

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 | Prashant Ghimire |
| Project title | Population Status, Distribution and Conservation initiation of Asian Woolly Neck (<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>) in Western Lowlands of Nepal |
| RSG reference | 20857-1 |
| Reporting period | 12 Months |
| Amount of grant | £4905 |
| Your email address | prashantghimire66@gmail.com |
| Date of this report | 14 November, 2018 |

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 |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| Status and Distribution survey | | | | After preliminary survey of the site, Direct field visit observation is made. Agricultural lands and wetlands were surveyed intensively. We established potential route for the survey. Winter, summer and rainy seasonal replication were done. Distributional map was created using Arc GIS 10.3. Hotspots have been marked. Two students perusing bachelor degree were taken as assistant for the field survey. Seven permanent road transects are selected for continuous monitoring in future. |
| Threat Analysis | | | | Questionnaire survey with 120 respondents of two districts was taken. Trained local youth worked as volunteers in data collection as they could speak native language and could grab attention of denizens. |
| Formation of Community Based Bird Conservation Unit (CBBCU) | | | | Two CBBCU were formed in Jagadishpur reservoir and Kudan. CBBCU of Kudan is working very actively in awareness programme. The have removed all bird trap nets from their VDC. They required advanced training and immediate income generation. 50 people were trained in bird identification and monitoring including students, Homestay owner, teachers, farmers and local unemployed youth. Bird guide training was completed successfully in Jagadishpur reservoir and Lumbini. Trainee are working for bird rescue and reducing anthropogenic impacts. |
| Conservation Education Campaign | | | | Conservation education campaign was conducted in 25 schools and 5 Social Groups. Schools were selected |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | | | on the basis of species occurrence. Posters were prepared and distributed in schools, CBBCU, Student Volunteers and Community Groups. |
|--|--|--|--|---|

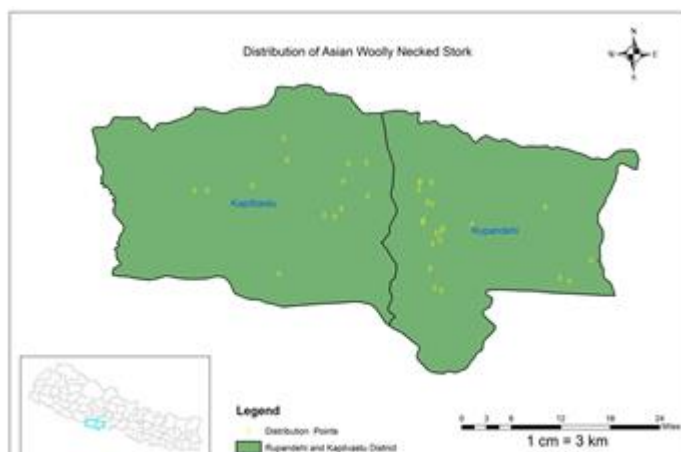
2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

As being resident of the study site there were not significant difficulties during the implementation of the project. We had argument with some hunters. They were using nets to trap farmland birds. Later with coordination of District Forest Office, Kapilvastu, we formed CBBCU including hunters which resolved the case. Now, we have been continuously surveying the place.

Continuous rainfall and flood affected our monsoon survey and conservational campaign. The expectations of local stakeholders were very high especially CBBCU members were expecting more advanced training and workshops. Due to time and budget constraints we couldn't satisfy them. On the another hand, student volunteers were expecting bird watching equipment's such as binoculars and books which we couldn't afford to provide.

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

A. Status and Distribution and Threat Analysis of species: For the first time, population status of the species was known. Our survey shows very poor population status of Asian woolly neck stork in study site in compared to Vulnerable lesser adjutant stork and Sarus crane. Nests were identified and monitored with community participation. Seven road transect were selected for the permanent monitoring of the storks and crane in study area. Spot billed pelican was recorded first time in Rupandehi during our survey (short note has been submitted for publication). Black necked stork was recorded in Lumbini for second time (short note is accepted for publication and will be published in December 2017). On the other hand, distributional map was extracted which showed this species is distributed patchily in the study area.



Picture 1 Distribution of AWN in study area

We interviewed 120 respondents of Rupandehi and Kapilvastu. The result of questionnaire survey can be depicted by following graphs and charts.

