

## 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

#### Grant Recipient Details

<b>Your name</b>	Dr Michael White
<b>Project title</b>	Assessment of sea turtles at Palmerston Atoll, Southern Cook Islands
<b>RSG reference</b>	10964-1
<b>Reporting period</b>	January 2012 to December 2012
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£6000
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Crwban681@yahoo.co.uk">Crwban681@yahoo.co.uk</a> OR <a href="mailto:team@picionline.org">team@picionline.org</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> May 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
Assess all beaches for nesting suitability			Yes	
Assess distribution and abundance of nesting			Yes	
Assess marine habits for use by turtles			Yes	
Tag and measure encountered turtles	Yes			No turtles were directly encountered; all sightings were underwater and captures were not attempted
Identify threats and impacts			Yes	
Raise environmental awareness of local community			Yes	
Education in local school		Yes		Easter vacation coincided with expedition; we were given a half day to teach whole school: it was very successful
Train local monitors and develop support network			Yes	This has been started and will be extended during future studies
Produce publicity material			Yes	Cook Islands News, FaceBook and PICI websites
Report findings to Biodiversity Strategy & TREDS; advise on legislative needs			Yes	In preparation. A copy of the expedition report will be sent to Rufford when completed (this will be in about 2 months time)

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

The Easter period meant we could not work on two holidays (we had planned not to work on Sundays anyway as the community is very religious); there was also ANZAC Day later in the month, so another day was lost. My solution was to get as much work as possible completed in the early part of the expedition and to remain very flexible with daily work programmes.

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

- i) Determining the current status of turtles at the atoll. Quantifying the nesting activity and species present. This will allow population trends to be compared over time.
- ii) Raising awareness with the islanders that sea turtles are endangered; and promoting them as an important local and national resource.
- iii) Training several islanders as research assistants.

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

- i) The Island Council approved this research and gave permission to teach in the school.
- ii) The school Principal and teachers facilitated in our teaching day: all students learned new things and some practical or artistic skills (ages ranged from 5-19).
- iii) Five teenagers (aged 16-19) worked with us as research assistants. They were each amazed and inspired by our research: at least two will continue to work with us in the future.
- iv) Three other islanders participated in an 'open day' of nest excavations.
- v) All the community attended our final presentation where we explained our findings, the importance of our work and their stewardship of natural living resources; and our plans for the future. Two of our local researchers spoke during the presentation.
- vi) The island Council expressed great interest in our findings and they are willing to support any necessary conservation measures (these will be formulated during another study).

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes. A future study will concentrate on nesting dynamics and ecology; extending the training of our local researchers; and an assessment of the outer reef underwater habitats.

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

- i Report made available online ([www.seaturtle.org](http://www.seaturtle.org) and [www.rufford.org](http://www.rufford.org) ).
- ii Regular blogs and press releases. Conclusions on [www.rufford.org](http://www.rufford.org) and [www.picionline.org](http://www.picionline.org) and [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)).
- iii Relevant data will be reported to TREDs ([www.sprep.org](http://www.sprep.org) ) and SWOT ([www.seaturtlestatus.org](http://www.seaturtlestatus.org) ).
- iv Emails to scientific peers and regional organisations.
- v If funds allow then a presentation at the International Sea Turtle Society symposium in 2013 or 2014.
- vi Publication of a scientific paper.
- vii Included in the Cook Islands Turtle Project annual report for 2012.
- viii Included in the Cook Islands National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
- ix Local and national government representatives have mentioned our contribution to Palmerston Atoll in their monthly reports.

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

Most funds were disbursed between January and April 2012. This was exactly as planned, with the expedition fieldwork being undertaken throughout April 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
Yacht charter fee	2201.84	1952.00	Saved £249.84	Reduced rate (see xls)
Accommodation	2026.62	1708.00	Saved £318.62	Reduced rate (see xls)
Food	337.77	896.34	Overspent by £558.57	Supplies and freight cost more than anticipated
Salary for local monitors	600.48	314.27	Saved £286.21	Local researchers weren't used in Easter week
Equipment	1033.01	1331.62	Overspent by £298.61	We needed extra supplies : See xls for full details
<b>Total</b>	<b>6199.72<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>6202.23</b>	<b>-£2.51</b>	

Notes: a) **1 NZ\$ = £0.488 (8<sup>th</sup> May 2012)**

b) Rufford Grant was for £6000 the additional £199.72 was provided by the turtle project and PICI.

c) The final tally was an overspend of £2.51, which the project covered.

d) Jess Cramp (Pici) will forward the final xls and scanned copies of all receipts by e-mail.

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

- i) To undertake fieldwork during the nesting season: this will be challenging as it coincides with the cyclone season and transportation is extremely rare. The likely solution is for a researcher to go to Palmerston for about 6 months, and train local researchers how to measure, tag and collect genetic samples from nesting females.
- ii) A comprehensive underwater assessment should be conducted: searching for hawksbill turtles in particular.
- iii) To determine if conservation measures are actually needed, or whether current levels of direct take are sustainable (they probably are).
- iv) To consolidate an electronic support network for local researchers; to extend their data collection capabilities.

**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?**

- i) Michael White FaceBook: initial announcement of grant, included RSG logo (18/12/2011).
- ii) Cook Islands Turtle Project 2011 annual report (White 2012).
- iii) Press releases in Cook Islands News included RSG logo.
- iv) PICI mentioned the expedition on its webpage.
- v) Advert for two research assistants included RSG logo.
- vi) Mentioned at the Council Meetings and community presentations on Palmerston Atoll.
- vii) Rufford logo will be shown at a public presentation in Rarotonga.

**11. Any other comments?**

It is unlikely that this study would have been undertaken without external funding. I thank the Rufford Small Grants Foundation for their willingness to sponsor this research; and it has been a pleasure to work with your organisation: which I found to be extremely professional. Thank You All.