

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	Christi Sylvia
Project title	Habitat use and movement patterns of Asian elephants in southern Eastern Ghats, India
RSG reference	02.12.08
Reporting period	June 2009-July 2010
Amount of grant	£5992
Your email address	christisylvia@gmail.com
Date of this report	August 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
Primary Objective: Studying the habitat and vegetation usage by Asian elephants within the study area				Primary data on habitat and vegetation usage by elephants have been collected from June 2009 to May 2010. I also collected secondary data for the same variables for previous years.
Primary Objective: Studying the movement patterns of the Asian elephants within the study area				The data were collected from reliable secondary sources of information (mainly government records). In some cases, information dating back to more than 5 years could not be accessed on account of government's policy of physically doing away with the records every 10 years.
Studying the extent of human-elephant conflicts				This was studied as part of the primary objective. Information gathered was from the questionnaire survey conducted and also from reliable secondary sources of information (government records). People in the villages were either not honest or not open to discussing the conflicts.
Study of the effect of re-colonisation of Asian elephants in southern Eastern Ghats				This was studied as part of the primary objective. The Asian elephants in southern Eastern Ghats show considerable seasonal movements and thus become a part of human-elephant conflict in the study area, thus the study of re-colonisation was partially achieved since the herds would keep moving into different areas.
To develop a sound conservation strategy for the Asian elephants in southern Eastern Ghats				This was the first systematic study on the Asian elephants in southern Eastern Ghats, and so based on the information gathered from the study and keeping in view the mindset of the authorities involved in taking decisions regarding the Asian elephants, some conservation strategies will be suggested in the final report that will aid in the decision making process.

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

1. The original plan was to follow the Asian elephants to gather information on their movement patterns, but this had to be changed later as the elephants were showing considerable movements within the study area almost every day which, in turn, led to increasing human-elephant conflicts. The authorities did not permit the researcher to follow the Asian elephants on grounds of personal safety, so this information was gathered from reliable secondary sources (government records).
2. Due to the increased movements of the Asian elephants in the study area, the researcher was unable to establish a base camp as the sites to be visited would change almost every day. Therefore the budgetary outlay originally earmarked for setting up the base camp had to be utilized to hire a 4-wheel drive all-terrain vehicle to move around the study area a lot more. Prior permission was acquired from Rufford Small Grants Foundation.
3. Most often, the government authorities (a Watcher, a Forest Guard or the Ranger) would accompany the researcher to visit the village households and farms that were damaged by the Asian elephants during the questionnaire survey. Naturally, this deterred the villagers from providing accurate information on severity of the conflict issue as they feared a possible backlash from the Forest Department. They tended to understate the damages and the conflict when interviewed in the presence of authorities. This was, however, resolved by questioning the person concerned individually. It was made clear to them that the information was being gathered as part of a research project and that the conversation will have no bearing whatsoever on compensation from the authorities.
4. At the same time, some of the villagers were alleged to have forged the damage in their farms and reported them as caused by the Asian elephants in anticipation for a larger compensation. A few of them, in fact, exaggerated the actual damage caused by wild elephants. These reports were later checked and corroborated through independent verifications.

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

1. There have been no systematic and scientific research studies to ascertain the origin, dispersal and seasonal movements of the Asian elephants in southern Eastern Ghats, and this study was the first of its kind. It has been able to gather considerable information on the past and present movement patterns of the Asian Elephants along with the quantification of human-elephant conflicts in the region.
2. While the elephant population in the Western Ghats has been studied in detail, the population in the southern Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu has not received as much attention. There has been only one scientific, documented, macroscopic study on the flora of this area. This study will contribute considerably to the information on vegetation types present in the Javadi hill ranges of Vellore and Tiruvannamalai districts of southern Eastern Ghats and habitat use patterns of Asian elephants.
3. The present study was also able to assess the attitude of local communities towards human-elephant conflicts and their role in conserving wildlife in the hills. It is

recognized that a greater cooperation between Forest Department and other stakeholders needs to be firmly put in place, and the study is currently working out the details of such a management framework. These suggestions will be furnished in the Final Technical Report.

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

1. The questionnaire survey attempted to quantitatively assess the attitudes and value systems of local communities vis-a-vis human-elephant conflicts and wildlife conservation in general. It is very clear from the results that involvement of local communities in mitigating human-elephant conflicts is imperative for successful implementation of our recommendations.
2. The study has also looked into existing mechanisms of monetary compensation in cases of human-elephant conflicts and a review is currently under way. This review is expected to yield recommendations for a policy framework to make the compensation procedure more tractable and transparent. This would enormously benefit the local communities who are vocal against the present norms that are clearly far from ideal.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The government is yet to take a crucial decision on the fate of this elephant population, and there are indications that they may be allowed to stay back in Javadi Hills. In that case, the elephant population needs to be intensively monitored and I plan to carry out the exercise. But, this is contingent upon the decision of the authorities.