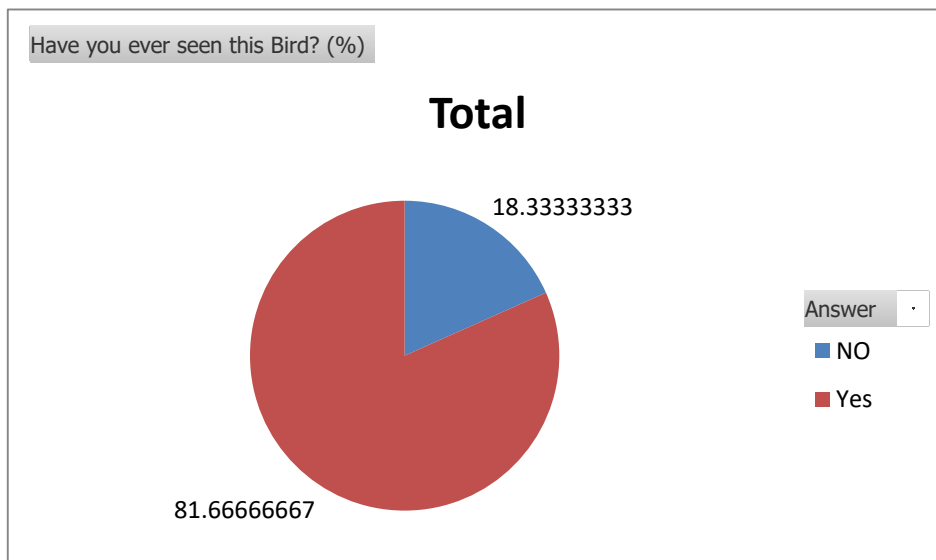


Figure 1

Among the 99 respondents who said that they have seen this bird species revealed the name of bird as shown in below bar graph.

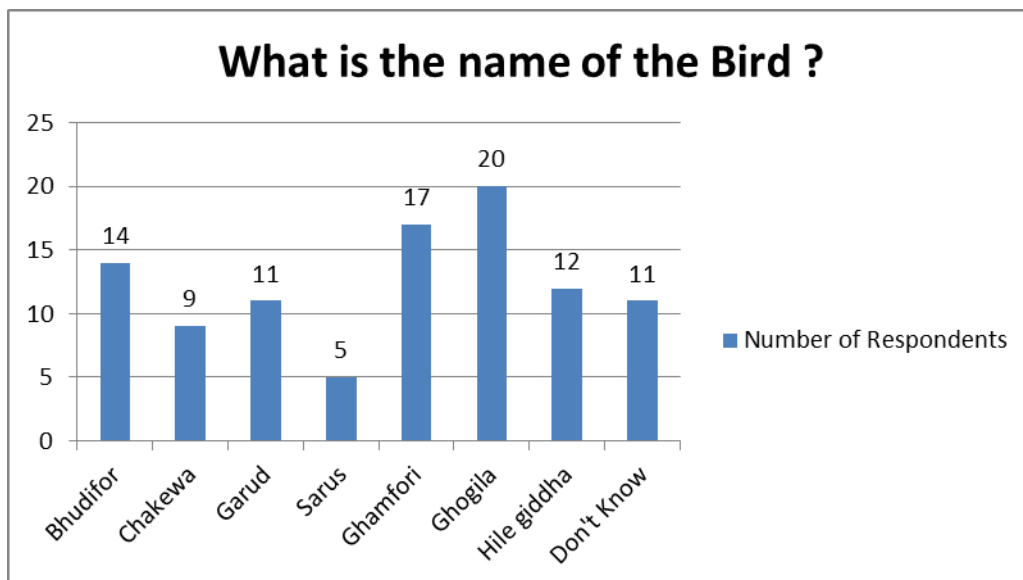


Figure 2

Out of the 99 respondents who have observed this bird, five have seen death of the species. Two of them were due to electrocution, two were due to wetland poisoning during fishing and one due to hunting.

