

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	Tatiana Sviridova
Project title	Conservation of waders in the agricultural landscapes (rare bird species and rehabilitation of agriculture)
RSG reference	11667-1
Reporting period	May 2012-December 2012
Amount of grant	£5992
Your email address	t-sviridova@yandex.ru
Date of this report	31 December 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
Gathering of up-to-date information on wader distribution and plans of further agricultural rehabilitation in the area				
Purchase of equipment.			X	Telescope/tripod and GPSMap-receiver purchased.
Field studies of waders during breeding season.		X		Breeding localities of three rare wader species and suitable for them habitats were planned to be mapped within 300 km ² of farmland. In 2012, this was fully done for two globally declining and threatened species (black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> and Eurasian curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>). In the case of the great snipe <i>Gallinago media</i> we were able to survey about 65-70% of potential breeding sites in 2012 because of poor weather conditions and the bird's cryptic behaviour. In addition, data on breeding localities of the common redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> and marsh sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i> (Red Data List of the Moscow Region) were collected. <i>See more comments in item 2 of current report below.</i>
Field studies of waders during migration.			X	Data on farmland use by migrating waders were collected for the entire area.
Positioning of newly ploughed (in 2010-2012) fields.			X	Current data (2012 situation) were obtained for the entire target area using satellite imagery and field mapping.
Data collection on perspectives of agricultural development in the target area.		X		It was planned to obtain plans of further agricultural rehabilitation from all land-users within the target agricultural area (300 km ²). However, it turned out that even official governmental databases still miss full information and contacts of some landusers. Thus, it was not possible to contact approximately to 25-30% of landusers. <i>See more comments in item 2 of current report below.</i>
Analysis of dynamics of wader breeding numbers during the last			X	Done for breeding waders on the agricultural part of the Homeland of the Crane Reserve (50 km ²); separate analysis was undertaken for 10%

5 years in relation to habitat conditions on the monitoring plot.				of newly ploughed lands within this reserve. The total number of rare (curlew, black-tailed godwit, common redshank, marsh sandpiper) and common (lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) waders is still stable in the reserve. However, all wader nests on new potato fields were destroyed in the course of ploughing, after which only half of the pairs of lapwings (n=98) laid replacement clutches. All pairs of rare waders (n=13) on potato fields failed.
Developing GIS database and recommendations for long-term meadow's wader conservation				
Developing GIS database.			X	GIS database with data on wader distribution and agricultural rehabilitation was developed for the entire target farmland area.
Hotspot actions. Negotiations with landusers on the problem of meadow conservation.			X	Four hotspots (areas where ploughing represented the largest threat to waders at the moment) were identified during field work. Preliminary agreements were achieved in 2012 with all four land users on necessary measures to decrease total area of ploughed meadows or recultivate grasslands on parts of their lands. Two of the agreements were enforced in 2012, and another two are planned to be enforced in 2013. Most other land users of farmlands were informed in the course of personal negotiations about needs of conservation of rare meadow waders in the Homeland of the Crane area.
<i>Practical experiments for wader conservation.</i>	X			<i>This activity was not originally planned in the project framework, but we made two attempts of fencing nests of Eurasian oystercatchers (http://www.craneland.ru/?p=3558) and Eurasian curlews on ploughed fields. Unfortunately both nests failed due to a high number of avian predators attracted by working machinery.</i>
<i>Public campaign against building country houses on the farmlands.</i>		X		<i>This activity was not originally planned in the project framework, however, a new threat to waders has appeared in the period of the project implementation, when vast areas of agricultural lands became a subject of reclamation for building country houses for Moscow residents. Thus, an urgent campaign was launched in 2012 by the project team. Over 10 official letters to local and regional agencies and organisations related to the problem and to the Governor of the Moscow region were prepared by the</i>

