Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Micol Montagna
Project Title	Marine turtle conservation during a pandemic: promoting online citizen science training and best practices to protect endangered marine species
Application ID	33607-2
Grant Amount	£6000
Email Address	montagna.micol@gmail.com
Date of this Report	03/03/2022

1. 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
Expand our social media outreach through the development of a website			✓	We have successfully developed a TurtleWatch website, including a section that users can use to share their sightings and a Red Sea map where they can find the latest turtle sightings and related details.
Engage and train dive centre staff (guidelines, how to report sightings and involve tourists)			✓	We have successfully: • Organised staff training events in person (47 dive professionals participated). • Shared guidelines and codes of conducts through our social media channels. • Invited dive centre staff to learn more about marine turtle biology and ecology, to learn guidelines, to know how to report sightings and to download our new TurtleWatch material through visiting the dedicated sections on our website.
Engage and train boat captains (code of conducts)			✓	We have successfully: • Organised workshops for boat captains in person (14 participated). • Shared codes of conducts through our social media channels. • Invited boat captains to learn more about marine turtle biology and ecology, to learn the codes of conduct for speed boats when driving in marine turtle feeding grounds and to download our new TurtleWatch material through visiting the dedicated sections on our website.

Objective				Comments
Perform in-water activities (data collection and practical training for dive centre staff)			▮	We have successfully run in-water activities to train dive centre staff on how to collect data in MarsaAlam area (in several different spots).
Sharing information with local authorities		▮		We are in the process of strengthening connections with the national park and we are sharing all project updates publicly on social media. Furthermore, data obtained from the citizen scientists are available on our website, visiting our map. We plan to get a better connection with local authorities once the project will be formally hosted by a local no profit association/ local charity body (we are working on it).
Data compiling, report analysing, database and catalogue updating			▮	We have collected several turtle reports (we have gathered more than 500 sightings overall – including citizen science submissions and the monitoring activities conducted with dive centres - and we have registered more than 60 new individuals over the year), analysed them and updated the TurtleWatch database and catalogue.
Engage local children in awareness activities	▮			We have not managed to run such an activity for the moment, but we are in contact with educators and an NGO which will be happy to run turtle days for kids in the next months.

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

We planned to organize awareness activities for local children during summer 2021, but the professionals we were planning to collaborate with for that purpose, were not available at that time. We rescheduled those activities for year 2022.

Project coordinator got pregnant in 2021, nevertheless most of activities were ran as scheduled.

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

1. Public engagement via web. We were able to reach more people who were interested in the project thanks to the website; we also managed to improve

the sighting submission process (through the online questionnaire). Furthermore, we obtained a stronger engagement of the citizen scientists through the map displaying the turtle sightings - people are happy to share sightings as they know that their photos and names will appear on the map.

2. Workshops for boat captains. We have run workshops (in Arabic language) addressed to boat captains for the first time since TurtleWatch2.0 was launched. This is for us a very important step toward the marine turtle protection in the Egyptian Red Sea as we expect that training boat captains and producing ad hoc dissemination material can, in the long run, help reduce injury and mortality rate of marine turtles in their feeding grounds due to boat collisions.

   Our team has received only two reports of injured turtles (one dated 2021- the accident likely happened in a bay where we have not run our workshop yet - one dated 2020), we also have received just a few reports of speed boat violations, again in a location where we have not run our activities yet. We are aware that the low rate of reports of injured animals and of violations could be related to the decrease in tourism that characterised not only 2020, but also 2021. Nevertheless, we think that once tourism will be back to pre-pandemic levels (while we will keep running training activities and workshops), we will be able to properly estimate the impact of our work and that we will see an actual improvement.

3. Due to the pandemic, 2021 was an incredibly difficult year for the tourism industry in Egypt, nevertheless we have received a good number of sightings from dive professionals (even the ones who were not working yet) and tourists (the few who were able to travel) happy to get involved in our citizen science programme. This gave us the possibility to successfully proceed with data collection, catalogue update and to keep monitoring injured individuals.

4. What do you consider to be the most significant achievement of this work?

5. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

We widely involved into our training events the local dive centre staff (at the dive centre bases) and also people living in Marsa Alam (organising activities in Marsa Alam town). For the first time we included in our training event all sort of dive centre staff, not only dive professionals. Also, this year we mostly worked with local staff as most of foreign workers have returned home during the pandemic. Initially, we were expecting to engage people through online meetings only, but fortunately, thanks to the support of dive centre managers and Moment's restaurant owners, we managed to organise in person events in wide and open air venues. This allowed us to reach more people, to better deliver our lecture content and to clarify any doubt or curiosity.

6. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Numbers of submitted sightings and of staff attending training events are not high but they are widely satisfying our expectations, as activities were run during a pandemic that let the country with almost no tourism for 2 years. Furthermore, the feedback from the participants was good, and we had received requests for organising training events in other areas of the Red Sea. We have been contacted also by tour operators and new foundations who are interested in supporting / collaborating.

Our plans for the near future are to run more training events, to arrange awareness activities addressed at local children and to keep the citizen science programme and data collection activities running consistently. We expect not only to continue our work, but also to see the project grow bigger.

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

We are keeping up to date people interested in our work through posts on our social media (we show what activities we have been running, the result of diver and snorkeler sightings, we regularly share codes of conducts and info graphics). Now we have an additional channel of communication, our website. Through the website anyone can see the results of our work, learn information about marine turtles through our dissemination material, check out our photographs and see in a map all dive spots where turtles were sighted and also basic information about each turtle registered in our catalogue (and data related to the latest sighting of each individual).

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

It was used over 12 months, as expected. Some activities nevertheless will be still running in summer 2022.

9. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion. 1 £ = 21.33 egp

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Communication service	200		-200	We did not need that as we ran activities in person
Social media	320	19	-301	Social media work was fully covered by the co-funding,

				Moment's restaurant. RSG is covering only advertising.
Website creation + Data collection services	1160	923	-237	The company developing our website and map has made a discount in support of the project.
Internet connection	180	25	-155	Moment's restaurant covered most of expenses for the internet use.
Equipment for communication	330	537	+207	Office equipment improvement.
Local translator for all digital material	300	319	+19	
Accommodation for field coordinator while on the field	900	1125	+225	
Internal travels (gasoline, car rental) + entrance fees and food on field	2160	2768	+608	We spent less than expected on food on the field and entrance fees thanks to the support of the dive centres, while we spent more than expected on car rental and gasoline as these costs rose significantly during the last year.
Bank fees	450		-450	Moment's restaurant covered this.
Sub-total	**6000**	**5744**	**-256**	
Equipment for field work (dive computer spear parts, neoprene vest)		132	+132	Not in the initial budget. We needed to replace old equipment spear parts.
Material for training (posters, stickers, t-shirts)		154	+154	Not in the initial budget, very useful during the training events in dive centres.
TOTAL	**6000**	**6030**		

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

- Reaching a larger number of dive centres (with training and workshops, in English and Arabic) in different areas than Marsa Alam, and a larger number of staff members (from 2022 we expect work to restart and dive centres to hire more staff). This will help improve the data collection process and it will also help share awareness with a higher number of dive professionals and their guests. Furthermore, this will improve the conduct of speed boat drivers and encourage people to report injured turtles/violations.

- Expanding TurtleWatch Egypt team and set up a TurtleWatch office in Marsa Alam in order to be able to analyse and process an increasing number of sightings and to arrange meeting and activities in a dedicated base.

- Keep the activities running consistently through the years.

- Arrange an official local structure that may host the project.

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

The Rufford Foundation was advertised and mentioned in all public events organized during the length of the project.

Furthermore, we have used the Rufford Foundation logo in:

- English ppt presentations for dive professionals.

- Arabic ppt presentations for boat captains.

- New manual.

- Certificates of completion for dive centre staff.

- Code of conduct for speed boat (English and Arabic versions).

- New flyers teaching how to assess injured turtle conditions and what to do.

- Our new poster.

Finally, the Rufford Foundation logo is displayed in our new website in the "collaborations" section, and we have linked it to the Rufford Foundation website (https://turtlewatchegypt.net/).

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

Micol Montagna, marine biologist – Field and data coordinator, trainer

Abdallah Rabia Taher, PADI MSDT –Trainer, assistant (helped on the field and replaced Ms Montagna whenever needed). Technical adviser for in-water activities; he translated into Arabic the material used during the workshop for boat captains and the code of conduct for speed boat.

Dr. Agnese Mancini, marine biologist – Scientific coordinator and data analyst.

Dennis Lisbjerg, marine biologist – President of the DZS. Adviser.

Trained local dive guides, instructors, dive centre managers are now able to be somehow part of the TWE team and act as "marine turtle ambassadors", introducing foreign tourists (and also colleagues) to codes of conducts and best practice to dive and swim in turtle feeding grounds and to the TurtleWatch protocol to collect and report data on marine turtles.

13. Any other comments?

We are extremely thankful to The Rufford Foundation for deciding to support us again. This small grant made a big difference for the TurtleWatch project: we managed to run activities even in such a difficult circumstance. This helped us get more connections and hopefully will lead us to gain more support in the coming years.