

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	Krishna Prasad Bhusal
Project title	Strengthening the local communities for in-situ conservation of critically endangered vultures in western mid-hills of Nepal
RSG reference	15385-2
Reporting period	October 2015
Amount of grant	£4995
Your email address	krishna@birdlifeneal.org, bhusalkrish@yahoo.com
Date of this report	December 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
Advocate and make aware to Unregistered Vet Practitioners				Four training events were organised in Arghakhanchi and Palpa districts targeting to unregistered vet practitioners with the collaboration of respective District Livestock Service Office. Two training events were organised in district headquarters Sandhikharka and white-rumped vulture nesting site, Argha. This training was facilitated by Dr. Aryan Mandal, Chief at District Livestock Service Office, Arghakhanchi who highlighted on diclofenac toxicity to vultures and its alternative. Altogether 66 individuals benefitted on trainings representing unregistered vet practitioners, veterinary pharmacy owners and Livestock Service Center and Livestock Service Office staff. In Palpa district one event was organised in district head quarter and another at white-rumped vulture nesting site, Rampur. Altogether 65 vet practitioners including 48 unregistered vet practitioners were made aware on the cause of vulture population decline and role of veterinary practitioners to stop illegal use of diclofenac in veterinary practice. During the training Dr. Tulsi Ram Bhandari, chief at District Livestock Service Office, Palpa took the commitment from participants for not using diclofenac.
Community and local stakeholder capacity development and public awareness.				
a. District Level Stakeholder's meeting in Arghakhanchi and Palpa				One-day district level stakeholder's interaction meeting has been completed at Sandhikharka, Arghakhanchi and Tansen, Palpa. These programmes were aimed at advocating district level stakeholders on conservation of vultures in Arghakhanchi and Palpa. Presentations were made on the status and importance of vultures, conservation practices and role of stakeholders and local communities on conservation of vultures. Altogether 92 individuals representing district level government agencies, community forests, veterinary pharmacies, journalists, local conservation organisations, teachers and social activists participated in those events.
b. Community				Two-day training programme on vulture conservation and management was organised on 11th and 12th

training on Vulture Safe Zone Management			<p>June 2015 at Tansen, Palpa. The training was highly useful and effective on bringing the local vulture conservation partners from all over the country in the project site. Major discussions of the training were centered on strengthening communities for vulture conservation, removing diclofenac from the environment, and sustaining Vulture Safe Feeding Sites in Nepal. 24 persons representing 14 community based organisations from 12 districts of lowlands and mid-hills of western Nepal used the opportunity to discuss vulture conservation issues at local level and strategies for future actions on vulture conservation in Nepal. Vulture experts from Bird Conservation Nepal facilitated the training. The community focal persons who had been working in vulture conservation especially in grassroots level were awarded for their contribution in vulture conservation.</p>
c. Community Awareness in Arghakhanchi and Palpa			<p>Vulture conservation interaction and community awareness programs had been completed in nesting sites of Arghakhanchi and Palpa. An interaction program was organised in Argha, Arghakhanchi during International Vulture Awareness Day 2015, where 52 individuals participated. Similarly International Vulture Awareness Day 2015 was marked with the presence of more than 150 local people at Madanpokhara, Palpa where interaction on conserving vultures in Palpa was done in details. Another community awareness programme was organised in white-rumped vulture nesting site Khairani community forest Rampur, Palpa. During the programme Tulsi Ram Bhandari, chief of District Livestock Service Office, Palpa and Jyoti Prasad Koirala, Assistant Forest Officer at District Forest Office, Palpa focused on immediate need to stop illegal use of diclofenac and role of communities in conservation of vultures. Altogether 31 participants representing vet practitioners, community forest user groups, farmers, local club and mother group were participated in the programme. In the programme Khairani Community Forest User Groups, Rampur, Palpa made a commitment to include vulture conservation activities in the operational plan of Community Forest User Group.</p> <p>Similarly another community awareness program was organised at red-headed vulture nesting site, Kartike community forest Luhung. Altogether 111 participated in the programme representing local government authorities, political leaders, vet practitioners,</p>

