

## Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Ngozi Mercy Okafor
<b>Project Title</b>	Conservation of the endangered Grey Parrot and birds of conservation concern in Afi River Forest Reserve, Nigeria: Population status and Conservation campaign
<b>Application ID</b>	44839-1
<b>Date of this Report</b>	28/11/2025

**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>1. Current information on the population status and distribution of the endangered Grey Parrots and birds of conservation concern in the ARFR.</p>		✓		<p>Field surveys were conducted using line transect methods, selected to suit the terrain of the Afi River Forest Reserve (ARFR) and to maximise species detectability. A total of 50 transects, each of 200m sections, were surveyed. Data collection took place every first week from December 2024 to April 2025 and focused on the presence, abundance, and habitat use of the Grey Parrot across the reserve. We recorded 58 Grey Parrot sightings and their calls as well. Notably, we discovered an active roosting site in a large 43 m tree cavity. However, we couldn't study their nesting behaviours as we didn't observe any nests during our study period. The Yellow-casqued Hornbill was not detected during surveys, although other hornbill species were recorded. No other threatened avian species were observed during the study.</p>
<p>2. Semi-structured questionnaires to assess local knowledge of the Grey Parrots and the threats they face in the ARFR and develop</p>			✓	<p>We administered 152 questionnaires across the selected communities, collecting data on local knowledge and attitudes toward the Grey Parrot. The sections included demographic info, identification, knowledge of</p>

effective conservation actions.				population status, threats, local importance, legal awareness and willingness to support its conservation.
3. Awareness programs on the illegal capture of Grey Parrots, the importance of conserving them and their habitat and training for local volunteers.			✓	Conservation awareness outreaches were conducted in the selected communities, and capacity-building training for youths on bird identification and monitoring was completed.

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

**a) Identification of Critical Habitats and Population Insights.**

Through extensive field surveys in the Afi River Forest Reserve (ARFR), our team successfully identified key forest sites actively utilised by the endangered African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*). Observations revealed that the species frequently uses disturbed forest edges, farmlands, and riparian areas, while fewer individuals were sighted in the undisturbed core forest, suggesting habitat preference linked to food availability. A particularly significant finding was the discovery of a 43-meter-high tree hollow actively used as a roosting site, an indication of potential breeding activity and habitat preference. The field data also allowed us to record vegetation parameters at each observation point, generating a valuable dataset for understanding habitat characteristics that influence parrot presence. Building on these findings, we are developing a species distribution map to visualise the current population distribution, highlight critical habitat hotspots, and guide future conservation planning and monitoring programs.

**b) Improved Understanding of Local Perceptions, Attitudes, and Knowledge of the Grey Parrot**

Our socio-ecological surveys, which engaged 152 community members across Buanchor, Olum, and Katabang communities, provided deep insights into how residents perceive the Grey Parrot and its conservation status. The respondents comprised 108 males (71%) and 44 females (29%). Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to over 50 years, distributed as follows: 18–30 years (25%), 31–40 years (29.9%), 41–49 years (22.9%), and above 50 years (22.2%). The majority were farmers (59%), followed by traders (18.8%), civil servants (8.3%), hunters (6.9%), and students (6.9%). The majority of participants (95%) recognised the species, were aware of its decline, and recognised the role of forest protection in its survival and associated parrot conservation with forest regeneration. However, there were also knowledge gaps regarding legal protections and their ecological importance. Importantly, community

members identified deforestation and hunting as key threats, reflecting their awareness of human-induced pressures. In addition, we identified ongoing anthropogenic threats within the reserve, including illegal logging and farming activities. We also recorded noises from chainsaws cutting down trees in the reserve. These findings underscore the importance of targeted environmental education, community-based conservation strategies and policy interventions that align conservation goals with local livelihoods.

### **c) Strengthening Community Capacity and Conservation Awareness**

A major achievement of the project was the successful implementation of our conservation education campaign, which included capacity-building workshops for local volunteers and awareness sessions across the host communities. The training equipped volunteers with field identification skills and data collection techniques, fostering local participation in conservation efforts. A total of nineteen community members (17 youths and 2 elderly men) were trained. All volunteers were residents of the host communities who expressed interest in learning, participating in monitoring surveys, and reporting sightings of threatened bird species. The training equipped participants with essential field identification skills and data collection techniques. Volunteers were trained to use the BirdLasser mobile application to record bird observations and submit records to the Nigeria Bird Atlas Project, thereby integrating local monitoring efforts into a national biodiversity database. Our community outreach programs emphasised the ecological role of the Grey Parrot, the impacts of deforestation and illegal trade, and the long-term benefits of bio-conservation. Approximately 300 community members and secondary school students participated in the awareness campaign. The feedback was positive, community members expressed a strong willingness to participate in species monitoring, report illegal activities, and support wildlife conservation initiatives. We also distributed Banners, 200 T-shirts and 292 notebooks detailing the Grey Parrots' ecological importance, threats and conservation actions to the participants. This outcome represents a vital step toward building sustainable, community-led conservation frameworks. By empowering residents with both knowledge and responsibility, our project established a foundation for long-term stewardship of the Reserve and the endangered species it supports.