				project leader and team aiming to prevent this dangerous development.
Promulgating conservation measures among people from local communities				
Publication of educational booklet.			X	Educational booklet on the problem of conservation of meadow waders and practical ways for achieving this task was published (Appendix 1). A number of booklet copies were already distributed among land users and attendants to the annual Crane Festival carried out by the TAPNA in 2012. Booklets will be used for conservational and educational purposes in 2013.
Web-sites, mass media, etc.			X	Information about the project, problems of conservation of meadows for rare waders and other grassland birds and articles on extreme danger of building country houses both to birds and to sustainable development of agriculture in the area were published and presented by the project leader, TAPNA Director and the team volunteers at four conferences, in several mass media interviews and articles, on the website of the Homeland of the Crane and other websites. Official letters with recommendations for conservation of meadows were sent by the TAPNA to all concerned parties.

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

Much of the difficulties were due to numerous gaps in official governmental documentation and databases of local administrations on location and contacts of landusers of farmlands. In extreme cases information about property rights' changes that had occurred as long ago as 2008 was still not reflected in 2012 in the governmental Land Cadastre. This situation was aggravated by chaotic redistribution of agricultural lands since mid 2000s between land users of different types, including leaseholders of state-owned lands, large and small private owners, leaseholders of private lands and agricultural enterprises cultivating lands of other owners without legally approved agreements. In this situation contacting actual land users turned sometimes into a multi-stage and time-consuming search effort. Eventually, almost all important landholders were identified, some living as far as the USA.

Unfortunately, weather conditions in 2012 were unfavourable for counting waders in the valley of the Dubna River (the principal river in the study area) due to high snow accumulation and late spring followed by extreme high for the region and prolonged flooding of agricultural lands. Apparently, some waders left the area and did not try to breed there due to late flooding and not because of any particular agricultural scheme realised. Incompleteness of information on great snipe distribution was due to adverse weather and also to cryptic behaviour of females during incubation and night

activities of males. Thus, the data on wader distribution in the Dubna River valley and the data on the great snipe numbers and distribution are now preliminary. Additional field surveys in the Dubna River valley and of the great snipe distribution are needed.

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

1). Assessment of current status (numbers and distribution) of 5 rare meadow waders and current condition of their habitat on agricultural lands in the north of the Moscow Region was made. Complete picture was obtained for two of the species and approximately 65-70% of data were gathered for the other three. Available current data on majority of landowners and land users of farmland and along with their plans of agricultural rehabilitation in the target area were compiled. GIS database with bird and agricultural data was developed including the following thematic layers: 1) breeding localities of five rare waders; 2) main feeding places of 18 species of migrant waders; 3) meadows of the highest importance for waders; 4) recently ploughed fields and fields planned for agricultural rehabilitation; and 5) land boundaries of all currently known landowners and landusers of farmlands.

These data will allow us to make prognosis and quick assessment of the status of rare waders in agricultural landscapes in the Homeland of the Crane area. As the first step a map of revealed conflicts between agriculture and environment (hotspots) was prepared in 2012.

2). The implementation process was started to prevent negative consequences of agriculture rehabilitation. Conservation plans were prepared for agricultural lands for 2013 by the project leader in cooperation with TAPNA Director based on the results of GIS analysis and field survey in 2012. We communicated with heads of most of agricultural enterprises in the area and achieved preliminary agreements with several landusers on further cooperation in nature-friendly agriculture. The most important practical outcome was represented by the start in 2012 of implementation of conservation measures at two hotspots, namely, cessation of large-scale single-stage ploughing and transition to a system of partial ploughing in different years. The impact of large-scale ploughing in 2011-2012 on breeding waders in the Homeland of the Crane Reserve (Apsaryovski Site) was evaluated which allowed to predict negative bird dynamic and unsuccessful wader's breeding. An agreement was achieved with land-users about recultivation of 100 ha (of a total of 500 ha) of potato fields into permanent grasslands during the next 2-3 seasons, with the first grass to be sowed in spring 2013.

3). An awareness of people in local communities about issues in meadow conservation and generally in conservation in the area was increased through broad spreading of information about aims and the first results of the project as well as through numerous direct negotiations with representatives of local authorities and agricultural enterprises. Colourful booklet with simple information on wader biology will make an important contribution to this awareness.

