

## Final Evaluation Report

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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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	GUETSE Francis
<b>Project Title</b>	Life behind the borders: Does the national park buffer zone supports a viable population of the Mt. Cameroon Francolin?
<b>Application ID</b>	44281-2
<b>Date of this Report</b>	21 <sup>th</sup> December 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
<p>Provide quantitative population density, abundance and distribution data for Mt Cameroon Francolin at the buffer zone of the Mount Cameroon National Park</p>				<p>A total of 252 point counts, set 300 m apart, were established across the buffer zone of Mount Cameroon National Park, where data on the Mount Cameroon Francolin were successfully collected. Out of the 252 stations surveyed, the Francolin was detected at 77 points, representing a 30% detection rate. The presence of the species decreased sharply with increasing distance from the park, towards community forests and subsequently farmlands. No Francolin individuals were found in farmland or heavily disturbed forests. Francolins were absent in some locations (Njonji, Bova, and Mapaja) that local people had indicated as the species' favoured distribution areas. This absence suggests a decline in the population. A Francolin distribution map was developed to show the areas where the species occurs on Mount Cameroon in order to facilitate its conservation by the Mount Cameroon National Park authorities.</p> <p>Some areas of Mount Cameroon were not surveyed due to inaccessibility and limited resources to allow sufficient time for surveying these locations. Further work will thoroughly investigate these areas.</p>

<p>Determine the effect of anthropogenic pressures on the species and compare the results with the Mount Cameroon National Park interior data</p>			<p>The main threats identified during the study included uncontrolled bushfires for clearing savannah (by hunters and beekeepers), poaching (we encountered 395 snare traps in the forests around the park no counting bullets), farmland creation around the park, Illegal and unsustainable exploitation of the threatened <i>Prunus Africana</i> bark for medicine (Francolin feeds on Prunus fruits and probably disperses the seeds) as well as vegetation changes by elephants. <i>Prunus</i> and altitude emerged as the key determinants of Francolin occurrence.</p> <p>The species seems to be very sensitive to human disturbances because in the buffer zone around the park where there is more anthropogenic indices, we detected the presence of the Francolin from 1800 m altitudes in undisturbed forests contrary to the inside of the park where we observed the Francolin from 1000 m altitude recently. This shows that the creation of the park in 2009 has contributed to the protection of the Cameroon Francolin.</p> <p>A paper on the Effects of Elephant-Driven habitat Changes on the Altitudinal Distribution of the Mount Cameroon Francolin has been submitted to Advances in Bioscience and Biotechnology (ABB) for publication (Manuscript ID: 7302246)</p>
<p>Train dedicated youths as Francolin monitors</p>			<p>Fields guides recruited in each of the management communities (05) were trained as Francolin monitors. During the survey, they were really keen to</p>

			<p>learn and presently available for future monitoring as well as other research works that will be done in the area. Also, a master's student Mametsop Lucky De Merline from the University of Dschang, received intensive training and she used part of our results for her master's thesis defended early in July 2025</p>
<p>Build lasting research collaborations between local and international NGOs and engage community in the species conservation</p>			<p>During the study, we established collaboration with local NGOs, namely the Program of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in Southwest Region (PSMNR), to encourage them to include in their activities the protection the species. We are also developing a partnership with the Limbe Wildlife Centre (LWC), which plans to establish a site on Mount Cameroon to rehabilitate and care for rescued wild animals. We are currently negotiating with Torie Curr Smith (Animal Care Manager at LWC) to install the facility in an area where the Francolin is present, so that the species can benefit from the initiative. In addition, a Francolin Friends Club has been established in schools in the area, whose members will serve as ambassadors for Francolin protection as well as biodiversity in general.</p> <p>It's essential to instill the importance for biodiversity conservation in young people, particularly in light of testimonies such as that of one participant, who reported that when his grandfather was alive, he regularly sent them into the bush during the dry season to collect Francolin eggs for his remedies.</p>

Outreach campaigns				<p>Education and Awareness campaigns were launched through workshops organized in some chiefdoms and in schools, but were disrupted due to post-election tensions following the presidential election in Cameroon. With the gradual return of calm, We plan to continue awareness campaigns in schools and chiefdoms. Given that Francolin eggs are exploited for traditional use, it is important to educate traditional authorities on the importance of Francolins conservation. A total of 20 posters and 100 brochures were produced to support sensitization efforts, and over 300 individuals were directly reached through in-person activities. In addition, awareness messages were disseminated more broadly via WhatsApp forums used for local community meetings, leveraging community leaders to facilitate wider engagement and mass sensitization.</p>
Identify priorities for further research and conservation management activities				<p>A project proposal on the breeding ecology of Mount Cameroon Francolin is in preparation. Little is known on the biology of the species. Its nest and eggs remain undescribed.</p>

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

**a). Updated population data and species distribution**

The project updated baseline information on the population status and distribution of the endangered Mount Cameroon Francolin. New occurrence sites were identified within the buffer zone of Mount Cameroon National Park ((in Mapaja, Bova and Etinde Community Forest, Irumabea, Vietelé, hurt2 and savanna after Bokwango village). An updated species distribution map was produced and shared with park authorities to support conservation planning, site management, and long-term monitoring of the species.

