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	Dianah Nalwanga
Project title	Using Low-key monitoring to promote community conservation of the Blue Swallow, in Mabamba Bay, a Key Biodiversity Area, North of Lake Victoria, in Uganda
RSG reference	16725-1
Reporting period	June 2016 - May 2017
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	dianah.nalwanga@gmail.com
Date of this report	5th July, 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
Obtain reliable information about the species and the threats to the habitat				Data on the number of blue swallow and other associated birds and threats was collected and has been analysed and shared with the community at the site. Results were a little disappointing as the numbers of blue swallow recorded were very low at 75 individuals, as compared to previous counts. On the centrally, the level of threat was very high and this explained the low blue swallow numbers as their habitats have been depleted from their original sites, the most prominent threat being clearing for agriculture or crop production. However, there is hope for the species in other key blue swallow sites like Sangobay with a record of 20 individuals during the Mirigwe bird population survey exercise.
Conduct awareness and education on the conservation of the species and reducing threats to the habitat				Two awareness meetings were held at the sites. Posters indicating the importance of Mabamba Wetland for the conservation of the blue swallow and other important species like the shoebill, have been distributed to the community, members of NatureUganda and partner organisations.
Designing a replicable simple (low-key) monitoring programme to guide conservation				A low-key monitoring programme has been designed with clear guidelines. This has been tried out and used during the blue swallow surveys. Two focal persons were appointed to spearhead this monitoring and constantly give us reports on the sightings. The local

				monitors will continue to use this to carry out the blue swallow monitoring as well as monitoring of other important bird species.
Conducting a small habitat restoration programme				The most threatened habitat at the site was the bay itself where most of the tourism activities take place at the site. In restoring this site, an awareness meeting was conducted and the guidelines to the sustainable use of the wetland resource as a source of income in terms of tourism revenue given to the wetland users. These guidelines were put in strategic points to ensure that all tourists to the site see them and are aware of them, and thus adhere to them. If these guidelines are followed, the wetland destruction rate will reduce and the wetland will be restored to more less its original state.

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

Being that the blue swallow surveys were to be conducted in the same areas that were surveyed in 2010, the majority of the areas had undergone significant change especially, change in land use and cover for example some had been converted for agriculture while others were fenced as private property rendering them inaccessible to the survey team. This made accessibility difficult but many of them were eventually accessed. In the same way, most of the historical sightings of the species were made in areas which have now completely changed, forcing the species to find other suitable sites. For this reason, locating the species was now difficult and so we used opportunistic sightings to trace the species, in which way, other sites where the species was sighted had to be added to the scope and transacts where then set in those sites. This delayed the survey process but got some numbers of blue swallow recorded, otherwise the planned sites had no significant blue swallow numbers.

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

- A low-key monitoring programme/ protocol for the monitoring of blue swallow was developed. Guidelines to this were developed and shared with the community in a simplified popular version. The accompanying data collection sheet was also designed and tested to be fit for use by the community monitors and other volunteers that can support the monitoring programme. This monitoring protocol is what has been used by the

community and will be used in future monitoring surveys. The plan is to try it out with other blue swallow sites as well as other species that can be monitored by the community especially the threatened species like the shoebill.

- Ten community members were trained to identify the blue swallow and the major threats to its habitat, and two of these members were selected to follow up the species and always be able to give updates to other group members and partners when called upon. They are called Blue Swallow Monitors and they will always be responsible for promoting awareness on the conservation of blue swallow including reducing the threats to the species. This was replicated for the case of shoebill, another threatened bird species, using the same approach.
- Awareness on the conservation of the blue swallow and its habitat was created. The monitoring results indicated that land use change for agriculture was the biggest threat to the habitat of the species, so this was the target for most of the publicity. One thousand posters on the blue swallow and its threats were produced and distributed to the community and tourists through the Mabamba Wetland Eco-Tourism Association (MWETA) - the local community-based organisation at the site. Other posters have been given to NatureUganda members at public dialogues while others were given to our partners like Flora and Fauna International (FFI) which is operating in the adjacent Makanaga wetland in the same landscape. In addition, 100 brochures publicising Mabamba Wetland were produced. A step towards reducing the threats and pressure on the habitat was made through providing the guidelines for the sustainable use of the wetland as an eco-tourism resource. They were produced in a set of four. These guidelines were highly welcomed by the community members and are to be displayed in visitor information offices at the site, where they will be shown to all tourists and wetland users. The awareness drive was spread to neighboring villages, which are now also interested in the conservation of their sites using lessons from this project.

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

- The local communities were fully involved in the monitoring of the blue swallow. During the surveys, they learnt how to identify the species in question as well as how to identify and score the threats it is faced with. They also learnt to identify other species that were part of the survey, specifically the aerial species, which are commonly confused with the blue swallow, as well as other bird species that we came across.
- They were also involved in designing the low-key monitoring protocol as they helped in the setting of the language used, which had to be easily understood by other community members. They are the ones responsible for the continued monitoring of the Blue Swallow and they report their findings to NatureUganda.
- The local communities were involved in awareness campaigns through distribution of posters as well as sharing ideas with other stakeholders on

lessons learnt from this survey. Two of the monitors were privileged to attend a training on bird population monitoring organised by FFI and NatureUganda from 20th - 21st December, 2016 and they gained more bird identification and monitoring skills.

