

## 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	
Your name	Annie Clift
Project title	Sea Turtle Nesting Conservation and Beach Project Led by Artisanal Fisherman at Bejuco Beach, Costa Rica
RSG reference	20122-1
Reporting period	September 2016-March 2017
Amount of grant	£4,298
Your email address	<a href="mailto:Annie.kclift@gmail.com">Annie.kclift@gmail.com</a>
Date of this report	March, 8, 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
<p>Protect threatened and endangered sea turtles nesting on Bejuco Beach from poachers and depredation. Reduce number of nests poached by approximately 50% or more.</p>				<p>During the pilot season we were able to conduct patrols to monitor the nesting activity and relocate nests to the hatchery nearly every night for 5 months, with the only exceptions being due to bad weather. Overall, we protected 191 olive ridley (<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>) sea turtle nests in our hatchery, which produced over 15,000 hatchlings. We consider these numbers to be very high in comparison with the neighbouring beaches. Because we built the hatchery conservatively for the pilot season, we were only able to relocate 2-3 nests to it per night and on average encountered 5-7 turtles per night. In total we encountered 405 nesting activities, of which 75 were poached. This greatly exceeded our expectation of reducing poaching to 50%, as we saw a 13% poaching rate. Nest predation rates were similar to poaching rates and equalled 12%. In summary, we were able to relocate almost 50% of the nesting activities to our hatchery, while those that remained on the beach faced about 50% chances of being poached/predated. We had high hopes of also protecting leatherback (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>) nests as well, however only had three leatherback encounters. The local fisherman assure us that leatherback activity is</p>

			usually greater, and we hope to see more next season. Overall, the results greatly exceeded our expectations and give us high hopes for future seasons to have reason to expand the hatchery and relocate almost double the amount of nests.
Work with the local community to shift their practices away from poaching and towards nest protection.			The project was led by a team of local artisanal fisherman, as described in the grant proposal. We found that the community was divided into two groups, with those who were family to, or close with the fisherman working with us, being passionately supportive of the work. The other group seemed to be more removed from the beach, however still used the area to fish, this group was less supportive and was witnessed poaching on occasion. Getting families and community members unrelated to the fisherman leading and working in the project would allow us to consider this objective fully achieved and we hope to work on this next season by approaching these community members through a more neutral setting such as school or church.
Work with community to fully involve them and educate them in sea turtle conservation.			The immediate community, those of which lived on the estuary/beach and worked with us, were extremely supportive and engaged in all community engagement efforts. We developed a teen programme to better educate teens on the importance of marine conservation and the definition of ecology. This was extremely successful and all teens that started with us in the programme saw it through to the end and several want to become patrollers when they turn 18. The main community really

				accepted us as family and supported us in all aspects of the project.
Expand work to be multi-species; get community interested in mangrove conservation, work with fisherman to achieve better sustainability.				This was a slow progression, however throughout the season we were able to build on making our efforts more multi-species. We had a marine biologist studying sharks in a neighbouring mangrove system come in and talk to the community about shark conservation and importance. This really interested a lot of the fisherman and we hope to be able to expand her study to include the Bejuco mangrove system. In the last couple of months we were able to start helping the fisherman record catch data to monitor their levels and species take. In the future we hope to expand upon these efforts and be able to include them throughout the season.
Set up the location and relationship with the community to build upon and continue the project annually.				The community and those involved directly with the project are enthusiastically waiting for next season. We saw their enthusiasm through their willingness to help in all aspects of the project and when funds were low, volunteer to do unpaid patrols. I consistently sat down with the community members throughout the project duration, and at the end of the project, to continuously gauge our relationship and success. I never had negative feedback or a single negative comment. Rather, they hope we are able to have the project run all year round, and when the turtle nesting slows be more involved in the sustainable fisheries work.

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

All aspects of the project regarding our objectives and goals with conservation, the community, and the turtles, were easily obtained and enormously fulfilling for everyone involved. The only obstacles tackled were related to budgeting and season duration. Because we weren't able to secure funding before August, we were not able to start the project until September, however if we had not received funding from The Rufford Foundation, we would not have been able to run the project at all, so we are exceedingly thankful that we were able to apply and receive the RFSG. When planning the Rufford Foundation Small Grant budget, we expected this to be the only funding we received, we are grateful that CREMA (Center for the Restoration of Endangered Marine Animals) was able to also secure a private donation from the Slander Family Foundation. This was extremely helpful and we were surprised and grateful for the extra funds, however we had to reassess our budget and figure out which parts were more easily paid for by which source of funding, as the money from CREMA was more easily accessible by using the CREMA credit card. Thus a reshuffling of the budget (as described in section 8. Budget below) took place to allow money from the RFSG to take care of most things that had to be paid in cash.

In the end, I would always prefer difficulties be crossed in budgeting rather than project success in conservation and within the community.

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

The most essential outcome was the relationship we built with the community. Their willingness and excitement to be involved so quickly in the project surpasses any other outcome I've seen in the area regarding community relations during the pilot season. The second most important outcome was the sheer number of nests we were able to protect and amount of hatchlings released. This is followed by the low percentage of poaching we were able to achieve, and seeing this decrease throughout the season, being the third most important outcome.

