

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Prudence Ndabasanze
Project Title	Conservation of Busaga Forest, a breeding site of Critically Endangered Hooded Vulture
Application ID	38740-D
Date of this Report	January 29, 2024

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
To minimize human-induced threats to the Busaga forest				A team of four Forest Protection Stewards was established to support the patrolling work at Busaga forest.
To gather evidence that can be used to influence the promotion of Busaga forest to an Important Bird Area or Key Biodiversity Area				A comprehensive report was developed and provides detailed information on birds and biodiversity status in the Busaga forest. The insights from this survey will inform future conservation plans, among others.

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

a) A Biodiversity and socio-economic assessment report:

The biodiversity survey conducted in the Busaga forest documented a total of 88 bird species, 14 mammal species, three amphibian species, six reptile species and 102 plant species. The survey identified different threatened and rare species endemic to the Albertine Rift in different taxa. Regarding vulture nest monitoring, two main nesting sites of hooded vultures were identified in Busaga forest, with four active nests and fledging individuals detected. This fascinating information informs the efforts to conserve this forest to secure the life of hooded vultures in the future. The survey pinpointed human activities like encroachment for tree-cutting, agriculture and firewood collection as the main threats to the forest. Expanding agricultural practices into the forest buffer zone is on the rise, often involving burning previously wooded areas. This highlights the urgent need for conservation efforts.

The socio-economic survey conducted in the surrounding communities showed that most residents rely heavily on agricultural practices. However, they face challenges such as insufficient income from different crops and livestock farming, leading to food shortages. Poor agro-inputs, infertile soil and erratic weather conditions further exacerbate the problem. Access to clean water is limited, and forest resources are essential for energy, with firewood being the primary source, demonstrating the high dependence of communities on forest resources. Health insurance and community savings groups provide essential support for the livelihoods of household members. The survey also reveals that historically and ecologically significant forest has lost wildlife due to human activities.

All these findings call for the deployment of rangers, the formation of government-community partnerships, and the initiation of community-driven projects for enhanced forest management and the economic well-being of communities.



A detected Juvenile Necrosyrtes monachus at fledgling stage in Busaga Forest ©Nature Rwanda
An Adult Necrosyrtes monachus in its nest in Busaga Forest ©Nature Rwanda

b) Established Active Forest Patrolling Team:

The project established a team of four community members, “Busaga Forest Protection Stewards,” who patrol the forest and mobilise the community to conserve the forest and its biodiversity.

c) Conservation Awareness Raised:

Increased knowledge for 115 households living around Busaga forest in three villages on the importance of vultures, the threats they face, and needed interventions for their conservation, contributing to reduced threats to Busaga forest. It is worth mentioning that 30 Vulture Champions enhanced their understanding of data collection and vulture monitoring methodologies through the use of technology.

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

The project faced some challenges, starting with a delayed research permit that resulted in a postponed commencement of project activities. Another challenge was the fluctuation in local costs for various project requirements. To resolve the challenges, Nature Rwanda co-financed the project, thereby contributing to the successful completion of planned activities.

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

The community members were actively involved and played a significant role in the project by participating in various activities, such as surveys conducted in and around the forest, community meetings, focus-group discussions, and supporting the selection of Busaga Forest Protection Stewards. Through their engagement, the community members learned about the importance of biodiversity conservation, and four community members were employed to support forest protection.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. The following steps include an assessment of the ecological movements of vultures and the implementation of a nest monitoring programme within the Busaga forest. In addition, building on the survey findings, more surveys are being planned in different seasons to inform the needed interventions in planning for the conservation and management of the Busaga forest.

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

To disseminate the valuable insights gathered from our work, Nature Rwanda is committed to a comprehensive and collaborative approach in sharing the results with various stakeholders. Our primary focus is engaging and informing the community directly impacted by our findings. Additionally, we will actively collaborate with key entities such as the Rwanda Forestry Authority, Rwanda Environmental Management Authority (a legal focal point for different international agreements for Rwanda), Conservation NGOs, the University of Rwanda, and the Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management. We aim to contribute to the more extensive knowledge ecosystem by incorporating the data into the Rwanda Biodiversity Information System (RBIS). This strategic alliance ensures that our research is disseminated widely and integrated into academic and policy frameworks. Furthermore, we recognise the pivotal role of the Ministry of Environment (MoE) in forest management, and we are committed to sharing our insights to support ongoing evaluations of plans and efforts for sustainable management of the Busaga forest. Through these concerted efforts, we aspire to foster a collaborative environment that catalyses positive change and contributes to the conservation and management of Busaga Forest and its threatened species.

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

Looking ahead, Nature Rwanda strategically directs its efforts toward a comprehensive assessment of the movement ecology and breeding success of the hooded vulture in Rwanda. This project will use loggers to yield invaluable insights into vulture ecological requirements and identify potential threats the species faces. That information will play a pivotal role in shaping targeted interventions for the sustainable conservation of this Critically Endangered species across the country.

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?

Yes, The Rufford Foundation was recognised for supporting this work. I and Nature Rwanda acknowledged the support of The Rufford Foundation along the project implementation processes, community education, and local meetings and the logo was used in the report production.

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

I supervised all the project implementation phases. Jean Claude Dusabimana coordinated the biodiversity and socioeconomic study from conception to the report's final version. Elie Sinayitutse designed the study and led the avian survey and reporting. Joseph Desire Dufitumukiza assisted the avian survey during data collection and species identification. Mapendo Mindje and Hendrick Hinkel led the amphibian and reptile survey. Christella Umulisa assisted in the amphibian and reptile survey. Emmanuel Munyaneza led the flora survey. Sandrine Uwase assisted Emmanuel, contributing to the data collection and identification of plant species. Methode Majyambere led the survey of mammals. Jeannette Uwitonze assisted in the data collection effort during the mammal survey. Christella Suavis Iradukunda led the survey of insects, and Fabrice Dufatanye assisted the data collection and identification of insects. Michel Ntakirutimana and Jeannette Iranzi headed socioeconomic and land tenure assessment efforts. Yvette Nishimwe supported community education and worked with Vivette Igihozo Iradukunda and Assoumpta Nduwaweyezu in data collection during the socioeconomic survey.

10. Any other comments?

We are very grateful to The Rufford Foundation for supporting this project.



One of the Active nests identified in Busaga Forest - Nature Rwanda.