

## 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>	Ian Tchagra Little
<b>Project title</b>	Understanding and Mitigating the Impacts of Land-Use Management Strategies on Grassland Biodiversity
<b>RSG reference</b>	32.08.09
<b>Reporting period</b>	December 2009 - present
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£6000
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ianl@ewt.org.za">ianl@ewt.org.za</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	25 October 2011

**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
Find sufficient grassland nesting birds nests for statistical analysis			√	This was challenging and hard work but persistence resulted in over 400 nests being found and monitored which was statistically significant.
Assess predator abundance using scent traps		√		The high and very frequent rainfall in this area does not allow for this technique. Visual observation was used.
To sample insect abundance as a surrogate for bird food availability.			√	>32,000 insects were sampled, identified to family level and weighed. This gave a very interesting and precise idea of food availability and arthropod response to disturbance.
Bird species diversity assessment based on land management.			√	Over 160 km of walked transects resulted in 127 species across the various study sites. Species assemblages responded strongly to management.
Vegetation structure and plant species diversity assessment based on management type.			√	>1,000,000 plant data points were collected across the various sites giving a clear idea of the structural integrity of grasslands based on management as well as the species diversity.

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

Two main unforeseen difficulties arose both based on the weather conditions in this part of the world. The first was the ineffectiveness of scent traps (for predator abundance estimation) as they got rained out too often. Instead of these, driven transects were done. The second was simply the logistical difficulty of getting around in extremely muddy conditions. Some sites had to be hiked to at distances of over 3 km due to them being inaccessible by car in mid rain season.

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

- a. The management practices on Verloren Valei Natue Reserve (a RAMSAR site) have been altered dramatically in order to conserve the grassland and its species.
- b. The development of grassland management guidelines based on indicator bird species for all of South Africa's grasslands (in progress in collaboration with EWT, WWF and BirdLife).
- c. A new rapid assessment tool for assessing grassland integrity in South Africa's moist highland grasslands.

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

- a. local people were hired as field assistants.
- b. the local community has been advised on how to best manage their communal grazing lands.

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

This work is being continued by Ian Little who is now based at the Endangered Wildlife Trust managing the Threatened Grassland Species Programme. The work is leading to considerable and important policy level development of grassland management guidelines.

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

Some results have already been published in popular (magazine) format (The birder, online magazine and Africa Birds & Birding). Further, at least four peer-reviewed publications will result from the work. An international talk was done in Brazil at the International Ornithological Congress in August 2010. I have also presented this work at the African Crane Conservation Programme AGM and at the Forestry/grassland council.

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

The RSG money was used over a 3-year period as expected.

**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
Diesel for field vehicle	?	£2206.54	-	This was the highest expense as there was considerable travel required.
Field site accommodation (£354 per month X 5)	?	£1765.23	-	
Vehicle maintenance (£442 X 3)	?	£1323.91	-	
Field Equipment (eg ropes, spade, markers, portable printer, small camera, etc)	?	£441.30	-	
Statistical Software (PC-Ord)	?	£264.78	-	
<b>Total</b>		<b>£6001.76</b>		The exchange rate was around 11.33 Rand to the pound as I remember getting R68 000.00

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

To take this research work forward into actual National grassland management practice policy.  
To extend the lessons learnt on Verloren Vallei to other grassland reserve management.

**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?**

An international talk was done in Brazil at the International Ornithological Congress in August 2010. I have also presented this work at the African Crane Conservation Programme AGM and at the Forestry/grassland council. The RSGF logo was presented at each of these talks.

**11. Any other comments?**

Thank you very much for the support it has made a world of difference to me as a person (I am now Dr Ian Little) and to the management and conservation of South Africa's grasslands. I have recommended your organisation to a number of other projects.