

## Final Evaluation Report

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| Your Details               |  |
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| <b>Full Name</b>           | David Wechuli  |
| <b>Project Title</b>       | The Conservation of Threatened Harrison's Giant Mastiff Bat at Mt Suswa Conservancy, Kenya |
| <b>Application ID</b>      | 39318-B  |
| <b>Date of this Report</b> | 5 <sup>th</sup> November 2023  |

**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   |
|--|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| To map all 18 caves in the Conservancy and determine which ones are a home to Harrison's Giant Mastiff bats    |              |                    |                | We mapped the caves and forest area with a drone, which provides aerial photographs display these caves.   |
| To document major threats that the species and their roosting caves face                                       |              |                    |                | Major threats such as charcoal burning, vegetation clearance to create room for subsistence farming as well as uncontrolled visitation to caves. Due to limited funding, only one cave was fixed with a gate to control visitations. Our future plan is to employ trained bat guardians to watch over the cave entrances and provide guidelines to tourists visiting caves. We propose fixing three more gates/fences on three caves. Our long-term plan will be to assess how land-use changes are affecting these natural habitats and advise on how to mitigate any potential negative effects. |
| To educate local farmers, pastoralists and school pupils on roost conservation in surrounding the Conservancy. |              |                    |                | The five trained local guides were part of a robust education and awareness programme to outdoor enthusiasts and local communities to enhance messages about the conservation and benefits of our target species and to increase visitation to the conservancy. We were unable to reach all residents in certain villages within the conservancy due to the broadness of the areas. We plan to educate local farmers, pastoralists, and schoolchildren about roost protection in three more communities surrounding the conservancy.   |
| To establish a baseline population, estimate for the target species Harrison's Giant Mastiff                   |              |                    |                | Based on echolocation data, we only have preliminary data on the species because just a few caves have been surveyed. Examining the echolocation   |

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| bats.  |  |  | files to identify the species is a daunting task. However, during the next phase of this project, more caves will be surveyed once we purchase A FLIR Systems SR-19 thermal camera, which is efficient in estimating bat numbers in caves.  |
| To develop a three-year action plan for the management of mount Suswa Conservancy. |  |  | A stakeholder workshop was held, with representatives from universities, Mount Suswa management, and local government in attendance. A draft document is now being evaluated and will be discussed at the upcoming meeting. Another workshop will be held to involve the general public, Bat Conservation Africa, Kenya Wildlife Service, IUCN and rangers in finalizing and endorsing the action plan. |

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

- a). The main threats to Mt. Suswa Conservancy's caves and bats foraging areas have been identified and documented and will provide the basis for the development of a proper 3-year bat conservation action plan.
- b). Well trained bat guardians who are now championing the protection of caves and guiding tourists as well as well informed local community on the importance of bats. The residents and enthusiasts will enhance messages about the conservation and benefits of bats.
- c). We now have an extensive education and outreach programme in place that will boost messages about the conservation and benefits of our target species and promote visitation to the conservancy.

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

A severe downpour caused terrible road conditions, which rendered some areas impassable and resulted in car breakdowns. Therefore, we hired/rented motorcycles to get to the project site. In the wake of fuel price increases, we had to make a small adjustment to our budget as well as source extra funds.

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

This project involved local community from the onset, and they were empowered on best practices to minimise bat-oriented conflicts by exchanging knowledge and working together, and the willingness to support bat conservation efforts as well as catalysing local ownership of the project.

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

I have plans to continue with this work as there were several gaps that I identified during project implementation which ought to be addressed. More caves and habitat will be mapped including species assessments in several localities. I intend to seek funding to purchase the A FLIR Systems SR-19 thermal cameras to estimate bat populations in caves. The assessment will enrich suggestions made during the recent Red List Workshop in Swakopmund, Namibia where I participated in an effort to update information for the Harrison's giant mastiff bat. This species is currently listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and therefore requires maximum protection.

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

A report will be submitted to the Conservancy and Kenya wildlife service (KWS) to be included in their annual magazine and website. I will present my work at the local and international conferences and workshops.

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

I am incredibly grateful to RF for the provision of financial support. Through this grant we are able to contribute to the global efforts of biodiversity conservation. I hope RF will continue to offer support as we work to address the identified gaps and add other research components to enhance the conservation effort.

**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 emblem featured on all banners, t-shirts, and leaflets displayed or distributed during outreach events. The RF was highlighted during our discussions and will be mentioned in future publications.

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

**Jackson Shonko** served as the Community Liaison Officer, assisting in the communication and coordination of our scheduled events in order to establish an environment that encourages and embraces community involvement and engagement. As a result, he was instrumental in creating a 'community spirit' around the project.

**Erick Keter** was eager to get hands-on experience with bat research methodologies. He actively participated in the project's execution, especially recording and analysis of bat echolocation data. He was instrumental in our school and community group education awareness effort.

**Angela Mingusa** was tasked with assisting in educating and spreading conservation information to the general public during our seminars through video shows and spoken presentations.

#### **10. Any other comments?**

I have concrete plans to continue bat research and conservation activities in collaboration with local residents and postgraduate students. I would continue to follow both short- and long-term measures for bat conservation at Mt. Suswa. Bat education and awareness campaign for school patrons and pupils who are members of Wildlife Clubs of Kenya will remain the top priority to bring a paradigm shift in the thinking of school pupils. This long-term strategy will convert this community from foes to friends of bats. As a result, we anticipate receiving additional funding from RF and collaborate with other donors to improve our strategies to save the bats, and community development. We appreciate the opportunity to work hand in hand with RF.