

Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF format**. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to jane@rufford.org.

Your Details	
Full Name	David Nibishaka
Project Title	Habitat Restoration, Monitoring, and Community Engagement for the Conservation of Bats in Urban Areas of Southern Province of Rwanda
Application ID	ID: 42612-2
Date of this Report	11 th March 2026

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
<p>Promote the restoration and preservation of bat roosting and foraging habitats through tree planting at our project sites.</p>			✓	<p>Three nurseries were established at the three different project sites. These nurseries supplied seedlings that were later planted within the project areas. Local schools and surrounding communities actively participated in the tree planting activities, which were conducted mostly during Umuganda (the national community workday held on the last Saturday of every month). At each project site, more than 800 trees including fruit trees and other agroforestry species preferred by bats were planted. The participating communities continue to take responsibility for the maintenance of these trees through regular weeding and protection from damage mostly during the monthly Umuganda activities.</p> <p>Over 450 local community members, including farmers, youth, school children, and local leaders, participated in tree planting activities across the three project areas.</p>
<p>Promote bat conservation in urban schools by the organizing educational workshops and outreach programs aimed at increasing awareness of the crucial role bats play in urban ecosystems while strengthening existing partnerships with teachers and students, particularly those involved in our</p>			✓	<p>Educational workshops and outreach programs were carried out in three urban schools to promote bat conservation and increase awareness of the ecological importance of bats in urban environments. Over 160 school children were reached through school-focused bat conservation awareness activities in the project areas.</p>

<p>established bat conservation clubs.</p>			<p>The activities involved both teachers and students and strengthened the partnerships already established through the project. Students participating in the bat conservation clubs showed strong interest and actively engaged in the conservation discussions and learning activities. Despite the successful implementation of this activity, we experienced some challenges, including delays in the timely provision of teaching materials and limited budget to train a larger number of students across different schools. As a result, although the level of interest among both students and teachers has been very encouraging, the full integration of bat related learning materials into school activities is still limited. One important lesson learned from this activity is the strong potential that schools have in promoting wildlife conservation awareness. Engaging students, particularly at lower school levels proved to be very effective in building early understanding and appreciation of bats and their ecological importance. We also recognized the need to strengthen outreach programs and develop stronger connections between schools and the surrounding communities, as this would further support bat conservation and environmental awareness. Furthermore, students demonstrated great enthusiasm and curiosity about bats and their role in the ecosystem. Due to this positive response, we are keen to expand this approach to more schools in the future so that more students can be involved in bat and environmental conservation efforts.</p>
<p>Enhance bat monitoring and data collection at the project sites by training and equipping bat conservation champions to monitor bat presence, roosting sites, and foraging behaviour.</p>		<p>✓</p>	<p>A total of 25 Bat conservation champions received refresher training on bat ecology and monitoring in urban environments.</p> <p>Following the training, the champions continued to actively participate in bat monitoring activities. They regularly visit the</p>

			<p>project areas to monitor bats and collect data. They also regularly visit sites where trees were planted under the project, as well as known bat roosting colonies and other important habitats used by bats. The champions were also provided with some monitoring equipment to support their field activities and improve the quality of data collected. These monitoring activities have improved local capacity to track bat populations and have strengthened community participation in bat conservation through citizen science.</p> <p>Environmental officers were unable to participate in the training due to prior engagements. However, they were aware of the training and expressed their commitment to attend future sessions. They also participated in several bat conservation awareness activities conducted in some of the project areas.</p>
--	--	--	--

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

- a) One of the most important outcomes of the project was the restoration of bat habitats through tree planting. More than 800 trees were planted at each project site, including fruit trees and other agroforestry species preferred by bats. Urban residents and schools actively participated in the tree planting activities during Umuganda. This activity not only contributed to improving roosting and foraging habitats for bats but also strengthened community engagement and awareness in bat conservation.

- b) Increased awareness of bat conservation among students, teachers, and urban residents. Educational workshops and outreach activities were conducted in three schools engaging both teachers and students. Through these activities, students and members of the surrounding urban communities gained knowledge about the ecological importance of bats and their role in urban ecosystems. While outreach was limited by time and resources, the strong interest shown by students, teachers and the public demonstrates that education is a powerful tool for long-term conservation. This outcome laid a strong foundation for sustained awareness and future expansion of school-based bat conservation initiatives.

- c) The project also strengthened local capacity for bat monitoring through the involvement of Bat Conservation Champions. A total of 25 champions received refresher training on bat ecology and monitoring techniques. They (Bat Conservation Champions) continue to visit project sites, including tree planting areas and known bat roosting colonies to monitor bats and collect data. Monitoring equipment and training provided through the project enhanced local skills in bat monitoring and promoted community participation in bat conservation through citizen science. The data collected through these monitoring activities will contribute to a better understanding of bat presence, roosting behaviour, and habitat use in the project areas.

