

## 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

| Grant Recipient Details |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Your name               | Hanyeh Ghaffari   |
| Project title           | Public awareness, education and research for protection Euphrates softshell turtle in Khuzestan province of Iran. |
| RSG reference           | 7916-1  |
| Reporting period        | September 2010 till November 2011   |
| Amount of grant         | £6000   |
| Your email address      | <a href="mailto:herpetology_hghaffari@yahoo.com">herpetology_hghaffari@yahoo.com</a>                              |
| Date of this report     | 16.11.2011  |

**1. Please 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>Conservation education of local communities;<br/>Education and awareness of local fishermen and also local children towards Euphrates softshell turtle protection</p> |              |                    | ✓              | <p>Three groups local people (children, fisherman, guards) were trained to monitor and conserve conservation of Euphrates soft shell turtle;<br/>We led Euphrates softshell turtle conservation education classes through a partnership program with The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP) of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for all primary and secondary schoolchildren at the Boys and Girls School in Shahid Beheshti, Seyyed Noor and Shahid Karimi villages. Children's were educated on the importance of turtles, actions for surviving Euphrates softshell turtle, and how they can be directly involved in helping to protect this turtle. Also fishermen and game guards from Dezful and also the Department of Environment of Khuzestan province attended the Awareness workshops.<br/>The programme has induced a significant behavioural change amongst local people and made a meaningful difference to fishermen and their ideas about Euphrates softshell turtle in the study area.<br/>The Department of Environment and ministry of education of Dezful gave us enormous support and have promised additional future support.</p> |
| <p>Increase awareness of Euphrates softshell turtle conservation issues to promote community turtle conservation</p>   |              |                    | ✓              | <p>A painting contest was announced to 314 schools in the region and the contest held on February 26th. We had a very enthusiastic response from all schools in the area. It was extremely difficult to pick an outright winner as they were all winners. The winners were selected by a jury comprised of the Ministry of Education of Dezful and also Pars Herpetologists Institute (PHI). The winners were honoured at The Earth Day and Turtle Festival that was held in Dezful on May 2011. This event held under the kind partnership of The Global Environment</p>  |

|  |  |   |   |  |
|--|--|---|---|--|
|  |  |   |   | Facility Small Grants Programme of United Nations Development Programme and also the Department of Environment of Dezful.  |
| To involve community in turtle conservation  |  |   | ✓ | Fishermen participated in the turtle monitoring and interacted with the research team in their daily activities. This made fishermen feel part of the process as collaborators and therefore promoted community-based conservation.  |
| Tagging Euphrates softshell turtle   |  |   | ✓ |  |
| Establish baseline information about the habitat, home range and ecology of the species in order to develop a conservation management plan |  | ✓ |   | The telemetry sessions expected to happen at the end of March 2011 were postponed to early April 2011. Three veterinary professors helped our research team to attach transmitters to the carapace and also to x-ray turtles with portable equipment to detect gravid females during the nesting season. The project is still under execution.                       |
| Making public support of the project (publications, TV- and radio-releases)  |  |   | ✓ | We presented several talks and notes for newspapers that were published in Iran. There was a video release on TV of the Islamic Republic of Iran about our conservational efforts. Also we gave a lecture in the Sulaimanya Environment Directorate of Iraq about our Euphrates softshell turtle conservational efforts in Iran" on November 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2011. |

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

Receiver and also transmitters are hard to get in Iran because of political sanctions. We managed to get a receiver from a collaborator in USA and transmitters via one of our relatives from Canada.

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

**Major outcomes:**

✓ **Tagging programme:** This study is the first of its kind for the Euphrates softshell turtle. Considering the project is still under execution, the expected outcomes have not been fully achieved. However, I would like to mention the involvement of local community in turtle monitoring and conservation of this project as an important outcome.

✓ **Fishermen involvement:** The most important action to conserve the Euphrates softshell turtle in Iran is to accomplish the volunteer participation of fishermen. Due to the fact that they are the

ones in closest contact with turtles in the study area, the future of Euphrates softshell population is squarely in their hands. During this project, fishermen were able to get more information about the endangered status of turtles, the threats to their populations, and how important their involvement is for their conservation. The interaction of the research team in their daily activities makes the fishermen feel part of the process and create a collaborative attitude about the turtle, thereby promoting community-based conservation. All these actions help sharing information and make fishermen become part of the solution to the problems faced by Euphrates soft shell turtle in the Dezful County.

✓ **Conservation Education:** During the project a total of 315 school children from Dezful were educated and involved in Euphrates soft shell turtle conservation. Also, an announcement for a painting contest was sent to 314 schools in the region and the contest held on February 26th. We had a very enthusiastic response from all schools in the area. It was extremely difficult to pick an outright winner. Euphrates softshell turtle conservation painting winners were honoured at the Earth Day and Turtle Festival that was held in Dezful city on May 2011. Also, fishermen and game guards from Dezful as well as the Department of Environment of Khuzestan province attended the Awareness workshops. The programme induced a significant behavioural change amongst the local people and made while correcting incorrect beliefs about Euphrates softshell turtle in the study area. The Department of Environment and ministry of education of Dezful were very supportive and the schools (pupils and teachers) responded very positively.

