

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. 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. 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	Sumin George Thomas
Project title	Pre-empting conflict - Human – Gaur interactions in the Nilgiris, Western Ghats, India
RSG reference	14169-1
Reporting period	January 2014-December 2014
Amount of grant	£5920
Your email address	sumin@keystone-foundation.org
Date of this report	22 January 2015

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
To map populations, movements and habitats of Gaur		Yes		Three distinct gaur herds have been identified; the movement of the three herds across two valleys has been mapped. The area in focus has been only around human settlements. There has also been observation and monitoring of interactions between gaur and other life forms (e.g., dogs, domestic cattle, birds). This was done to increase our understanding of behaviour of gaur, within areas and beings of human influence, and outside this domain as well.
To monitor activity in Gaur trails			Yes	Movement patterns of three herds have been identified and monitored. The mapping of movement patterns has been limited to certain valleys in Kotagiri only. Movement of the herds have been documented through GPS tracks taken along the routes commonly used by gaur, as well as through a participant observation system, where observations were submitted through an online form, and the information compiled and represented through maps. Maps generated through the latter mode would provide information on areas where sightings are most frequent.
To create awareness with the help of active participant stakeholders				Awareness presentations have been held in educational institutions around Kotagiri. There has also been a sustained engagement with the local populace, especially with residents and workers, who interact with gaur on a regular basis. In collaboration with Wildlife Trust of India and Hill Area Development Programme, the Gaur Festival was created, which facilitated many opportunities to interact with various stakeholders. There was a separate training conducted for the State Forest Department personnel (Tamil Nadu – Nilgiris North & South Division). The training was attended by over 80 department personnel and it was

				<p>conducted in association with the Nature Conservation Foundation (www.ncf-india.org)</p> <p>Gaur awareness presentations were conducted in public events organised by the District Administration in Kotagiri.</p> <p>A local community radio station (Radio Kotagiri 90.4 MHz) collaborated with us to aid dissemination of information about gaur.</p>
To administer perception surveys in selected areas of study			Yes	<p>Perception surveys were administered on a small focus group of individuals who interact with gaur on a regular basis, instead of a generally survey across a large study group. There have been sustained interactions with various stakeholders, regarding their concerns about their gaur as well as their perspectives towards the animals and possible ways of taking our current work forward.</p>
Implement suitable conservation action to mitigate conflict situations		Yes		<p>Areas of high interaction between human beings and gaur have been identified, and appropriate warning signs are being designed. Interactions with people residing in/working in areas of frequent gaur interactions have also been sustained to increase sensitivity towards the natural environment.</p> <p>The interactions with residents or workers in areas of frequent gaur interactions have been held over six months and has aided in providing different perspectives and concerns faced by residents and workers in these regions.</p> <p>Interactions and discussions have also been held with individuals who have been severely affected by gaur (through injury, or economic loss) and some simple solutions have been provided.</p> <p>There have also been interactions with educational institutions on sensitising and increasing awareness of gaur among the students and teachers. The effort will be sustained through the information kits that will be distributed to the institutions and other role players in the region.</p>
Create a Gaur Information Kit		Yes		<p>The narrative for the kit and basic design has been finalised. The final kit is currently being designed and assembled. The kit is being</p>

				<p>designed in association with Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO). The kit would contain, a booklet containing an illustrated narrative aimed at spreading awareness, bookmarks containing information on differentiating between gender of gaur, a note on how to behave around gaur, as well as a personal home observation sheet, and instructions on how to use it.</p> <p>The information kit will also include a series of maps, depicting the areas with most frequent sightings as well as maps showing routes of herds, and adult bulls around Kotagiri. The information recorded on the maps will be limited to the three herds being monitored.</p>
Conduct a Gaur Festival, showcasing the gaur from different perspectives			Yes	<p>A festival was conducted on 8th-9th August 2014. The festival showcased artists, musicians, storytellers from different regions of India, coming together to share their varied ideas and perspectives concerning the gaur.</p> <p>The idea of the festival was conceived to provide a platform on which to engage with the local public on different perspectives and narratives concerning the gaur. The festival was a public event, where everyone was invited to be a part of the festivities. Another perspective making the festival a public event, was to not only increase interest and awareness from the local stakeholders, but also share their experiences and their perspectives. While the festival showcased artists, musicians, theatre artists, and storytellers engaging with the audience on interactions with nature and specifically gaur, more depth was added to this event with good participation and discussions with the locals.</p>