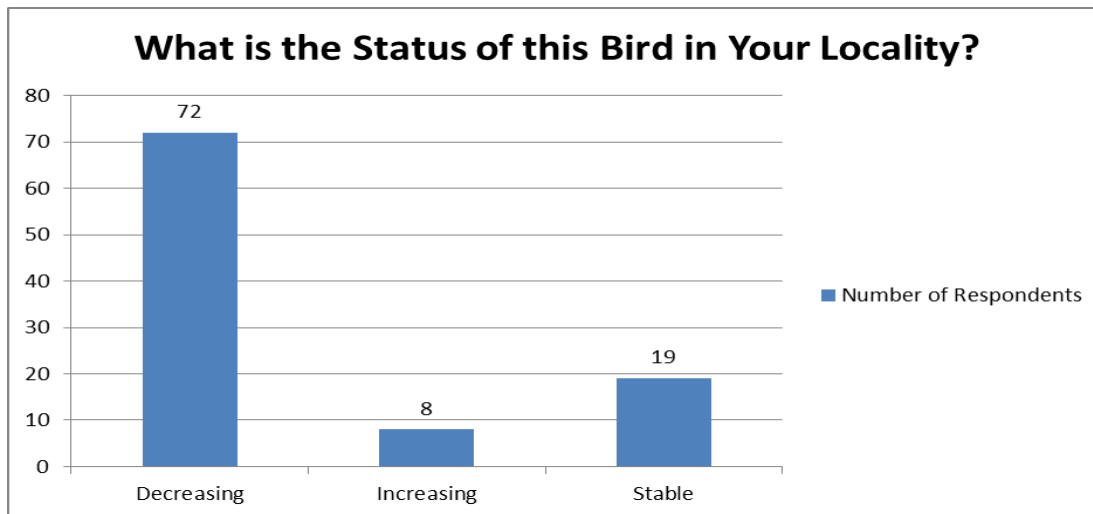


Figure 3

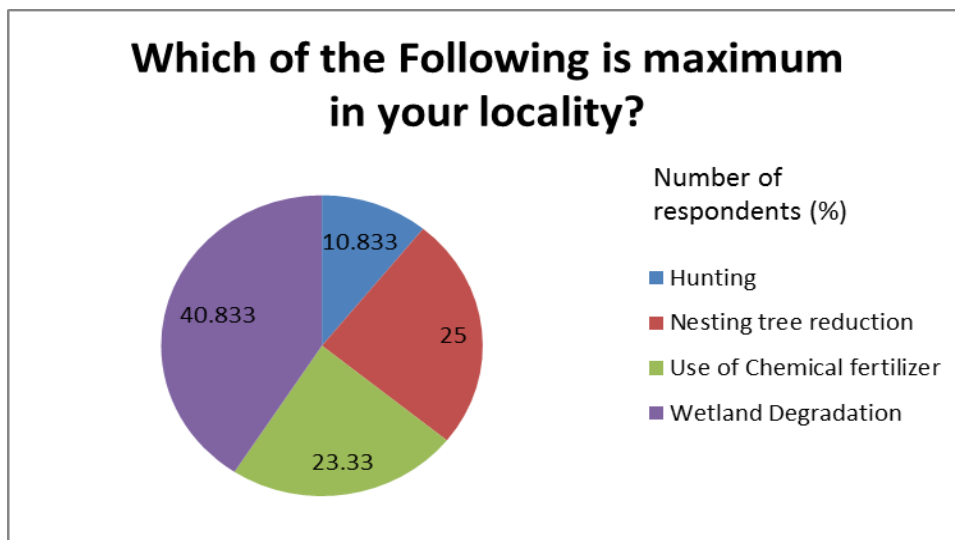


Figure 4

Questionnaire survey indicated that Asian woolly neck stork are declining in the most of the locality in study area due to wetland degradation and nesting tree reduction. According to local, nesting tree of Asian woolly Neck near Suryapura was cut down. Our direct observation in the study area indicated that there is high disturbance in river as due to sand extraction. Tall trees along the river line are destructed. So, main focus to combat decline of this bird should be done to nesting tree and wetland protection.

B. Formation of Community based Bird Conservation Unit (CBBCU): Two Community Based Bird Conservation Units (CBBCUs) were formed for the first time in Nepal. It included local youth and conservationist. The committee was formed in coordination with District forest Office, Kapilvastu. The CBBCU of Jagadishpur reservoir is working in bird rescue and awareness programmes. Youth volunteers frequently inform us about the activity around the reservoir. Illegal fishing and stealing of eggs have been reduced to some extent but cases are still prevailing

although of our efforts. The CBBCU of Kudan is working to reduce human impacts over farmland birds. They have removed bird trap nets placed by hunters and conducted community teaching programme. We together with CBBCU conducted "Home Visit" programme during summer in Kudan. CBBCU seem to be influential but they cannot be sustained if financial and technical support is not provided continuously. Very unfortunately, we couldn't make them self-sustaining and regulating. We aim to provide advanced training and collect funds for them through conservational campaign in near future.

On the other side, bird guide training was provided to 50 youths of Jagadishpur and Lumbini which seems to very fruitful. Some of our trainees were involved in mid-winter waterfowl census. Suresh Khatik, Deelip Kumar Yadav and Poonam Chaudary are local youth of Kapilvastu and Rupandehi who has been working in grass root level awareness. They were also trained for data collection for questionnaire.

