

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	Prachi Mehta
Project title	Status and Distribution of Malabar Giant Squirrel Ratufa indica in Western Ghats of Maharashtra ,India
RSG reference	10399-1
Reporting period	October 2011-November 2012
Amount of grant	£5994
Your email address	prachimehta1@gmail.com
Date of this report	20 November 2012

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
1. To carry out a distribution survey of the Malabar giant squirrel in the study area			√	The survey could not be carried out in coastal districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg due to the onset of monsoons.
2. To estimate the population of the Malabar giant squirrel in the study area			√	We could generate the density estimates for the entire study area, but population estimate is not possible since the extent of squirrel habitat is not known.
3. To identify threats to Malabar giant squirrel in the study area			√	Hunting of squirrel for meat and trade is reported from the surveyed region but except in very few cases, was difficult to establish as people were wary to reveal the information to the research team.
4. To identify vulnerable populations of Malabar giant squirrel in the study area in immediate need of conservation action			√	

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

The survey was carried out in an extensive geographical area on a very intensive scale. It required the research team to be on a constant move. To complete the survey in time, we appointed additional researchers. Arranging logistics at each site was difficult as it required contacting senior officers and field staff. However, with prior planning we were able to provide the facilities to the research teams.

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

1. The occupancy analysis estimates that 95 % of the surveyed area is occupied by giant squirrel indicating that the species is widely distributed within the landscape.
2. Though widely distributed, the measures of giant squirrel density and encounters indicate low abundance outside the protected areas. Bhimashankar has high density of squirrels although it is lower than the previous estimates by Dr. Renee Borges.
3. The northern-most range of Malabar giant squirrel is the Harishchandragad-Kalsubai Sanctuary. Though this is a protected area, the northern and western region of this sanctuary has almost no signs of squirrel presence and hunting of squirrel is still being continued in pockets of the Sanctuary. As per the earlier information and local knowledge

many areas around Nashik, Thane, Roha, Paud, Karjat, Sudhagad-Pali, Raireswar, Bhor, Srivardhan had giant squirrels in the past but the current survey did not record any signs of their presence. Habitat loss and hunting are the main causes of decline in squirrel population in the region. In Sawantwadi, farmers admit to shooting the squirrels as they damage their coconut and cashew orchards.

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

Not applicable.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. We plan to continue the survey in remaining districts and initiate appropriate conservation programs in specific sites.

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

Preliminary findings of the project were presented as a poster at the Biodiversity Conference in Pune in February 2012. A few newspaper articles have been published about the survey. We shall be distributing hard and soft copies of the report to Forest Officers and conservation institutes within the state and outside. The findings of the report will be presented at the PCCF office. We plan to publish the project findings in scientific journals and in popular media. A popular article has been written for WWF magazine. We have also made a short film on the methods of estimating population of giant squirrel by distance sampling. This CD will be distributed in forest department for training the staff in population monitoring method.

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

Due to prolonged monsoon in 2011, the survey was late by 2 weeks. The survey commenced in 2nd week of October and had to be wrapped up by 3rd week of June 2012 due to onset on monsoon season. The dataset was very large so considerable time was spent in preparation of data for occupancy analysis, density estimates and GIS analysis. The estimated time to submit the report was October 2012 but due to various delays it got extended for about 3 weeks.

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
Equipment				
Camera	140	163	23	
TOTAL	140	163	23	
Field Survey and Operation Expense				

Lodging in field for Field Researcher during the survey (£80/month x 8 months)	640	279	-361	Saving in lodging expenses for field researchers because they sometimes stayed in rest houses of Forest Department
Lodging for PI during the survey (£80/month x 0.5 months)	40	0	-40	
Food allowance for Field Researcher (£20/month x 8 months)	160	447	287	There was increase in food allowance for field researcher because we employed two field researchers, one of whom was funded by WWF, India
Communication with field officers and Headquarters by Phone (£3/month x 8 months)	24	24	0	
Motorcycle (3000 km/month x £0.027/km x 8 months)	640	711	71	Higher expenditure because considerable travel was involved
Subtotal	1504	1461	-43	
Personnel				
Principal Investigator (£820/month x 1.5 month)	1230	1184	-46	
Field Researcher (£165/month x 12 months)	1980	1949	-31	
Field Assistant (£55/month x 8 months)	440	415	-25	
Subtotal	3650	3548	-102	
Traveling Expense				
Jeep travel by PI to visit the field site	250	449	199	field visits were made by PI to ensure the quality of data collection
Office Cost				
Purchase of toposheet maps (£0.5 x 80 maps)	40	11	-29	
Stationery	20	40	20	
Postage	20	4	-16	
Report printing	70	19	-51	Saving in report printing because most electronic media was used for sending report
Office Overheads (5% of project cost)	300	299	-1	
Subtotal	450	373	-77	
GRAND TOTAL	5994	5994	0	

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

The importance of giant squirrel in the ecosystem needs to be highlighted among policy makers and administrators so that squirrel habitats are not compromised for commercial gains. Hunting is prevalent yet difficult to control. New approaches and strategies are needed to contain and control hunting.

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?

Yes, the Rufford logo was used in the poster, report, presentation and in the film. Field researchers, colleagues and forest officers are aware of support of RSG program for the survey.