

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	Tashi Dhendup
Project title	Assessing the Anthropogenic Threats to Clouded Leopards in Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan
RSG reference	15303-1
Reporting period	June 2016-June 2017
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	bhutanfauna@gmail.com
Date of this report	28.05.2017

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
Identify and assess threats to clouded leopards and its habitat in Royal Manas National Park				
Inform the general mass and the managers of the threats with recommendations				The dissemination of the findings and its outreach will be done through a detailed final report and a manuscript.

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

The project did not see any major unforeseen difficulties during the study period. However, landslides and swollen rivers during monsoon did present challenges. Due to time constraints and fund limitations, the objectives were modified but was kept within the framework of the initial scope of the study. The study stands out as a good start and an invaluable baseline on clouded leopards in Bhutan.

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

1. Many of clouded leopard occurrences have been detected in areas where human activities are prevalent. Studies elsewhere have observed that the species is less adaptable to human disturbances and as such, the species could potentially be affected. Thus, it is important that activities such as resource extraction and development of infrastructures be limited and strictly regulated in these areas. Though Royal Manas National Park does not suffer from major habitat destruction or other challenges to their integrity, however, considering the minor decline in habitat quality, and threats due to poaching, the status of clouded leopard and the habitat need to be reassessed periodically. Setting up appropriate practices for species conservation is felt necessary.

2. The occurrences of clouded leopards in the disturbed habitats could also mean that the species is more adaptable and tolerant than previously thought.

3. There is a considerable lack of information on the status of clouded leopards in Royal Manas National Park. Though listed as a totally protected species in the Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan 1995, it has received less priority. Research and conservation funding is highly lacking.

Proper species management is countered by a lack of reliable information on current habitat quality and nature of threats. Like elsewhere, felid responses to impacts of degradation to existing habitats are poorly understood. If dedicated surveys and conservation measures are not attempted, the clouded leopards are very unlikely to be recorded and conserved, and so might disappear without our knowledge.

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

There has not been a substantial benefit to the local communities except for the small sum of monetary amounts which were given in return for their services as porters. However, the proponent did spread words on clouded leopard and their conservation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I plan to carry out a more rigorous and scientific assessment on the status of the species in the park.

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

The first and the foremost plan is to prepare a manuscript on the findings from the study. A final report will also be shared with Rufford Foundation. The proponent shall also participate in conferences, seminars, and symposiums where the findings shall be presented. Awareness and education will be constantly conducted through social media and personal blogs.

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 grant was used across the entire reporting period. It worked out well as planned in the timeline.

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
Daily subsistence allowances for the field crew	2927	2000	927	The field season lasted shorter than anticipated and so reduced the cost considerably under this heading.
Equipment	300	1000	700	Better quality equipment to aid the

				researchers in data recording and analysis were purchased.
Travel and mobility	200	1000	800	Travel took more amount than anticipated.
Reporting and publication	0			
Food per diem	1573	1000	573	Due to shorter field season, the total food per diems was also reduced.
Total	5000	5000		

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

Looking ahead, I feel that the ecological significance of clouded leopards should be strongly highlighted and this could be done by supporting and initiating more studies on the species. Awareness is strongly recommended to not only educate people on clouded leopards but also to help draw conservation funding.

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?

Yes, I have used it in my report and in presentations that present findings from this study.

11. Any other comments?

In a country where conservation funding is entirely dominated by tigers, snow leopards, and other bigger charismatic species, Rufford foundation has always been very helpful in funding research on underfunded and understudied smaller and lesser charismatic species. It is my sincere pleas to Rufford to recontinue supporting conservation in Bhutan.