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

The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Marburg outbreak reported in Rwanda in 2024 significantly influenced community perceptions about bats. This resulted in initial reluctance among some community members to participate in bat conservation activities and, in some cases, resistance to cooperate with our project team. This situation arose after Marburg virus cases were confirmed in the country and health authorities reported that the outbreak was associated with bats roosting in a mining site. To address this challenge, the project intensified community outreach and sensitization efforts working closely with local leaders, health educators, and Bat Conservation Champions. Awareness sessions focused on correcting misinformation and explaining the ecological importance of bats, which helped rebuild trust and gradually improved community participation in project activities. Moreover, public health precautions also affected the frequency of some field monitoring activities. In response, the project adopted adaptive approaches, including the use of simplified monitoring tools and flexible schedules that allowed trained community members to continue collecting monitoring data at the project sites.

Another challenge was the delays in the timely provision of some teaching and outreach materials needed for school awareness activities. This slightly slowed down the organization of some of our planned educational sessions. In addition, the available budget limited our ability to reach a larger number of schools and train more students within the project period. Nonetheless, the project team adjusted the schedule of the outreach activities and prioritized working with schools that were already engaged through the Bat Conservation Clubs. We also relied more on direct engagement with teachers and students using the available materials and interactive discussions to ensure that the awareness activities continued successfully. Despite these challenges, the workshops and outreach programs were completed in the selected schools and generated strong interest among both students and teachers.

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

Community members in our project areas participated actively in habitat restoration through tree planting activities particularly during Umuganda, (Rwanda's monthly community work programme). Their participation helped increase local ownership of the project and strengthened community support for bat conservation. Additionally, the project provided refresher training to community members as bat conservation champions, equipping them with skills to monitor bats, collect data, and act as local advocates for conservation. Furthermore, the educational outreach in schools further engaged students and teachers, helping to dispel myths and reduce fear associated with bats. Therefore, communities benefited through increased environmental awareness, improved urban green spaces, and access to fruit trees that will contribute to household livelihoods. Overall, the project strengthened local capacity, pride, and stewardship, laying the groundwork for sustainable community-led bat conservation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

There are plans to continue this work given that the project has established a strong foundation through community engagement, bat habitat restoration, school outreach, and the training of Bat Conservation Champions who continue to monitor bats in the project areas. Future efforts will focus on expanding environmental education to more schools, strengthening community-based bat monitoring, and continuing tree planting to enhance bat habitats in urban environments. We also aim to build on the partnerships established during the project to promote long-term bat conservation and awareness.

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

Information about the project, its objectives, and its progress has already been shared through community meetings and engagement with local leaders and conservation stakeholders during Umuganda and other community and conservation platforms. I also plan to share the findings particularly from the bat monitoring activities with relevant conservation organizations, researchers, and local authorities interested in urban biodiversity conservation, including the Rwanda Development Board and the Rwanda Environment Management Authority. In addition, the Bat Conservation Champions will continue to raise awareness within their communities, helping to disseminate knowledge about bat conservation and the ecological importance of bats. I also plan to present the results of this project at a conservation conference that will take place in Rwanda in July 2026.

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

The next steps include:

- Expanding environmental education and outreach to more schools and urban communities to further improve awareness about bats and their ecological importance.
- There is also a need to continue supporting and strengthening the Bat Conservation Champions so they can sustain bat monitoring activities and data collection in the project areas.
- Also, further habitat restoration through tree planting and the protection of known bat roosting sites will be important to improve bat habitats and promote long-term coexistence between bats and urban communities.

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 some of our project materials (e.g., T shirts, and banners) and presentations used during community meetings, school outreach activities, and training sessions with Bat Conservation Champions. The Rufford Foundation also received recognition during these activities, where its support for the project was acknowledged to community members, teachers, students, and local stakeholders. This helped raise awareness about The Rufford Foundation's contribution to bat conservation and community based environmental conservation initiatives.

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

- David Nibishaka: I was the project leader and provided overall leadership, coordination, reporting, and technical oversight.
- Damien Habishuti: Served on the project as a field assistant and led field activities such as training bat conservation champions and supporting field data collection.
- Dr. Julius Nziza: Provided scientific guidance, mentorship and supported the project with expertise on monitoring methodologies.
- Manishimwe Adrien: Served as the community engagement officer and was instrumental during school outreach and education activities.
- Benoit Dukundumukiza: He is a forest extension officer and guided us during habitat restoration and tree species selection.
- Didier Habimana: He is a monitoring specialist who supported the design of monitoring tools and assists in data collection.

10. Any other comments?

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to The Rufford Foundation for funding both our first and second Rufford Small Grant projects. This second RSG project has demonstrated that education, community engagement, and habitat restoration can significantly improve public attitudes toward bats and promote long term coexistence. Despite challenges related to public health crises, the project achieved meaningful conservation outcomes and established a strong foundation for future work.

ANNEX – Financial Report
[Intentionally removed]