

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Swechhya Shrestha
<b>Project Title</b>	Initiation of Community Based Conservation of Fishing Cat in Jagdishpur of Kapilvastu, Nepal
<b>Application ID</b>	28790-1
<b>Grant Amount</b>	£5,963
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<b>Date of this Report</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> November 2021

**1. 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
Consultation with the local government				A meeting was held with a representative of the local government. The importance of conservation of fishing cat and its habitat was thoroughly explained. Besides that, the project activities and its goal were also highlighted in the meeting.
Focal group discussion				With the presence of around 25 locals the first cycle of focal group discussion was organised. The ideas of locals and their understanding on conservation the major goal of the project was discussed. Also, once the project was in its final phase, a second focal group discussion in presence of 10 locals was also organized. The second cycle of FGD was more about the future planning regarding fishing cat conservation and the further role of community in conservation.
Questionnaire Survey				100 questionnaire survey was undertaken.
Camera Trap Survey				Two transects of camera trap survey was held in the area. The cameras successfully captured fishing cat in various locations.
School awareness program				Although 20 schools were planned only 15 school awareness programmes could take place. It was because of the unavoidable situation like Covid-19 pandemic many schools in the area remained close.
Three community awareness campaigns				Community awareness campaigns were also organised. The informational posters were used as major awareness equipment.
Information boards installation and informational poster printing				Two information boards with conservation message of fishing cat were designed and installed in the area. The areas for installation of the boards were selected by discussing with the local government. Also, 500 copies of informational posters were designed and distributed as awareness material in the area.

**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

During the middle of project implementation phase, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Nepal and the government announced a national lockdown from March to July 2020. The country underwent strict lockdown for around 4 months. With things getting back to normal, again the open borders of the country brought a rise in infected people and the virus spread like wildfire, especially in the Kathmandu Valley. Hence second lockdown was announced from August to September 2020.

However, other desktop works like data compilation, informational poster and information boards were designed during the lockdown. Two news articles (in English and Nepali languages) regarding the fishing cat being captured in the area was written and published in two national dailies.

As soon as the travel was allowed field activities were planned with safety and precautions.

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

- Community's level of knowledge in understanding conservation importance of fishing cat and its habitat conservation

The questionnaire survey delineated that there's a huge knowledge gap in understanding fishing cat conservation and its habitat. Out of 100 locals, around 85% have seen fishing cat in the area while 15% were unaware of its existence. Although, 85% could identify the fishing cat in the picture they did not know the conservation importance and its status. When asked about the feeding behaviour of fishing cat, the locals described that the species visited their poultry to feed upon fish and chickens. Besides only few could elaborate the threat the species is facing in the area.

- Fishing cat record in camera trap

There were many studies done on fishing cat after the first photographic evidence in 2015. The previous studies after 2015 failed to record the fishing cat in camera traps. This also asserted that fishing cat has locally disappeared from the area. But the record of fishing cat in camera traps in both transects from this project has been a biggest outcome. Furthermore, two news articles were published in two national dailies in both English and Nepali languages.

- Impact of information boards

The sites selected for the informational boards were in a noticeable region of the reservoir where there's high flow of locals as well as outsiders. The information on the boards highlights the conservation importance of fishing cat and its habitat. It has influenced many people of the area to generate knowledge regarding fishing cat and its conservation.

**4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.**

The local communities were directly and indirectly involved in the project activities. Through the focal group discussion and community and school awareness programmes, the communities have benefitted with the information about fishing cat, its habitat and the conservation value. Apart from that one of the locals was chosen a local assistant in the project. He was trained with basic knowledge of using camera traps and GPS. He was also actively involved in all the project activities, mainly the camera trapping. Furthermore, the information boards installed in the region have provided information about fishing cat to both national and international visitors of the Jagdishpur region. They will be aware that the area not just is the hotspot for migratory birds but for a very unique and rare species like fishing cat. It is also expected to help in reducing incidences of retaliation killing and hunting of fishing cat with increasing awareness of conservation.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Although an initiation has been made for community-based conservation there's still much more to do in order to create proactive community members in conservation. This project has provided a baseline of community-based conservation of fishing cat, now the further plan is to implement more advance form of project activities. With just the basic information provided about the fishing cat during the project the youth in the community have been interested in being involved in conservation of fishing cat actively in the area. Hence, bringing up a more advance form of project activity like "promotion on ecotourism via conservation of fishing cat" as continuation of this project would support in uplifting livelihoods of the locals as well as developing a sense of ownership for conservation in the area among the community. This would eventually discourage hunting and retaliation killing of wildlife and promote development and conservation in a parallel manner in and around the area.

