

## **Project Update: September 2017**

### Objectives

- To quantify the benefits of pastoralism on the mammal fauna in the Mutara Rangelands, Rwanda, by using camera trapping and local ecological knowledge.

Partially achieved - Until now I finished the quantification of mammal fauna by using the local ecological knowledge and very small portion using the camera traps.

- To assess the impact of different degrees of cattle grazing, subsistence agriculture and urbanisation on small and medium-sized mammal species (ungulates, carnivores, primates) that have often adapted to a cryptic and crepuscular life style.

Partially achieved - Only data from cameras are missing.

- The study was supposed to provide information on abundance and distribution of wildlife for the first time and helps to understand the impact of pastoralism and differing conservation status on wildlife and biodiversity.

Partially achieved - Only data from cameras are missing but the preliminary photos are promising that some animals are still persisting in the study areas.

### Outcomes

The most important outcome of this project is that the local community and the officials knew about The Rufford Foundation and that it supports scientists for nature conservation related research.

As advised by the police officers, I am planning to have meetings with the local communities and do the conservation awareness campaign before setting the cameras again. The cameras were unknown to the local community but I started to explain to them and the one who funded me for the interests of the nature conservation. I plan to share my results with others, through scientific publication, i.e. Biodiversity conservation Journal, through conferences and through seminars.

### Difficulties

I came to know that to carry out the study in the unprotected area is very difficult especially in the areas with mainly with indigenous knowledge only, the local communities were accusing me to plan the future loss of their land.

The unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project were the confiscation of the cameras from the field by the police on the 1st May 2017; at that time I was also arrested and jailed for 3 weeks. Due to that the cameras were outside of the protected area (de-gazetted parts of the Akagera NP) and I was charged to use the photos in spying and send them somewhere else not for research purposes. It was not easy for the local community and police to see the camera traps in the people's farmlands. Before starting the fieldwork I was recommended by the university then I went to the Mayor of the District of Nyagatare to allow me carry my study in his district, he allowed me to do it with a written permission. But the permission didn't prevent my entrance to the jail.

Interestingly, after 3 weeks I was released from the jail and advised by the police not to use the Mayor's permission but the Ministry of Education's Research Clearance. Now the documents requesting for the research clearance from the Ministry of Education were submitted and I am still waiting for the response which I hope to get it in November 2017. As I promised you in the request of the extension of the project I wrote to you in June this year, I promise to finish this project next year at this time.

I strongly advise to those who carry researches in the non-protected areas especially using high technology in the areas with local community to take care because it is not easy for the local community and security officers to understand what is the purpose, why use that high technology on their land, the local community always think that you want to steal their land especially in developing countries where the resources are the main needs.

### Plans

For sure there are plans to continue this work because the officials instead that the project is good for the environment managers, who will see also that the animals still persist in the unprotected areas. The important next steps are the use of the camera traps in the field because during the small period I used them I have seen the unmentioned species by the local communities during the interview and the ones that have mentioned in interviews were not seen in images that's why I strongly insist on that step.

