

## 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 Rosemary Groom (African Wildlife Conservation Fund)   |
| <b>Project title</b>       | An assessment of the conservation status of, and threats affecting the endangered African wild dog in the Zimbabwean part of the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA). |
| <b>RSG reference</b>       | 16.04.08   |
| <b>Reporting period</b>    | May 2008 – August 2009   |
| <b>Amount of grant</b>     | £5,790   |
| <b>Your email address</b>  | <a href="mailto:rosemary@africanwildlifeconservationfund.org">rosemary@africanwildlifeconservationfund.org</a>   |
| <b>Date of this report</b> | 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2009  |

**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  |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|---|
| Investigate the distribution of wild dogs throughout the Zimbabwean part of the GLTFCA                  |              | yes                |                | This objective is almost fully achieved, but there remain a few small wildlife areas where the presence/absence of wild dogs has yet to be confirmed. But we now have a pretty good understanding of the distribution of dogs throughout most of the GLTFCA (Zimbabwean side), as well as relative densities in different areas   |
| Investigate the relative impact of different threats to the wild dogs                                   |              |                    | Yes            | In key focal areas (those where wild dogs remain), mortality records are now sufficient to show snaring as the highest cause of adult mortality and lion predation as the highest cause of pup mortality. The resettlement of commercial wildlife farms during Zimbabwe's fast-track land reform programme in 2000 was the biggest cause of population decline and local extirpation in the ecosystem between 2000 and 2007.  |
| Work towards developing mitigation strategies to alleviate threats                                      |              | yes                |                | Increasing awareness of the poaching problem and the consequent snaring of wild dogs has helped lead to the setting up of a centralised and properly managed anti-poaching unit in the Save Valley Conservancy. We have also removed life threatening snares from several wild dogs. The impact of lions is being closely monitored and recommendations will be made to prevent an explosion of the lion populations in fenced wildlife areas also containing wild dogs. Participation in a recent national action planning workshop for wild dogs allowed the development of country-wide strategies for improving linkages and developing wild-dog friendly land use practises. |
| Investigate connectivity of wild dogs within Zimbabwe and between Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique |              |                    | yes            | Genetic analyses have been undertaken to assess connectivity between certain wild dog populations within Zimbabwe and between Zimbabwe and South Africa. More samples are required to get a better coverage. Comprehensive photographic databases are kept of all wild dogs on the Zimbabwean and South African side of the   |

|  |  |     |     |  |
|--|--|-----|-----|--|
|  |  |     |     | GLTFCA and are regularly compared for matches.   |
| To prepare a spatial analysis of land use types in the Zimbabwean part of the GLTFCA |  | yes |     | A reasonably detailed land use map has been compiled by CIRAD, and we have added detail to this map although there are some areas still to be ground truthed and details added.  |
| Closely monitor the wild dogs in key focal areas                                     |  |     | Yes | The wild dogs in SVC have been closely studied, with detailed records kept of pack sizes, litter sizes, pup survival, causes of mortality, movement patterns and conflict. The population of wild dogs in previously un-studied Gonarezhou National Park have been determined, and pack sizes, home ranges etc determined. |
| Investigate wild dog diets through faecal analysis                                   |  |     | Yes | A student from the University of Zimbabwe has been analysing the hairs from faecal samples of wild dogs, lions, leopards and cheetah to look at diet and dietary overlap of all these large carnivores. Her thesis will be finished by November.   |
| Carry out 300 questionnaire surveys in communal and resettled lands                  |  |     | Yes | A local student from Bindura University of Science and Technology, working in collaboration with Marwell Trust Zimbabwe and our wild dog project carried out 313 interviews (155 in communal lands and 158 in resettled lands).  |

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

Working in Zimbabwe during 2008 presented enormous logistical challenges, given the political instability and the lack of basic necessities such as cash for wages, food, fuel and basic supplies (vehicle spares etc). Nonetheless through perseverance and resourcefulness the wild dog team were able to overcome most of these problems and remain effective in working towards our objectives.

None of the main project objectives presented *unforeseen* difficulties because our previous experience in the area allowed us to be realistic when designing the project.

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

*1) Quantifying threats to wild dogs:* Understanding and quantifying the impact of different threats to wild dogs allows properly targeted mitigation efforts. It gave the PI a strong case for requesting appropriate actions at the national action planning workshop held in Zimbabwe in September 2009, and for locally implementing appropriate mitigation strategies. Due to a better understanding of the threats to the wild dogs, recommendations to the Technical Advisory Committee of the Savé Valley Conservancy could be based on solid scientific data.

2) *Understanding connectivity:* As mentioned, the transfrontier boundary initiatives play a potentially vital role in the conservation of wide ranging species such as wild dogs. But the designation of large tracts of land under the title of Transfrontier Conservation Area does not automatically assume utilisation by, or benefit to, a species. Our work towards assessing the extent to which wild dog populations are connected within the GLTFCA is crucial to understanding the reality on the ground. Genetic isolation is a threat to wild dog populations in isolated reserves and we need to make sure that is not happening in the GLTFCA, and if it is, to recommend appropriate actions to combat this; i.e. removing fences, opening up corridors where necessary, or even translocating unrelated wild dogs into an area.

3) *Changing negative attitudes:* Although not an explicitly stated goal of the project, through our efforts on the ground we have been able to help change the very negative attitudes of some of the land owners, local farmers and community members towards wild dogs. We have also contributed towards a better 'PR' for wild dogs through the project blog and informal interactions with tourists. This is very important, given the ill-informed and usually negative impression that people tend to have of wild dogs.

