

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Clara Naomi Cassell
Project Title	Early steps towards Liberia's Bird Atlas Project
Application ID	32666-1
Grant Amount	£5,950
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Date of this Report	February 2022

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
Deliver much needed information about Liberian Bird Atlas to students				Awareness materials have been designed, distributed, and posted at various bird club locations. This included stickers, posters, and notice boards.
Build number of birds atlassers active around Liberia				This objective is yet to be fully realised since bird atlases must use good birders, and bird club members are still building their birding skills.
Provide equipment and guides to students for the pursuit of birding				Binoculars and bird guides have been delivered to five bird clubs formed across Liberia.
Provide linkages and contacts to students and faculty for bird and Atlassing related queries				The training seminar visits were followed by a check-in visit and a final visit to deliver notice boards, and bird club representatives remained active in all phases.
Explore more pentads outside Monrovia				Approximately eight new pentads have been visited during bird club visits.
Imbue students with a sense of responsibility for these pentads near them				This objective is dependent on the number of active atlases, which is still pending development of birding skill and competence by club members.

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

- Equipment delivery from abroad delaying seminars by 4 months.
- University procedure and politics causing delays in club formation.
- Interest of non-science students causing friction with science students who felt they should be the only target audience for such an activity.
- Distraction and chaos caused by addressing larger groups than intended, due to miscommunication of seminar information.

- Short amount of time to teach about app and spark interest in bird watching in initial seminar visit.
- Student requests to conduct seminar birding experience outside of their usual environment, since they were taking the visits as a possible substitute for poor practical component of their degree programmes.
- Blockages to normal confidence in forming a campus club caused by the unfamiliarity with concept of a bird club as just another club: guidance on routine issues was requested from University focal persons.
- Failure to account for much needed regular follow-up visits in initial plan.

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

- Equipment has been delivered to institutions which have a need for them, not just for bird atlas, but also for other field activities and projects.
- Student interest has been suitably assessed at several universities across Liberia (generally positive reactions) and contact has been established with key drivers of birding/science clubs at universities.
- Awareness materials have been created and distributed, and the Liberian Bird Atlas is better known now than before the project began.

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

Representatives from local communities, namely university faculty and students from local communities around the five institutions have gained access to equipment and materials for participation in an activity and a useful skill and hobby.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

I intend to pursue further funding to continue providing support to the Liberian Bird Atlas's existing infrastructure and to expand the skills, material resources, contribution, and capabilities of the clubs and birding groups which form the Bird Atlas. This will include regular planned trips to nurture formed bird clubs and a larger training seminar to target protected area research and monitoring staff around Liberia (following examples from Kenya and Nigeria).

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

A poster showing the details and progress of the bird atlas, a call for participants, a list of resources, and our contacts, focused on biodiversity-related NGOs and protected area staff, another untapped resource for bird atlasing in Liberia. These will be delivered to various NGOs around Liberia, including their focal locations and atlas details surrounding these.

Our Facebook page (Liberian Bird Atlas) is also ideal for sharing our progress.

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

Actual: January 2021 – November 2021

Proposed: October 2020 – March 2021

The delayed release of funds led to difficulties in ordering equipment and shipping them here while many associates visited Liberia around the end of the year. The alternative shipping means used was as a part of another person's cargo on a steel container on a ship, which was delayed for unknown reasons, likely complications due to COVID 19 restrictions.

The continuing impact of COVID 19 on the Liberian educational institutions' schedules caused uncertainty in visiting the universities and institutions included in the proposal.

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
Incidental	149	532	+383	Included unforeseen shipping costs and bank transfer charges: 1. £342,96 = \$463 was deducted from the amount received into account of SCNL, likely a result of conversion disadvantages and in-between bank charges. 2. A flat rate of \$255 = £188,89 was paid to include a box of books and binoculars in a container of other cargo. (I carried remaining 20 binoculars from Switzerland free of charge).

Stationery & Printed materials	361	501	+140	A different vendor was used when the first print shop closed, and the cost of printing was much lower. Notepads and pens were purchased for participants at different institutions. Additionally, notice boards were designed for each bird club and posters showing results of bird club grant and a call for atlases are to be printed and displayed at various NGOs and National Parks.
Telescope	68		-68	The bank charges removed from the grant amount made it necessary to prioritize certain items and the telescope was removed, considering difficulties in shipping anticipated once the holiday rush was over.
Binoculars	1211	1077	-135	More functional and reasonably priced items were found in lieu of Wingspan binoculars for which the price had increased in the six months since the application was sent.
Bird Guides	247	278	+31	Offers on Amazon were less than they had been during price estimation.
Data packages	114	182	+68	Credit vouchers were purchased for participants at different institutions to download and use recommended apps and services, and for team members to maintain contact with contact persons (covered by the cost of the modem initially presented)
Travel modem	76		-76	The purchase of the travel modem was put off until the other equipment was received, then entirely cut out in favour of distributing data amongst persons downloading the apps and other materials.
Hall rental/seminar	380	607	+227	Hall use and power for seminar fees estimated around \$150 were generally set at \$200
Team DSA	608	830	+222	One of the trips had 3 instead of 4 team members, and additional DAS was paid for return visits and club check ins.

