

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	Deepthi Chimalakonda
Project title	Biogeography of managed wetlands: Understanding population dynamics of water birds
RSG reference	12893-1
Reporting period	March 2015 –December 2016
Amount of grant	£4672
Your email address	diptibharadwaj.l@gmail.com
Date of this report	15 October 2017

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
Quantification of avian diversity of the wetlands				
Research papers, Reports, articles				Have a year of work left. Will be achieved by 2018-2019
Engagement with the local community				Ongoing process
Mapping of all the wetlands				
Training volunteers and research assistants				

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

a) One of the difficulties was to find a local person who would be willing to work with the project, develop skills that are important for long-term conservation. While, I made acquaintances and few friends in the landscape who all encouraged me and helped me, I failed to find someone from the surrounding villages to continue on the project. The search is still on. All the research assistants and volunteers I worked with, during the course of the project, were invaluable but not the ones who would stick to working in the same landscape.

b) Before the project started, I hoped the government departments had information on these tanks and ponds in terms of its age, area, GIS mapping etc. I spent weeks doing rounds of multiple departments, talking to staff there, if there was any information that could be useful. I found very little. My team then got down to mapping them all on our own. The challenge is the water level fluctuates every year since these wetlands are dependent on the monsoons. We can only map the wetlands every season on Google after it updates.

c) The original plan was to sample wetlands in three different districts. However, after factoring in the costs involved and my inability to be in three different places coupled with lack of trained ornithologists forced me to stick to sample intensively in one district. This plan worked out for us as now we have data on the wetland bird diversity from two years and hopefully three seasons by next year.

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

a) An inventory of bird species diversity from ~ 60 wetlands that were sampled repeatedly within and across seasons. Some of these species include Near

Threatened (IUCN classification) species such as the Oriental darter, painted stork to name a few which breed in these wetlands. We documented evidence for breeding of fulvous whistling teals that were not known to be breeding here previously.

b) All the wetlands are mapped on GIS for future use. The sampling protocol and point counts locations have been set for future reference. The first 2 years would serve as a catalyst for a long-term monitoring program in these landscapes.

c) We have established rapport with the local people in some villages who grew familiar with our presence and work around the wetlands. I have gathered informal information about management and governance of wetlands and inland fisheries. These interactions have encouraged me to explore the socio-economic aspects and institutional governance of wetlands and have paved way for future projects.

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

There is no direct benefit done to the local communities through my bird survey project. However, by establishing good relationships with them over 2 years, it definitely helps me think of projects that could potentially highlight how governance/management of these wetlands helps livelihoods and conservation. This is a work in progress and may take 2-3 years.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes absolutely. I have been repeatedly sampling these wetlands each winter for the last 2 years. I am grateful to Rufford Foundation for providing the seed money and helping me realise the goal of long-term documentation of wetland bird diversity in this landscape. Rufford's grant helped me with 1st year and about half of 2nd year sampling. Since I couldn't stop it mid-way, I supplemented the extra cash from my student stipend. I go back to the field in December 2017 again to continue.

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

I plan to share my work to the scientific and conservation community through two scientific publications (potentially around 2018-2019).

After the third season of sampling, i.e. this winter, I hope to write an exhaustive report to be distributed to the relevant government departments (around December 2018). I plan to present about this work at ecology and conservation conferences next year.

It would be ideal if I could make material in the local language talking about diversity in the wetlands that could be distributed in the schools.

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

I originally wrote this project for a grant period of one year. This work is part of my PhD. I have used the grant money for one season (Indian winters) of fieldwork and for part of the second seasons field work i.e. over a period of 2 years.

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
Field station (Includes rent, maintenance, daily provisions, water etc.)	652	~800	+148	For security reasons, we stayed at a flat that cost more than we budgeted for.
Field assistants (includes wages of assistants)	2038	~1900	-62	
Equipment / Repairs (includes spotting scope, bird book, range finder, GPS, and other minor field equipment)	666	~700	+34	
Travel (includes bike charges, daily travel, volunteers and assistants travel. Excludes my travel from Singapore to India)	847	~1200	+353	Travel costed us more than we anticipated. It included lot of recce initially, the costs of which weren't factored in and some extra travel for sampling.
Posters/ Stationary	204	~20	-184	We did not print posters and spent 20 GBP on stationary
First aid equipment / medical	15	~40	+25	We had flu, fever, back aches (due to travel on muddy roads) due to which we lost some days during the field season.
Emergency/repairs/delays	200	~200	0	Bike repairs/ service/
Postage	50	~0	-50	Did not spend on postage.
Total	4672	~4960	+288	

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

The next important steps are to: a) complete the 3-year sampling, collate the data, analyse and publish the results; b) To write an exhaustive report on the avian diversity of the wetlands to be submitted to the relevant government and academic departments; and c) To raise funds for future projects

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?

I have used the logo and acknowledged Rufford Foundation when I presented in my department in the university. However, since the 3-year sampling period is not complete yet, I haven't been able to present this work to the scientific community yet. But, next year, when I publish and present about this work, I assure you to be using the Rufford Logo and acknowledging Rufford's contribution to the project/study.

11. Any other comments?

I am really thankful to the Ruffords Foundation for their funding not just to my project but for all those conservation projects that involve non-charismatic animals and outside protected areas. As someone who works in human-dominated landscapes holding incredible diversity and having faced the challenge of raising funds for seemingly common species, I cannot tell you how important your grant has been to this work, my PhD and the landscape. Thank you for your belief in small-scale conservation projects the sum of which, I believe, will have a bigger impact.

