

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	Lindy Thompson
Project title	Ecology of the Hooded Vulture, <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i> , in the Kruger-to-Canyons Biosphere Reserve, South Africa
RSG reference	18421-1
Reporting period	26 November 2015 to 4 December 2016
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	lindojano@yahoo.com
Date of this report	5 January 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
Data collection and publication of results relating to the breeding and feeding biology and movements of hooded vultures in South Africa				We have collected 89 nest-months' worth of camera trap photos from hooded vulture nests. This week we will submit our first manuscript for publication, on visitors to hooded vulture nests, outlining the potential threat from Chacma baboons and Egyptian geese. Movement data is half analysed and will provide a continent-wide perspective on factors affecting hooded vulture movements. We have presented scientific talks in the USA, Senegal and South Africa. We have presented a scientific poster in Senegal at the International Ornithological Congress in October 2016.
Public talks and other outreach efforts to increase general awareness about vultures and the ecosystem services they provide.				We have given public talks in South Africa, and more scheduled for this year. The K2C Hooded Vulture Project has 414 members who receive regular updates about the project. We have published two newspaper articles in a local paper which has a readership of 5000 people. Numerous volunteers have assisted with fieldwork, increasing their understanding of research techniques. Last year I formed links with local government operatives, and this year will collaborate to develop and implement education programmes at local schools. Some

			local historically-disadvantaged people have had paid temporary employment whilst helping with field work.
Collection of data on nest trees and nest dimensions.			Over the next 6 months I will complete this data collection. Most of it can be done on inactive nests, before the breeding season, to minimise disturbance, but some must be done during the breeding season, so can only be finalised in June 2017, now that we have enough nests for this analysis.
Production of a species management plan to be disseminated to all stakeholders.			This will be the culmination of the project, once all other scientific publications have been completed. Before this is done, we still aim to publish papers on: (i) breeding success, (ii) nest site selection and nest characteristics, (iii) theft of nest material, and (iv) feeding ecology, resulting in five scientific publications in total.

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

The main challenge I faced was the length of time it took for a research permit to be issued by the South African National Parks. Until this permit was granted, I could not conduct fieldwork in the Kruger National Park. However, I was fortunate in also having study areas outside the park. So, until the research permit was granted, I focused my work outside the park.

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

- i. We have learned that hooded vultures in my study area have had very poor breeding success over the last two breeding seasons. They are threatened by natural predators such as Chacma baboons and martial eagles. Egyptian geese (known usurpers of some raptor nests) cause disturbance to breeding hooded vultures.
- ii. We have learned that hooded vultures from Southern Africa move much more widely than hooded vultures from West Africa or Ethiopia, which may be

linked to their diet, and differences in how commensal these birds are with people.

- iii. We have formed links with local government operatives with a view to implementing education programmes at local schools in 2017.

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

I have had volunteers from local communities working with me on the project. One young man who regularly joined me on fieldwork has since changed jobs and moved to a reserve warden role in the local area. A young woman from an impoverished local community has decided to do an MSc on vultures; she has been successful in obtaining funding from a South African NGO and I will be co-supervising her over the next 2 years. I have trained four people to do tree climbing for research purposes, and I have taught all of my volunteers and assistants about vultures and vulture conservation. I have also employed some local people on an ad hoc basis (using funds from Hawk Conservancy Trust in the UK), to assist with fieldwork, so they have benefitted financially through the project and also learned new skills.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I plan to continue with both the research and the outreach activities in 2017.

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

- In 2016, I presented talks on the project at three local bird clubs, one university group, and a group of international interns in the USA. I already have public talks planned for 2017.
- I have made a Facebook page for the project, called 'K2C Hooded Vulture Project', where I regularly share updates with 414 group members.
- I send updates to project stakeholders (all landowners, reserve managers and volunteers) twice a year.
- I have published two newspaper articles about the project and will write more in 2017.
- I have written one manuscript that will be submitted to a peer reviewed journal this week.
- Other manuscripts will be completed and submitted this year and next year.

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 RSG was used over 1 year. I would like to continue this project for 2 more years (in 2017 and 2018).

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
GoPro Hero 3 White Edition plus accessories	203	2353.12	-32.49	Exchange rate used was from www.xe.com on 5 January 2016, where GBP 1 = ZAR 16.72.
Fuel for 4x4 vehicle for 2 field seasons	1761	1641.87	+119.13	
8 x Acorn infra-red camera traps	2555	2063.92	+491.08	
Tree climbing equipment	481	1064.81	-583.81	
Total	5000	5006.09		In total, we overspent by £6.09

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

- I will use the data I collected (and will collect in 2017) to determine hooded vulture nest site selection criteria, which can then be used to identify the area's most in need of protection.
- I will work in conjunction with local partners to deliver environmental education for children and adults in the study area. In particular, it is important to educate local people about the importance of vultures in the ecosystem, and that the use of body parts from poisoned birds in traditional medicine may harm human health.
- It is important to educate landowners and key personnel on how to respond to vulture poisoning events.
- I also wish to produce a final species conservation plan for hooded vultures in South Africa.

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 logo was used in the talks I did at scientific conferences and for public and student audiences. It was also used on a scientific poster which will be printed and copies made available for the public at the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

N/A.

12. Any other comments?

I am extremely grateful to the Rufford Small Grants Fund for their generous support.