

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	James C. Williams
Project title	Capacity Building in the Solomon Islands to Enhance Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation (Year II)
RSG reference	17164-2
Reporting period	12 Months
Amount of grant	£4994.00
Your email address	jwilliams@mrf-asia.org
Date of this report	04/05/2016

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
1) Establish a revised monitoring schedule and maintain strong recording and reporting protocols.			Yes	Maintained communication channels through communication officers. Accurate, standardised data recording protocol/training. Safe location set up for records and samples.
2) Introduce new skills and knowledge regarding nest identification, threat identification and relocation.			Yes	Coordinator run refresher workshop. Training workshops; refresher, basic and advanced. Turtle biology/ecology workshop. Problem solving meetings and exercises with coordinators and rangers (see #4). Identification of nesting phase, identification of poor nesting locations, nest relocation skills for all rangers; development of problem solving skills. Organic theatres and supervision of initial operations.
3) Determine a further development project for the community and provide assistance in delivering on their wishes, maintaining the high level of buy-in and support from the wider community.			Yes	Elders, coordinators and villagers decided to continue to develop their conservation centre. Windows and doors installed; additional toilet for women only. Last year's development has already facilitated additional conservation projects.
4) Re-election of Turtle Rangers and continued support for the project coordinators. An open invitation will be made for more neighbouring villagers to participate.			Yes	28 rangers across four villages. Many more interested every week. 4 experienced, 'key rangers' elected. At least one to be present every night. Multiple face-to-face coordinator meetings, and constant support through email.
5) Implementation of monitoring				Radios and second pit tag reader improved efficiency.

improvements, such as use of handheld radio, and a second pit tag reader to simplify data collection logistics.				A second 'ranger kit' provided the necessary equipment to monitor the 3-4km beach adequately. The first aid supplies eased concerns about possible injuries from walking in the dark.
6) Provide copies of the final report back to the community to reinforce learning.			Yes	See attached detailed report.

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

Severe storms in April and May 2015 removed a significant amount of sand from the beach. As a result, at high tide water reaches the vegetation in most places and during spring tide the wave action takes it ~5 m over and into the vegetation. In addition to this there is a large amount of debris on the beach. Large logs physically block access to the beach in many places and driftwood is scattered widely and the wave action has created ~75 cm high 'escarpments' in places. Consequently, much of the beach is inaccessible for turtles, and those which do find a nesting site are located where the nest is likely to be inundated.

To address the problems with the erosion, a relocation area was chosen close to the village, which appears to be the least impacted area of the beach. It has both shaded and unshaded sands and the 2015 nests were relocated to this section to ensure they are protected. Eroded nest and early nests in May 2015 that were not checked were used as case studies for 'advanced' training, developing problem solving, thinking and knowledge application –in an effort to help creative solutions when unexpected events happen.

Disturbance of some of the nesting turtles as they attempted to nest was used to emphasise that data collection is important, but secondary to allowing the turtles to nest unhindered. James developed a tag line stating "we can't protect nests if we don't let the turtles make any" and this was clearly taken in by the ranger team.

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

- Increased numbers of turtles were captured during the 2015 season. Seven nesting events were recorded, with most of the turtles having DNA sampled. Four nests were successfully relocated to a safe location and protected using grids.
- Wai-Hau has taken on more responsibilities in terms of the implementation of the project on site. Less on the ground technical expertise were required compared to 2014. The community has appreciated the gradual reduction in capacity development in terms of training, and have taken further responsibilities to implement the project independently. There was empowerment of local people particularly youths and sense of strong project ownership especially Wai-Hau as an implementing institution. An indirect consequence of this and the widespread awareness of the project has motivated a number of the younger villagers to go back to high school, college or university to gain further qualifications in their fields of interest.
- The local rangers have demonstrated improvements in skills, knowledge and confidence from previous year. The logistic support in terms of walkie talkies, medical kits and safety equipment helped improve communication on the beaches in 2015. Rangers and

Coordinators were able to communicate effectively, boosting the working morale of the rangers and coordinators.

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

The project is conducted by a team of locally elected rangers led by two coordinators and is maintained via the Waihau Foundation, an NGO created and run by local people from around the region. Furthermore, logistically the tribal land the nesting beach encompasses is accessible due to a conservational land agreement between the main villages from each of the three tribal lands Wairaha (Ausi), Waisurione (Au'vaura) and Hauhui (Po'otori).

