

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Asif Ali Sandeelo
Project Title	Socio-ecological and Conservation Policy Study of Houbara bustard
Application ID	37002-1
Date of this Report	3 October 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
Investigate the impact of falconry on Taloor population				Hunting by Middle Eastern elites poses a serious threat to the Taloor population. This also damages the habitat of other biodiversity in the area.
Know about Taloor habitat and diet				I was able to learn about the feeding of the bird in its habitat. I collected the data about vegetation, including plants and trees, and insects on which Taloor feeds in the winter season.
Identify the population abundance				I learned that there is no credible population assessment of Taloor available at the provincial and national levels in Pakistan. The study revealed that the bird population has significantly decreased in its habitat. However, it is necessary to visit the other Taloor sites to collect more information on it.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). Identify potential Taloor sites in Pakistan

I was able to identify the Taloor sites in Sindh and Punjab, such as the Nara desert, Thar desert, Kohistan, Cholistan and desert areas of Balochistan.

b). Identify the bird experts and relevant organisations working on Taloor conservation and management.

I was able to identify the potential bird experts and organizations working on Taloor i.e., Houbara Foundation, Zoological Survey Department, WWF-Pakistan, IUCN, Ministry of Climate Change, and provincial wildlife departments.

c). Fill in the knowledge gaps about abundance, habitat degradation, feeding, and sheltering grounds

I could collect basic information about the population abundance, habitat degradation and feeding grounds. However, this information/ data will help me to build on my further studies and work on this objective in future.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

I encountered two major difficulties. One was related to the widespread rains and floods in Pakistan. As I reached Sindh, Pakistan in May 2022, there were predictions of heavy rains, especially in Karachi, Sindh. The widespread rainfall started in the second week of June 2022 in Karachi, and later it affected the other parts of the province, including my project sites in Jhampir and Chundko. Considering the rain situation, I made some changes to my field plan. As per my original plan, I had scheduled my field visit at Karachi from 21 May to 20 June, which I later extended to 12 July 2022. While my original plan to start research in Jhampir and Chundko was from 21 June to 30 July for a total of 40 days. Later, I changed and started the research at sites from 13 July to 8 August 2022, for a total of 26 days. Thus, I researched for 48 days in Karachi (i.e including interviews with participants and archival research) and 26 days at Jhampir and Chundko sites.

Secondly, due to the busy schedule and unavailability of the representatives of the relevant organisations and government departments, it took more than expected time to complete interviews with them. During my stay in Karachi, I could complete six out of the eight interviews with the relevant participants. The interviews were conducted with two representatives at IUCN Pakistan, an official of the Sindh Wildlife Department, a representative at WWF-Pakistan, an ornithologist based at the Pakistan Zoological Survey Department, and an environmental legal expert. The environmental legal expert was not planned in the original schedule. However, I felt the need to include a legal opinion on the hunting and conservation of Taloor as the new Sindh Wildlife Act 2020 allows the regularisation of the falconry in the province. I also had an initial discussion with another ornithologist, Z.B Mirza based at Islamabad, Pakistan. But I could not conduct detailed interview with him due to his busy schedule. I plan to have a detailed interview with him next year.

It may be noted that during the recent floods and rains in Pakistan, over 1500 died, and 33 million people were affected according to government figures. Pakistan particularly Sindh, experienced the worst flood in its history during the monsoon season.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

As I lived with the communities at the project sites, they were sensitised on the dwindling population of the Taloor bird. They realised that conservation initiatives should be started to improve the habitat and feeding ground of the bird. In the long run, this project is looking into the options to engage the local community members in the protection of the shrubs and fruit trees on which Taloor feeds in the winter season. Community members will be paid for their services and will be encouraged to present their work at local media houses or different programs in the future.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, I have a plan to continue the research work for 2023 and onwards. I am working on the plan for the next year and will share it with The Rufford Foundation by the end of this year.

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

I have a plan to make the results and findings of my research study available to the public. First, I will set up ResearchGate account where all data for my study could be accessed. Secondly, I will add the data to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility. Thirdly, based on my field research, I will develop a research paper that will be published in a peer-reviewed journal of Forktail- a journal of Asian Ornithology. Moreover, I will also develop at least two articles that will be published in English and Urdu dailies in Pakistan to raise awareness on Houbara conservation.

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

Here are the next steps:

1. I plan to work with ornithologists and conservation experts to develop a conservation strategy for Taloor at the project sites.
2. I intend to study the impact of climate change on the bird population, migratory patterns, and feeding grounds.
3. I want to conduct two workshops in Karachi/ or project sites with an aim to raise awareness about the conservation and protection of the bird. These workshops will be joined by the youth, researchers, conservation experts, and ornithologists. The media will be engaged in developing the stories and news packages.

8. 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?

I have a plan to develop a policy brief and will use the Rufford Foundation logo on it for wider distribution among policymakers and other stakeholders involved in the conservation of Taloor.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

I worked as an independent researcher.

10. Any other comments?