

## The Rufford Foundation

### Final Report

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Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

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Grant Recipient Details	
<b>Your name</b>	Jo Marie V. Acebes
<b>Project title</b>	Conservation of a humpback whale winter breeding ground in northern Luzon, Philippines through research, education, and local capacity building.
<b>RSG reference</b>	15216-B
<b>Reporting period</b>	May 2014 to June 2015
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£12,000
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:jomacebes@yahoo.com">jomacebes@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	29 June 2015

**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
<p>To continue to monitor the population of humpback whales breeding in the Babuyan Islands in order to expand the Philippine humpback fluke catalogue.</p>		10%	90%	<p>Cetacean surveys, photographic-identification study and sound recordings were conducted for two seasons, from April to May 2014 and March to May 2015, around Camiguin Island.</p> <p>A survey and photo-ID study was conducted in April 2014 off Calayan Island.</p> <p>The land-based monitoring survey was conducted in April 2014 off Pamoctan Island in Camiguin.</p> <p>Biopsy sampling was conducted in May 2015 with one sample collected.</p> <p>In 2014, a total of 24 humpback whales were photo-identified. Nine were new and 15 were re-sights from previous years. In 2015, there were 23 newly photo-identified whales out of a total of 53 photo-identified whales for the season.</p> <p>There are now 244 humpback whales in the fluke photo-ID catalogue of the Philippines. 165 hours of humpback sound recordings were sent to collaborators from Whale Trust for analysis.</p> <p>In both seasons 2014 and 2015, seven other cetacean species sighted. Species sighted were Fraser's dolphins, pantropical spotted dolphins, rough-toothed dolphins, false killer whales, dwarf sperm whale, pygmy killer whales, bottlenose dolphins and short-finned pilot whales.</p>
<p>To initiate a photo-identification study on rough-toothed dolphins (<i>Steno bredanensis</i>).</p>			100%	<p>Photo-ID study was conducted on rough-toothed dolphins (<i>Steno bredanensis</i>) off Camiguin Island on April 2014 and March to April 2015.</p> <p>We have established the first dorsal fin photo-ID catalogue for this species in</p>

				<p>Southeast Asia. There are 56 individual dolphins photo-identified to date.</p>
<p>To provide technical and logistical support for the establishment and strengthening of the locally-managed Marine Protected and Humpback Whale Conservation Area.</p>			100%	<p>The Responsible Marine Life Tourism Practices training-workshop had 20 participants. Participants shared their knowledge and ideas on potential tourism sites in Camiguin and were taught how to conduct responsible dolphin and whale watching.</p> <p>The Marine Mammal Stranding Response Training had 19 participants. It was organised to increase the knowledge and to develop skills of potential coastal managers in responding to marine mammal strandings, and to initiate establishment of a Camiguin Island stranding network.</p> <p>An environmental law enforcement training was conducted in Camiguin Island on June 2015. Members of the Balatubat Fisherfolk Association, officials from two barangays (villages) and community law enforcers including the Coast Guard participated in the training and learned about Philippine environmental laws and how to enforce them.</p> <p>Assisted in the delineation and mapping of zones in the proposed marine sanctuary in Camiguin.</p> <p>Two mooring buoys were installed off Pamoctan Island in Camiguin.</p>
<p>To extend the environmental education outreach to all schools in the Babuyan Islands group and the coastal municipalities of Cagayan.</p>			95%	<p>Environmental outreach campaign was conducted in Camiguin Island in 2014 and 2015.</p> <p>In 2014, environmental talks were conducted for 260 students in Camiguin Elementary School, while in 2015 we reached 100 students in Grades 5 and 6 from Camiguin Elementary school and 255 students in Grades 7 and 8 from Calayan High School Annex and Lyceum High School.</p> <p>The Camiguin Youth Ecological Camp (CYEC) was held last 27th-29th July 2014 at Camiguin Island. 29 high school students</p>

			<p>from the Island participated.</p> <p>An environmental outreach campaign was conducted in four coastal municipalities in 2014. Our educational campaign: "Cause to Coast 2014" reached 1,770 students from Grades 7 to 12 in 12 schools in the municipalities of Pagudpud, Claveria, Aparri and Sta. Ana.</p> <p>Environmental outreach campaign was not conducted in Calayan Island.</p> <p>We now have a total of 2,592 likes and a reach of 6,136 a week in Facebook.</p> <p>100 t-shirts were produced and distributed to volunteers and local stakeholders.</p> <p>100 posters produced and distributed to schools, government offices and other local stakeholders.</p> <p>Selected photographs of cetaceans that occur in the waters of the Babuyan Islands were printed and framed. These are for display at the information centre that the Balatubat Fisherfolk association is building.</p> <p>50 flyers were printed and distributed to university students and to the general public during exhibits at the Ateneo de Manila University and R.O.X. Outdoor festival 2015.</p>
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**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).**

