

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	M Firoz Ahmed
Project title	A Photographic Guide to the Common Amphibians and Reptiles of Northeast India- a tool to increase awareness, knowledge and skill for conservation of herpetofauna.
RSG reference	201.01.05
Reporting period	Final Report
Amount of grant	GBP 5000.
Your email address	firoz@aaranyak.org
Date of this report	3 August 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
Production of a colour field guide of amphibians and Reptiles of Northeast India	-----	-----	Fully Achieved	The sole primary objective of this project is achieved by publishing the photographic colour field guide of amphibians and reptiles of Northeast India. The Field guide is considered as a significant addition towards herpetological research and conservation in the region as opined by a number of experts and users. The guide was formally released by Mr. Rokybul Hussain, the Minister of Forest and Environment, Assam on 18 th July 2009.

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

We were faced with a technical problem in the production with regard to quality binding of the field guide. However, the printer is very cooperative and willing to learn from this experience while binding the books in small quantity to overcome the binding problems one by one.

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

1. This is the first ever regional colour guide of the amphibians and reptiles in India.
2. This guide is going to assist the forest managers and guards, students and teachers and interested people to increase their knowledge about amphibians and reptiles and also skill to identify common species.
3. This work is the first step for the authors towards an enhanced edition of field guide to the herpetofauna of the region in near future. The experiences gathered by the authors are immensely helpful in writing, producing and distributing a field guide.

I quote one of the feedback on the field guide by one of the prominent herpetologist of the world, Romulus Whitaker, *"Thanks very much for this book you guys, it is a great contribution and hopefully paves the way for more regional treatments of Indian herpetofauna. The nice thing is you will soon see a lot more feedback from people on distribution, behavioural observations and new records and even new species. A field guide like this will encourage a lot more people to take interest and it has a snowball effect."*

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

This guide, given to some managers and students to use as trial has, resulted in feedback saying that it is immensely helpful in identifying some of the common species and also in creating awareness about species diversity.

Above all this is helping in spreading facts about snakes eliminating fallacies associated with snakes and lizards.

The section on 'snake bite and its management' attracts attention of the readers and is likely to help communities in medically treating snakebite victims in the region.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The authors plan to continue similar effort and shall work on a field guide on all the known amphibians and reptiles of the region. This work is the first step for the authors towards an enhanced edition of field guide to the herpetofauna of the region in near future.

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

The field guide is already published and it is being distributed to targeted users within the region and others parts of the country and also interested users/libraries around the world.

We have also approached local newspapers to publish a review on the book to spread the news on availability of such a book for the region. A few scientific journals have already agreed to publish review on the book. Further, Aaranyak has already updated its publication page on www.aaranyak.org with info on the new book.

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

The anticipated length of the project was 2006-2007.

However, in the process of preparing this guide, the authors got an opportunity to compile a local language field guide supported by the World Bank Biodiversity Window. This local language guide (in Assamese language) was published in 2008 (copy has already been submitted) and we got delayed in meeting the target of the English version.

However, in the process we got couple of more seasons to photograph and study more amphibians and reptile species that helped us in enhancing the English edition of the field guide (128 pages in Assamese version vs. 184 pages in English version).

Also major personal problem of the lead author further delayed the final production of the guide that was not considered during the project planning.

Finally, though we missed target to conclude the project that was perhaps responsible for producing a better field guide.

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
Subsistence and remuneration to authors	1500	1500	0	
Travel, Food and Lodging for project staff during production, distribution	600	700	-100	More expanses due to more field work to get photographs
Printing	1700	1700	0	
Photography	600	600	0	
Book Release Programme and Media Publicity	300	200	+100	Less expanse due to cost sharing by Aaranyak

Communication and postage	300	300	0	
TOTAL	5000	5000	0	

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

Being one of the poorly studied groups, the herpetofauna are least documented in the region. During the last ten years at least ten new species were described from the region. There are many species new to science and waiting for description. I would like to work on these new species and describe those to science along with other co-workers. This will be a big task but provided received support from all quarters this would be possible.

Describing new and poorly known species will help to highlight the herpetological richness of this biodiversity hotspot in near future.

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?

It was used in both the field guide (English and Assamese) and the Rufford Small Grants Foundation has been acknowledged prominently.

11. Any other comments?

Appreciate the role the Rufford Small Gants Foundation is playing in nature conservation around the world. The support provided to me has helped in establishing herpetological diversity in the region and by the assisting to publish both the field guides; I believe it is a big step forward towards awareness and long term conservation of herpetofauna in the region.