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

The results from the project will be shared with the community through discussions and presentations. A copy of final report will be provided to local government bodies, local organisations (Jagdishpur reservoir management committee and homestay management team), concerned government and non-governmental organisations. Likewise, an article shall be published based on the camera trap and questionnaire survey data in a peer-reviewed journal.

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

The project got approved in October 2019 and funding got released in November 2019, the permission for the project implementation also got approved by the end of November 2019. The project activities were implemented in mid-December 2019. Although, the initial plan was to complete all the field activities by May 2020 the first and second wave of the Covid-19 outbreak interrupted these and many setbacks

followed. However, after almost 18 months of delay the project concluded in October 2021.

**8. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.**

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Food and Accommodation	2310	2400	+90	Personal Protection Equipment had to be brought.
Travel Expenses	303	450	+147	Public transportation had to be avoided for safety reasons and vehicle was hired for travelling both long & short routes.
Stationaries for educational outreach program at schools	500	475	-25	20 school programs were decreased to 15
Lunch and refreshments for 3 awareness campaign	675	600	-75	Participants were decreased due to pandemic
Stationaries for 3 awareness campaigns	450	413	-37	Participants were decreased due to pandemic
Lunch and refreshments for Focal group discussion	135	135		
Stationaries for questionnaire survey and focal group discussion	150	150		
Stipends for local staff	700	600	-100	Working days were reduced due to pandemic
Two Informational Board installation and manufacture	190	190		
Photo book/Poster preparation and production	200	200		
Technical Support	150	150		
Communication	100	100		
Report preparation and publication	100	100		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5963</b>	<b>5963</b>		

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

The important next step that seems to be required is capacity building training to the local community. The area also holds high potential for ecotourism and recently has become a centre of attraction for bird watchers. Likewise, Jagdishpur reservoir is getting popular these days for recreational purposes as well. If the promotion of the area could be done as a prone habitat of a unique species, fishing cat, it is expected to become an international and national tourist destination. However, the area lacks good accommodation facilities. Although a homestay facility is there, the homestay is not well established, and all the houses are not suitably made for homestay services. Therefore, a capacity building training on ecotourism should be provided to the locals who would emphasise conservation of wildlife species that habituate in the area.

**10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

The Rufford Foundation logo was used in information board and poster. The PDF versions of those have been emailed to the foundation.

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

**Ms. Swechhya Shrestha** was the principal investigator of the project. She did her master's in environmental science in 2018 and since then she has been actively working in conservation. Her role for the project was to lead the team into implementation and completion of the project while coordinating all the aspects of the project.

**Mr. Deelip Chand Thakuri** was the research assistant in this project. He has pursued his master's degree in environmental science and was associated with SMCRF as an intern. He has been doing various field-based activities and database management.

**Mr. Anil Chaudhary** was the local assistant from the community in this project. He has passed 12<sup>th</sup> standard and was very happy to be part of the project. He was trained with basic knowledge on GPS and camera trap. He assisted the team in camera trap survey, communication with community and various awareness programs.

**12. Any other comments?**

The team express its gratitude towards The Rufford Foundation for being understanding and adaptable in regard to project completion amidst Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Like Jagdishpur region there many such areas in Nepal which lie outside protected areas that holds many conservational important species. But due to weakness in policies, the species outside protected areas remain unexplored and unprotected. Thus, the team is very thankful to the foundation for giving an

opportunity to work with the community of such area where conservation ideas  
area more required.