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

One major setback our field team experienced was a road accident on one of our trips to the reserve. The unpaved and pot-holed roads leading to the Afi River Forest Reserve (ARFR) made vehicular movement extremely difficult. Fortunately, just 1 person was injured and received immediate medical attention.

At the onset of the socio-ecological survey in one of the communities visited, many residents were reluctant to engage in interviews, largely due to concerns about possible legal repercussions surrounding the illegal trade of Grey Parrots. This hesitation

initially limited participation and data collection. To overcome this, the team held follow-up meetings with community leaders to explain the objectives of the study and emphasise that the survey was purely for research, not for law enforcement. Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality was given to all respondents, and no personal identifiers were collected. These trust-building measures, coupled with the involvement of the local assistants, significantly improved community participation and the quality of responses obtained.

Fieldwork within the ARFR presented several environmental and logistical difficulties. The terrain was rugged, with steep slopes and limited access trails, making navigation strenuous and time-consuming. Additionally, sandflies, mosquitoes, and other biting insects were prevalent, posing discomfort and health risks to the research team. To mitigate these challenges, we adopted early-morning and late-evening survey schedules to avoid insect activity periods. Team members were equipped with insect repellents, protective clothing, and first-aid kits. The use of local field assistants familiar with the terrain also helped us navigate efficiently and safely through difficult sections of the forest. Despite these challenges, the project was completed, meeting its core objectives. The experiences gained strengthened the team's project management capacity.

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

Local community participation was central to every stage of this project as we recognise that sustainable conservation outcomes depend on the active involvement of the local people. Before commencing fieldwork, we conducted introductory meetings with community chiefs and youth representatives to discuss the project objectives, activities, and seek their consent and guidance. Their cooperation helped in mobilising residents for interviews, granting access to the forest, and maintaining community trust throughout the research process.

Community youths were recruited as local field assistants (2) and volunteers (19) and also trained in bird identification and data collection. This training equipped them with valuable skills in the use of binoculars and GPS devices, data recording, and species observation and monitoring techniques. Their involvement provided them with hands-on experience that can enhance future employment or participation in similar initiatives. Community members were also actively engaged in the interviews, where they shared their knowledge of the Grey Parrot's ecology, population trends, legal awareness, and threats. This participatory approach also encouraged dialogue and helped us identify locally acceptable strategies for mitigating threats to the species. The project also brought tangible benefits to the communities as we distributed project-branded notebooks, T-shirts, and educational materials, creating a sense of belonging among the participants. The awareness sessions empowered community members with environmental knowledge and fostered a sense of shared responsibility toward protecting the forest. Additionally, by involving field assistants, local translators

and transporters, the project contributed economically through short-term employment and stipends.

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

We plan to continue periodic surveys to monitor population trends and habitat use of the Grey Parrot within the ARFR and include bioacoustic monitoring. Data collected from the first phase will be used to develop a species distribution and habitat suitability model, which will help identify critical areas that require heightened protection.

Given the strong community interest and willingness, we aim to initiate community conservation networks. This will involve trained local volunteers to assist in wildlife monitoring, report illegal activities, and support forest restoration. By integrating long-term ecological monitoring, community participation, and policy engagement, this will contribute significantly to securing the future of the Grey Parrot and preserving the ecological integrity of the Afi River Forest Reserve.

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

We plan to publish the full results of this study in a peer-reviewed journal. The manuscript, currently being drafted, will detail our key findings on knowledge, population trends, and identified threats and community perceptions of the Grey Parrots in Afi River Forest Reserve. Additionally, we aim to present our results at relevant conferences such as the British Ornithological Union Meeting, Pan-African Ornithological Congress, and other local conferences to reach a broader scientific and policy audience.

A detailed project report will be shared with the Cross River State Forestry Commission and WCS to inform policy and management decisions within the Afi River Forest Reserve. We are also in communication with the Nigeria Coordinator of the World Parrot Trust and, as recommended, will share our findings with the IUCN SSC Wild Parrot Specialist Group.

