

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Aritra Kshetry
Project Title	Scaling up a successful conservation model: Safer shared spaces between people, elephants and leopards
Application ID	33632-D
Date of this Report	9 th August 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
Leopard density estimation and tracking of collared individuals				Leopard estimation was carried out over ~400 sq. km of tea plantations and forests despite setbacks due to multiple outbreaks of Covid 19. Across a sampling effort of 1205 trap nights, 71 leopard images were obtained of 32 individuals.
Leopard Quick Response Teams				We set up leopard quick response teams in four tea estates and, instead of creating small teams, we included all the female workers in our programme. Whistles were handed over to them to use before the commencement of work. The sound made would scare away the leopards from the respective area of the garden and help avert accidents. A total of 2400 workers were included in this programme.
Tracking of Collared elephant herds				The two collars on two herds are still active and our team has been providing support to the West Bengal Forest Department in tracking and managing data from these collars.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) We estimated leopard density in a tea plantation landscape for the first time and also included the protected areas in the study. Apart from the leopards, the camera trap exercise also documented other fauna such as leopard cat, jungle cat, stiped necked mongoose, yellow throated marten, Indian crestless porcupine, and small-toothed ferret badger or the Chinese ferret badger. The work underscored the conservation value of these shared landscapes.
- b) The safety sessions along with the leopard teams in tea gardens led to reduced fear of leopards and there was no request for leopard trapping from the estates where we have carried out safety sessions and established the leopard teams.
- c) Tracking of collared elephant herds provided vital insights on their ranging pattern and how they avoid human-use areas during the day and only cross

them at night to move from one forest to another. This is a vital learning in coexistence for the herds to share space safely with people.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

The only issue we had to tackle was recurrent outbreaks of Covid-19 in the project area during the project period. However, we managed to complete our project activities despite the small setbacks.

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

Right from our project team to our project beneficiaries, local communities are the fulcrum of our projects. In this project Amir Chettri, our field associate is himself from the local Nepali community. Furthermore, our Leopard Teams program also targeted local Adviasi (Indigenous Tribes) communities. The project impacted more than 2400 families of local communities.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The Coexistence Project has been active in the region since 2013 and we plan to continue and expand on our work as well. The leopard population monitoring will be repeated every alternate year and the elephant monitoring will also continue. We will also add new initiatives that enable local communities to share space safely with elephants and leopards.

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

We are developing a short video on the leopard teams and early warning methods to prevent accidents. The video will be widely circulated through local TV, social media and other tools to reach the maximum number of people possible.

The results from the leopard estimation will be shared with the scientific community through peer-reviewed publications. Our earlier work supported by The Rufford Foundation has also been published and the published papers have been shared with the foundation as well.

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

Looking ahead, the next steps should be to institutionalise the safety practices so that tea estate workers routinely follow them to avoid accidents. Efforts should also be made to share the costs of coexistence so that workers who share space with leopards and elephants get incentives for the shared spaces. Policy level intervention is required so that a Payments for Ecosystem Services approach is incorporated into coexistence models.

8. 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 all contact programmes/awareness sessions and during the creation of the leopard teams. More than 2000 people were involved in these sessions. These events were also attended by officials from the forest department.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Aritra Kshetry: Team Leader

Tonmoy Mukherjee: Project Coordinator

Tonmoy has been with the project since 2018 after obtaining his master's in clinical research and has retained good contacts with local plantation managers and also the local forest department. He is also a local and is acquainted with the intricacies of working in human-use areas on elephant and leopard conservation especially when people face major losses. He is trained in field techniques such as collaring, tracking and GPS mapping.

Priyanka Das: Academic Coordinator

Priyanka has been part of the project since 2017 and completed her masters in Conservation Science in 2020. Her interests include stress physiology and acoustics in elephants. Priyanka coordinated with the Forest Department regarding required permits to carry out leopard estimation inside the Protected Areas of Gorumara National Park and Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary.

Amir Chhetri: Project Associate

Amir Chhetri is a member of the local community, and he has been with our project since 2015. Amir supports all the field components of the project including setting up of cameras, monitoring the cameras, and communicating with local communities.

Anish Paul: Intern

Nitish Kumar: Intern

10. Any other comments?





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