By the conclusion of the project, I expect that at least one additional outcome will be reached: the production of the first data on home ranges of the Euphrates soft shell turtle species in Iran. These data are critical for the conservation management of this endangered species.

**Others:**

- ✓ The relationship and information exchange have been improved between the local community and Department of Environment.
- ✓ The barriers to community participation in research were crossed and local communities now have a much better understanding of what Euphrates soft shell turtle monitoring is about, how it relates to them, and the motivation behind it.
- ✓ Suggestions to the Department of Environment on Euphrates soft shell turtle conservation and making rules and feedbacks. We designed and made a stamp that includes an image of the Euphrates and this sentence: **“Hunting, hurting and killing of the Euphrates soft shell turtles are legally prohibited”**. The Department of Environment of Dezful accepted to stamp every fishing license.

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

Local community involvement was an intended part of project design. Local children, fishermen, Department of Environment’s staff, and park rangers were trained with the turtle and its conservation. Local communities were involved in all project activities, from turtle monitoring, data gathering and education activities, to painting exhibition and celebrating the cosmos and turtle conservation events and theatre.

Fishermen participated in turtle monitoring. Furthermore, interaction with the research team in their daily activities made fishermen feel part of the process and create a collaborative feeling. This promoted community-based conservation.

- The fishermen, educators and park rangers also took part in workshops that offered learning and training opportunities through the year.
- All monitoring and conservation actions were carried out by 10 fishermen. In this way, the local community have been a great support for us.
- The turtle conservational education programme in schools covered 14 schools and about 315 children.
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#### **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

A movement to conserve the turtle has been started and surely must be carried forward in order to realise the long-term survival of the Euphrates soft shell turtle. A change in local people attitude to freshwater resource use and a shift towards the development of community-led management strategies will promote more sustainable exploitation in all local fisheries.

Conservation is a long-term commitment for our team and there is evidence that the local population would like us to continue with our education and monitoring programme. The effort of these years is evident now; the response of the fishermen committee, and the community participation, adults and children is a green light to continue. We plan to continue this project in the present schools and also take on new schools. We have gained valuable experience by working with the present schools.

We plan to expand collaboration with conservationists of neighbouring countries, Iraq, Syria, and also Turkey (cooperative field research, training, and seminars).

The priorities for the coming year will be to: 1) continue monitoring tagged turtles with telemetry 2) develop turtle handcrafts 3) spearhead community conservation-based programs in new areas 4) continue environmental education.

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

Results on conservation and education were presented in Sulaimanya Environment Directorate of Iraq on 3 November 2011, also a meeting of Nature Institute in Tehran, Department of Environment of Iran meeting. We presented several speaking and notes for newspapers that were published in Iran one of the papers published in Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation Magazine. There was a video release on TV of the Islamic Republic of Iran about our conservational efforts. Also many per-review articles will be generated using data collected during this project and we will also disseminate information about this project on the Pars Herpetologists Institute Website

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

The RSG was used during the period September 2010 till November 2011. The anticipated length of the project was from August 2010 to August 2011.

**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                                    |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|---|
| Transmitters | 5400            | 5464          | -64        |   |
| Receiver     | 550             | 479           | +71        |   |
| Antenna      | 50              | 57            | -7         |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | 6000            | 6000          | 0          | Local exchange rate used:<br>1£= IRR 17, 00 |

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

Conservation education is the ongoing endeavour. Also there are still many aspects of Euphrates soft shell turtle ecology that require study. The important next steps are:

- To replicate our work in a new region in Andimeshk and Shadegan county in Iran and also in Iraq and Turkey.
- Continuing and expanding the conservational education programme in schools.
- Continue the work in strengthening the action lines and looking for sustainability.
- Involve local NGOs so that they can work more closely and frequently with fishermen.
- Involving local communities even more in our programmes.
- Create a Euphrates soft shell turtle community conservation film to address specific conservation issues.

**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?**

- We used the RSG logo for the environmental bags.
- We are producing Euphrates soft shell turtle booklet on the carrying the RSG logo. Also Logo was used in the banner of education programme
- We used the RSG logo on the participation certificates given to Pars Herpetologists Institute (PHI) group members.
- We have provided a link to the RSG website and our project on the PHI website <http://pars-herp.org/>
- We always mentioned RSGF as the project sponsor in all publications, TV and radio interviews.

**11. Any other comments?**

I am very grateful to the Rufford Small Grants Foundation trustees for giving me the opportunity to conduct this project. It is gaining momentum with every phase of intervention and I very much look forward to the RSGF support in the future.

Without your support, the continuity of this work would have been very difficult, and the results would not be the same. Financial support from The Rufford Small Grant Foundation has allowed for positive, tangible changes for conservation in this region. I am indebted to my referees (Dr. Mahmoud Karami, Dr. James F. Parham, and Dr. Theodore J. Papenfuss) for their valuable support during the project and suggestions for future steps.