C. Conservation Education Campaign: The conservation education campaign was conducted in 25 schools of Rupandehi and Kapilvastu. Total 1250 students participated. School teaching, bird-watching programme, essay competition and drawing competition was conducted among the secondary level students effectively. Schools for the campaign were selected as per the species occurrence. Our programme mainly focused on the schools and community groups from rural area. We hope these students will be real conservationist of their locality.

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

As the project was focused for community stewardship towards bird conservation, there was significant participation of the local people. Discussion programme conducted with local during the implementation of the project was coordinated by District Forest Office, local Youth Club, Schools and conservationist. Our previous contact with the community based organisations (CBOs) helped us for increased people's participation.

Their involvements in the discussion have inculcated the sense of responsibility and ownership of Birds. Local people were unaware about the conservational need, their role and benefits. Distribution of conservation materials to the local and display in various programs has educated people to some extends. Most of the people were unaware about the use of the chemical fertilizers and poisoning of wetlands could impact on birds. Participation of local youth in bird guide training has trained them for self-employment. These programmes will surely aid in long term conservation of species along with local upliftment.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We have conducted status and distributional survey of the species in two district of Nepal. Our team will be monitoring continuously in determined route in this study area in future too. We are planning to continue status survey throughout of the lowlands and mid hills. As the population is very low, there is utmost need to study its

ecology. We are planning to work for nesting identification, monitoring and conservation to ensure their safety. Conservational campaign in other part of country is our next aim.

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

Local and national media highlighted our work. We are planning to share our results through them. Data collection and analysis is ongoing. We are applying suitable statistical modelling and remote sensing for better interpretation of the results. Final report and our publication will be submitted to Rufford foundation, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Department of Forest (DOF) and Bird Conservation Nepal. We have planned to share results with national and international students and expert researchers through scientific papers, seminars and conferences.

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

Majority of the grants was used as per the proposal. Bird guide training was conducted earlier than mentioned as to involve volunteers in waterfowl census and to monitor their activities closely. So, some more expenses were done during the beginning. We published 1000 posters (instead of 500 mentioned in proposals) and 50 t-shirts (not mentioned in proposal) using RSG grants for effective publicity about the work. Else grant was used in respective time period for respective objectives.

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 |
|---|-----------------|---------------|------------|--|
| Travel Expenses: | 75 | 150 | -75 | Due to continuous seasonal monitoring of Wetlands and determined routes. Internal transportation was bit more expensive as we have hired an electric rickshaw. |
| Preparation cost: Poster, T-shirts and Banner | 665 | 800 | -135 | 1000 Posters were printed due to large study area and demand of CBO's. T-Shirts were also prepared. |
| Field Allowance | 965 | 875 | +90 | Cost for trainer is reduced as supported by Pokhara Bird Society. |
| Conservation Education Programs | 1620 | 1500 | +120 | Training hall was organized by local supporter such as Green Youth of |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|----------|--|
| (Inc. Bird guide training, Formation of CBBCU, School camps, Community Teaching, Home visit) | | | | Lumbini and Niglihawa Youth Club, Equipment support by District Forest office. |
| Field Subsistence | 1480 | 1480 | 0 | |
| Miscellaneous Cost | 100 | 100 | 0 | |
| Total | 4905 | 4905 | 0 | Local exchange rate: 1£ = 131.08 NRS |

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

Study of Asian woolly neck and specific conservation treatment is very low. We want to conduct more scientific surveys in other parts of country along with conservational campaign. As the number of Asian woolly neck is very low as compared to other vulnerable stork in Rupandehi and Kapilvastu, it has become an important task for national survey to understand its current national status. On the other hand, Study of nesting ecology is most important steps to understand breeding propensity, Nesting habitat selection and conservation. Further, knowledge of people seems to be very less in this species so, grass root level conservation camp is our next step. As there no books and publication regarding Asian woolly neck stork, we also want to publish a small book/ Booklets with the information of species for awareness program.

10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did The Rufford Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The logo of the Rufford Foundation was used in Asian woolly neck conservation posters (1000) and t-shirts (50). The logo was also displayed during all the project related activities such as the conservation workshop presentation and in banners prepared for school and community based conservation camps. The foundation's name and activities was also broadcasted through local and national media and papers. Scientific notes were sent for the publication which also credited RSG for the support.

