

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. 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. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

Your name	Irma Maria Jurrius
Project title	Environmental education and nature conservation for and with the local community living in and nearby the Tayrona Park
RSG reference	49.03.08
Reporting period	FINAL REPORT
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	Jurrius@hotmail.com
Date of this report	Oct 2010

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objectives	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Individual approach: personal talks with fishermen and poachers			X	During the 2008 and 2009 turtle season, project staff and volunteers had frequent dialogue with fishermen and poachers involved in the extraction of turtle eggs.
Turtle Festival	X			The yearly turtle festival takes place at the end of July and by the time the fund came in in 2008 it was too late to coordinate our participation with the Park Unit. Unfortunately, due to the problems with the Park Unit related with the extraction of turtle hatchlings in 2008, no further cooperation with the Park Unit has been sought in 2009/2010.
1000 Community members and schoolchildren participated in workshops, meetings and events on environmental conservation and turtle protection			X	Generally the meeting started with a short dialogue on the situation of turtles on our beaches. Then short presentations were given on marine turtles after which we walked the beach explaining into detail the importance of turtle control on the beach. Each participant was given a plastic bag to recollect garbage on the beach to reduce the risk of waste to the female turtles.
Community conservationists and 15 Local Tourist guides of the Posadas Ecoturísticas initiative received training on nature conservation and marine turtles			X	Training on nature conservation and turtle protection has been given to community conservationists and local tourist guides as to improve knowledge on these issues, and provide information on practical responses and alternatives to stop nature degradation. The local tourist guides have turned into enthusiastic conservation promoters amongst their communities. After the training, the volunteers (Community conservationists and local tourist guides) have had interesting dialogue with their neighbours on the importance of biodiversity conservation and turtle protection in specific and became involved in the project awareness raising activities. Additionally the tourist guides include the gained knowledge to generate awareness amongst tourist on turtle protection and provide them with information on the small measures tourist can take during their stay

				in the Tayrona Park (no bonfires on the beach, garbage in waste bins etc). An additional workshop was given on the design and elaboration of turtles with natural products (stone and wood).
Control activities Turtle Season		X		During the 2008 turtle season, project staff with the support of the local tourist guides, university students and tourist volunteers patrolled the Castilletes beach, one of the beaches most visited by marine turtles in the Tayrona Park. No turtle control activities took place in 2009-2010.
Three turtle nests protected during the 2008 turtle season.			X	In 2008 only 15 nests of marine turtles have been reported in the Tayrona Park, three of which at the Castilletes beach. Unfortunately, in only two of the 15 nests turtle's hatchlings were born. In total 232 turtles were born on the Castilletes beach. Every morning and afternoon the nests were revised. Plants approaching the nests were taken away, also the underground roots as they can damage the turtle eggs. A wooden fence was build around the nests to protect them from being stepped upon by tourists.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

At the end of the 2008 turtle season, after a huge effort of control activities, personal talks with fishermen and poachers, and nest protection, out of two nests turtles were born. Unfortunately, the first turtles born at the beach that we controlled were taken away by the Park Unit and a local university for exhibition at an aquarium in Santa Marta.

Even though we started the project in close collaboration with the Park Unit, complementing each other's activities related to the protection of the marine turtles, this act, disturbed the relationship between the project members and the head staff of the Park Unit, and impeded future collaboration on turtle conservation, as we lost the belief in the goodwill of the Park Unit to the real protection of sea turtles.

We have learned from this unfortunate event that it is important to generate formal documents when collaborations with other institutions are started. Even though at the beginning of the project, a meeting with the Park Director took place and clear collaboration strategies were defined, unfortunately no formal document with the agreements was signed.

In 2009, control activities started in May at another private beach outside the Park borders, but due safety reasons these were stopped. And we only continued with the environmental education activities in the communities.

How could this happen?: The Park Unit is the official entity involved in protection of nature in protected areas. The procedure mutually defined by the Project and the Park Unit at the beginning of the project was to advise local park rangers at the moment of the disclosure of the nest, for them to accompany the little turtles on their way to the sea. Unfortunately, when the turtles were born, the Park Rangers did not appear and the staff of the local university, definitely against our will, placed all the turtles in boxes, expressing having a special permit from the Park Unit. We did not allow them to leave the beach with the turtles, until the Park Rangers came, and to our surprise accompanied the university staff with the box of baby turtles leaving Castilletes beach.

It seemed that the local university had not been able to find marine turtles for their aquarium and the Park Unit offered them the baby turtles of our project. We found out later that all this was done without the necessary official permission for the capture and transport of endangered fauna. But at the time we found that out it was too late for the hatchlings, and unfortunately no response was given to our official complaints.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

First of all, the training of the volunteers and the local tourism guides resulted in an amplified and better qualified group of local conservation promoters in the communities surrounding the Tayrona Park. Improving the knowledge of these promoters can be considered a long-lasting outcome of the project. This group of trained community conservationist is a benefit for future conservation projects of the Park Unit, the F.C.V and other organisations working in and nearby the Tayrona Park. In addition, the tourist guides benefit from the gained knowledge, being able to include information on nature conservation and turtle protection during their work as tourist guides, which in turn support the Park Unit in their intent to reduce environmental impacts of the tourist sector.

