



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	Ashish Thomas
Project title	Conservation of the Endangered Indian Purple frog through threat identification, area prioritization and community education.
RSG reference	16181-1
Reporting period	2015-2016
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	ashishthomas1610@gmail.com
Date of this report	13 May 2016

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
a) Identification of anthropogenic threats faced by the purple frog populations in different localities.		X		<p>Field surveys were conducted in 15 out of the 20 selected locations. Anthropogenic as well as natural threats were identified and documented along with the exact GPS coordinates of the surveyed locations. Data on some ecological variables, like rainfall, temperature, humidity etc., have been collected from all the surveyed locations. All this data has and will serve as baseline data for modelling studies.</p> <p>Note: Five localities remain to be surveyed.</p>
b) Management of conservation efforts through community participation.		X		<p>Efforts were made to reach out to all relevant stakeholders who can contribute towards conservation of the endangered purple frog. Between April to September 2015, we visited eight tribal settlement areas (66 families), nine Forest Department offices, delivered lectures at six tribal schools and three nature camps, and had talks with two estate owners. Pamphlets, highlighting the importance of amphibians, life cycle of purple frog and harvesting of its tadpoles, were distributed to tribal families and school students that helped raise awareness among the people. Posters were put up on school notice boards. Moreover, 13 forest guards in six different areas</p>

				were trained to identify the tadpoles of purple frog. Their inputs will be helpful in identifying areas within protected areas where the species inhabits. Note: Three Tribal settlement areas need to be visited.
c) Prioritisation of areas for effective planning and implementation of conservation efforts		X		The data collected from surveys has been used to devise a threat index for the various populations of the species. It was found that the fragmented populations of purple frog faced variable level of threats due to natural and anthropogenic factors. Data on few more important locations needs to be collected before formulating a comprehensive distribution map that also emphasises the threat index of various populations.

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

There were few unforeseen difficulties encountered during organizing lectures in tribal schools. Although I had obtained the permission from the Kerala Forest Department, it was only later that I was informed that an additional permission was required from the Tribal Development Department of Kerala Government for giving lectures in tribal schools. Obtaining that permission would have expended much time due to bureaucratic hassles. However, I was able to convince senior forest officials at few areas who gave me special permission to deliver the lectures in schools. There were also some constraints in scheduling the lectures at some schools due to tight teaching schedules and prior engagements. Nevertheless, I was able to make up for this through lectures at nature camps and by visiting about 65 tribal families and interacting personally with the children in these houses.

The precious time lost in accomplishing the objective of community education coupled with unpredictable weather conditions did affect the first and third objectives of the project, i.e. conducting survey for identifying threats and prioritizing areas for conservation by devising a threat index. The work remaining with respect to these objectives will be completed in the upcoming monsoon season and, if required by RSGF, a separate report will be submitted.

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

The three major outcomes of the project are:

1. First comprehensive survey of a major portion of the distribution range of purple frog and collection of data on threats faced by various populations. Used this data to devise a threat index that can be used to predict priority conservation areas over a GIS platform.
2. Reaching out to various stakeholders (tribal families, school children, forest department staff, and estate owners) and educating them about the importance of conserving the purple frog as well as the amphibians in general.
3. Collection of vital baseline data that will be used for a comprehensive reassessment of the conservation status of *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*.

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

As mentioned above, local communities constituted a major stakeholder group for the success of this project. I was able to conduct a very personal interaction with a number of families as well as individuals of these communities through which I could successfully convey to them the importance of preserving the amphibian biodiversity of their respective regions with special emphasis on the purple frog. I was also able to dispel some false myths that many people nurtured about the purple frog thus making them more sensitive to this weird looking creature. They were also sensitised to the issue of consumption of tadpoles as well as adults of the species. Children were taught how to handle the purple frog in case they encountered one. Thus, with increasing awareness levels, communities were able to nurture a very pro-conservation attitude towards amphibians, which if channelised properly through regular interaction and monitoring can lead to effective implementation of conservation actions.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I definitely plan to continue this work and at the same time add some more components to it.