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

Representatives of local communities were immediate participants of our project. These were heads, land-managers and agronomists of five local and settlement government administrations, heads of large agricultural enterprises and local farmers. These people were interested in further

efficient development of farmland and rehabilitation of agriculture in the region after tens of years of abandonment. Naturally, not all of them could easily recognise needs of meadow bird conservation as an essential part of wildlife conservation in the Homeland of the Cranes. However, most of them were opposed to a new tendency of reclamation of agricultural lands for building country houses for Moscow residents. This created an important common ground for establishing an alliance between conservation activists and agricultural managers aiming together to avoid the new threat of permanent destruction of many ha of farmlands both for birds and agriculture. Several publications were produced by the project leader and volunteers, emphasising advantages of the nature-friendly development in the Homeland of the Crane area both for nature and agriculture, with eventual benefit for entire local community.

Educational activity was aimed on local teachers and schoolchildren. In 2012, it was realised through distribution of booklets on conservation of meadow waders. In the framework of the current project approximately 25 volunteers contributed to different types of research, educational activities and a campaign against building of country-houses on agricultural lands.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We plan to continue our work during several next years as certain objectives could not be achieved in one or two field seasons. In particular, in 2013 we plan:

- 1) To implement two of four agreements achieved in the course of the current project regarding concrete hotspots on farmlands. This work will be done by the project executor in cooperation and with funding support by the Taldom Administration of PNAs and agricultural enterprises.
- 2) We will continue personal communications with land users with view of increasing their awareness and motivation for conservation of meadow waders and grasslands as an important wildlife habitat.
- 3) We plan to continue broad public campaign against destruction of farmland habitats for construction of country houses in the area of the TAPNA responsibility and to involve in the process a variety of conservation organisations, community representatives and mass-media.
- 4) Field inventory of distribution and abundance of rare waders will be continued, provided required funds will be raised.
- 5) New conservational and scientific publications will be prepared based on the results of the current RSG project.

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

Parts of the data and results of the current project have been already presented at the website of the Homeland of the Crane:

<http://www.craneland.ru/?p=3775>; <http://www.craneland.ru/?p=3866>;
<http://www.craneland.ru/?p=3919>; <http://www.craneland.ru/?p=4285>

Project results (scientific and, mostly, conservation related issues) were shared with ornithologists and conservationists in 2012 in the following presentations at three conferences:

- 1) Talk "Waders of farmlands of the Homeland of the Crane and perspectives of their conservation" at the 25 Anniversary Conference of the Wader Study Group of Northern Eurasia (November 2012, presented by T. Sviridova).
- 2) Talk "Nature conservation in the north of the Moscow Region. Current problems and approaches for their solving" at the Conference on Ecological problems of the Moscow region (December 2012, presented by T. Sviridova and O. Grinchenko)
- 3) Talk "Conservation work in the Homeland of the Crane" (including RSGF-project activities) at the third Anniversary of NGO "BirdsRussia" (December 2012, presented by O. Grinchenko).

Results of the project, with a special focus on new problem of farmland reclamation for country houses' construction and consequent irreversible destruction of seminatural bird habitat important for rare and common species conservation, will be presented on two upcoming conferences in the following talks:

- "Agricultural lands - refuges for wildlife or country-houses?" at the All-Russian Hunting Conference, to be held in February 2013.
- "Current conservation problem of the Homeland of the Crane: new realities of the XXI century" at the conference dedicated to the 20th Anniversary of the Russian Bird Conservation Union (February 2013).

The project results will be presented in a variety of scientific and conservational publications during the next 1-2 years.

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

The RSG for the current project was used over originally planned timescale - from May 2012 to December 2013. Most of the field work on bird surveys was done in May-June and August-October, while the data on current agricultural development and landusers were gathered mostly in May-August. Negotiations with land users, local and regional authorities and educational and public awareness activities were mostly implemented in July, September, and October-November. Most of the data analysis and GIS job was done in July and November-December.

