

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Devcharan Jathanna, Centre for Wildlife Studies
Project Title:	Ecology and conservation of small carnivores in the Western Ghats
Date of Report:	13 th January 2014
Report Author and Contact Information	Mr. Devcharan Jathanna

CEPF Region: Western Ghats (Mysore-Nilgiri Corridor)

Strategic Direction:

CEPF Strategic Direction 2 - Improve the conservation of globally threatened species through systematic conservation planning and action.

Grant Amount: \$ 17,260.00

Project Dates: 1st October 2009 to 31st August 2013

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):

Organisation: Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore

Personnel: Dr. K. Ullas Karanth (Project advisor and Director, CWS); Dr. Ajith Kumar (Project co-advisor)

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.

The main contributions of the project are towards

Strategic Direction 2 (Improve the conservation of globally threatened species through systematic conservation planning and action), specifically Investment Priority 2.1 (Monitor and assess the conservation status of globally threatened species with an emphasis on lesser-known organisms such as reptiles and fish). This was carried out partly during the preliminary surveys in different areas of the Western Ghats, which generated critical information on the occurrence and status of the study species (Nilgiri marten *Martes gwatkinsii* IUCN status VU; brown mongoose *Herpestes fuscus* VU; stripe-necked mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis* LC, of which the first two are listed in the species outcomes by Bawa et al. (2007; Appendix 1)) as well as other wildlife (other carnivores, large herbivores, primates, Indian giant and flying squirrels. In addition to these large-scale surveys, site-based work in and around Talacauvery (in CEPF priority site outcome 117, and straddling Padinalknad RF, CEPF critical link no. 18 within the Malnad-Kodagu corridor) using camera traps and secondary information from local communities also generated information on status, threats and natural history information on the study species and other wildlife. During the project I also carried out some preliminary work towards later, in-depth field research such as collecting DNA samples from museum specimens, learning laboratory genetic techniques, and designing hair snare surveys in the field towards estimating population-level parameters. The site-based work in and around Talacauvery as well as the engagement with local communities and the state forest department is being continued currently.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project against the expected results detailed in the approved proposal.

Of the expected results detailed in the approved proposal, the project has generated much information on the occurrence, status and current threats faced by the three study species as well as other wildlife (see Table 2 in Appendix 1). During this time the PI has also been able to engage extensively (see map 1 and table 1 in Appendix 1) with local communities and forest department staff, so that sightings of the study species are now observed with some interest and usually reported to the PI. Even within the forest department staff, there is a greatly increased awareness of the study species, with the Chief Conservator of Forests, Kodagu Circle issuing a directive (to all forest guards) to report all sightings of particularly the Nilgiri marten to the DCF's office, in addition to compiling information from local planters.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected:

None (this is a conservation-oriented applied research project, not a conservation implementation project, so actual protection of habitat was outside the scope of this project)

Species Conserved:

Unable to assess (I would say that the engagement with the local communities and the increased awareness has certainly benefited the conservation of the study species as well as other wildlife; however, it is impossible to tangibly measure the contributions this project has made towards species' conservation).

Corridors Created:

None

Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

Due to extremely long delays in obtaining permits for radio-telemetry studies from the forest department and customs clearance for the radio-telemetry equipment, radio-telemetry fieldwork could only be started after the end of the grant period. This has delayed the contributions this project would have made towards species recovery and management plans (IP 2.2), since these inputs should ideally be based on reliable field data. While I was able to meet some of the objectives despite these delays and restrictions, some of the objectives must necessarily follow the intensive radio-telemetry study.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

The amount of interest the study species, especially the Nilgiri marten, have generated within the forest department staff was an unexpected, but welcome surprise. Similarly, the enthusiasm shown by local planters and bee-keepers in helping the project was also a pleasant surprise, especially given the fact that many of them suffer from martens raiding bee boxes. The idea that someone is taking a lot of trouble to study what was essentially considered a pest species has certainly altered local community perceptions about martens, so that local bee-keepers now enthusiastically pass on information about sightings and bee-box raids to me (instead of just shooting them, as they would have done earlier). On the flip side, the species appears to occur at much lower densities than I had expected, and I was unable to either sight the species or obtain a camera trap capture during the grant period.

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that

would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

1. Do not underestimate the potential delays in obtaining permits when planning to do intensive field research (e.g. radio-telemetry).
2. However, do not underestimate the importance of perseverance in finally obtaining permits that initially seem impossible.
3. Have a back-up plan and back-up activities to carry out when waiting for the above permits.
4. When dealing with low density, cryptic species, obtaining data, or even sightings may prove to be a formidable challenge, and this should be considered during project planning and design. Although (carefully screened!) secondary information from local communities can still provide some information, for various reasons such information is not as useful as direct sightings or camera trap captures when assessing distribution patterns and its drivers. However, the lack of such detections forced me to rely largely on secondary information to assess species occurrences and status (see Appendix 1).

Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

1. In any work that requires close engagement with local communities and lower-level forest department staff, it is important to engage as a peer, rather than talking down to them as a 'knowledgeable expert'. This makes all the difference in determining whether you receive help and useful information, or not.
2. However, while respecting knowledge systems other than the 'scientific', it is important not to blindly accept all information received from local communities, and recognize that there may be intentional (due to economic, social, cultural or political reasons) or unintentional (due to strong local lore, superstition, mis-identification, preconceptions) misinformation.
3. On-ground field presence is very important and plays an important role in gaining the acceptance and trust of forest department staff as well as local communities.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

None

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Mohamed Bin Zayed SCF (2011)	A	USD 5,000	Funds for genetic work for fecal, blood and hair samples of small carnivores
Govt. of Karnataka, SECEM- CWS (2011)	A	INR 2,34,000	PI scholarship from Oct 2011 to Jan 2012; July 2012-May 2013
Zoo Heidelberg (2013)	A	EUR 1,500	Funds for remaining equipment purchases

			(beyond CEPF funds) and for initial fieldwork
NGS/Waite grant (2013)	B	USD 12,000	Funds for radio-telemetry study from October 2013.

***Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:**

- A** Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)
- B** Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)
- C** Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)

Sustainability/Replicability

Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.

As an applied research project, all activities are fully replicable by anyone wishing to carry out research on the conservation and basic biology of poorly known species, especially since methods used (secondary information surveys, camera trap surveys, scat surveys, radio-telemetry) are all standard methods.

The CEPF-supported research is being continued now in the form of a radio-telemetry study of the three study species, from October 2013 onward. The preliminary genetic sample collection and training carried out during the grant period will also be continued, using blood samples collected during the live capture and radio-collaring.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

None

Safeguard Policy Assessment

Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.

Not applicable.

Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets

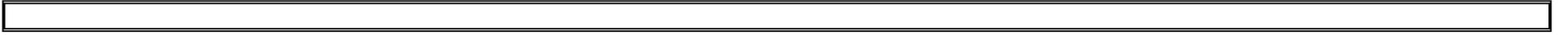
(Enter Grant Term)

Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant.
Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.

Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual	Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF	Describe the principal results achieved from 1 st October 2009 to 31 st August 2013. (Attach annexes if necessary)

		period.	support to date.	
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.	No			Please also include name of the protected area(s). If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?	No			Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.	No			

If you answered yes to question 5, please complete the following table.



Additional Comments/Recommendations

Although the extremely long delays in obtaining research permits and the severe restrictions imposed on the project initially made for a frustrating experience, the CEPF RIT at ATREE have been extremely supportive through the entire (long) process, and I wish to thank all the team members for their help, support and encouragement.

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

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List of appendices:

Appendix 1: Technical Report