

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	Naresh Kusi
Project title	Population assessment and conservation of wild yak <i>Bos mutus</i> in upper Humla, Nepal
RSG reference	17181-1
Reporting period	Ten months
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	naresh.kusi@gmail.com
Date of this report	2 Feb 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
To estimate population of wild yak in upper Humla		√		The earthquake that struck Nepal in April 2015 largely affected our field research. We had to shift our field research for a month. When we arrived in the intensive study area, the local people had already arrived with their domestic yaks. This made the study very challenging, as wild yaks are known to move to far-off locations in presence of the herders.
To generate local and national interest towards wild yak conservation			√	
To encourage university students towards wildlife conservation in upper Humla including wild yaks			√	
To inform the general public about the status of wild yak in upper Humla			√	

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

The herders had not reached the meadows of upper Humla for grazing their livestock back in July 2014 when we had seen two wild yaks grazing in the pastures of Gyau valley. But in 2015 some domestic yaks were already grazing in the same place where we had seen the wild yaks in 2014. So we ventured higher up in the valley to look for wild yaks.

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

- **Outcome 1: An increased information on places with presence of wild yaks in Humla district**

During the two months of research in Jul to Aug 2015 we made live sighting of only one wild yak in Gyau valley of upper Humla. We observed two old heads, two old horns and six hoof prints (four recent, old fresh and one old) of wild yaks in upper Humla. Details of these signs are given in table 1.

Table 1: Various signs of wild yak observed in Humla during July-August 2015

S.N.	GPS		Elevation (m)	Sign type	Habitat	Location
	Lat	Long				
1	30.23268°	082.04351°	4389	Hair	Grassland	Chuwa khola
2	30.38108°	081.60388°	5004	Half head with horn	Grassland	Gyaumingma khola
3	30.37206°	081.57912°	5105	Hoof print	Grassland	Tso lamgyok
4	30.35707°	081.51979°	5187	Live animal	Grassland	Gyau Eu
5	30.35621°	081.51904°	5188	Hoof print	Grassland	Gyau Eu
6	30.35621°	081.51904°	5188	Dung	Grassland	Gyau Eu
7	30.37141°	081.57117°	5217	Hoof print	scrub	Tso lamgyok
8	30.38301°	081.57051°	5122	Hoof print	Grassland	Tso lamgyok
9	30.37473°	081.71370°	4862	Horn	Grassland	Mergyu khola
10	30.39086°	081.55753°	5089	Hoof print	Grassland	Tso lamgyok
11	30.37786°	081.57181°	5095	Hoof print	Grassland	Tso lamgyok
12	30.38392°	081.58528°	5269	Head with horns	Grassland	Gyaumingma dhinga
13	30.25306°	081.73772°	4570	Horn	Grassland	Ngin khola

Based on the sightings of 2014 and 2015 we assume that there are at least three different wild yaks in the remote valleys of upper Humla.

In addition to our main research site in Limi valley, we also explored Chuwa khola valley situated east of Limi valley in 2015. We were informed by local people about the presence of wild yaks in this valley. Sightings of four wild yaks in July 2015 and three in August 2015 were reported by the herders in the valley. During the five days we spent there in August 2015 we did not spot a wild yak ourselves but recorded a hair sample.

- **Outcome 2: Generation of local and national interest towards wild yak conservation**

Through conservation posters and community workshops we conveyed the fact to the local people of Limi Village Development Committee (VDC) of upper Humla that the trans-Himalayan valleys of their VDC are the only places harbouring wild yaks in Nepal at present. We encouraged them to protect the remnant population. They were seen motivated to discourage killing of wild yaks in their area.

During the conservation workshop in Simkot, the district headquarter, the Chief District Officer and Local Development Officer opined that concrete activities should be taken to protect wild yaks and other important wildlife species in upper Humla in collaboration with respective government authorities. Other participants suggested that upper Humla should be declared a protected area. A total of 66 people including the representatives from major governmental and non-governmental organisations, political leaders, college and school teachers and journalists from Humla district were present in the workshop.

