

The Rufford Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford 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	Rajkamal Goswami
Project title	Faunal Inventory and Conservation of Threatened Community Forest in Meghalaya
RSG reference	9807-1
Reporting period	November 2011 - August 2013
Amount of grant	£5958
Your email address	rajkamal@atree.org ; rajkamalgoswami@gmail.com
Date of this report	October 2013

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
Appraisal and orientation workshops with the local communities to make them aware of the project and its objectives.			✓	This was done through several meetings across 13 villages and two Hill Autonomous Councils (HACs), the Jaintia Hills and the Khasi Hills. In each case local interpreters were used. Through these meetings we not only appraised the local inhabitants about the project but also identified potential volunteers from the indigenous communities for the participative faunal inventory survey.
Creation of maps highlighting the important biodiversity areas in the forests controlled by the communities.		✓		This is a work in progress as we are still processing the existing biodiversity information in order to merge them into spatial maps which may be used as easy, simple and meaningful tools by the indigenous communities to conserve the existing biodiversity effectively.
Participative biodiversity inventory			✓	<p>Within the narrow boundaries of the project, this has been by far the most successful of all the objectives both in terms of the way it was conceptualised and visualised and the in terms of the rich data that we actually collected. The same was achieved through the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During the meetings organised as part of the fulfilment of objective 1, we appraised and identified the inhabitants who were in possession of rich knowledge about the local faunal attributes. 2. Over several focused group meetings (FGM) we fine-tuned an easy and effective method of participative monitoring whereby we provide hands on training on data accumulation, entry and simple tabulation and analysis of biodiversity data. Through these FGMs we formed what we called as 'Integrated Ilaka^[1] Biodiversity Groups' or IIBB which comprised of 5-7 local village level representatives and the PI. In total 2 IBBs were formed, one each in Khasi and the Jaintia HACs. 3. Three faunal groups namely birds, mammals and butterflies were chosen as the best possible taxa which could be effectively monitored over longer periods of time within the participative framework. The taxa were chosen

				after consulting both the IIBBs. 4. All data collections were carried out under the aegis of this IIBB. 5. 63 bird, 371 butterfly and 29 mammal species were inventoried under this project.
Land Tenure review		✓		This is also a work currently under progress as a research manuscript document a copy of which would be submitted to the RSG foundation as soon as it is complete.
Awareness workshop	✓			This is not yet held but has been scheduled to be held tentatively in February 2014 after all the materials viz. maps, brochures etc has been published.

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

There were two main unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project:

1. In 2012, the rains were unpredictable and played a lot of havoc with the scheduled field work regarding the faunal inventory. In fact much of the inventory was done in the period December 2012 - August 2013. This was the key reason behind the inadvertent extension of the project period.
2. The prices of basic commodities, viz. food items and fuel, rose considerably during the project period mainly due to a general trend of rising Inflation in the Indian economy. This resulted in an unforeseen inflation of the estimated expenditure planned and budgeted as a part of the project.

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

1. Formation of the 'Integrated Ilaka Biodiversity Groups' or IIBB which has pledged to continue the faunal monitoring tasks.
2. Faunal inventory resulted in the confirmed presence of 63 bird, 371 butterfly and 29 mammal species from the community-controlled forests of the Jaintia and Khasi Hills indicating that they are highly rich in biodiversity.
3. The maps and the review document of the existing land tenure, to be completed shortly, would figure among the most important outcomes of the project.

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

This project, right since its inception, was visualised as a participative engagement of the 'scientific experts' community with the local community's knowledge on local biodiversity. It will be valuable to note here that in Meghalaya, the study location; more than 80% of the forests are managed and controlled by the communities, a fact which just re-emphasises their crucial power in any matters concerning the conservation of the biodiversity and the forests in general. Thus, more than a romantic notion, we conceptualised the participation of the local communities as an inherent practical reality to ensure long term success of any programme linked with biodiversity conservation

beyond the Government Protected Areas, which represents a miniscule 12% of the total existing forest area of the state.

And we are glad to admit that we were able to realise this most important framework and ensured participation of the local communities at all three stages of the project execution, viz. preliminary planning of the field work, data collection and preliminary analysis of the biological data, which we have detailed in the comments section of the objective fulfilment summary of this report format. We just wish to re-highlight the formation of the 'Integrated Ilaka Biodiversity Groups' or IIBBs which comprised of 5-7 local village level representatives and the PI, one each in Khasi and the Jaintia HACs which to us is an important intervention in this regard. We further envisage their participation in the Awareness Workshop that we have tentatively scheduled in February 2014.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. During the course of the field work, we realised that since tigers are thought to be extinct from Meghalaya, there has been a dearth of political motivation to protect the community forests, which nevertheless are very important for both cultural as well as natural diversity, as this study has shown. Further owing to drastic changes in the global resource use patterns particularly in the post globalisation era, largely shaped by modern capitalist economic and political regimes, the erstwhile decentralized, small scale, subsistence level Khasi-Jaintia societies and their institutions underwent major changes and upheavals. The aggressive growth policies pursued by the Federal Government of India in the last two decades has led to the proliferation of large-scale unsafe and unscientific mining activities, illegal timber felling and deforestation in large areas of community forests in Meghalaya. Thus, many forests areas have either disappeared or have been severely fragmented leaving, at the same time, many rivers and streams polluted with toxic effluents from the mines and its affiliated industries. Moreover, we aim to project and highlight the value of these community forests beyond the local context of Khasi-Jaintia cultures, in the global context of conservation priorities such as threatened and endemic species, biodiversity 'hotspot', critical habitats and ecosystem services. This project has partially addressed it by highlighting the conservation values in terms of their biodiversity values. The work needs to be taken forward by implementing the findings in the current socio-political contexts in order to secure the remaining forests and biodiversity rich areas.

