

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	John Aboje Onah
Project Title	Conservation of the Vulnerable Population of the Northern Ground-hornbill: A Community-Based Survey and Conservation Education Program in Bauchi State, Nigeria.
Application ID	41864-1
Date of this Report	2 nd June, 2025

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 understand the Perception of the local community's perception of hunting Northern Ground-hornbill				We were able to interview 236 individuals across Eight communities. These individuals cut across every socio-economic way of Life of the people in these communities. From these interviews, we were able to understand the effect of socio-economic structure and perception of the people on the Northern Ground-Hornbill
Comprehensive conservation education to educate the people on the importance of conserving the Northern Ground-Hornbill				<p>We implemented an extensive conservation education and community engagement program aimed at raising awareness about the importance of protecting the Northern Ground-Hornbill and biodiversity in general. Through this initiative, we were able to reach a wide range of stakeholders, including traditional medicine men, farmers, traders, hunters, and students in the communities surrounding the Yankari Game Reserve.</p> <p>Our activities included interactive sessions, educational talks, poster and banner displays, and the distribution of learning materials such as conservation-themed exercise books. Through this programme activities we were able to foster better understanding of the species' ecological role and the long-term benefits of biodiversity conservation. This approach helped build community support for the conservation of this species</p>

				and biodiversity in general.
Identify Nesting areas of the Northern Ground-Hornbill				<p>We carried out nest search inside the reserve and some of the communities surrounding the reserve. During our nest search, we encountered two adult Northern Ground-Hornbills and one juvenile near an abandoned nest site within the Yankari Game Reserve. In addition to this sighting, we recorded multiple sightings of the Northern Ground-Hornbills in some parts of the reserve, as well as in the nearby Mainamaji community.</p> <p>These repeated sightings suggest the continued presence of the species in the area and indicate that the reserve and surrounding habitats may serve as important breeding and foraging grounds. These highlights the need for further monitoring to identify active nest sites, understand habitat use, and assess the overall population status of the species in and around the reserve.</p>

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

a). One of the key outcomes of our project was gaining a clear understanding of how local people perceive the hunting and trade of the Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill. Through interviews and field surveys, we engaged with individuals from various groups—hunters, traders, elders, and youth and uncovered the cultural beliefs, motivations, and socio-economic factors driving their actions. These insights were essential for designing a targeted and culturally sensitive conservation education program.

b). Through our survey, we were able to identify key areas where the Northern Ground-Hornbill is regularly observed in and around the reserve. These areas are known feeding and nesting sites that are important to the species. We also identified major threats impacting its presence, such as habitat loss from agricultural expansion, disturbance from human activities, and targeted hunting for disguise and traditional uses. These findings are important for developing targeted future conservation strategies to protect the species and its habitat.

c). The conservation education and awareness program has successfully increased public understanding of the importance of protecting the Northern Ground-Hornbill. This has helped shift local perceptions toward valuing the species and has created a strong sense of stewardship for the people across all levels, as each community chief gave their full commitment to protecting this species and gave out a law prohibiting their people from hunting the Northern Ground Hornbill

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

During our research activities in and around the Yankari Reserve there were some security challenges, such as poaching, reports of kidnapping and growing tensions in local communities due to longstanding government neglect. To address these issues, we took several precautionary measures. We restricted all fieldwork to daylight hours, carefully selected travel routes, and adjusted our visits to survey sites based on the current security situation. We worked closely with local security agencies and adopted a flexible field schedule to respond to any unforeseen developments. We also maintained regular communications with traditional leaders, including village chiefs and community elders, to build trust and ensure local support. These proactive steps helped reduce security risks and allowed us to continue the project safely and effectively despite challenging circumstances.

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

Throughout this project, we actively involved local communities at every stage. School teachers served as interpreters and coordinators during interviews and conservation education activities in schools and communities. We also engaged community members, including youths, women, and farmers, in both school outreach and local awareness programs. In addition, they participated in field surveys, helping to foster a sense of ownership and support for the conservation efforts.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We plan to continue our RSG project. One major conservation issue we identified is the lack of biodiversity awareness among local communities. Many community members are unaware that the Northern Ground-Hornbill plays an important role in pest control on their farmlands. Most farmers mistakenly believe the bird feeds on their crops, when in fact it feeds on insects found around farms. This misunderstanding has led to the unnecessary killing of the species. To further address this issues, we plan to expand our conservation education program to more communities around the reserve and introduce repeated awareness initiatives over time to refresh the knowledge of the importance of these species to the people. We also plan to conduct further surveys to better understand the species' breeding habitat preferences.

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

Currently we have prepared a manuscript focused on understanding human perceptions of the threatened Northern Ground-Hornbill population. The manuscript will be submitted to an internationally peer-reviewed journal, making it accessible to researchers, conservationists, NGOs, government agencies, and the management of Yankari Game Reserve. We shall be presenting the findings of this research to conferences. Additionally, we plan to share key findings through social media and online platforms to engage the general public and broader conservation networks.

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

To promote lasting conservation efforts, we recommend that more conservation education activities be conducted on repeated basis and expanded to reach more communities around the Reserve. Repeated awareness efforts will help improve understanding of the ecological importance of the Northern Ground-Hornbill and biodiversity as a whole. We believe that continuous and repeated education and community engagement will foster long-lasting change in attitudes towards hunting and habitat destruction.

A complete habitat and population assessment of the Northern Ground-Hornbill should be carried out to better understand the population trend of the species and its habitat preference. Furthermore, research on the breeding ecology and feeding behaviour of the Northern Ground-Hornbill should be carried out to provide a comprehensive understanding of the species' biology. This will help provide critical information for further conservation action to protect this threatened species.

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?

- On pamphlets, books, and posters used during our community-based conservation education programmes in schools and among the community members.
- On t-shirts worn by team members and some community members during field surveys and conservation education activities.

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

John Aboje Onah – Project Lead, data analysis, field and social surveys and conservation awareness activities.

Conscience Ogunleye – Field and social survey and conservation education activities

Rose Adejo – Field and social survey and conservation education activities

Josiah Ibrahim – Support nesting and conservation awareness activities

Iniunam Iniunam – Support conservation awareness activities

Isreal Adedeji Bolade – Support conservation awareness activities

Nasiru Mohammed – Community liaison, social and field survey and conservation education programme.

10. Any other comments?

This project gave me the opportunity to strengthen my skills in community engagement, conservation and leadership. It has also been an important step in understanding people's perceptions and helping to conserve the Northern Ground-Hornbill. One of the major successes was the strong collaboration built with local communities during this project and we hope to build on this momentum in future conservation efforts.

ANNEX – Financial Report
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