

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	John Kahekwa Munihuzi
Project title	Developing a local and sustainable tourism industry in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park by habituating a group of gorillas to human observers
RSG reference	16754-1
Reporting period	July 2015 – June 2016
Amount of grant	£5,000
Your email address	ariel@arielkedem.com
Date of this report	June 21, 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
Habituate a group of gorillas to human observers		X		The objective for the grant period has been fully achieved. The overall objective of the project – the full habituation of the group – is expected to be achieved within several months. The Mpungwe gorilla group is now semi-habituated to the presence of human observers and the park authority is continuing the habituation process until completion. As noted in the original proposal, the habituation process can require anywhere between 1.5-3 years.
Work with local communities to promote environmental awareness and develop alternative livelihoods		X		Work with local communities was conducted throughout the grant period as planned. Development of alternative livelihoods was conducted on a limited scale due to lack of funding (this was not part of the request from the Rufford Foundation). On the other hand, a new food security programme has been developed to meet the same goals and is progressing at full speed.

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

We were not successful in raising the additional funds as outlined in our original proposal. Unfortunately, we did not receive the much expected continuation grant from Whitley Fund for Nature. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the park authority assumed full responsibility on the continuation of the process after the completion of a 3-month intensive period, in which the group members became almost fully habituated to the presence of human observers. What was required after this period was daily contact with the group members, a task which has been undertaken by the park staff, who were trained by John Kahekwa during

3 intensive months in the field, which included camping in close proximity to the gorillas and daily habituation activities.

In terms of the additional community development activities, which were not budgeted in our request but were mentioned as supplementary activities, we were only able to conduct these on a limited scale due to shortage of funds. However, we were very lucky to develop a new partnership with an international organisation that promotes the production of "Spirulina", a highly nutritious "superfood" among local communities in Africa, to combat malnutrition. So, while we were unable to conduct the specific planned activities at full scale, we were able to address the needs of the local communities surrounding the national park in a different way. The project is now being rapidly developed and will enable us to provide local communities with a highly nutritious food that will ensure their health and also provide them with an excellent source of protein and other nutrients, as an alternative to the consumption of bushmeat. We plan to greatly expand this project over the course of the next year as a way of engaging with local communities, which live adjacent to the national park and helping them develop sustainable and nutritious food products which have very little, if any impact on the environment.

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

- The Mpungwe gorilla group is now semi-habituated to the presence of human observers and the park authority is continuing the habituation process until completion.
- The park authority will soon have an additional significant source of income, which will be used for increased conservation efforts.
- Many more people (local and international) will soon be able to see gorillas in the wild, learn about the importance of gorilla conservation and become ambassadors of gorilla conservation.

These outcomes are especially important given the recent report published by WCS, FFI and ICCN, which confirmed an estimated 84–93% decline in Grauer's gorilla across its range. It is now highly probable that the subspecies will be listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. As has been learned and seen in neighbouring countries, Rwanda and Uganda, gorilla tourism has been the lead factor in combating gorilla poaching and conserving gorilla populations. We hope to see a similar process now in DRC.

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

All of the project staff members (rangers and trackers) are residents of the local communities, surrounding the national park, who live in extreme poverty. The project provided them with a boost in income, which also boosted their motivation to protect the gorillas (they are normally paid very meagre salaries). Furthermore, now that the group is

close to full habituation and will soon be introduced to tourists, they will enjoy increased employment opportunities.

The project was designed and led by POPOF, a local organisation that is based in the local community and understands the overall needs of the community. Throughout its different community activities POPOF involved the community members in the ongoing process of habituation and discussed future opportunities expected from increased tourism. POPOF will continue to work with the communities so that they will be the primary beneficiaries of the much expected increase in tourism.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The project implemented through the RSG constituted the bulk of the multi-annual habituation process. During the 3 intensive months in the field, the gorilla group has become semi-habituated and the park staff has been trained by John Kahekwa to continue the habituation process on their own. The park is now continuing the habituation process, which is now less intensive, and mainly includes ongoing tracking of the group, until its completion. The park is also looking into the possibility of habituating a third gorilla group.

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

The results of the project have and will continue to be publicized through POPOF's different media channels. The Kahuzi Biega National Park is promoting a strategic tourism plan in which it continuously promotes the habituation of the new gorilla group. In addition, John Kahekwa's habituation expertise and experience are recognised worldwide and John is occasionally invited to train field teams in other countries and present his work at conferences, seminars, etc. Any further assistance in promoting the project results in the UK and elsewhere would be greatly appreciated.

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

After the grant was received, POPOF and Kahuzi Biega National Park discussed the different possible habituation methods, and chose to conduct an intensive habituation process, which included camping in the field, in close proximity to the gorillas and daily observations and gradual (distant) contact. Ultimately, this proved to be highly successful as within three months only, the group became semi-habituated to the trackers' presence and what was then required as follow-up was daily tracking and observations (without camping). The Rufford grant has graciously enabled us to fund the 3 months of work in the field. After this period, since additional funding was not secured, the park has been able to undertake the expenses of the follow-up activities as noted above.

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 gorilla habituation professional	3,250	920	2,330	As explained above, the grant was used for the 3-month intensive habituation process. The additional expenses for the follow-up process are being covered by the national park.
Stipends for 6 trackers - gorilla habituation	9,360	2,670	6,690	
Travel to and from tracking point	1,950	540	1,410	
Daily rations for trackers	2,925	870	2,055	
TOTAL	17,485	5,000	12,485	

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

After two decades of war in the DRC, in which we have all viewed the drastic decline of the Grauer's gorilla, scientists have now confirmed in numbers that this subspecies is on the brink of extinction. Eco-tourism is one of the leading forces in wildlife conservation throughout the world. Before the Congo wars, thousands of tourists came to Congo to view the gorillas every year and this helped tremendously to protect the entire subspecies and its natural habitat. The security situation in our region has been stable for quite a few years now and tourism is slowly but surely increasing. We hope that within a few years, Kahuzi Biega National Park will once again become a prime tourist destination and this will undoubtedly be one of the key solutions to protecting the entire subspecies. This strategy helped save the mountain gorilla from extinction and it can also save the Grauer's gorilla.

The important next steps to ensure that this vision becomes a reality are:

- 1) To maintain ongoing contact with the Mpungwe group until full habituation is achieved.
- 2) To gradually introduce tourists to the Mpungwe group.
- 3) To work with the surrounding communities in developing different services for tourists.
- 4) To increase international awareness, which will bring in a higher volume of tourism to the park, and engage the international community in Grauer's gorilla conservation.

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?

The RSGF was noted in all of POPOF's publications regarding the project, in communications to members, friends and supporters, social media, and more.

11. Any other comments?

We would like to thank the Rufford Foundation for its generous support and also for its unique approach of identifying and supporting local conservationists in developing countries. The Rufford grant enabled us to implement a highly important project, which thankfully also helped us engage the park authority, who assumed full responsibility on the continuation of the project and its further development. We look forward to further opportunities for cooperation with the Rufford Foundation.