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

The local community was extremely involved and remained enthusiastic about the project throughout the season. Very quickly the local community seemed to accept our team as family and regularly involved them in local activities, such as planning activity days, attending First Communion ceremonies, even cooking tamales together for Christmas. For the entire duration, eight community members

led patrols, this was valuable work for them because not only did it supplement their income during a time of the year when fishing is low, but it provided extensive training and knowledge regarding sea turtles and conservation. We also employed two women to cook for the team, thus being able to supplement two more families at a low income time of the year, and provide experience for future jobs. Fisherman also benefitted from the help in recording their fishing/catch data, in that it was more conclusive when they had assistants recording it and they became more interested in the sustainability of their work.

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

Our team, along with the community, sincerely hopes to secure funding to continue the work next season. However, we hope to be able to start earlier, June or July, and carry out the season through March, extending the total season length by 4-5 months. Eventually we would like to keep the project running all year round, suggested by the community, to play a role in helping them with their fisheries and mangrove conservation while the turtle nesting slows down. This would also allow for us to assist them in developing more tourism skills so they have more economic opportunities that could eventually lead to becoming self-sustained and non-reliant on outside funding to carry out the sea turtle protection.

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

Throughout the season we used the Turtle Trax S.A. public platform to share our success with the surrounding communities and with their extensive international network. Some team members are also attending the International Sea Turtle Symposium this year where some of the community success achieved in Bejuco will be represented in their presentation materials.

#### **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 money was used from September through mid-February, although we kept some team members in Bejuco through March to continue helping with the fisheries. We would have liked to be able to continue running paid patrols through March however we knew this wouldn't be an option for the pilot season due to funding and personnel. For the 2017/18 season we hope to be able to secure enough funding, and earlier, in order to begin patrols in June and keep them running through March.

**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
Local patrollers (4 people paid 68.51£ per month x 8 mo.)	2,192	1,485	707	Because we calculated this amount based on an 8 month season, but were unable to start until September, this was an over calculation. However, because of this we were able to hire cooks to prepare meals for the team of research assistants and thus put the same amount into the local economy as we were expecting. The sum paid for Local Patrollers (£1,485) and Local Cooks (£829.026) is £2,314. Which you can see is very close to what we originally budgeted for Local Patrollers.
Materials to repair housing structure	180	45.82	134.18	When creating the Rufford budget we were unaware that CREMA would secure some funds as well and they were able to put forth money to help with the housing structure, patrol equipment, and hatchery equipment. This allowed us to relocate funds to paying local cooks, paying the on site coordinator, and have enough money for unexpected costs (listed under administration).
Transportation	433	394.21	38.79	We were able to use the local

				but more than initially imagined/planned, thus saving money in this area.
Communications	45	34.46	10.54	Communications was cheaper than expected as the locals let us use their internet sources which saved money from being spent on phone refills.
Patrol Equipment	762	99.43	662.57	CREMA was able to put forth money for Patrol Equipment; we were also donated old patrol equipment from Turtle Trax, which cut down on these costs greatly.
Project Equipment	336	464.76	128.76	We were able to spend more in project equipment due to the CREMA funding being allocated towards patrol equipment and hatchery equipment. We also found unexpected expenses here such as the need to buy a fridge, kitchen stove, and other essential kitchenware (items we were originally expecting to be donated but were not).
Hatchery Equipment	350	244.9	105.1	Although CREMA put some money towards hatchery equipment, the locals donated the majority of the equipment and put in hours of labour building it.
Local Cooks	0	829.026	829.026	See above explanation in Local Patrollers item. The locals are grateful we were still able to provide them with the same relative amount of monetary work as expected regardless of unforeseen



				difficulties in budgeting.
Coordination	0	726.79	726.79	Originally CREMA was going to pay the entirety of the coordination fees, however because they were more easily able to pay for patrol equipment, hatchery equipment etc. (because the money from CREMA was more easily accessible by credit card and the money from The Rufford Foundation was easily accessible in the way of cash), we moved things around to pay coordinator fees as well. This was around £145 per month.
Administration	0	16.59	16.59	We added the category administration as the season progressed as an area to record unforeseen minimal costs that came up while running the project. This mainly included ATM fees and banking fees.
<b>Total</b>	4298	4341.097	43.097	Although budgeting was reshuffled and proved more difficult than planned, we were able to stay very close to our allotted amount.

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

Currently the most important next step is to look for funding for the upcoming season. We are planning to apply for a Rufford Second Small Grant, however we are reviewing our budget and spending from the pilot season and predict we will need more financial backers, and ones that can begin funding earlier. After this is secured, we will be talking with the community to see who will continue patrolling and if we have any new locals interested in being a part of the project. Once we know how many locals want to be involved we will have an idea of how many research assistants we need to hire.

**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 will be on three or four presentations at the International Sea Turtle Symposium as information collected from the community efforts and from monitoring data will be referred to in these presentations thus we will acknowledge The Rufford Foundation for making these investigations possible. The symposium reaches hundreds of sea turtle biologists and scientists from across the globe. Throughout the course of the season RSGF also received publicity through our postings on Turtle Trax public media. The project site was also visited by several groups of tourists and we made sure to always have a representative take time to talk to the tourists about the project and how it was made achievable by The Rufford Foundation.

**11. Any other comments?**

The community of Bejuco, our team, and myself thank you tenfold for making this season possible. We are all elated by the success of this pilot season, which surpassed our wildest expectations. We are filled with joy and excitement to be planning the 2017/18 season and sincerely hope The Rufford Foundation can, once again, be a part of our project as we tremendously enjoyed working with the foundation.