### **b). Capacity building and academic/scientific contribution**

Francolin monitors were trained in each management community surrounding Mount Cameroon National Park. These locally based monitors will ensure continuity of species monitoring and contribute to future research initiatives. Also, one student, Mametsop Lucky De Merleine, successfully obtained a Master's degree using a part of data collected during the study. In addition, a paper on the Effects of Elephant-Driven habitat Changes on the Altitudinal Distribution of the Mount Cameroon Francolin has been submitted to Advances in Bioscience and Biotechnology (ABB) for publication (Manuscript ID: 7302246)

### **c). Community awareness and attitude change**

Community engagement and outreach campaigns increased awareness of the Mount Cameroon Francolin among rural communities in Southwest Cameroon. Local attitudes and perceptions improved compared to the start of the study, with community members increasingly reporting incidents of francolin trapping, indicating growing conservation awareness and engagement.

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

Among the major difficulties we faced was the delay in issuing the research permit which delayed the start of the project. But we appealed to the park authorities, who allowed us to conduct the study beyond the time limit set on the research permit.

During the fieldwork, my GPS Garmin 62s which got damaged during this survey. It was thanks to my assistant's small etrex GPS that we were able to continue the fieldwork.

Other difficulty was the lack of water in the mountains because the dry season started very early this year unlike previous years. We negotiated with porters to come from time to time to resupply us with water.

In addition, due to post-election tensions following the presidential election in Cameroon, outreach campaigns were disrupted. With the gradual return of calm, we plan to continue these awareness campaigns in schools and chiefdoms.

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

Each of the surveyed communities provided one local who was recruited as a field guide/assistant to assist in fieldwork activities and accomplish the study effectively.

They received financial support and acquired significant experience in field data Collection. They were also very active in helping us to collect scientific data and to educate local people using local language. Also, recognizing the influence of traditional institutions on the effectiveness of grassroots conservation education, we closely worked with traditional authorities, community members and focused groups in organizing and implementing conservation awareness meetings. To conduct a study in Mount Cameroon National Park, the involvement of at least one member of the park's staff is required, in accordance with current regulations. For this study, we work with Mr. Kamta Godwill, head of the patrol unit.

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

Yes, given that we already know the important areas of Mount Cameroon where the species is found, we are planning to target these areas to investigate the breeding ecology of Mount Cameroon Francolin to inform evidence-based conservation planning and the identification of critical breeding habitats. To carry out this project, however, funding with the Rufford Booster Grant will be critical. To this end, I plan to apply for the Rufford Booster Grant to continue the work on the little studied Mount Cameroon Francolin.

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

Part of our findings were used by Mametsop Lucky De Merleine for her master's thesis which has been successfully defended publicly in July 2025 at the University of Dschang. Also, a paper on the Effects of Elephant-Driven habitat Changes on the Altitudinal Distribution of the Mount Cameroon Francolin has been submitted to Advances in Bioscience and Biotechnology (ABB) for publication (Manuscript ID: 7302246). Other data will be analyzed alongside that of this project for the second publication in Open Journal of Ecology. In Addition, the results of this work will form a chapter of my PhD thesis that will be submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a PhD degree in Applied Ecology and Wildlife Management at the University of Bamenda. These data will also be used to revise the global conservation status (Global IUCN Red List Status) of this species. I have submitted two of my peer-reviewed publications on the Mount Cameroon Francolin to the IUCN SSC Galliformes Specialist Group. This led to my admission as a member. I also plan to share all data collected to date on the species with the group and to present these findings at the upcoming International Galliformes Symposium if bursary for attendance is granted.

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

- Investigate the breeding success of the Mount Cameroon Francolin as well as factors influencing that pattern in the area,

- Determine in greater detail the ecological relationship between African cherry (*Prunus africana*) and Francolins,
- Determine the diet composition and predators of the Mount Cameroon Francolin.
- Contribute with conservation strategies to reduce anthropogenic threats on the Mount Cameroon Francolin as well as others 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?**

Rufford Foundation was acknowledged in the master's thesis of Mametsop Lucky De Merleine as well as verbally in the Power Point presentation (by presenting Rufford Foundation logo) as donor during her defense. Also, the Rufford Foundation logo featured prominently in all conservation posters, t-shirts and flyers that were produced and distributed during our education and awareness campaigns. We also acknowledged The Rufford Foundation in the article submitted to ABB Journal. Further acknowledgement of the support received from The Rufford Foundation will be made other in publications and presentations that will come from this study.

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

- **Guetse Francis:** Applicant and principal investigator.
- **Dr. Simon Tamungang:** Supervisor of the work.
- **Mametsop Lucky De Merleine:** Master student and assistant
- **Luma Francis:** Facilitator and ornithologist assistant
- **Kamta Godwill:** Park staff and assistant
- **Mokoko Francis:** Local guide
- **Ekama Marcus:** Local guide and porters

**10. Any other comments?**

I am truly grateful for the financial support offered to us by The Rufford Foundation, which has enabled to update the population status and threats of this threatened species as well as to engage and sensitize local communities in the protection of biodiversity. Also, this grant enables me to successfully complete a chapter of my PhD thesis. Thank you very much for your assistance.















**ANNEX – Financial Report**  
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