

## The Rufford Foundation

### Final Report

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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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

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Grant Recipient Details	
<b>Your name</b>	Naresh Kusi
<b>Project title</b>	Establishing the first population estimate for wild yaks in Nepal and strengthening efforts for their conservation following the rediscovery
<b>RSG reference</b>	19535-2
<b>Reporting period</b>	12 months
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5000
<b>Your email address</b>	naresh.kusi@gmail.com
<b>Date of this report</b>	28 February 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
To establish the first population estimate of wild yaks in Nepal				We had gone to Chuwa khola valley of Humla district in April 2016 as we were informed that wild yaks usually roam the area mainly in the winter season moving to remote areas across the border with China before the local herders came up to the valley during summer. But snow hindered our endeavours this early in the mountain spring. Although we observed recent hoof prints and dung piles of wild yaks, we could not verify the presence of living wild yaks in the area.
To strengthen efforts for conservation of wild yaks in Nepal				
To inform the general public about the status of wild yaks in Nepal and generate local and national interest towards their conservation				
To encourage university students towards wildlife conservation, including wild yaks, in upper Humla, upper Dolpa and upper Mustang				

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

We had gone to Chuwa khola valley during April 2016 assuming that snow would have melted there by this time. But the place still had some old snow. More importantly it snowed again while we were exploring the valleys which made our research more difficult.

During the research expedition to upper Mustang my field companion suffered from altitude sickness while we were heading towards the Tibetan plateau area in Damodar kunda. He had to be rescued in the late evening.

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

• **Outcome 1: A detailed information on the present status of wild yaks in Nepal**

During the 4.5 months of research in Chuwa khola valley of Humla, upper Dolpa and upper Mustang region of Nepal we did not see any live wild yak. However we observed five hoof prints and two dung piles of wild yaks in Chuwa khola valley in April 2016 and a single old head with horns of wild yak in upper Dolpa and no signs in upper Mustang. Details of these signs are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Various signs of wild yak observed in Chuwa khola (Humla), upper Dolpa and upper Mustang during April 2016, May-July 2016 and Oct-Nov 2016

S.N.	GPS		Elevation (m)	Sign type	Habitat	Location/District
	Lat	Long				
1	30.233°	82.046°	4393	Hoof print	Scrub	Chyangmatang/Humla
2	30.239°	82.046°	4410	Hoof print	Scrub	Chyangmatang/Humla
3	30.239°	82.046°	4410	Dung	Scrub	Chyangmatang/Humla
4	30.284°	82.070°	4711	Hoof print	Grassland	Tapchyak/Humla
5	30.238°	82.047°	4409	Hoof print	Grassland	Rakaru/Humla
6	30.238°	82.047°	4409	Dung	Grassland	Rakaru/Humla
7	30.266°	82.057°	4538	Hoof print	scrub	Chyangmatang/Humla
8	29.619°	83.163°	5388	Old head with horn	Barren	Khun La/Dolpa

The live sightings of wild yaks in 2014 and 2015 documented their presence in Limi valley of upper Humla. At the same time, observations of recent hoof prints and dungs from Chuwa khola valley also suggest their presence in this valley.

We had explored all the potential wild yak habitats in upper Dolpa. Lack of recent signs of wild yaks in upper Dolpa suggests that although these animals were historically present they are regionally extinct from the Dolpa region of Nepal. But we could not explore all the potential wild yak habitats in upper Mustang. However here too, wild yaks are possibly regionally extinct. To sum up it can be said that wild yaks are reported at present only from Humla district in Nepal.

- **Outcome 2: Strengthened efforts towards wild yak conservation**

In the previous project we had produced wild yak conservation poster to promote wild yak conservation efforts. This time we installed metallic information boards in three different strategic locations in Humla district to raise public concern towards wild yak conservation. The information boards with photographs and relevant texts in the local Tibetan language and Nepali language will help to sensitise the local people of upper Humla on the urgency of wild yaks conservation and will present a long-term reminder on the issue.

At the same time, the documentary film will present a stronger impression about the status of wild yaks in Nepal and sensitise the concerned authorities about the steps that are needed to be taken soon to protect this species in the country. (The film is in its final stage and will be completed in a few days. We will provide it to RSG as soon as possible).

- **Outcome 3: Collection of nationally significant data on more wildlife species**

As with the first project, this project also generated some significant by-products. We discovered rufous-tailed rock thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*) as yet another new bird for Nepal from upper Dolpa.

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2017-02-11/new-bird-species-sighted-in-upper-dolpa.html>

Similarly we made the live sighting of a male Tibetan argali (*Ovis ammon hodgsoni*) in upper Dolpa. This sighting marked the first sighting of the species in Dolpa region in more than four decades and also provided the third locality record of the species in Nepal.

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2016-08-09/tibetan-argali-sighted-in-upper-dolpo.html>

At the same time, we also recorded Stoliczka's mountain vole (*Alticola stoliczkanus*) from upper Dolpa and upper Mustang. The species is data deficient in Nepal and our records provided the new locality records to this species in the country.

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

During the 4.5 months of field research we involved local villagers from the respective districts as field guides, mule keepers and cooks. As in the earlier expeditions we provided all these local participants with daily allowances during the field research.

The cook and the mule keeper from Humla further improved their knowledge and respect for wildlife in the area through our shared time as this was the 3rd year we worked together. The local participants from upper Dolpa and upper Mustang also developed considerable regard to wildlife in their area.

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

Yes. We have plans to continue this work and bring forth more activities on research and conservation of wild yaks and other high altitude mammals in Nepal.

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

Like in our previous project, we have already shared our results with university students, district authorities and national conservation stakeholders through wild yak conservation talks.

More specifically we are sharing the results through a documentary film. The film portrays our efforts towards the research of wild yaks in Nepal from 2013-2016 and sheds light on various aspects related with these animals across their range in Nepal.

With more data collected from the field, we would now write a journal article to share the outcomes to the scientific community.

**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 for 12 months from March 2016 to February 2017. It matches with the activities and timescale outlined in 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
Daily allowance for researchers (Two people for 90 days @10)	1800	2700	-900	The field research extended to 135 days instead of the planned 90 days
Daily allowance for local field guide (One person for 90 days @10)	900	1350	-450	The field research extended to 135 days instead of the planned 90 days
Daily allowance for cook (One person for 90 days @10)	900	1350	-450	The field research extended to 135 days instead of the planned 90 days
Four sleeping bags @ 66 and Four mattresses @9)	300	300	0	
Documentary post processing @159, voice over @159) and background score @159)	477	400	77	
Information board: designer @62 and 3 boards @190)	632	232	400	
<b>Total</b>	5009	6332	-1323	I managed this difference in budget from WWF Nepal to complete the project.

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

The following are the important next steps:

1. Genetic study around wild yaks in upper Humla.
2. Ensuring community participation towards wild yak and other endangered mammal's conservation in upper Humla.

**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. The Rufford Foundation logo appears in the documentary film of wild yak.

The public information boards on wild yak conservation contained the Rufford Foundation logo.

The Rufford Foundation logo also appeared in the banners of wild yak conservation talks.

RSGF also received publicity during the course of this project, mostly during the conservation talks in universities and among the conservation stakeholders.

**11. Any other comments?**

We immensely thank the Rufford Foundation for funding this project. We anticipate to receiving similar support in the future as well.