				community forest user groups, teachers, local club and mother group.
d. Vulture Conservation Radio Program				Vulture conservation message were broadcasted through radio programme for 6 months from Community Radio Madanpokhara, Palpa 106.3 Mhz (www.radiomadanpokhara.org.np) and Community Radio Arghakhanchi, Arghakhanchi 105.8 Mhz (www.arghakhanchi.com) for half an hour every week. People of rural and remote area of western mid hill were benefitted through this radio programme. District level stakeholders like chiefs and representatives from District Forest Office, District Livestock Service Office, District Development Office, Veterinary Association and conservationists were interviewed on the vulture conservation agenda through these radio programmes and the interviews were broadcast.
e. School Education and Awareness Campaign				School is knowledge generating house that may impact directly to change the attitude of society via light of education. Thus to familiarise the schoolchildren and teachers with vulture conservation issues in Nepal and its ecological role in nature; school education programmes were launched selecting 10 secondary and higher secondary schools in the vicinity of vulture nesting site of Arghakhanchi and Palpa. Altogether 392 students and 38 teachers participated in these events. Posters and fliers with key message of vulture conservation were distributed among them. BCN staffs and local vulture conservation partners facilitated the programme.
f. Incorporation of Vulture Conservation agenda in community forest operational plan				If vulture conservation activities are included in operational plan of Community Forest User Groups, vulture conservation works would go in a systematic and sustainable way in local level. For this purpose, some important activities to be done by local communities and forest user groups have been drafted and shared with concerned community forest user groups in Arghakhanchi and Palpa districts. One-day interaction programme was done among the community forest users of Garta Khahare Khola community forest in Argha. During the interaction, the issues of vulture conservation and course of actions in future were discussed. Altogether 62 community forest users were participated on the interaction programme. Community users have drafted the activities related to conservation of vultures and other biodiversity on the basis of a draft provided by Bird Conservation Nepal and have agreed to include in

			<p>operational plan of community forest user group. The following activities have been enlisted in their draft:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demarcation of vulture nesting block of community forest and strictly prohibiting cut down of trees having vulture nests as well as other potential nesting trees. - Regular monitoring of vulture nests and their behaviour. - Provision of providing non-diseases and diclofenac free dead carcasses to vultures instead of burying them. - Provision of conducting community awareness programmes related to vulture and biodiversity conservation issues. - Collaborating with local government authorities, NGOs and conservation bodies for the vulture and biodiversity conservation. <p>Similarly 1-day interaction programme was organised among Adheri Chharchhare Community Forest User Groups, Madanpokhara, Palpa. The interaction programme discussed and finalised a list of activities for conservation of vultures and other biodiversity to be included in community forest operational plan. During the programme Mr. Prakash Lamsal District Forest Officer at District Forest Office, Palpa agreed on the need of including the list of activities drafted for the conservation of vultures and other biodiversity in operational plan of community forest user group. Altogether 148 participants representing from District Livestock Service Office, Palpa, District Agricultural Development Office, Palpa, political leaders, journalists, social activists, and community forest user group members were participated during the programme.</p> <p>Similar interaction and discussion were made with Khairani Community Forest User Groups (CFUG), Khahare Khola CFUG and Kartike CFUG on including vulture conservation activities in their operational plan.</p>
g. Awareness Materials produced and Hoarding Board Placement			<p>To increase public awareness and stop the illegal use of diclofenac, information display materials like posters, leaflets, t-shirts were produced through this project and distributed widely within and beyond the project sites. One hoarding board containing message about introduction of vulture, their importance and cause of decline, role of local communities to conserve them was placed near the white-rumped vulture nesting site, Argha, Arghakhanchi and another board was placed in red-headed vulture nesting site, Setipokhari, Palpa.</p>