In addition, we will prepare concise policy briefs highlighting key findings and recommendations, especially on community engagement strategies, the need for stronger law enforcement, and habitat protection priorities.

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

The next phase of this project will focus on transforming the research findings into long-term, action-oriented conservation programs. The insights gained from our field surveys and interviews have highlighted both ecological and socio-economic factors driving the decline of the Grey Parrot in the Afi River Forest Reserve (ARFR).

Establishing a systematic monitoring framework to track Grey Parrot population trends and habitat use within the ARFR is essential. Future research will focus on bioacoustic monitoring of Grey Parrot populations to gather more precise data on population density, activity patterns, and seasonal variation. Continuous data collection will

enable us to assess population stability, habitat changes, and the effectiveness of conservation interventions over time.

To reduce reliance on forest exploitation and wildlife trade, we plan to introduce alternative livelihood programs such as beekeeping, sustainable cocoa farming, and eco-tourism. These initiatives will help create incentives, particularly for youth. Empowering communities economically is a long-term strategy to ensure positive behavioural change and reduce pressure on wildlife. Addressing deforestation is critical to the Grey Parrot's survival. The next phase will also include reforestation of degraded buffer zones using native tree species that provide food and nesting resources for parrots and other birds of conservation concern.

Finally, we intend to use our findings to advocate for stronger protection measures for the ARFR, including improved enforcement against illegal logging and wildlife trade by engaging local stakeholders and the Cross River State Forestry Commission.

**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 displayed on all project materials used throughout the course of this work, including the banners, notebooks, and T-shirts distributed during our conservation education campaigns. These helped increase public visibility and recognition of the Foundation's support for wildlife conservation in Nigeria. Additionally, the Foundation was publicly acknowledged in all meetings and presentations held with the stakeholders. Participants were informed that the project was made possible through the generous support of The Rufford Foundation, which further strengthened the Foundation's reputation as a key supporter of grassroots conservation initiatives.

In future publications and presentations, we will continue to acknowledge and display the Rufford Foundation logo in accordance with their branding guidelines to ensure sustained visibility and credit for their invaluable contribution to this conservation effort.

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

Ngozi Okafor (Project Leader): Coordinated the overall planning and implementation of the project. She led fieldwork logistics, supervised the questionnaire surveys, and organised all community outreach activities. She designed and produced the educational materials used during the awareness campaigns. She is also responsible for data analysis, report writing, and ongoing manuscript development.

Adebeji Emmanuel: Emmanuel actively participated in the field surveys, socio-ecological interviews, and community education programs. He contributed to data

collection and community engagement efforts, and he will support manuscript preparation.

Josiah Ibrahim: Josiah played an important role in the fieldwork and questionnaire surveys. He also assisted with the delivery of educational outreach activities across the communities. He will contribute to the final stages of the manuscript development.

Mr. Christ Oned (Local Field Assistant): He was instrumental to the success of the project. He assisted extensively with fieldwork and questionnaire surveys. His fluency in the local language significantly strengthened communication with community members and enhanced the effectiveness of outreach activities.

Mr Donatus Ofre (Local Field Assistant): He provided valuable support throughout fieldwork, interviews, and conservation education programs. His participation helped ensure smooth field operations and effective engagement with local communities.

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

The support from The Rufford Foundation has been instrumental in making this project a success, providing the foundation needed to initiate research and conservation action for the endangered Grey Parrot in one of Nigeria's most biologically rich but threatened forest reserves. Through this funding, we were able to collect vital baseline ecological and socio-cultural data, raise community awareness, and build local capacity for wildlife conservation. We are particularly grateful for Rufford's emphasis on community-driven conservation. The experience and outcomes from this project have also strengthened our intellectual and field capacity, enhanced our collaboration with the local stakeholders, and opened avenues for future partnerships. We sincerely thank The Rufford Foundation for its vision and support, which continue to inspire early-career conservationists like us to lead impactful and inclusive conservation actions in Africa.

## **ANNEX – Financial Report**

**Your Details**

<b>Full Name</b>	Ngozi Okafor Mercy
<b>Project Title</b>	Conservation of the endangered Grey Parrot and birds of conservation concern in Afi River Forest Reserve, Nigeria: Population status and Conservation campaign
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**Using the budget provided with your original application, please give a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure. If there is a difference between the budgeted and actual amounts, please explain why.**

**If there are funds remaining, these should be returned to the foundation. We will provide details of how this can be done.**

**It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.**

**All figures should be given in pound sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.**

