

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. 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	Mr. Snehal Patel
Project title	Vulture Conservation Project, South Gujarat, India
RSG reference	43.06.09
Reporting period	
Amount of grant	£6,000
Your email address	Natureclubsurat81@gmail.com , info@natureclubsurat.org
Date of this report	01 March 2011

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
Provide diclofenac-free carcasses to Vultures			Fully achieved	It requires a regular watch and interaction with veterinary doctors and Rabaris (local cow herders).
Awareness Programs			Fully achieved	It's a continuous process.
Stabilize the Population			Fully achieved	
Protection of nesting/roosting sites		Partially achieved		

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

2.1 Unforeseen difficulties

The vulture feeding programme required us to hire a mini-tempo to transport the carcass to the feeding site. However, it became increasingly difficult to hire this, as the owners were unwilling to rent it out due to putrefying smell of the carcasses. The program would continue with a given owner for couple of days and then he would refuse to lend it out. Although, we would clean up the vehicle after disposal, the owners were not satisfied, as they used it for transport of sand, bricks and other construction material, as they believed there was some latent smell present.

The difficulty became apparent at the very start of the programme. We decided to purchase a sturdy locally made "chhakdo", which allowed the continuity of the programme. We hired a driver, who is a butcher, who would collect the carcass from cattle shelters and dump the carcass at the feeding site on a daily basis. **(Appendix -1)**

2.2 Nuisance of stray dogs

There has recently been an increased nuisance of stray dogs at the feeding site. As long as dogs are present near the carcass, the vultures will not approach the carcass. The stray dogs are chased away, but they are very persistent and we need to stay alert to be able to allow vultures to the feed.

The vultures of course, keep a distance between both the stray dogs and humans, which increases difficulties. A long term solution is creating a fenced feeding site. **(Appendix -2)**

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

3.1 Steady Vulture Population

The population of the vultures remained steady during the one year period. The observation is based on the visit of the vultures to our feeding site. A formal survey will be conducted in March 2011. The last formal survey for South Gujarat was conducted in May 2010. **(Appendix -3)**

The number of vultures visiting the feeding site was between 25 and 85. During breeding season (Jan-Feb), vultures visit in small batches of 25-30, with groups arriving periodically.

3.2 Increased Nesting Activity

One of the positive outcomes observed during the period was increased nesting activity in the area. This year, totally 22 nests were noted. This can be compared with only 9 nests in the corresponding period last year. Nesting in the Hajira region is primarily on Palm trees. **(Appendix-4)**

3.3 Eliminated diclofenac usage

According to reports, the primary contributor for the decline in vulture populations has been widespread usage of veterinary diclofenac for treatment of cattle. Since dead cattle constitutes the primary diet for the vultures, the usage of veterinary diclofenac needed to be addressed quickly.

While we ensure that carcasses we dump were not treated with diclofenac, it was equally important to ensure that diclofenac is not used in other places, because the vultures are likely to feed at other places as well.

As an outcome of continued awareness meetings with veterinary doctors and pharmacies, the usage of veterinary diclofenac has completely stopped. This is now substituted with an alternate drug meloxicam. Nature Club Surat conducted monthly meetings with veterinary doctors, also meeting individual doctors personally to persuade them to eliminate veterinary usage of diclofenac. We also would regularly check out medicine shops to verify that diclofenac is no longer sold. We distributed meloxicam, an alternative to diclofenac at subsidised rates to encourage adoption. The subsidy for meloxicam was availed from other sources.

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

4.1 One of the main tasks was involvement of local communities in the project. Most of the nesting sites of vultures are located in the Hajira area, and they would be occasionally being within village itself. A surprising observation is that the vultures prefer to nest close to human populations, even though there are more isolated spots available, with tall palms for nesting.

4.2 The organisation conducted several education programs covering all schools in the region. The educational programmes included audio visual presentations, detailed history of vulture populations and the role of vultures in the ecological cycle. As a part of the programme, students were taken on a field visit to show the vultures within their village perimeters. A positive outcome of this, was that the students would report any new nests, or if any sick or injured vulture is found. Four new nests were discovered in Junagam, as a consequence of this. The students also reported five sick vultures during the 1-year period. The vultures were treated at our rescue centre, four of these survived, one of these died. **(Appendix-5)**

4.3 To be able to provide dead cattle, required close interaction with “rabaris” or local cowherds, who have cattle sheds. The rabaris would notify our driver, if any of their cattle died, during a road accident or otherwise. Our driver would then pick up the dead cattle after verifying the history of death. On an average, we receive five to six calls per day, who was a sufficient number to be able to provide food on a daily basis.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The project being a conservation activity is a long-term tenure project which will easily span a decade or more. The organisation has been able to create a setup to be able to provide diclofenac-free food in Hajira area for the vultures. The population of the vultures has held steady during the observation period. We have also been able to eliminate the veterinary usage of diclofenac.

The awareness programmes need to continue and the activity expanded to cover more areas. The involvement of the local communities has been significant, as the organisation also works with them on other conservation and education projects.