Ecological Monitoring of Vultures			<p>In order to study the breeding ecology, nests were counted. The nest occupancy, breeding status and general behavior were recorded. Observations were made from the ground without disturbing the vultures. Monitoring of each nest was done to access the nest status and breeding success for the breeding season 2014-15 following the Postupalsky (1974). Breeding success of vultures was calculated by following formula:-</p> $\text{Breeding Success} = \frac{\text{No of productive nest}}{\text{No of active nest}}$ <p>Fourteen active nests of white-rumped vulture were monitored in the <i>Pinus roxburghii</i> tree in Garta Khahare Khola community forest, Khahare Khola community forest and Garlam forest of Argha, Arghakhanchi. Out of 14 active nests of white-rumped vulture, nine nests were successful to fledge their chicks producing the breeding success result 64.28% for this breeding season.</p> <p>Five active nests of Egyptian vulture were monitored in all over Arghakhanchi district. Out of five active nests, four nests were successful and the breeding success is 80% for this breeding season.</p> <p>Thirty-four active nests of Himalayan griffon were monitored in Gherabhir cliff of Arghakhanchi. Out of 34 active nests 25 nests were successful and the breeding success is 73.52% for this breeding season.</p> <p>Single nest of bearded vulture was monitored in Gherabhir, Arghakhanchi for this breeding season which became successful with 100% breeding success.</p> <p>One nest of red-headed vulture was monitored in Kartike community forest, Baughapokharathok, Palpa and another one nest of red-headed vulture was monitored in Dharampani, Tansen, Palpa. Two nests were successful for this breeding season with 100% breeding success.</p>
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The community forest user groups legally extract the resin from nesting and potential pine trees for the commercial purpose in Argha, Arghakhanchi which was making disturbance to vultures especially during their breeding season. It was difficult in earlier stage to make local communities stop the work but regular advocacy and awareness with District Forest Office and Community Forest User Groups has resulted

the stoppage of resin extraction in the area. One nest of red-headed vulture was located just 50 m from Sarswati Rawat's house in Dharampani, Palpa. Because of some misconception of local people towards vultures, local people had recommended her to cut down the tree and she was ready to cut down the tree but with the regular communication and encouragements to her and awareness activities to local communities, she was convinced not to cut down the nesting tree and protect red-headed vultures. Later she was awarded for her contribution to protect nesting tree of red-headed vulture.

Because of devastating Earthquake in April 2015 in Nepal some community and school awareness activities were delayed.

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

- One of the most important achievements of this project is advocacy and training to unregistered vet practitioners of Arghakhanchi and Palpa to discourage the illegal use of diclofenac on livestock treatment. In both districts collaboration was done with District Livestock Service Office and Nepal Para Veterinary and Livestock Association district chapter and aware more than 80% of vet practitioners.
- Strengthen the capacity of local community on vulture conservation doing training and incorporate the vulture conservation activities in their community forest operation plan which would help to conserve vulture on a sustainable way. The advocacy with stakeholder and awareness supported by this project trigger up the community initiative to save the critically endangered vulture species feeling ownership and stop to extract resin from nesting and potential pine tree.
- Study and monitoring the breeding ecology of five (two critically endangered, one endangered and two near threatened) species of vultures in Arghakhanchi and Palpa. This continues the study of last 5-year ecological monitoring of these species begins by the Rufford first grant. This study also supports to enlist the project site (Arghakhanchi) as potential Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) in Nepal.

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

A number of key activities training to unregistered vet practitioners, revision of community forest operation plans including vulture conservation activities, community/school children awareness were led by local government bodies (District Livestock Service Office and District Forest Office) and community-based local conservation/management partners. Some activities with respective budget were transferred to local conservation partners making agreement and we support technically which strengthen them on programme launch and management. For continuous ecological monitoring of vultures and NSAIDs monitoring focal persons were selected one in Arghakhanchi and one in Palpa and handing over essential skills as well as providing a small remuneration.

Thus the most important benefit for the local community was the handover of knowledge and skills to the community so that they can continue carrying out activities like nest monitoring, monitoring of vulture population and monitoring of NSAIDs. District Forest Office focussed the vulture nesting forest site of district and ordered them to stop the cut down of tall nesting trees haphazardly and this ultimately help to save and managed the community Forest Biodiversity.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The project site is significantly important as habitat of two Critically Endangered, one Endangered and two near threatened vulture species. Two nests of red-headed vulture located in project site which were explored recently after the gap of 10 years in the country thus long term monitoring should be done with their ecological study. And there is need of extensive research and exploration of additional colony of vultures in the potential sites of surrounding districts.

Still misuse of human Diclofenac on cattle treatment is serious problem in Nepal.

Thus awareness and advocacy targeting to unregistered vet practitioners and their study institution should continue to all over vultures range sites on landscape level.