Team accommodation	456	304	-152	Some team members had family in some of the locations, and accommodation for one of the trips was in the house of the registrar of the college.
Car rental	2280	1640	-640	Initial estimates were accidentally given for buses, and as none of these were available, we rented smaller vehicles for less. This excess ensured that additional day trips were possible to provide additional support to formed clubs in later stages of projects.
Total	5950	5950		

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

Clara N. Cassell

Bird atlas team leader, and record reviewer for Liberia. Grant led. Managed release of funds from SCNL, selected additional team members, established communications with institutions for trips, engaged companies for car rentals, arranged ordering and shipping of equipment and books from the US and Switzerland, designed and arranged printing of awareness materials, designed and arranged presentations and agenda, oversaw logistics for individual trips, and compiled final report.

Andrew Gweh

A graduate of the University of Liberia and atlasser working in conservation projects around Liberia, Andrew has become an avid birder and conservation scientist in the last three years. He joined for several of the trips and led the logistics and implementation of one of these with assistance.

"It was observed that participants had little or no knowledge about birds watching but after the training, they showed desire to study/watch birds. The responses from participants at each institution during the training showed that more educations about birds will increase their participation as well as their value as citizen scientists in data collections. I suggest that the establishment of bird clubs or training could start earlier, such as in high school in order to prepare students for birding. Financial aid to various clubs is vital to cover basic needs like stationery and little movements to other communities around for birding. Finally, we should ensure that knowledgeable persons regularly visit the various clubs to mentor each club. Thanks to the Rufford organization for affording us the opportunity to learn and share the important of citizen's participation in scientific data collection."

Deborah Messan

A student at the University of Liberia, member of the Fendell Bird Club and burgeoning birder, Deborah's passion is to showcase the inspiring routine of Liberians.

"I was opportune to have been part of this unique bird atlas training series. This training has help improve my knowledge and passion more about bird watching in my country because there is a need to do more bird watching, so as to get more information on species that are in Liberia and to continue educating and providing materials for people who are interested in this field."

Eric Quanie

Is a former student of the Nimba Community College, and graduate of the University of Liberia working in conservation in Nimba. Liaised with the administration of the Nimba County Community College before and after workshop to enable formation of the bird club at NCCC.

"Although I'm still new to bird identification, the bird Atlas trip increased my experience in the area and allowed me to gain new insight into bird identification. I noticed different species composition in different areas, e.g., the swamps at the edge of the Nimba Community College campus. Also, I learned that first recognizing those features (body size, beak, colour patterns) as well as calling the name of a bird which distinguishes them from each other is very important. I know that the bird Atlas trip was organized in such a way as to utilize limited resources, but I look forward to more such trips and time being allotted to explore new ideas the field such as projects and observations."

Ernest T. Teamah

A student at the Forestry Training Institute, and head of FTI's bird club and conservation drama club. Ernest organized the students at the Forestry Training Institute into a club and put into place with his compatriots a schedule for bird watching and learning about birds.

"I observed many types of species during the bird watching trip including migratory and indigenous birds. During the time of my bird atlassing I learned many things: I became more attentive to noting wildlife in the field and became more experienced in scientific work and new terms in birdwatching. I learned that birds play a major role in forest regeneration and seed dispersal. After the initial trip carried out at the Forestry Training Institute, our group continued with birding during class field trips at various locations including the Lake Piso Multiple Use Reserve. My major challenge during the training was learning about transporting data to the Bird Map, in terms of verifying records to submit trip cards."

Beyan Borbor

A University of Liberia graduate working at the Libassa Ecolodge's Wildlife Sanctuary, Beyan's interest in birds and his job working close to them and in one of the more popular birding destinations in Liberia made him a good addition to the team.

"The purpose of the bird atlas visit was to educate and provide tools for establishing a bird club. The team gave the BCTC leadership some printed materials, binoculars and bird guides, and provided them with resources useful in establishing and maintaining a bird club. From what I have seen, it is necessary to conduct frequent visitation of trainers and Bird atlas team members, so as to ensure their progress."

Franklynne Cassell

An administrative student and linguist living in Monrovia, Franklynne joined on a couple of trips and aided in management and arrangement of the seminars.

“Working with the Liberian Bird Atlas team was amazing! I learned about the role of birds in our ecological system and basic bird identification techniques. I also learned to appreciate nature more after experiencing it through the eyes of our team leader who was so passionate and informative about the environment, birds and education. I wish there were more teachers and fun clubs like that at the universities here. I judge my experience as exceptional because I learned new things and met some very interesting people. I’m sad the program is ending but glad to have new birders and friends because of it!”

Adolphus Tiah

An employee of the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia and birder. Joined for one of the five trips and taught students about bird watching and identification.

Please see below some photos from the project activities with some team members:



Image set 1 Forestry Training Institute: i. Bird club received field guide and binoculars;
ii. Birding with students



Image set 2 Cuttington University College: i. Team introduction brief; ii. Birding trip binocular use tutorial by Clara Cassell and Franklyne Cassell (rightmost); iii. Turnover of equipment by Clara Cassell and Deborah Messan (leftmost)



Image set 3 Bong County Technical College: Students birding with Andrew Gweh and Beyan Borbor



Image set 4 Nimba County Community College: i. Andrew Gweh presenting project goals; ii. Group photo with Eric Quanie (leftmost)



Image set 5 Grand Bassa Community College: i. Deborah Messan with poster and ii. Student group photo



Image set 6 Awareness materials: i. Grant activities banner; ii. materials distributed

The digital copies of awareness materials printed are available if requested.

12. Any other comments?

Our sincere thanks to The Rufford Foundation for the chance to share the joy of birding with others, particularly students at a vital stage of their careers in science and forestry, and provision of awareness materials that will serve as constant reminders of the initiative.