Our collaborators from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Integrated Coastal Resources Management Project (DENR-ICRMP) and Cagayan State University (CSU) were not able to deliver their counterparts for the project. These were in the form of providing necessary equipment for the survey, namely a digital SLR camera with 300mm lens, digital theodolite, digital sound recorder, hydrophone and a handheld GPS unit. This hampered our survey effort substantially during the 2014 and 2015 seasons. In the 2014 season, we were not able to initiate the land-based survey until the latter part of the season because we did not have a theodolite. Similarly, we were not able to deploy a survey team to Calayan Island until April 2014. Lacking the necessary equipment (digital SLR, sound recorder, hydrophone and GPS) for a second team to conduct a simultaneous survey in the 2015 season, we had to cancel the survey in Calayan and Fuga Islands during the 2015 season.

Our digital sound recorder and hydrophone broke down at the beginning of the 2014 season. DENR-ICRMP and CSU were supposed to provide new units but they did not deliver a sound recorder until the latter part of season 2014. They were not able to deliver a hydrophone. Fortunately, however, our collaborator from the USA, Whale Trust donated a hydrophone and a digital sound recorder in time for the 2015 season. However, there was a delay in getting the sound recorder to the field site. It only arrived in mid-March 2015. On April 2015, the digital sound recorder broke down and could no longer be replaced in time.

By February 2015, CSU was able to procure a digital theodolite but for administrative and logistical reasons were not able to lend the unit to us. The same was true for the digital SLR camera, digital sound recorder and GPS from DENR-ICRMP.

Our project laptop also broke down in 2014. We sent it for repair and we were able to get it back by March 2015. However, it broke down again in the middle of the survey hence, we had to purchase a new one.

There were delays in obtaining a permit from the local government unit of Calayan to collect biopsy samples from humpback whales. The municipal mayor was seldom at his office hence, we could not get a signed prior informed consent from him. A prior informed consent is necessary to obtain a tissue sample collection permit from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) – National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI). We were only able to embark on the biopsy sampling in May 2015, the tail-end of the season after being granted a special permission by the BFAR and NFRDI. By this time, there were only a few whales left in the area.

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

This project has established the first humpback whale fluke photo-identification catalogue in the Philippines. We have 244 whales in the catalogue to date, indicating a minimum number of animals migrating to the Babuyan Islands to breed. With 23 new individuals and 30 resights during the 2015 season and an average of 15 new whales identified every season for the past three seasons (2013-2015), this indicates that there are more whales utilising these waters as a wintering ground than we are seeing. In the 2015 season, we were able to document the occurrence of humpback whales until 15th May 2015. This is so far the latest humpback whales have been documented in the area.

We were able to record 165 hours of humpback whale songs which we will send to Whale Trust for analysis. The results of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between the different stocks of humpback whales and the entire western North Pacific population. In the same way, the results of our photo-ID study which includes matching with the Japan and Russian humpback whale catalogues will contribute to unlocking the mystery of the “missing breeding ground” of the western North Pacific.

Furthermore, this project established the first dorsal fin photo-ID catalogue for rough-

toothed dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*) in the country and in Southeast Asia. This is a significant contribution to the knowledge on cetaceans in the region and will be a platform for further scientific investigations on a little-known species.

The technical and logistical support as well as capacity-building initiatives of the project provided the necessary assistance to the local communities in order for them to manage their proposed Marine Protected Area. We believe that in empowering the locals, they will have a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility for this proposed marine protected area. The training on marine environmental laws will enable them to protect their proposed marine protected area and natural resources. The workshop on marine life tour guiding and the training on marine mammal stranding response not only increased their appreciation of the rich biodiversity around them but it also presented sustainable and environment-friendly livelihood options.

The enhanced environmental education campaign allowed us to reach a wider audience within the northern Luzon region and in the country, as well internationally. This was clearly evident in the higher number of volunteer applicants from within the country and overseas and the greater response in the social media.

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

The members of the Balatubat fisherfolk association were leading the work on the delineation of the proposed marine protected area. They also led the construction and installation of the mooring buoys.

A group of women from the village of Balatubat were enthusiastic about participating in a supplemental livelihood training that we organised in partnership with Conservation Sew Mates. This 2-day training on sewing small humpback whale plush toys was aimed to create a small start-up supplemental livelihood project for women. Thirty women participated and they were able to produce 100 toys in just 2 days. These toys were sold to volunteers and other visitors to the island. The women directly benefitted from this project because for each toy they sew and sell, they earned fifty pesos.