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

A technical report will be submitted to the state Forest Department for further actions and it will also be published and sent to conservation organisations and people who are interested in the project.

I also plan to write a couple of scientific papers for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

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

The RSG has been used for a period of 12 months (June 2009-May 2010) till now and it will also be utilized to meet the cost of the outsourcing mapping of the GPS data, printing and distribution of Final Technical Report. Though the projected duration of the study was 10 months, it took a little longer owing to some delay in getting necessary permission from the Forest Department. Because of this overshoot, renewal of work permit had to be done for April-May, 2010. The field work was completed in May 2010. The project will officially end with the completion and submission of the Final Technical Report in another 2 months' time.

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.

*Total Amount Received In £ @ Rs. 72.81/ £ on 4th May 2009 = Rs. 436253/-
Interest Received : 01-03-2009 to 31-08-2009, Received on 4/9/09 = Rs. 4844/-
Interest Received : 01-09-2009 to 28-02-2010, Received on 1/3/10 = Rs. 5444/-
Interest Received : 01-03-2010 to 31-03-2010, Received on 29/4/10 = Rs. 593/-
Total Interest Received till March 2010 : Rs. 10881/-

	Amount Budgeted INR	Amount Budgeted £	Actual Amount Used INR	Actual Amount Used £	Difference INR	Difference £	Comments
Particulars of Expenditure							# The current exchange rate is used to calculate the difference. When the amount is transferred the exchange rate will vary.
Salaries/ Allowances							
Field assistant Wages	64000	859	11480	158	52520	723	Only 1 field assistant was hired due to lack of resources, & was paid on a daily basis.
Fellowship for Researcher	150000	2006	150000	2066			-
Food expenses	32000	4290	31476	434	524	7	-
Accommodation & Travel							
Base Camp	100000	1342	3570	49	96430	1328	*This budget-head was used to pay for the remaining vehicle hire charges, travel allowance, & consumables.
Vehicle hire charges	40000	537	95708	1318	-55708	-767	*After the reconnaissance survey it was decided not to set up base camp,

							since the elephants showed regular movements. The vehicle was used more than initially planned.
Travel Allowance	10000	134	16913	233	-6913	-95	*This includes travel for the whole team (consisting of 2-4 people in different areas).
Others							
Communications	10000	134	10000	138			
Consumables	10000	134	22543	311	-12543	-173	*Due to a malfunction of the GPS, a new GPS had been bought, since it was required for 90% of the field study.
Film Purchase & Processing	5500	74			5500	76	
Medical expenses	10000	134	3022	42	6978	96	
Report Writing	10000	134			10000	138	
Miscellaneous	5500	74			5500	76	
TOTAL	447000	5992	344712	4748.10	102288	1409	

NOTE: *Due to difference in exchange rate the amount received was less than budgeted amount, but the interest received on the funds have compensated for the same. This table does not reflect the complete expenditure of the project. All the money remaining after the outsourcing of GIS mapping, printing and distribution of the Technical Report will be returned to Rufford Small Grants Foundation as such.

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

1. A step of immediate concern would be the decision of the Forest Department over the fate of this elephant population. It remains to be seen whether the elephants will be translocated or status quo will be maintained. Any future action plan will be wholly dependent upon this decision.

2. Human-elephant conflicts in southern Eastern Ghats are increasing at a rapid rate and given the fact that a landscape approach is required to understand the movement and habitat use patterns of elephants, it is essential that future studies should have landscape matrix as an important component. As such, another important step would be to look into the migratory corridors traditionally used by the elephant populations and secure them back for their continued use.

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 will be acknowledged in all the materials produced during this project like the GNAPE Technical Report and scientific papers. The RSGF logo will be prominently displayed on the cover pages of the final technical report. The support of RSGF has been proudly highlighted in GNAPE annual reports and progress reports. At a more informal level, I have informed my colleagues and other researchers about the RSGF and the mode of application.

11. Any other comments?

We are grateful to the Rufford Small Grants Foundation for supporting this study and in particular, the ease and flexibility with which the RSGF is processed for supporting conservation studies and initiatives are highly appreciated. It is also to be noted here that all the queries and clarifications from aspirants and applicants are promptly addressed and replied. In short, I am extremely grateful and very proud to be associated with the Rufford Small Grants Foundation.