Secondly, the group of tourist guides, associated with the Posadas Ecoturísticas, a community tourism initiative, has embraced the turtle protection project. During the 2009 and 2010 turtle season they were actively involved in the awareness raising activities of the project. They organised together with the F.C.V, workshops in the communities and at the local schools around the Tayrona Park, and realised environmental walks to the turtle beaches for clean-up activities before the start of the turtle season. Their interest in continuing the community workshops on turtle protection by themselves is an interesting additional outcome.

Thirdly, awareness on the marine turtles and the vulnerability of their population has been increased, and turtle protection has been placed under the attention of community members and schoolchildren during the event, workshops and meetings realised by the project. During the dialogue the elder community members talked about the abundance of turtle nests in the past, important information for the younger generation, as nowadays the turtle nests on our beaches have decreased to less than 100 nests per year (In 2008 only 15 in the whole park). This has led to the important conclusion that turtle protection is necessary and that we have to stop the consumption of turtle eggs. Project staff, volunteers and tourist guides used this information during their individual talks with fishermen and poachers which has resulted in at least four of them, leaving poaching of turtle eggs, during the project lifetime. The volunteers will continue the dialogue with fishermen and poachers after the project and we hope that this outcome is sustainable in time.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

The project, from its design, involves local communities, supporting a bottom-up initiative of a group of “conservationists” whom on a voluntary basis wanted to contribute to the nature conservation in and around the Tayrona Park. The environmental education and awareness raising activities were based on a “community-community approach”.

The group of tourist guides, associated with the Posadas Ecoturísticas, have embraced the turtle protection project. They were initially only interested to participate in the training on nature conservation in return of beach control activities. They considered it important to improve their knowledge on nature conservation to become better tourist guides. But after the first training workshop they became involved in awareness raising activities as well, partly due to their conviction of the importance of turtle protection, partly as support to their community and especially schoolchildren, so as they say “the younger generation deserves a proper education on their natural environment”.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The group of tourist guides, associated with the Posadas Ecoturísticas, has embraced the turtle protection project as their flagship project. They want to expand the project to other species, including the iguana, macaw, tamarin monkeys etc. They are interested in continuing the turtle project, and are in the process of getting funds.

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

I hope to share the results with other people working with Rufford funds, especially to generate awareness on the importance of “community – community approach” instead of “community – extensionists/environmental educator approach”.

In addition, all the project members, university volunteer and community volunteers, also those being sceptic in the beginning, became convinced of the effectiveness of the “community-community approach” and will continue sharing this approach with others during future work opportunities.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The funds were used over a 2-year time span (July 2008- August 2010) instead of the planned 1-year project duration. Due to safety reasons, the 2009 year activities had to be partially postponed to the 2010 turtle season.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Educational Material	800	600	200	As the F. C.V bought a projector, this facilitated giving presentations during the workshop and it was not necessary to print posters. During the meetings, workshops and events, leaflets on turtle protection were given to the participants, and for the children drawings to colour. In addition handicrafts of turtles made by volunteers were given away as prizes.
Food during events, workshops and meetings	1800	2200	500	As more people participated as expected, more money has been spent on refreshments.
Transport of community members to participate in events, workshops and meetings	400	400		As planned
Beach control	200	300	100	Flashlights and binoculars were bought. In addition material to protect the turtle nests was bought.
Support to project staff and volunteers (transport and food during training and beach control activities)	2800	2400	400	As more money was necessary for refreshment and beach control we had to reduce budget on support to project staff and volunteers. Fortunately the project staff, project volunteers and tourist guides, were willing to co-finance part of their training activities.
Total	6000	6000	6000	Local Exchange rate July 2008: 1 £ sterling = 3.400 Colombian Pesos.

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

Even though we have had problems with the Park Unit that have impeded further collaboration during this project, it would be good if the group of tourist guides of the Posadas Ecoturísticas, start a dialogue with the Park Unit, to see whether it is possible to institutionalise their effort on awareness raising on marine turtles amongst the community, as one of the activities financed by the Park Unit. Community member- Community member dialogue has proven to be very effective in nature conservation, and would be a good complement of the Park Units activities.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes. Attached you find the materials with the RSGF Logo.

11. Any other comments?

Unfortunately, declaring an area Natural Park does not directly lead to nature conservation. It offers the necessary legal status, but local interests of community members, official park unit, universities and other organisations are factors that can impede or embrace the real so needed nature conservation action. During our project we experienced both; the Park Unit and local university that took away the turtle hatchlings for exhibition purposes at an aquarium in Santa Marta, and the support of the group of tourist guides in the implementation of the environmental education activities. Definitely: "Local people can make or break your nature conservation efforts".