The vulture feeding programme needs to continue, to ensure that the population of vulture remains steady and increases. This year, the nests have increased, so the expectations are high that the existing population may increase over the year.

One of the main highlights of the difficulties faced has been disturbance of stray dogs at the feeding site. This, we expect to eliminate by creating a chain linked fence to protect the feeding site. The creation of fence will require support in form of grants and donations.

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

Our club volunteers participate in workshops and highlight the result of this work. We have published literature in local language highlighting this conservation aspect. A rally is planned in May 2011, which will cover 20 districts of Gujarat. The programme will share results with local grassroots organisations, to enable them to setup similar programmes in their areas.

The results of the programme have been submitted to several magazines, related to environment, in form of articles, some of which have been published. Others are expected to be published in due course of time.

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

The timescale of any conservation project is fairly long. The project was initiated in year 2004. RSG was used for the period Jan 2010 to Dec 2010. We expect the project to continue for another 10 years.

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
Salaries		£ 1,332/-	£ 1,332/-		
Transport expense		£ 3,060/-	£ 3,132/-	-£ 72/-	348 trips x £ 9 = 3,132/-
Awareness Materials	Booklet	£ 990/-	£ 985/-	£ 5/-	
	Posters	£ 200/-	£ 193/-	£ 7/-	
Awareness Programs		£ 68/-	£ 68/-		
Meeting Expenses		£ 24/-	£ 24/-		
Office Expenses		£ 50/-	£ 48/-	£ 2/-	
Vehicle Maintenance		£ 300/-	£ 318/-	-£ 18/-	
Total		£ 6,024/-	£ 6,100/-	-£ 76/-	

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

9.1 Fenced feeding site: As we have earlier mentioned about the nuisance of stray dogs at feeding site, we are planning to fence the site with 2800 running ft chain link net and for these new steps we require grant.

9.2 Reimbursement: In South Gujarat, white-rumped Vulture prefers palm trees mostly for their roosting/nesting and its excreta damaged the crop of the field. If such farmers reimbursed for their damage it will be helpful to the project. We are also planning to felicitate locals as well as the school students who are helping us in Vulture Conservation.

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?

We have used RSGF logo in the school presentations.



Vulture Conservation Project

Vulture Survey 29-30 May 2010

➤ Surat District

Nature Club Surat had surveyed in 7 villages which includes Hazira, Junagam, Suvali, Rajgari, Damka, Vasva and Bhatlai villages of Surat district, where Vultures are exist.

In this area White-rumped Vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*) uses palm trees for their nesting and roosting where as Long-billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*) and Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*) uses it for their roosting.

During our survey on 29-30 May 2010, we have found following figures..

Place	Species	Vulture Activity		Juvenile	Total
		Feeding site	Roosting		
Hazira Area (includes 7 Villages)	White-rumped Vulture	69	7	(15)	76
	Long-billed Vulture	5	-	-	5
	Eurasian Griffon Vulture	2	-	-	2
Total		76	7	(15)	83

THREATFULL ACTIVITIES FOUND IN THESE AREAS -

- 50% population of the total vultures are found in Hazira Village, very next to high scale industries. The expansion of ESSAR Company will become the highest thread for Vultures. As per our record, in 2007, where we spotted 3 nests of vultures, are destroyed and now that land is under ESSAR possession. The way this company is expanding, within 3 years it will cover most of the area where vultures are exists and are sustain too.
- Another thread is by local activity, as they chopped palm leaves for making the roof, for fuel, for fence and so that vulture loses the place for their nesting and roosting.
- In this area Nature Club Surat, with the help of Hazira LNG Private Limited and Forest department , has started VULTURE FEEDING SITE, where we provides them 'Diclofenac free' food and daily 40-80 vultures feed on it. Stray dogs are the biggest threat for vulture as well as for their food. If the area will be covered by chainlinked fence of 800 running meters, will keep away dogs.

➤ Dang District

Vulture population was found in the boundary of The Dangs and Maharashtra. Nature Club Surat's volunteers have recorded Long-billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*) between the southern parts of Saputara to northern area of Nakatia Hanvat. To get the actual number of the vulture, the easiest way we found is to dump the carcasses at proper place where vulture could land to feed and Nature Club Surat did so during the Vulture Survey May- 2010. We tow the carcasses in the trailer from Surat to Danag.

During our survey on 29-30 May 2010, we have found following figures..

Place	Species	Vulture Activity		Juvenile	Total
		On Feed	Flying		
Don Village, Piplaidevi Range, Forest Land	Long-billed Vulture (<i>Gyps indicus</i>)	23	29	(4 Juv)	52
Malegaon Village, Saputara, Farm Land	Long-billed Vulture (<i>Gyps indicus</i>)	-	2	-	2
Total		23	31	(4 Juv)	54

We have recorded total 54 numbers of Long-billed Vultures in the Dang region. Comparing to the Vulture Survey- 2007, number of vultures are increased by 11 in the Dang region.

Generally, in the Dang, people dumped their dead cattle in the nearer valley and these areas are out of reach to the vulture to feed on. If, make aware the locals of these area for where and how to dump their cattle, we can surely save these vultures in their Natural Habitat.