

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	Himani Kala
Project title	Assessment of the population of white-naped tit (<i>Parus nuchalis</i>) and its thorn forest habitat in southern Aravalli hills, Rajasthan, India
RSG reference	11.10.09
Reporting period	May 2010 – June 2011
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	monal.birds@gmail.com and monalbirds@yahoo.co.in
Date of this report	10/08/2011

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
Establishment of baseline information			✓	This was used to survey the areas where the birds were reported to be present earlier and also before this study.
Field surveys			✓	In total, 36 areas (thorn and thorn mixed forest) were surveyed in Aravalli hills of southern Rajasthan and seven areas in Aravalli hills of north Gujarat. Of all these areas, white-naped tit were sighted in 20 areas in Rajasthan and four areas in north Gujarat. Total birds seen were 214.
Habitat modelling and preparation of distributional map			✓	Birds prefer large contiguous patch of dense <i>Acacia</i> forest. Specifically they were found at sites where the canopy was more and the forest had two layers, both tree and shrubs. Highly disturbed areas were not or used very less.
Stakeholder participation – group discussion with local communities and forest managers			✓	However, awareness and group discussion with locals and forest managers was helpful to make both the stakeholders understand that participatory approach is needed for better conservation, this needs to be done in a more extensive and large scale.
Pilot conservation action – provision of 50 artificial nest boxes and occupancy of nest boxes by white-naped tit (<i>Parus nuchalis</i>)			✓	It was found that white-naped tit readily take up the nest boxes and also bred successfully, so this could be one of the major tool to support and improve the potential of breeding of this species and the most appropriate means of improving the population and its status.

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

None.

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

Major outcomes of this project were:

- ❖ We were able to know where this species were distributed and clearly showed that the birds were found in sites with less to moderate disturbances and also sites where the canopy cover was more and trees of larger size class was present. Further, it was established that this species preferred thorn forest that have contiguity that is basically thorn forest spread over a larger landscape without being fragmented.
- ❖ This species readily takes up artificial nest boxes and also bred successfully with three fledglings from two boxes and four fledglings coming out of five boxes. At least some males breeds twice in a season, which needs further research. Further, in addition to the bird competitors for nest holes it was found through this study that five-striped palm squirrel, Indian bush rat, Indian long-tailed mouse, a species of big black ant and honey bees also compete with this bird for nesting and that natural holes are very less in the forest.
- ❖ We were able to involve local communities and built confidence among them, which helped in the protection of the nest boxes. Local's involvement in the study was evident when they discussed and asked us the success of birds taking up the nest boxes. This clearly gave us a learning that "conservation through community participation," is possible provided there is constant interaction with the community and conservation includes their resources needs also.

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

As mentioned in the proposal that this bird is very specific to its thorn forest habitat and most of the thorn forest are found along the foot-hills of Aravalli hills mainly bordered by the villages and their agriculture land. Among the villagers, few local communities are totally dependent on this thorn forest for their basic requirements like fuel wood and fodder. Therefore our first mission was to engage two persons to assist in the project as part of building confidence among the people. This led to better interaction of the villagers and the local community in all the awareness and education programs. As said earlier, the local assistants were constantly used to interact with the community and as a result the grazers and other locals constantly informed about the nest boxes and the visitation of the birds. They were much excited to see the birds using the boxes and also suggested some means of reducing disturbance from the other competitors. Further the Forest Department has been made aware that there is an immediate need to develop resources that are used by the local, within their village environs through restoration of their common lands. This is one benefit to the locals.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I would like to continue this with the help of the Rufford Small Grant Foundation; basically I want to carry out an intensive environmental education and awareness programme among the local communities living inside and outside the thorn forest and the adjoining forest in Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary which holds a considerable population of this endemic and threatened species. This would also help in educating the locals on sustainable use of the available resources. Further, would like to use the funds to try and provide nest boxes in some other parts of this PA and also try to know more about the bird's ecology that would involve marking or ringing few individuals and monitoring them during the breeding season, which would shed more light on its social organisation that is important for its conservation.

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

Two workshops were conducted involving the stakeholders i.e. local communities and forest managers. Further, based on the results posters on the significance of the species and how it is of importance to the local are being prepared and will be shared with the locals, NGOs and GOs. The results will also be used to write popular articles in the local news papers, semi-scientific magazines and journals and publish in scientific journals. The results will also be presented in national and international symposiums and conferences.

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

Since the nest boxes were made and placed in the field in May 2010, we continued all other activities of the project from that and completed the project in June 2011. As we wanted to establish information on the nest box experiment we started the project at the beginning of the breeding season of white-naped tit. We were able to achieve what we expected during this time frame.

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	Budget Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Desk study	25	25	0	
Collecting information on distribution from villagers	25	25	0	
Cost of hiring vehicles	1815	1800	15	The amount saved from this was used to support the second Field Assistant, which was very helpful in monitoring the nest boxes as well as creating awareness among the local people
Field stays (lodging and boarding expenses)	2475	2000	475	We had rented a room for stay, which was cheaper. The amount saved from this was used to support the second Field Assistant, which was very helpful in monitoring the nest boxes as well as creating awareness among the local people
Support for local field assistants (one)	540	540	0	
Meetings and discussions with villagers	100	100	0	
Workshop on conservation issues of white-naped tit and thorn forest for Forest Department	264	265	-1	
Awareness campaigns	100	100	0	
Make of nest boxes	500	500	0	This includes modification of the nest boxes also.
Placement of nest boxes in the field	56	56	0	It includes replacing of the nest boxes after modification

Stationary and final report preparation	100	100	0	
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9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

We feel that all the area in its distribution range needs to be surveyed, which would include both the areas where it was reported to be present earlier and also areas where it is said to be present now in India. This would provide us with the information on the status of the population of this bird species, its habitat, which would help in prioritising the populations or areas of immediate or high concern, moderate concern and low concern. The conservation plan that would include education and awareness, restoration of thorn forest its major habitat, provision of nest boxes to support its breeding and negate other specific threats, which would be site or area specific. Second would be to study the ecology and behaviour of this species, which is totally lacking and needed for framing appropriate conservation action. Another very crucial step is to carry out extensive education and awareness program along with linking the restoration of natural (forest) resources in all government village development initiatives so that the dependency in the white-naped tit habitat decrease to minimum. This is because this endemic species lives in the forest, which is mostly close to human habitation that is totally dependent on bird's habitat for their basic needs. However this project has helped in achieving to involve local community in white-naped tit conservation in few sites it needs to be done on a large scale covering all the sites within the bird's distribution range.

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, I have used RSGF logo in posters that was used to spread awareness among all stakeholders and stickers that were pasted on the 50 nest boxes placed as part of the conservation action experimental study.