

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	Betty Jepchirchir Rono
Project Title	Assessing wildlife presence and abundance in relation to nature's contribution to people (NCP): The case of Mau Forest Complex in Kenya
Application ID	42949-1
Date of this Report	15/10/2025

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
1. To assess how wildlife dynamics in the Mau Forest Complex influence forest conservation and ecosystem health.			Yes	Camera trap setting and obtaining data was successful. The results clearly showed species diversity, presence, and ecological roles across sites. Camera-Trapping Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Number of camera traps deployed:</i> 27 cameras, with 3 cameras per site across the three study villages (Nessuit, Mariashoni, and Sururu). • <i>Trap-nights accumulated:</i> A total of 110 trap-nights, covering the period from 17 December 2024 to 7 April 2025. • <i>Species recorded:</i> Cameras captured 18 unique wildlife species across 152 sampling events. • <i>Field assistant training:</i> All field assistants received comprehensive training on camera setup and operation, supported by the project funding.
2. To correlate real-time wildlife data from camera traps with community perceptions of Nature's Contributions to People (NCP).		Yes		Both datasets; camera trap data and the social survey, were analysed and conceptually linked, but full quantitative integration is still pending A few minor challenges were encountered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in seasonal

				<p>coverage required careful consideration, as the 2022 survey captured perceptions over a broader seasonal cycle, whereas the camera traps collected data from December 2024 to April 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variations in data granularity (survey perceptions versus camera-trap events) required careful alignment of variables and analytical methods. • Reconciling local species names with scientific taxonomy also required attention. For example, the community referred to the aardvark as “anteater” directly translated from local dialect. <p>Despite these considerations, the datasets are compatible and allow robust insights into human-wildlife interactions in the Mau Forest Complex.</p>
3. To examine how changes in wildlife populations affect local communities' access to material and non-material benefits, including food, wood, medicine, and cultural well-being.		Yes		<p>From the results, findings clearly highlight associations between wildlife and well-being, but evidence of direct or causal effects remains limited.</p>

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

- a) *Enhanced understanding of wildlife presence and dynamics in the Mau Forest Complex:* Camera trap data revealed clear patterns of species presence,

diversity, and activity, offering valuable ecological insights into how wildlife use different forest zones at different times.

- b) *Evidence linking wildlife to community well-being*: though still in analysis, the integration of ecological and social data highlights strong perceived connections between wildlife and Nature's Contributions to People (NCP), particularly in relation to food (instrumental values/material demands), cultural/relational value, and psychological well-being.
- c) *Foundation for integrated conservation approaches*: The project demonstrated that combining community perspectives with real-time wildlife data provides a powerful framework for aligning forest conservation approaches with the needs and values of communities, especially Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC).

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

The project experienced several unforeseen challenges, including delays in fieldwork caused by heavy rains and difficult terrain, which limited access to some sites. These were managed by rescheduling activities to drier periods and reorganizing travel logistics to maintain site coverage. A few camera traps were also stolen or went missing, likely due to human interference; this was addressed through community sensitization, improved camera concealment, and relocating remaining units to safer but ecologically similar areas. Lastly, integrating wildlife data with community perception data proved complex due to differences in timing and structure, so the team adopted a thematic comparative approach to ensure meaningful interpretation.

The ECT cameras performed effectively overall, capturing clear sampling events, which met our expectations. Minor operational challenges were encountered, including occasional battery depletion and the need for timely retrieval of memory cards to access images since they could not transmit remotely due to lack of signal. These issues were mitigated through regular battery checks and regular planning and timely retrieval of memory cards, ensuring minimal loss of data. Overall, the cameras reliably supported our objectives for monitoring wildlife presence and activity across the study villages.

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

Local communities played a central role throughout the project, which enhanced both the scientific quality of the data and the project's local relevance and legitimacy. Community members were engaged from the planning stage through field implementation, contributing valuable local knowledge about wildlife movement, access routes, and forest use. Residents were employed as field assistants, gaining practical skills in camera trap installation, GPS use, and ecological data collection. Additionally, the regular interactions with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) created opportunities for dialogue about forest conservation and wildlife management.

The project plans to further benefit communities by sharing preliminary findings on wildlife presence and trends, which will help foster awareness of the ecological

importance of local species, and strengthening trust between researchers and residents.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. Building on the strong foundation of this study, there are plans to continue the work through extended monitoring and deeper integration of ecological and social data. The next phase will focus on long-term wildlife monitoring to capture seasonal and interannual trends to allow for occupancy modelling, while expanding community engagement. There are also plans to explore how observed wildlife patterns can inform forest restoration and sustainable livelihood initiatives within the Mau Forest Complex by looking into policies and decision-making mechanisms. The insights from these expansion ideas project will feed into a broader comparative framework across other forest landscapes in Kenya and the region, strengthening the connection between biodiversity conservation, policy, and community well-being.

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

The results of our work will be shared through multiple channels to reach both scientific and local audiences. Scientifically, we plan to publish peer-reviewed articles in high-impact journals and present findings at conferences, workshops and brainstorming sessions to engage researchers, decision-makers and policymakers. For local communities and stakeholders, we will prepare accessible summary reports and hold feedback sessions with community members, Indigenous Peoples, and local authorities, highlighting findings from both community surveys and camera trap data on wildlife dynamics and their contributions to Nature's Contributions to People and sustainable forest management. Additionally, we aim to disseminate visual materials, such as infographics and maps, to clearly communicate key findings and support informed decision-making.

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

Looking ahead, important next steps include communicating our findings and rolling out a second phase of long-term wildlife monitoring, which will allow modeling of key species occupancy across multiple seasons and improve our understanding of temporal trends. This will foster insights into how wildlife dynamics influence Nature's Contributions to People. Additionally, expanding community engagement and knowledge-sharing will help ensure that findings inform local management and conservation strategies.

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?

Yes, the Rufford Foundation logo was used in project materials. The Foundation will also receive publicity through these materials and during community feedback sessions, where its support will be acknowledged for enabling the research and wildlife monitoring work.

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

Research team	Role
1. Clarkson Rutto	Oversaw the project, coordinated

	Nessuite stations, assisted with camera trap installation, animal tagging/naming, and interpretation of findings.
2. Elder Chemaina	Coordinated Mariashoni stations, supported camera trap setup, contributed to animal tagging/naming, and interpreted findings, especially from an indigenous people's (IP) perspective.
3. Benard Maritim	Also helped in the facilitation of the project at Mariashoni stations, supporting camera trap setup, animal tagging/naming, and interpretation of finding.
4. Obadiah Chelule	help in installation of camera traps in Sururu station, help in animal tagging/naming and in interpretation of finding.
5. Nicholas Nge'eno	Also, part of the Sururu team doing the installation of camera traps, animal tagging/naming and interpretation of findings.

10. Any other comments?

We are grateful for the support provided by the Rufford Foundation, which has been instrumental in enabling this project. Their support was fundamental in acquiring equipment, strengthening the quality and process of data collection, and supporting the team. We look forward to building on these achievements in future work.

Setting up the ECT camera traps:



ANNEX – Financial Report
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