Members of the community who participated in the trainings such as the environmental law enforcement training benefitted because they now have a better understanding of the laws pertaining to the environment such as the Wildlife Act and the Philippine Fisheries Code. They also have a better understanding of the process of enforcement, from apprehension to filing a case.

#### **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes. This project was envisioned as a long-term project. I intend to apply for a completion grant for the 2016 season. I am also aiming to seek other funding in order to pursue the

long-term goal of the project which is to establish a humpback whale marine sanctuary in the Babuyan Islands.

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

The results of the project are being shared to the public through the BALYENA.ORG website ([www.balyena.org.ph](http://www.balyena.org.ph)) and Facebook page. We have been posting updates on the project regularly. The poster produced by the project will also disseminate information on the basic biology and ecology of humpback whales. These posters will be distributed to schools in northern Luzon and Manila, as well as to government offices.

The results of the research will be presented formally through presentations in scientific conferences. I am presenting a paper at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Association of Tropical Biology and Conservation to be held at Hawaii on July 2015. I have submitted an abstract to the 21<sup>st</sup> conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals to be held on December 2015 at San Francisco, USA. I am also submitting an abstract to the Philippine Association of Marine Science to be held at General Santos City, Philippines on October 2015.

We will also submit a copy of the project report to the Local Government Unit of Calayan, the BFAR and DENR.

**7. Timescale: Over what period was The Rufford Foundation grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?**

The grant was used from May 2014 until June 2015. Some expenses from activities conducted a few months prior to the receipt of the grant were also covered. This is 1 month short of the anticipated length of the project. The proposed time frame for the project was May 2014 to July 2015.

**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
Boat hire and fuel for survey	4,314	2,425.27	1,888.73	Boat surveys were not conducted in two sites. The actual survey days were shorter because of unfavourable weather conditions.
Transportation to and from field site	457	775.90	(318.90)	Additional sites visited for educational outreach and fare increases on land and

				air transportation.
Food and accommodation for researchers on field	3,192	3,328.95	(136.95)	Costs of unanticipated meetings.
Training-workshop costs (food, supplies, transport, accommodation)	1,064	993.97	70.03	Number of participants was a little less than expected.
Education outreach costs and communications	792	1,392.74	(600.74)	Costs for accommodation in the sites were higher than anticipated. More schools were visited.
Field supplies and equipment ( GPS, LCD projector, batteries, binders)	1,692	2,422.95	(730.95)	Breakdown of equipment necessitated purchasing a replacement. Shipping/transport costs and duties and taxes are included here.
Web and email hosting	150	159.94	(9.94)	Needed additional data storage.
Print educational materials (posters, fact sheets and t-shirts)	339	571.43	(232.43)	Professional fee for designer for the poster which was not included in the budget.
<b>Total</b>	12,000	<b>12,071.16</b>	(71.16)	

*The exchange rate used is 70 Philippine Pesos to 1 GBP. The discrepancy in the actual expenditure from the budgeted amount was greatest in the fuel and boat rental because as mentioned in the previous section, two sites (Calayan and Fuga Islands) were not surveyed because of the lack of available equipment for a second team. There was also the need to purchase new equipment to replace those which broke down. The expenses for the educational outreach, communications and transportation were also higher than expected because of higher cost of accommodation in certain sites (i.e. Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte) and because of additional schools visited.*

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

The important next steps are three-fold, first is to expand the survey area and increase the survey effort around the Babuyan Islands. This increase in effort should include conducting photo-ID, sound recordings and biopsy sampling around the three main islands, Calayan, Camiguin and Fuga Islands. It is also highly recommended to extend the survey effort to cover a considerable period of the season, i.e. from February to May.

The biopsy sampling effort should also be increased to aim for obtaining as many tissue samples as possible. These samples should then be analysed and compared with the North Pacific humpback whale population database.

Matching with the humpback whale fluke catalogue of Japan (Okinawa and Ogasawara) must be initiated and sustained. The same efforts must be conducted with the Russian catalogue. Secondly, the project should continue to provide technical support to the local communities in their efforts to establish the Marine Protected and Humpback Whale Conservation Area in Camiguin Island. This should include revising the proposed marine protected area plan, *barangay* (village) ordinance and municipal ordinance. Community consultations should be refined to deepen the understanding of the people on the need for conserving the marine ecosystem and to garner further support for the establishment of the marine protected area.

Lastly, the educational outreach programme must be sustained in the schools covered by this grant. It should be expanded to include a programme designed for college students, targeting specifically the Cagayan State University (CSU).

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

Yes. The Rufford Foundation logo was used in the t-shirts produced by the project. It was also used in the posters and fact sheets produced by the project.