All the governmental and non-governmental organisations who participated the national workshop on wild yak conservation stressed on the need of coming up with immediate actions to protect wild yaks in upper Humla. Importantly the ecologist of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) informed that the government authority is interested to initiate the process of declaring the area as a new protected area. He suggested that a written application from the local community requesting the government to begin the process is required for this. The national workshop was attended by 40 participants including the major government organisations like DNPWC, Department of Forests (DoF) and non-governmental organisations like NTNC, ZSL-Nepal, Himalayan Nature, BCN, RHF, SMCRF, WCN, RPN, GPN, journalists from major newspapers of Nepal and the local people from upper Humla who had come to Kathmandu to spend the winter.

University students were encouraged to conduct researches on wildlife including wild yaks during the university workshops. The workshop at Tribhuvan University had 40 participants while the workshop at Pokhara University was attended by 20 participants.

- **Outcome 3: Publicity of the area as one of the ultimate high Himalayan birding destinations in Nepal**

The project although related to wild yak, generated two significant by-products. We discovered Tibetan lark (*Melanocorypha maxima*) as a new bird for Nepal and also gathered a photographic evidence to suggest the first breeding record of common redshank (*Tringa tetanus*) for Nepal. These findings together with the earlier important findings on birds made by researchers from Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal present the area as one of the ultimate high Himalayan birding destinations in Nepal.

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2016-01-09/tibetan-lark-found-in-upper-humla.html>

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

During the 2 months field research we involved one local villager from Limi VDC as our field guide and a local villager from Barkhang VDC as a cook. We also hired ten mules from him that were taken care of by one mule caretaker from his village. All these local participants were provided with daily allowances during the field research.

Most importantly they developed a considerable respect for wildlife in the area through our shared time and have also learnt some techniques of studying them.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. We would continue activities on research and conservation of wild yaks in Nepal.

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

We have already shared our results with university students, district authorities and national conservation stakeholders through wild yak conservation workshops. The results were share with the general public through publication of news and popular articles.

1. <http://www.ekantipur.com/2015/04/21/national/extinct-wild-yak-found-in-humla-study/404342.html>
2. <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-09-01/survival-of-wild-yaks-under-increasing-threat.html>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNURGGvt2lw>
4. <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2016-01-26/black-giants.html>

We plan to share the outcomes to the scientific community through publication of journal article for which we anticipate to collect more data from the field.

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 for ten months from April 2015 to January 2016. We had outlined the final report submission in March 2016. But we are submitting it a month earlier.

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
1. Field Research				
Sleeping bags	450	600	(-200)	
Mattresses	15	9	6	
Daily allowance for researchers	2400	2400	0	
Daily allowance for field guide	750	750	0	
Kitchen utensils	150	150	0	
Batteries for GPS and camera	50	100	(-50)	
Data sheets (print and copy)	25	15	10	
2. Conservation workshop				
Hall charge	40	60	(-20)	
Transportation	200	100	100	
Communication	20	20	0	
Snacks	300	550	(-250)	
Multimedia hiring	80	40	40	
Posters	500	200	300	
Total	4980	4994	(-14)	

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

The following are the important next steps:

1. A detail study on wild yaks in Chuwa khola valley
2. Enforcement of effective national level programs for wild yak conservation in Humla

**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.

The wild yak conservation poster contained the Rufford Foundation logo.

The Rufford Foundation logo also appeared in the banners of wild yak conservation workshops.

RSGF also received publicity during the course as it was mentioned in the news covered by the national print media of Nepal.

<http://myrepublica.com/society/story/34611/rare-bird-tibetan-lark-sighted-in-upper-humla.html>

11. Any other comments?

We are thankful to the Rufford Foundation for funding this project. We look forward for receiving similar support in the future as well.