

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	Qamar Zaman
Project title	Preliminary assessment of population status, distribution and conservation of giant woolly flying squirrel (<i>Eupetaurus cinereus</i>) through education awareness in Upper Neelum Valley Azad Jammu Kashmir Pakistan
RSG reference	9923-1
Reporting period	June 2011 - May 2012
Amount of grant	£5980
Your email address	qamarzoologist@yahoo.com
Date of this report	9 th June 2012

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
Capacity building of wildlife field staff			✓	According to feedback in field the training got appreciation and excellent mark.
Workshop and seminar			✓	Wildlife field staff, school students and general community became will aware about the importance of woolly flying squirrel and high mountain ecosystem of the area
Students involvement			✓	
Field trip			✓	
Awareness material			✓	
Research			✓	A research article on Field findings titled "New distribution record of woolly flying squirrel in upper Neelum valley Azad Jammu Kashmir-Pakistan" is submitted to <i>Pakistan Journal of Zoology</i> which has gone through review process and will be soon available as online research article.
Baseline Data			✓	Baseline data about the important wildlife species has been compiled and shared with the Azad Kashmir Wildlife Department for its future conservation planning.

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

Due to recent climatic changes this area faced unpredictable snowfall and thunderstorms during summer, these inhospitable weather conditions hinder some field activities like students field trips and field research activities. The team faced much difficulty in the field and much time was spending in the field than the scheduled time.

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

1. First ever sighting record of woolly flying squirrel was made through long and exhausting efforts. Photographs and video were made and shared with wildlife experts, Azad Jammu Kashmir University and wildlife department. The presences of this world rarest mammal in the area poses positive effects on the masses about the importance of their area as a unique biodiversity hotspot. They also realise the importance of this area as global priority for conservation. A significant change was developed in the relevant authorities on the conservation planning of the area to conserve snow leopard, Himalayan ibex, Himalayan musk deer, brown bear and Asiatic black bear along with its important flora.

2. Well trained and educated wildlife field staff. Eighteen members of field Staff of Wildlife Department from upper Neelum region has been aware about the importance of biodiversity of high mountain areas and well trained on law enforcement policies, community participation approaches and population census techniques about four important wildlife species in the area. Two of them have been involved in the field surveys and they were practically trained in the survey's techniques. Now they are able to design the data sheets and collect the relevant data from their field observations.
3. Community dedication about conservation of natural resources is the third main success. They are more active and are organised to conserve the natural resources of the area along woolly flying squirrel. Many of the community activists join the local conservation NGO "Breath Foundation" which is on the way to organise the local community for natural resource conservation.

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

Community showed positive response during the project implementation period, some community members were also involved during the surveys which also help them to understand the high mountain habitat and emerging threats to the important wildlife species along with woolly flying squirrel. The Breath Foundation which is a local conservation NGO shows interest in the conservation and protection of woolly flying squirrel after the completion of the project. The said NGO got capacity building trainings to generate their human resource for future conservation activities.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

On the basis of secondary data about the presence of the species Shounthar valley and kail area was selected for the project activities. This valley is corridor link between Musk Deer National Park which is situated on south-eastern side and Ghamot National Park situated toward north-east. The findings of field research activities prove the presence of woolly flying squirrel in targeted area. The upper reaches of Musk Deer National Park also represent steep rocks and cliffs of high alpine zones, characterised by cold desert. In near future this protected area has to be explored about its status and conservation measures will be started.

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

Results will be shared with major stakeholders like national universities, Azad Jammu Kashmir wildlife department and national conservation NGOs in the form of a detail final report. The research article will be shared to the national as well as international conservation organisations and wildlife biologists.

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

Project period was June 2011 –May 2012

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
Traveling	200	300	+100	Due to uncertain increase in the prices of petrol and diesel, hiring of vehicles also shot up which effected the planned budget
Field allowances to principal Investigator	960	960		
Local assistant	960	1000	+40	Due to uncertain weather conditions scheduled field activities were prolonged which affect the budget limit
Allowance to research associates	120	120		
Allowance to wildlife staff	216	216		
Essay writing, drawing, speech competition and prizes to winning students	450	540		
Field trip of school children	500	600	+100	Uncertain whether hindered the field trip schedule. Reorganising the activity affect the budget limit
Nature club	300	300		
Poster and brochure publication	600	600		
Workshops	640	600		
Stationery and supplies, communication and report	250	250		
Equipment	800	800		
TOTAL	5980	6220	+240	

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

Woolly flying squirrel (*Eupetaurus cinereus*) is among the lesser known mammals in the world, listed as endangered at national level and internationally. Woolly flying squirrel remained mysterious to the international scientific community until late 20th century. Subsequently, woolly flying squirrel was not recorded for over a century in Pakistan, until it was reported in Northern Areas of Pakistan in 1994. Woolly flying squirrel is considered endangered in Pakistan by the national red list assessment. Our present attempt is ever first to look for woolly flying squirrel in Neelum Valley of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Shounthar valley is one of the sub-valleys of Neelum valley, branching off from Kel and ending at Shounthar Pass. Shounthar valley is surrounded by district Chilas and Ghamot National Park (GNP) from north-western side, Astor and Deosai National Park on north-eastern and Musk Deer National Park (MDNP) on south-eastern side. This is much remote and inaccessible area

of the state. Topographically, this area constitutes lofty mountains with broken outcrops, gorges, glaciers, sub-valleys, steep and rolling slopes of alpine pastures. The area is an excellent hotspot for Himalayan biodiversity and hosts many endangered species like woolly flying squirrel, snow leopard, brown bear and Himalayan musk deer. Woolly flying squirrel needs special attention for the protection and conservation for its existing population in Azad Jammu and Kashmir-Pakistan. Scientific information on its presence/absence, status and conservation issues in Azad Jammu and Kashmir-Pakistan are very necessary to develop its long-term future conservation strategy plan. This will ensure the conservation of this endangered species.

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?

RSGF logo was highlighted in all posters, banners and material which have been used for RSG project.

11. Any other comments?

As results show that the remaining population of Woolly Flying Squirrel is declining rapidly due to rapid habitat degradation, and if this decline continues at the same rate woolly flying squirrel will be extinct from this area practically. So, it is important to conserve its population through regular conservation measures.