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

We plan to distribute and share the maps with the village level committees, the Ilaka level institutions, the State Forest Departments and Civil Society Groups so that the important biodiversity areas can be clearly known and shown. This would greatly empower the community forests which are under the constant threat of being encroached upon by the developmental activities.

Awareness workshop on existing wildlife and biodiversity protection laws for the community would be carried out at all the study sites. We will invite local community leaders, political leaders, legal experts and local academicians and conservationists who would appraise the community about the federal laws and the ecological importance of all living organisms. We would also organise various easy and entertaining exercises to highlight the issues.

The detailed project report, which is under preparation right now, would be submitted to the state Forest Department, the Autonomous District Councils and the Village and Ilaka heads.

Articles highlighting the main findings of the study would be sent to few peer-reviewed and popular journals to reach a wider global audience.

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

The grant was utilised in the period of November 2011 till February 2013. Beyond the fund utilisation, there was an extension of further 5 months over the actual planned field work because of highly unpredictable southwest monsoons in the field site during the year 2012. It is detailed in point 2.

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
Night Travel (from current base to field sites)	383	242.24	-140.76	Fewer trips were required
Local Field Travel (Day travel during field work): 13.7£ per day*150 days	1110	2228.21	+1118.21	Due to extension and high inflation in the prices of fuel and hiring charges since the time the budget was prepared.
Food expenses during field work @ 3£ per person per day*2 persons*150 days	500	428.81	-71.11	Food items were subsidised by a local friend and well-wisher.
Binoculars (275£*2 Units)	275	108.45	-166.55	Locally manufactured cheaper models became available
Digital Camera Trap	1320	1251.68	-104.32	Units became cheaper since the preparation of the budget
Posters, refreshments, booklets, CDs, LCD monitor hiring	350	339.77	-10.23	
Printing, copying, binding charges @ 250£	250	198.21	51.79	
Telephone, letters, internet (e-mails, literature review etc),	250	180.77	69.23	
Renewables (batteries, chargers), emergency medical expenses, unforeseen expenses	100	246.3	+146.3	Due to extension in the project period
Accommodation: 42 £ per month*5 months	210	511	+301.8	Due to extension in the project period
Total	5958	5958	0	Exchange rate: 1£ = 73.58 Indian Rupee

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

Having generated the requisite knowledge about the surviving biodiversity across three significant taxa, conservation wise, the next important step would be initiate the required processes for the formation of community conservation areas (CCAs). Through the CCAs, we aim to conserve and secure the existing biodiversity-rich community forests from high potential threat of unsustainable developmental activities. The way we have envisaged, these areas will be managed with the collaboration of state Forest Departments, the traditional community-based forest management institutions, the civil society bodies and the village level traditional institutions that would safeguard the area from any kind of unsustainable developmental activities. The involvement of the stakeholders in developing the conservation plan and their subsequent participation in the implementation of it would be a measure of the success of such initiatives.

In tandem, we also wish to explore ways through which it might be possible to initiate small scale ecotourism activities thereby creating viable income opportunities for the local communities. We strongly believe that such an approach, if successful, would not only lend sustainability and economic stability to the initiative but also improve cash income of the rural poor. We also feel that such ventures can potentially expand the local stake in conservation from its current focus on forest produce harvest.

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

RSG logo was prominently used in a PowerPoint presentation that the PI presented in the North-Eastern Hill University at Shillong.

We highlighted the first report of a butterfly species belonging to the family Nymphalidae from the Indian mainland in many local newspapers and weekly magazines both in English and the local Khasi language. This finding was a direct result of the fieldwork conducted during the course of this project.

The RSG logo would occupy prominently space both in the forthcoming workshop, as well as the maps that are currently under preparation.

11. Any other comments?

Two manuscripts which were direct output of this project have been submitted of which one has been accepted for publication and is currently under the second level peer-review process. RSG has been acknowledged in both the publications. Three more manuscripts related to the project are currently under preparation.

Footnotes:

[1] An Ilaka is a sub-district level administrative territorial area which is usually a cluster of villages represented by homogeneity in terms of tribal, sub-tribal or linguistic identities. It is headed by a Dolloi, in case of Jaintia HAC and a Sardar, in case of the Khasi HAC. This institution is recognised under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.