

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	Paras M Acharya
Project title	Investigation of Population Status and Habitats of <i>Lutra perspicillata</i> in Narayani River, Chitwan National Park
RSG reference	9409-2
Reporting period	March 2012
Amount of grant	£ 5900
Your email address	otterofhimalayas@yahoo.com
Date of this report	5 April 2012

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

2.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Determine the population status of smooth coated otter in the area		√		Five automatic cameras with the support of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation/Chitwan National Park placed in different potential habitats during the months of January and February 2012, but could not be successful in trapping the pictures of the otters.
Assess the status of water quality in otter habitat			√	The water samples from the pre-monsoon period were analysed in the Environment and Public Health Laboratory (ENPHO), Kathmandu. This laboratory was initially established with the support of the Italian Government and recognised by the Nepal Government and WHO. The detailed water quality monitoring is required for all seasons in the Narayani River basin to assess the ecosystem health and evaluate its impact on the otters.
Assess the factors determining the habitat choice of <i>L. perspicillata</i>		√		Assessment of habitat quality is largely based upon the site occupancy survey and interpretation of Google Image 2010. The GIS maps of potential habitats prepared by Arc GIS 10.0. Investigation is further required to assess the changes in habitat quality (habitat dynamics) between 2009 and 2013.
Raise awareness and educate the local communities about the importance of otter conservation			√	The study recommends the need of intensive conservation education programs to the communities and students around the protected areas.

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

N/A

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

1. The database on the status, distribution and habitats established which could be beneficial to park managers, particularly in the incorporation of the otter conservation issues in the on-going preparation of Chitwan National Park Management Plan.

2. GIS database of habitats of otters in Narayani River is prepared. These GIS layers are useful in designing effective conservation strategies and conservation efforts to the protection of otter populations in the river basin.
3. Optimum public awareness and education is achieved. Massive awareness activities were conducted through extensive discussion with key stakeholders and target groups of the area such as park rangers and game scouts, buffer zone users, fishermen, and army personnel on the importance and values of otters. The motivation of the people has been aroused to develop a strong feeling of stewardship in conserving these threatened through the stakeholder meetings, discussion meetings, cluster level meetings, on spot trainings on otter survey.

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

The park rangers and game scouts from the different posts of the Western Sector along the Narayani River were actively involved in the implementation of the project activities. During the period, the park staffs were trained on spot in surveying and monitoring of otters and their habitats. The net effect of this activity has enabled them to handle the survey equipments and also in the identification of otter signs and maintain the field data sheet. Due to the enhancement of awareness among the local communities, they have shown their willingness to involve in otter conservation projects of the park. Importance of otters among the stakeholders has created strong willingness to participate in otter conservation activities. In addition, the Gharial Breeding Centre now has been gathering information on habitats and sightings of otters while monitoring gharials in the river basin.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, as recommended I am interested in carrying out the survey of otters in the Terai Arc Landscape which include the Narayani, Rapti, Karnali, Babai and Bahunne Rivers and connected to 11 protected areas of India functioning as wildlife corridor. This study will lead to understand the status, population and habitat requirements of smooth coated otter beyond the Narayani river boundaries. In addition, the study will also include the habitat dynamics of Narayani and Rapti Rivers to assess the impacts of changes in habitat quality on otter habitats and population.

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

The outcomes of the study will be largely shared by disseminating the information to the protected areas and the communities through different public forums, interaction programs and publication of findings in the leading national and international journals.

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

RSG was used for a period of one year starting from April 2011 to March 2012.

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
Professional Services	1080	1080		
Field Expenses	1685	1685		
Field gears and equipment	515	715		Five Automatic camera supported by DNPWC. Purchase of digital topographical layers.
Seminar, Training & Meeting/Publicity Materials	1395	1395		
Water quality analysis	500	800	300	
Report Preparation & Publication	290.00	290.00		
Communication (Tel./Fax/Mail/E-mail/Internet)	250.00	250.00		
Stationary (Photocopy, Printing, Web Maintenance)	215.00	215.00		
Miscellaneous	220.00	220.00		
Institutional contribution	1,400.00	1,400.00		
TOTAL	7,550.00	8,050.00	500.00	

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

I look ahead to continue this research through the RSG booster grant to establish the GIS based database in the landscape level.

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?

The RSGF logo was definitely used in all the materials of the project and also in the GIS maps produced.