MRFs role was to conduct the initial training and implementation. It then takes a step back handling all accounts and finance transactions with the assistance of Waihau's treasurer, chairman and team with regards to local expenditure. MRF also provides the project oversight, science and conservation objectivity.

The Waihau conservation community has grown substantially in the last 12 months. The foundation raised funding to send people to Fiji on exchange visits and training courses, and are starting to accommodate and seek funding for other projects. The effect of the 2014 and 2015 funding has been notable. The conservation centre is much larger, the classroom section is raised off the ground, there is a storage room and a flushing toilet attached to the building, the foundations and a septic tank have been laid. Project funding in 2015 provided mesh screens for the windows, paint, nails, transport expenses (freight), labour, 40 chairs and other materials for the interior of the building.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. MRF worked with the Waihau Conservation Foundation to jointly submit a grant application for ongoing funding into 2016 through the IUCN Critical Environment Partnership Fund. This has subsequently been accepted and funding is expected to be disbursed by February 2016.

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

Results are available via our annual project report, available to all stakeholders.

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

The funding was used between May and September 2015. This was a longer period than planned. Project equipment was purchased in May 2015; training and supervision took place in early June 2015. It was later identified that extended monitoring would be necessary at the end of the season, taking it into September 2015. Rufford funding facilitated this through savings made in June 2015.

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
Flights: Kota Kinabalu - Brisbane	667	479	188	
Flights: Brisbane -Honiara	591	388	203	
Domestic Travel	1586	815	771	James' prior experience and knowledge of the region allowed him to operate with greater frugality, making large savings and freeing up funds that could be applied elsewhere.
Community Contribution for Living Costs	346	346		
Community Contribution for Accommodation	577	577		
Pit Tag Readers	653	906	-253	An additional unit was purchased to replace MRF's which ceased to function. This unit is integral to much of MRF's global conservation work.
Hand Held Radios	474	434	40	
First Aid Kits	100	116	-16	An additional first aid kit was purchased to supply MRF staff with medical supplies for fieldwork.
Ranger Wages for Monitoring Extension		930	930	The need to continue monitoring during September became apparent as the season went on. Previous saving enabled this; covering the operational costs.
TOTAL	4994	4991	3	

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

The continuation and spatial/temporal expansion of the monitoring effort in the region are key next steps. Already progress has been made regarding each of these steps.

The aforementioned funding for 2016 (#5) intends to expand the monitoring to encompass winter nesting season and also develop the first draft of a local management plan in consultation with surrounding villages and the Solomon Islands Department of Environment and Conservation. Additionally, partnerships have now been established with other local organisations such as the Harisiharai Tribal Land Association, the Hahorarumu Uru forest conservation, the Ministry of Commerce and the Secretariat to Pacific Communities (SPC).

Furthermore, news of the project benefits has spread along the coast attracting the interest of two new villages (Waisisi and Siua). Waisisi's two village chiefs are already involved in the current project at Waisurione, and the village is working together with the Waihou Conservation community to start their own conservation projects. During the 2015 season people from Siua registered their interest to extend the current conservation at Wai-hau to their locality. Initial consultation among all of the villagers has already taken place and provided there are (financial) resources in coming years, the project hopes to expand to other areas such as Si'ua and hopefully other parts of Malaita.

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?

Yes. Rufford logo appears on the final report for stakeholder. The Waihou Foundation and key people involved in the project are aware of where the funding comes from.

11. Any other comments?

As was the case with funding in 2014, it is important to recognise that Rufford grant was an important contributor towards a larger project funded by NOAA. Aspects specific to, or as a direct consequence of Rufford's funding are provided where necessary. However, many of the results provided in this report are as a result of the overall project efforts. For more in depth information regarding the project as a whole please refer to the attached final report for 2015.

Due to the current positive state of the project, subsequent funding from Rufford, for 2016 is not necessary. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to again thank Rufford for their support of this project. The funding received over the past 2 years has enabled proper implementation and high quality operations to be set up, as well as affording MRF the opportunity to provide face to face support; forging linkages with the Waihou Foundation and the local community.

