

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. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other 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. 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. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. 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	Caroline Leuchtenberger
Project title	Conservation status and diet of giant otter groups in the southern Pantanal
RSG reference	88.08.09
Reporting period	2010
Amount of grant	£5225
Your email address	caroleucht@gmail.com
Date of this report	13 December 2010

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
To map giant otter groups in several rivers, extending our knowledge on population status in the Pantanal.			X	Three rivers of the southern Pantanal were surveyed during 2010: Negro river, Miranda river and Vermelho river. We estimate a total of 23 adult individuals (7 social groups) of giant otter in 35 km of the Negro river, 19 adult individuals (4 social groups) in 40 km of the Miranda river and 29 individuals (4 social groups) in 40 km of the Vermelho river. These numbers suggest a density of 0.6 giant otter/km or one giant group for each 8 km of river.
To identify the diet of giant otter groups		X		We collected 112 latrines of 10 giant otter groups. However, until the moment we identified the diet of giant otters through visual observations, when individuals were seen eating. Fish was the most frequent item, representing 95% of the observations (n= 72). However crabs, caimans, conch and Tapir feces were seen in few events (n=4). <i>Hoplias malabaricus</i> was the most common fish that giant otters ate during this period (18%), followed by <i>Prochilodus lineatus</i> (14%) and different species of Piranha (10%). Other fishes were observed but in lowest frequency.
To interview local communities to know what fishes are important to local fisheries			X	We carried out interviews with local communities and their receptivity about the project was very good. The main fishes for the local fisheries are:

				<i>Pseudoplatystoma corruscans</i> , <i>P. Reticulatum</i> and <i>Piaractus mesopotamicus</i> , which seem to be consumed by giant otters in lowest frequency.
To carried out education plans with local communities and schools			X	The education plan was successful in presenting the project to the community and to involve them in some activities, as to monitor giant otters that live near the village. The kids were very excited with the lectures about giant otter's behaviour. The development of this project seems to reduce the negative view of the people about the species. However some people ask for alternatives to use the species as an attraction for ecotourism. This question could be an future objective of the project.

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

We had problems with the identification of the latrine's contents. To solve it we will create a reference database of bones and other fish's structures from the study area. However, to accomplish this activity it is required an environmental permit, which has already been requested and we believe that early on the next year we can get started on this process.

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

a – To know the status of giant otter population in different areas of the Pantanal: development of maps and photographic database from giant otter groups that occur in three rivers of the Southern Pantanal. This database will be important to other research and to do a long time monitoring of these populations.

b – To involve the local community with the activities of the project: meetings with communities provided a good relationship with local people and opened the door for future education programmes. See the testimony of a fisherman: "the development of this project and the presence of researchers here inhibits aggressive actions against the species".

c – Environmental Education: environmental education activities were structured and applied to the school of a local community. These activities were realised with children of ages 3 to 14 with the active participation of all the teachers and parents. The public answered positively to the activities and showed interest in a continued programme.

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

The local community was involved in meetings and presentations about the species and the results of the project. A photographic database of giant otter's groups was created to facilitate the knowledge of the individuals by the people. Each giant otter has received a name, so people could know them and increase their interest in monitoring them. This programme is just a beginning and we hope to increase the participation of communities with the project and to create ecotourism actions that could improve economically this people.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We will continue this project to finish the identification of the latrine's contents and to develop a more elaborated education programme with local communities, to create alternatives to use the species as an ecotourism flag.

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

- Regular publication of results in magazines, scientific articles and on the media.
- Presentations on meetings, conferences other events.
- Meetings with local communities.
- These results will complement a PhD thesis.

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

January 2010 to December 2010.

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
Gasoline	2225£ sterling			
Lodging	2500£ sterling			
Education plan	500£ sterling			
Total	5225£ sterling			

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

To develop a long time monitoring programme with giant otter's population is very important to know more about their behaviour and ecological needs. The photographic database of giant otter's groups will help to monitor the longevity and the sociobiology of the species in these areas. Moreover, it is necessary to continue the education programme with the local community to create effective alternatives to use the species as attractive for ecotourism, which is an increasing activity in the region.

Giant otters from Negro River



*1 - photo by Lucas Leuzinger
*2 - photo by Luciano Candisani

Giant otters from Miranda River



*1 - photo by Carolina Ribas

Giant otter's groups from Vermelho River



*1 - photo by Carolina Ribas