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
Transportation costs (fuel)	810	1069,02	+259,02	More fuel was used as the project execution required spending more working days in the field and surveys over larger distances than expected.
Food/accommodation during the field activities: 14,65 £ per day X 144 field working	1978	2157,85	+179,85	More working days (144 instead of planned 135) were spent in the course of negotiations with landusers and additional trips were required to

days				collect materials for an urgent campaign against building country-houses.
Purchase of GPSMap-receiver 62stc (1 item)	565	388,13	-176,87	Price of this item decreased in the period from January to May.
Purchase of Telescope with tripod (1 set)	1570	1699,3	+129,3	As certain amount of money was saved on the GPS purchase, it became possible to buy a better optics (Swarovski) for the project.
Publication of educational booklets: 1500 items X 0,272 £ per item	450	481,85	+31,85	The difference was due to change in exchange rate of £ to rubles from January (calculated) to May (real).
Communication costs	75	195,85	+120,85	This item could not be precisely calculated at a stage of the project planning. The costs included mobile communications and mobile - internet. Actual communication costs were even higher and were partly reimbursed by the TAPNA.
10% contingency	544	0**	-544**	**this item was used to cover excessive expenditures on transportation (fuel), accommodation and communication.
Total	5992	5992	0	Final exchange rate (after transferring money via bank from pound to dollars and then into roubles) was <u>1 £=46.725 rubles</u>

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

In addition to already mentioned in item 5 activities (see above) it seems useful and reasonable:

1. To develop plan of long-term wader monitoring within entire area of the Homeland of the Crane.
2. To carry out in the nearest years focused study of populations and distribution of globally threatened great snipe as this species is threatened both by ploughing of meadows and by land abandonment. Both processes occur currently in the "Homeland of the Crane" due to polarisation of agriculture.
3. To educate and involve local schoolchildren and teachers in wader monitoring and conservation.
4. To expand the project scope to conservation of other than wader's wildlife of agricultural landscapes.
5. To promulgate our experience among other groups of ornithologists and conservationists concerned about wildlife of agricultural landscapes in Russia.

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?

All publications and conference presentations based on the RSGF grant included and will include indication of the RSGF support. In particular, the RSGF logo was put on the project page at “the Homeland of the Crane” website (<http://www.craneland.ru/?p=3775>) and appeared in the educational booklet published in the framework of the project (1500 copies). The RSGF Logo and the project contribution in 2012 to conservation work in the “Homeland of the Crane” (6% of a total annual budget) was highlighted in presentations at 3 conferences in 2012.

11. Any other comments?

I would like to thank the Rufford Small Grants Foundation on behalf of our entire team. This grant allowed us to make new significant step towards nature-friendly agriculture in the “Homeland of the Crane”. With the support by the RSGF we received actual, although in parts preliminary, information about on-going processes in populations of rare waders and about trends in agricultural development in the north of Moscow region. Results of this project will allow us to plan the next steps for elaboration and implementation of needed conservation actions for meadow waders and to design new projects for this purpose.

I am grateful to all the team members, who helped in a variety of ways to me and Olga Grinchenko (Director of the TAPNA) to develop nature-friendly agriculture in the “Homeland of the Crane” area. Special thanks to nature-photographers Igor Bartashov, Mikhail Ivanov and Vyacheslav Zabugin; a lot of effort contributed to the project Dmitri Koltsov (GIS consultant and field researcher) and Alexei Sevryugin (booklet layout); Vitali Kontorschikov, Sergei Volkov and Alexander Sharikov helped in bird data collection. Mikhail Soloviev provided invaluable help by improving the English. My sincere thanks to Pavel Tomkovich from the Zoological Museum of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, Elena Smirenskaya and Claire Mirande from the International Crane Foundation and Nikolai Sobolev from the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences who supported the project idea at a stage of its infancy.

Detailed illustrated information about the project is available in Appendix 2.