First of all, I plan to complete the work remaining in the current project during the upcoming monsoon season (June - September). ***This includes survey of five important places and visiting three tribal settlement colonies.***

Secondly, I plan to closely monitor all the surveyed sites again for at least a couple of seasons to assess the impact of the identified threats on purple frog populations of the respective sites. As part of my PhD work, I had recently published an on the

impact of tadpole harvesting on purple frog population at a single location {Tadpole consumption is a direct threat to the Endangered Purple frog *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*. 2015. Salamandra. 51(3): 252-258}. I will devise a similar methodology for this objective.

Thirdly, I also want to monitor the impact of educating the tribal communities and other stakeholders with respect to our overall objective of conservation of the purple frog by visiting them again and observing for any changes with respect to their earlier activities, behaviour and beliefs. As such initiatives cannot be successful with just a single workshop or interaction or education session, focus will also be on re-educating them and answering their doubts and queries so as to reinforce the pro-conservation attitude in them.

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

The results of this work will be shared in the following ways to the various stakeholders:

1. Detailed report of the outcome of the project, which would include various suggestive measures for conservation of the purple frog, will be submitted to the Forest Department.
2. A comprehensive assessment of the conservation status of *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis* will be submitted to IUCN.
3. Results of the project will be published as a scientific article.

I would like to mention here that RSGF would be duly acknowledged in any document that is generated as part of this project.

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

The duration of the project was between April 1st 2015 and March 30th 2016. The RSG amount was utilised over this period. However, there is still some work left in the project, which will be completed during June and July 2016.

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	760	685	-75	Few locations remain to be surveyed, hence the difference.
Food	790	798	+8	-

Travel	795	860	+65	Three return trips were made from Delhi to Kerala. Local travel also was a bit expensive.
Accommodation	530	475	-55	-
Visual Presentation Kit	430	340	-90	Got a good deal because of buying the Presentation kit and camera together from the same vendor
Nikon DSLR camera	335	488	+153	Nikon D7000 camera, which is a semi pro camera excellent for field photography was purchased. Although the actual amount was higher than the budgeted amount, it was bought for a price much lower than the prevailing market price.
Garmin GPS	250	175	-75	Got a good Garmin GPS for a very reasonable price, lesser than the budgeted amount.
Small Field Equipments	320	352	+32	-
Consumables and stationary	400	358	-42	-
Printing	390	320	-80	The balance amount left will be utilized for printing of the final reports to be submitted to Forest department
TOTAL	5000	4851	-149#	

***Local exchange rate: 1 £ sterling = INR 96**

The balance amount will be utilized for printing the final report and for conducting surveys to the remaining locations during June-July, 2016

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

This current project is only a small beginning towards conservation of the endangered purple frog. However, it is important to properly channelize the momentum gained from this project. Hence, the next important steps include expanding the outreach activities as well as to continue conducting scientific



research on *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*.

Firstly, with respect to the community outreach initiatives, I am in talks with few more upcoming amphibian researchers of the Western Ghats for starting an NGO. The motto of this organisation will be conservation management of the endangered amphibians of Western Ghats through scientific research, public outreach and policy advocacy. With a larger group of people to work, dispersal of knowledge to local communities and other relevant stakeholders will become much more efficient and effective.

Secondly, I also plan to continue collecting scientific data on various aspects of life history, population distribution and ecological interactions of *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*, that are yet unknown. The whole idea is to generate as much comprehensive data as possible for proposing effective and scientifically viable conservation strategies for this endangered species.

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?

I used the RSGF logo in all the printed materials (informational flyers, posters, pamphlets). RSGF would be duly acknowledged in any report or document that is generated as part of this project. The contribution of RSGF was also highlighted during all major meetings with forest department staff, at school lectures and at Nature camp workshops.

11. Any other comments?

I am extremely thankful to the RSGF in supporting this project, which, although small in scope, is highly significant with respect to the impetus needed for conservation planning of the endangered purple frog.