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

The sharing of project work was done with wide coverage in local and national mass media. The media coverage of vulture conservation activities became exceptionally well which help to get vulture conservation message out to a wider audience. Activities news was broadcasting via Radio Program and Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) website. Some featured article and conservation motivation with success stories were written and published on our annual vulture bulletin *Gidda Sandesh*. Key activities of the project were done in coordination with government line agencies and local conservation groups which have helped widen the implication of the project.

We have a stock of some posters and leaflets with content and picture of project site thus plan to distribute these materials in any awareness programme, schools and community-based conservation organisation. We are also working on the long term monitoring data analysis collected from the field study and we hope to publish this in a national and international science journal.

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

The project was initially planned to start on September 2014 and end in November 2015. Some awareness and advocacy activities were altered and became little delay because of local partners and stakeholder time feasibility. The devastating earthquake in Nepal also hampers few activities because of close of schools. However ecological monitoring of vultures was completed in the anticipated time.

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
a. Transportation (2 person) to field site with local fare in Arghakhanchi and Palpa.	540	250	290	Field travel of staff was managed from our field office Butwal, near to project site than central office thus save the budget of travel.
b. Lodging and food subsistence in the field (2 researchers and 1 local assistant)	1500	1400	100	Travel from Butwal field office so lowers the cost of lodging and food.
c. District level stakeholder advocacy workshop in Arghakhanchi and Palpa.	500	500	0	
d. Community forest operation plan meeting.	150	170	-20	We initially target for two forest only and approach for three community forest thus slight exceed the budget.
e. Awareness for unregistered vet (4x80), for community (4x80), school children (8x40) and radio programme (2 x150).	1260	1270	-10	
f. Poster (500 x 0.10), Leaflets (2500 x 0.05), T-shirts(50 x 4) and hoarding board(2 x90)	550	550	0	
g. Overhead Cost	490	490	0	
Grand total	4950	4630	360	

(£1=150 NRs)

Budget Justification: - The salary of project team leader and other staffs who involved in this project is covered by Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and local community based conservation partner's personnel support to implementation of project voluntarily. We have some funds (£360) saved mainly from travel and logistic that will be used for ecological monitoring of Vultures (nest monitoring) in project site for the breeding season 2015-2016.

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

- The awareness and advocacy targeting to unregistered vet practitioners needs to be enlarged further in the mid hills of Nepal which is less studied area as compared to lower region of the country to strengthen the Vulture Safe Zone.
- There is need to keep on engaging and flow up the key stakeholders (veterinarians, para-veterinarians, veterinary drug sellers, government line agencies, local communities and forest user groups living close to existing nesting sites) in the conservation of vultures. To be ensure the implementation

of Vulture Conservation Activities by Community Forest User Group including in their Forest Operation Plan. This will be most important achievement to save vulture by community initiation in the long term because all nesting colony of vultures in the project site are lies out of the protected area system of Nepal Government.

- c. Misuse of human diclofenac in veterinary use and deliberately poisoning to kill other carnivores (feral dogs, jackals, leopards etc) is now the key threat to vultures and strong advocacy and massive awareness is need to stop misuse of human diclofenac and poison. Minor threats such as electrocution, habitat loss, human disturbance etc also can now impact the surviving vulture population and these need to be investigated and necessary measures taken based on the investigation.
- d. The project area is now qualifying as potential Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by Birdlife International with main criterion the habitat of globally threatened bird species. Thus there is need of extensive research and survey of birds with other biodiversity.

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?

The Rufford Foundation logo was used on hoarding board, poster, leaflets and t-shirt produced by this project and JPG copies have been submitted to Rufford Foundation with update reports. Logo also used in BCN publication like quarterly newsletters *Munal*, *Danphe* and in annual newsletter *Gidda Sandesh*. The logo was also used on banners and training materials during awareness and notice in media and Rufford Foundation has received publicity. The logo will be used in the reports disseminate in project sites among line agencies and also in the short documentary will make to pile up the field footage.

11. Any other comments?

Nepalese Conference for Rufford Grantees workshop was held in Nepal in 2012 where all the Rufford Grantees of Nepal assembled in to a single forum to share their research results which is the first of this kind in Nepal. Replication of such programme widens more the key role of Rufford Foundation in the biodiversity/conservation management of Nepal and learns more by younger researcher and conservationist.