- The leaders of three of the communities in the adjacent villages picked interest in this programme and were present during the stakeholders' workshop where the results were shared. These requested for this programme to spread its wings to reach their villages and do similar interventions. This showed that they have picked a message from this sharing and are willing to join hands to conserve the general landscape. I promised to include them in their future plans for this site.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue the monitoring so that we can follow the trends over a long period of time. Since the community has been trained, they will be able to continue monitoring and give reports on the sightings of the blue swallows and their threats. Further still, the plan is to replicate what has been done here to other major blue swallow sites in the neighbouring villages as well as in Uganda to promote community involvement in the conservation of species. The other sites include Sango Bay - Kagera Area and Lake Nabugabo Wetland, both Important Bird Areas and Ramsar sites in Western Uganda.

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

- The results from the survey were shared through a stakeholder's meeting involving the community members, political leaders and land owners from parishes surrounding the wetland.
- They will also be shared through publications and presentation of a scientific paper at the NatureUganda biannual Conservation Conference.
- The results will also be published on the NatureUganda website and articles in the newsletter.
- The results will be entered in a database at NatureUganda so that they can be accessed by anyone that would like to use them for scientific and policy reasons.

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 grant was used during the period June 2016-May 2017, which was the planned project period.

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
1.1 Train community members to conduct Blue swallow population surveys using transact and to obtain reliable information.	**923.5**	925.6	-2.1	
1.2 Train the community members to conduct habitat surveys using transacts and to obtain reliable information.	**564.7**	564.8	-0.1	
1.3 Together with the communities assess the threats to the species and its habitat in this site along predetermined transects.	**382.4**	382.5	-0.1	
2.1 Design and conduct an annual community and educational programme involving publicity campaigns, awareness meetings, forming a working group for the species, demonstration of wetland edge gardening and community patrols for the conservation of the species.	**735.3**	735.4	-0.1	
2.2 Produce e publicity and awareness materials to promote Blue Swallow conservation based on the results from the threats survey.	**735.3**	735.2	0.1	
2.3 Conduct habitat restoration exercise in selected degraded wetland and grassland sites.	**573.5**	573.7	-0.2	
2.4 Design a low key community monitoring programme for the species and its habitat using a participatory approach through a training workshop with a practical session	**1,005.9**	1,006.2	-0.3	
3.0 Other costs (Communication, airtime, batteries for camera and GPS)	**79.4**	76.9	2.5	
4.0 NU management Costs e.g. printing, reference books etc. -5%	**822.6**	798.1	24.4	Support from NU
TOTAL	**5,822.6**	**5,798.4**	**24.2**	To be used for monitoring

Exchange rates: 1GBP =5,200UGX

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

- Replicating the low-key monitoring protocol to other blue swallow sites.
- Engaging the government leaders to guide the local communities on how to follow policies governing wetland use.
- Continuous monitoring of the blue swallow at Mabamba Wetland site
- Continuous awareness of the threats to the blue swallow and other wetland birds at the site in order to curb the threats to their Habitats
- Engaging landlords and landowners especially those surrounding the wetland to restore the wetland edges that have been and continue to be cultivated.

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?

Yes I used the Rufford Foundation logo on the posters, brochures and low-key guidelines and guidelines boards for Mabamba and it has received and is still receiving a lot of publicity as the publicity materials continue moving.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Name	**Role**
1. Dianah Nalwanga	Head of Project
2. Achilles Byaruhanga	Advisor (ED NatureUganda)
3. Michael Opige	Supervisor
4. Geofrey Akule	Finance & Administration
5. Judith Mirembe	Field Assistant Trainee and later Trainer
6. Lilian Twanza	Field Assistant Trainee
7. Sandra Sayuni	Field Assistant Trainee
8. Joseph Muloki	Community BS Champion
9. Shakul	Community BS Champion
10. Irene Namubiru	Head of the MWETA Community Group
11. Community Members	Monitors for the Habitat threats

12. Any other comments?

There's need for continuous monitoring and more comprehensive surveys to get more data which can be analysed to determine the trends over time. The blue swallow is a migrant to Uganda and other sites in East and Central Africa and these sites should be conserved. This survey has exposed the fact that the blue swallow habitats have drastically reduced as most of it has been converted into agricultural land. This calls for more joint efforts in the awareness drives for site conservation in the general landscape.

My gratitude goes to Rufford Foundation for the grant provided for this research, which has called upon the interested conservationists to get out of the comfort zones and lay strategies to conserve the Blue Swallow, which needs joint African conservation efforts.

My gratitude to staff of NatureUganda who were part of this project team for their support and guidance. And last but not least, the community members from the MWETA group for their commitment to conservation of their site and the Blue swallow among other threatened species.

BS Habitat Loss due to clearing for Agriculture

The typical BS site