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

There are multiple herds of gaur present around Kotagiri. Mapping movement of all herds simultaneously is a difficulty which arose. Also, the behavioural nature of gaur, where adult bulls are seen wandering alone, separated from the herd have also been observed. This factor would cause difficulty in identifying which exact individual it is, and which herd he is usually associated with.

Also, the wandering behaviour exhibited by gaur further complicates problems, as sometimes two individual herds have been observed congregating in the same space. The extensive home range of adult bull's makes constantly following and monitoring them very difficult.

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

1. Increased awareness of the gaur amongst local communities, and greater interest in understanding and learning more about gaur.
2. Increased understanding of gaur behaviour and their land use, enabling us to better communicate ideas about gaur and pre-empt conflict.
3. Increased understanding of interactions that occur between gaur and nature, and the extent to which human activity has influenced this interaction.

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

Workers residing/working in areas of most frequent gaur interactions have been engaged with continuously. They aided us by providing information on whereabouts of gaur through the day, as well as making note of any exceptional/extraordinary behaviour. They have also been a group which we have focussed on spreading awareness and sensitising them to gaur behaviour.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue this work, by expanding our area of study and possibly looking at behaviour and movement across different landscapes. There has been interest expressed in our work, from local residents of Coonoor (a town in the Nilgiris 24 km away from Kotagiri), we plan on exploring possibilities of working in the Coonoor region, as well as start a dialogue with Defence Services Staff College (A Military Institution) as they control large portions the landscape in the Coonoor region.

We are planning to initiate a dialogue with IUCN Wild Cattle Specialist Group, on exploring more ways of continuing our work, and new dimensions and perspectives we could explore. The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), a premier wildlife in the country extended their support through a Rapid Action Project. The association with WTI will be leveraged to garner support from the State Forest Department to initiate gaur conservation programmes in the region.

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

The results of this study will be shared through a Gaur Information Kit. The kit is aimed at increasing gaur awareness across all age groups. The kit will contain information on differentiating between Gaur, how to behave unobtrusively around Gaur, as well as snippets of their natural history and their behaviour patterns. The results will be shared at various public forums in the region and it will be done through the Nilgiri Natural History Society (www.nnhs.in)

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

The RSGF was used to cover the expenses of the project from January-December 2014. This was as anticipated, as the work was done over a period of 12 months. The concept of the Gaur Festival was aimed at spreading awareness and sharing of information gathered through the course of the project.

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
1. Meetings with Villagers				
Village Meetings	565.00	675.00	-110.00	Excess utilised on Gaur Festival
2. Surveys				
Travel to Field Sites	516.00	405.00	111.00	Set off for the excess spending in item 1
Payment to field guides	968.00	971.00	-4.00	
Boarding and lodging	645.00	646.00	0.00	
3. Publication				
Publication Preparation and Printing	1,613.00	1,619.00	-6.00	Consultancy for content development, processing, design and printing expenses
4. Payment for field assistants				
Field assistants	1,614.00	1,892.00	-279.00	Utilised from exchange rate gain
TOTAL	5920.00	6209.00	-289.00	

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

1. Increase the area and depth of study of gaur and their habitat.
2. Create opportunities for greater participation from the community locally.
3. Involve other stakeholders in activities pertaining to observing, monitoring and understanding gaur habitat in both urban and forested landscapes.

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 was used in publicity material made for the Gaur Festival. The logo will be used in the Gaur Information Kit as well. The kit is under postproduction and will take a few weeks to complete. On completion a copy will be submitted to the RSGF.