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

Here is the list of all members of our team:

- a) **Mr Manshanta Ghimire (President, Pokhara Bird Society)** - Trainer- Bird Guide Training
- b) **Ms Shristee Panthee – Conservational Campaign coordinator.** She worked in coordinating local stakeholder and mobilizing community based organizations.
- c) **Mr Nabin Pandey and Mr Gaurav Raz Baral (Research Assistant)** –Assisted during field survey and conservation Awareness.

- d) **Mr Bishal Aryal and Mr Kritagya Gyawali**- Worked during field survey in Rupandehi.
- e) **Mr Binamra Thapa**: Worked for map extraction sites tracing and GIS works
- f) **Mr Deelip Kumar Yadav, Mr Suresh Khatik and Mr Poonam Chaudary**- Local youth worked during questionnaire survey in their indigenous language. They have been monitoring AWN in different wetlands in study site.
- g) **Mr Ashish Bajagain (Sr. coordinator, Yabeez pvt. Ltd) and Mr Milan Aryal** - Worked as media coordinator for publication of field stories and efforts in websites and social media.
- h) **Mr Bikki Wagle (Niglihawa Youth Club), Mr Sarad Ghimire (Campaign Youth Club), Mr Binod Gautam and Mr Imran Khan** - field contacts who helped us individually as well as through their organization in effective implementation of the project.

12. Any other comments?

As this was first project on Asian woolly neck stork in Nepal and we are very confident that it has impacted positively to some extent. We are able to raise issues of its conservation for the first time nationally. Different national newspapers, TV and Radios broadcasted about the conservation of species. Assistant researcher and local supporters are benefitted as well. They have learnt scientific survey techniques. Local people came out for reducing anthropogenic impacts over nature. Rural communities were also benefited through our conservational camps and home visits. Members of CBBCU and Bird guide training are benefited with bird identification and watching knowledge. Though we have worked at our best but there always remain some weaknesses. By minimising our weakness and maximising effectiveness, we aim to work much harder in our next project.



Picture 2. Researcher and Assistant Mr. Nabin Pandey during Wetland Monitoring



Picture 3. Researcher speaking during training



Picture 4. Electric Rickshaw used during Field



Picture 5. Discussion with Local people



Picture 6. Mr. Ganga Ghale (Bird Guide) Sharing his Experience



Picture 7. T-shirt Inauguration by Mrs. Carol Inskipp



Picture 8. Asian Woolly Neck Stork in Nest



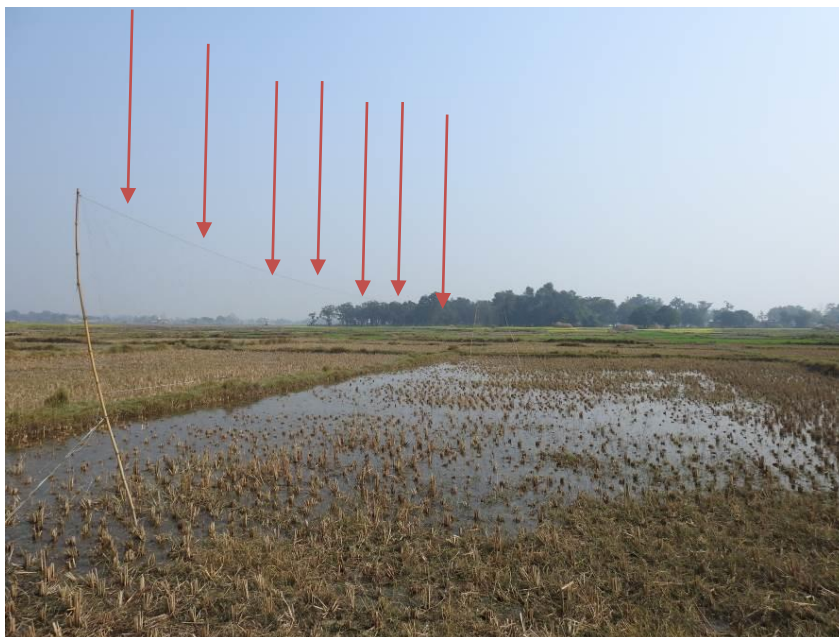
Picture 9. Children and Catapult



Picture 10. Sketch by Ms. Aarti Basnet



Picture 11. Researcher sharing Field experiences at a training organized by Forest for Transformation Nepal.



Picture 12. Bird Trap Net placed by Hunters



Picture 13. Mr. Manshanta Ghimire (President, Pokhara Bird Society) as a trainer