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

Both our full-time project trackers are from local villages, as are all other temporary employees. A local student doing her masters through the University of Zimbabwe has also benefitted from the project by joining us for her field project.

We have been involved in local schools helping with an environmental education programme, although this was severely hampered in 2008 and early 2009 by the economic and political problems in the country which meant government schools were closed for the majority of the time. Nonetheless, we are working with a lady from Harare to design teacher training programmes and an education program within local schools to be properly implemented next year.

Two groups of students from a school in Harare have been on a field trip to the Savé Valley Conservancy where they have learnt about wildlife and conservation in general as well as wild dog ecology and conservation issues.

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

Yes, there are plans both to continue and expand the work. We hope to continue the work in the Savé Valley Conservancy (ongoing since 1996), since long term datasets are extremely valuable to understanding population dynamics and impacts of various disturbances. As mentioned above, we aim to implement environmental education programmes in at least five of the local schools next year, with properly designed, long-term and sustainable programmes. We also want to expand more into Gonarezhou National Park and set up a project there to investigate why wild dogs are at such low densities in the park, ideally in combination with a lion conservation project as lions are also at extremely low densities there.

We will also continue working at the national level in terms of helping to design and implement national strategies for wild dog conservation, including a focus on corridors and linkages between populations, and attempts to minimise the adverse effects of certain land developments.

On an international scale, we would like to set up a transboundary monitoring project, with satellite collars on wild dogs in Gonarezhou, Kruger and Limpopo National Parks (in collaboration with Wilderness Trust) in order to get more of an idea of wild dog movements in these border areas and to understand to what extent the Limpopo River is a barrier to wild dog movements between the countries.

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

Our results are frequently shared with donors and other interested parties through a series of informal updates and quarterly reports. The project blog site also shares some of the project results with a very wide audience.

More formally, results are shared with other wild dog and carnivore conservation programmes at meetings and conferences (Wild Dog Advisory Groups, and the IUCN carnivore specialist groups), and also with the regional co-ordinator for cheetahs and wild dogs in southern Africa. The Zimbabwean Parks and Wildlife Management Authority are also provided with reports (and suggestions for management).

In addition, we aim to publish three papers in peer reviewed journals (targets: *Biological Conservation*, *Conservation Biology* and *Oryx*) within the next year, as well as at least one article in popular press such as *BBC Wildlife* or *Africa Geographic*.

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

The RSG was used for 16 months from May 2008 to August 2009 as anticipated in the original proposal. Some additional funds from private donations and donations on the project blog site were used towards the last few months to augment the RSG funding.

## 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   |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|--|
| <b>Transport</b>       |                 |               |            |  |
| Vehicle (cost covered) | 0               | 0             | 0          | Covered by funds from National Geographic  |
| Fuel (cost covered)    | 0               | 0             | 0          | Covered by funds from National Geographic  |
| Vehicle maintenance    | 800             | 1100          | + 300      | Servicing the vehicle was more expensive than expected in 2008 because of the difficulty in sourcing parts and the unfavourable exchange rates |
| <b>Equipment</b>       |                 |               |            |  |
| Digital camera & lens  | 510             | 330           | - 180      | I used my personal 300mm lens for the project  |
| GPS                    | 120             | 120           | 0          | Purchased as planned   |
| Etrex GPS              | 140             | 140           | 0          | Purchased as planned   |

|   |             |             |             |  |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|--|
| <b>Subsistence</b>                              |             |             |             |  |
| Food (for 4 people at £5 per day for 16 months) | 2400        | <b>2400</b> | 0           | Approximately as budgeted. Some months (especially in 2008) were more expensive but days on leave balanced this out. |
| Subsistence payments (local trackers' wages)    | 1400        | <b>1400</b> | 0           | Trackers were paid as budgeted for   |
| <b>Administration</b>                           |             |             |             |  |
| Internet and administration costs               | 600         | <b>960</b>  | +360        | Cost of internet went up to US\$120 per month (for 16 months = \$1920), shared equally with one other project.       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                    | <b>5970</b> | <b>6450</b> | <b>+480</b> |  |

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

- A properly designed, coordinated and implemented environmental education programme in schools surrounding the Savé Valley Conservancy.
- A continuation of the long-term monitoring and conservation project in Savé Valley Conservancy.
- Proper expansion into Gonarezhou National Park (including collaring wild dog packs) to investigate the conservation status of the wild dogs (and lions) in the park, and their connectivity with South Africa and Mozambique.
- Greater involvement in the national picture, with efforts to open up corridors throughout Zimbabwe, and by doing so to use wild dogs as a flagship species which will help the conservation of many other species.

**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, the RSGF logo was used on posters put up in Gonarezhou National Park headquarters and campsites requesting information on wild dog sightings, and the Rufford Small Grants Foundation name used on all reports.

**11. Any other comments?**

We would just like to thank the Rufford Small Grants Foundation once again for their generous grant. Supporting a project in Zimbabwe during the current times is especially worthwhile because of the huge conservation needs in the country (especially because of the land reform programme and its consequences), the lack of in-country resources and the dearth of researchers and conservationists on the ground. Given this situation, the wild dog project, thanks to the support of the Rufford Small Grants Foundation, was able to make a real and very valuable contribution to wild dog conservation in southern Africa, even just within a 16 month period. We hope to continue our relationship with Rufford as we move forward with the project.