

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. 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. 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	Udayan Borthakur
Project title	Survey and Conservation of Multiple Owl species in Brahmaputra Valley, Assam, India
RSG reference	20 th December 2007
Reporting period	October 2008 to April 2010
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	udayan.borthakur@gmail.com
Date of this report	30.06.2010

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objectives	Not Achieved	Partially Achieved	Fully Achieved	Comments
Survey of presence and distribution of multiple owl species in the Brahmaputra Valley, Assam		75%		We have surveyed multiple owl species presence and distribution in 10 districts of the Brahmaputra Valley, Assam following the methodologies mentioned in the project proposal. However, looking at the large geographic area of the project about 25% of the areas as targeted in the beginning could not be covered. During the reported period, we have surveyed 24 different sites of 10 districts, with a total of 74 permanent call playback stations repeated twice in a year time.
Questionnaire survey with local communities for supplementary data on species presence, nesting, roosting sites and evaluation of attitude and general knowledge about owls			100%	We could complete questionnaire survey in all the target areas as planned. We have also compared some of our questionnaire data with actual field survey data on owl species presence and distribution and have evaluated the reliability of guided and unguided questionnaire survey.
Creating awareness among the local communities about the benefits of owl conservation through holding meetings with different target groups		45%		We have organised meetings with some of the communities as part of this objective. However, we could not cover all the target groups as planned. Moreover, the educational materials developed are still in press. We could not distribute this educational and awareness material during the reporting period which we plan to do once the materials are in hand
Evaluation of the use of nest boxes as a tool for creating awareness among private agricultural landowners	Not achieved			We have started with placing about 10 nest boxes, but before any results are obtained, nest boxes were stolen from their place. We did not proceed further with this objective as survey and questionnaire objectives were felt as of greater importance and demanded greater effort

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

First difficulty arises during call playback survey for presence of owls. Call playback survey was carried out along with questionnaire survey in the first time. However, we felt the need of a repeat survey to ensure some of the presence and distribution data. Therefore, we have carried out a second repeat call playback survey which was not planned during project preparation. We have used some of our project leader per diem, educational material preparation costs and nest box construction costs for the extra costs. The travelling and camping expenditures were higher than expected even for the planned part of the survey.

The educational material preparation got delayed due to greater time demand for survey. However, we felt that obtaining the baseline data for presence and distribution of owls as well as evaluating local attitude towards owls are necessary prior to undertaking conservation actions. Therefore, we have delayed the educational material preparation part in order to carry out the survey in a satisfactory way.

The use of nest boxes totally failed in our first attempt due to all the boxes being stolen from their places. This is probably being stolen for use as firewood.

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

- i. We have obtained extensive information on the presence and distribution of 20 species of owls over a vast landscape of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. Some of the important information such as sympatric distribution of species and variance of species composition across ten broad habitat types surveyed are highlighted outcomes of this project.
- ii. Permanent call playback sites were marked with GPS and locality name which can be re-surveyed in subsequent years for evaluating population dynamics of multiple species of owls.
- iii. Attitude towards owls seemed to have varied across the study area. However, guided questionnaire (where we have shown field book and reference pictures of owl species and played calls) with the local communities seems to have given reliable idea about species presence in a particular area. Thus, guided questionnaire survey may be a reliable way of assessing the species presence in places where call playback is not possible.

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

We have undertaken questionnaire survey which involved the knowledge of local people in assessing the presence and population status of owl population in a particular area.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. We have trained one person to undertake survey on owls using call playback, direct search and questionnaire. We are looking forward to secure more funds so that this survey could be extended to other parts of northeast India and covering the protected areas as well.

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

We are analyzing our survey data which will be published in the form of a technical project report, with due acknowledgement to Rufford Small Grants as the sole funding agency. Moreover, we will also communicate scientific papers to peer reviewed journals.

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

RSG was used from October 2008 to April 2010. We have extended the project for another 7 months in order to complete the repeat call playback survey.

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
Equipment				
Binocular (2)	250	250	0	Two Nikon binoculars were purchased
GPS (1)	200	165	45	One Garmin e-Trex Vista GPS was purchased
Spotlight (2)	100	100	0	Two rechargeable spotlights were purchased
Headlamp (2)	100	65	45	Two Petzl headlamps were purchased
Recordable media player with repeat function (1)	150	175	25	One Sony recorder and one Sony record player with USB function were purchased
Megaphone (1)	30	50	20	One megaphone was purchased for call playback
Survey and monitoring, vehicle expenditure	1100	1,800	700	The vehicle expenditure exceeded by £ 700 due to rate hike than during project preparation and repeat survey
Per diem to team leader @ 4 £ per day (180 days)	620	540	80	The team leader per diem was reduced as he was partially supported by other projects (non-owl). The excess amount was spent for repeat survey
Field assistant (1) wages @ 2 £ per day (180 days)	360	360	0	The per diem of the 2nd member of the team was covered by this amount

Camping expenditure	400	770	370	Camping expenditure exceeded due to the repeat survey undertaken
Preparation of educational material, awareness programme	1100	500	600	We have prepared some leaflets for circulation. Some of the educational materials are in press, for which £500 has been spent. The excess amount was spent for repeat survey
Nest box construction (60 units)	350	125	225	£100 was spent on 10 nest box construction. The excess amount was spent for repeat survey
Report writing	240	100	140	Report writing expenditure was £100. rest of the amount is spent for survey expenditure
Total	5000	5,000	0	

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

- i. Survey of protected areas for owl species presence and distribution, as the reported project covered only unprotected areas.
- ii. Training volunteers to undertake yearly call playback and direct survey for long term monitoring of owl species in the landscape
- iii. Evaluation of resource availability and micro-climatic factors governing the presence and distribution of multiple owl species in the landscape
- iv. Extending this study to other areas of northeast India, where the information on species presence and distribution is considerably lacking.

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

Yes. We have used RSG logo in the awareness campaign leaflets, educational material (in press) and the final technical project report (in preparation).

11. Any other comments?

For appropriate conservation action of owls in an area, prior knowledge on presence and distribution is essential. Without this, a blindfold approach towards awareness or conservation may lead to failure of the overall goals. For this reason, we have concentrated more on the survey part (both call playback and questionnaire) rather than conservation-oriented actions as proposed initially. We are pleased to report here that our enhanced efforts on survey have given us new information on presence and distribution of multiple owl species in the study area.