also been attached. Additional photographs can be provided at Rufford's request.