

The Rufford Foundation

Final Report

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.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Iurii Strus
Project title	Distribution, population size, habitats and conservation of Common and Great Snipe in Western Polissia region
RSG reference	13673-1
Reporting period	19 June 2014 – 19 June 2015
Amount of grant	£4316
Your email address	yurastrus@gmail.com
Date of this report	8 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
To estimate breeding population size			yes	<p>This objective was fully achieved. Basing on the obtained densities of breeding snipe on the studied sites we can now extrapolate those densities and estimate possible population size for West Polissia. Unfortunately, now it is much lower than it was in the past and lower than we expected. For common snipe it is 100-150 pairs, for great snipe – ~50 pairs (five leks).</p>
To find new territories valuable for snipe on migration and as breeding sites			yes	<p>We have found three new breeding locations of great snipe in West Polissia region. And five new locations of common snipe. But the spring 2015 was very dry. Many marshes, peatlands in this year were dry without temporary puddles/lakes. Some without any water. This was caused by lack of snow in winter of 2014/2015 and low precipitation in spring of 2015 in West Ukraine. So we expect that in normal year we would possibly find some more localities with somewhat higher numbers of breeding pairs.</p> <p>Apart from the breeding sites, nine new stopover sites valuable for snipe on migration were found.</p> <p>All territories were mapped in GIS and files were provided to local nature conservation organisations.</p>
To create distribution maps			yes	<p>This objective was fully achieved. The maps and lists of valuable breeding and stopover sites were provided to Shatsk National Park, National Park Pripiat-Stohid and Rivne Nature Reserve. Including those that were found not on the territory of this reserves/park but in closeness to them. Some information was also shared with specialists from State Museum of Natural History and from biology department</p>

				of Lviv University.
To develop recommendations for conservation			yes	This objective was fully achieved. The recommendations were distributed among workers of local nature conservation institutions (staff of nature reserves, national parks, forestries). Also some recommendations were published on our webpage and in the brochure.
To publish a booklet/brochure			yes	This objective was fully achieved. The brochure (http://bit.ly/1JpoBoR) was distributed mostly among hunters. Also among workers of local reserves, national parks and biology teachers in small village schools.
Website in social networks		yes		The original idea to create a webpage about the project in social networks (e.g. Facebook) was later abandoned and we have created the relevant pages on website of the West Ukrainian Ornithological Society (http://aves.org.ua/pages/snipe.htm http://aves.org.ua/pages/baranci.htm), because this website already had wide auditory interested in birds and their conservation, including many of local hunters. Our pilot web page in Facebook covered mostly young people from our contact lists. Majority of middle aged and older hunters/people in Ukraine do not use social networks at all.

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

Main unforeseen difficulties were of financial type because of the political and therefore economic situation in Ukraine in last year. After the revolution and during the military conflict in East Ukraine there was/is instability in currency exchange rates and prices in the country. Original exchange rate of GBP/UAH has changed from 1/12 (when we submitted project proposal) to 1/32 now (sometimes up to 1/50). This caused great fluctuations in prices. Also sometimes we had problems to take the grant money from bank account because of established state limits for banks. Also we had not foreseen bad state of some roads in remote areas of the Polissia region. This caused some additional expenditures of fuel because of driving car at low gears. Fortunately we had asked for additional 10% contingency costs in the grant proposal that were almost fully used for buying fuel.

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

- During the project implementation we have found several completely new localities valuable for common and great snipe as breeding sites in vicinity to the borders of existing nature conservation territories. This is good basis to extend territories of existing reserves (e.g. Pripiat-Stohid National Park); new data about snipe distribution also will be submitted to the new atlas of European breeding birds (EBBA2), which is now in preparation.
- On the basis of our surveys of the breeding densities of both species we now can estimate the size of the breeding populations of both species in the studied region. This is good starting point for future monitoring of their populations in West Polissia region and this data should be included to next Red Book in Ukraine.
- We suppose that sharing of the information that we have done through distribution of the published brochure, website, personal talks with hunters on their meetings should play some role in decreasing of mistaking hunting on great snipe in future and should increase awareness of local people.

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

Local community (forestry workers, staff of nature reserves and hunters) was involved to the project as target auditory. Among those people we distributed the brochure about snipes. With hunters we had also personal conversations on their annual meeting in Lviv and through hunting societies.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

In next year's we plan to extend our study further to the east to cover more eastern parts of Polissia in Ukraine. We plan to explore peatlands and fen mires of Rivne region which we think are also very important as breeding and stopover sites for Snipes and other waders (Charadrii).

If it will be possible we also plan to fight with overgrowing of some valuable for Snipes territories by cutting *Salix* spp. bushes.

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

We already included some information gathered during project implementation to the published brochure. Much more information is published and freely available (including pdf version of the brochure) through the website of West Ukrainian Ornithological Society. Apart of that we are preparing scientific paper in cooperation with some other ornithologists in Ukraine and going to publish current numbers of Snipes populations in Ukraine.

Conversations with hunters on their annual meetings allowed us to make new personal contacts with members of hunting societies in West Ukraine. This will also help us to share information about snipe and other vulnerable bird species in future.

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

When we submitted the grant proposal (in December 2013) we expected to do all surveys in spring and autumn of 2014. To cover spring migration, breeding period and autumn migration of snipe. As our grant proposal was confirmed only in June 2014 we had shifted the study periods. Therefore studies of snipe on autumn migration were conducted (as planned before) in autumn 2014, and studies on spring migration and on breeding grounds were conducted in spring 2015. But in spring 2014 we also performed some surveys on the breeding grounds of snipe using our own costs. This was very helpful and allowed us to save time during spring of 2015 because we already surveyed some places.

Grant was used in following periods:

- 1) August - December 2014 – Part of the equipment was purchased. The brochure about snipe was prepared, designed and published. Series of field trips to count snipe on autumn migration were performed.
- 2) March – April of 2015 – We performed regular trips to count snipe during spring migration on stopover sites. In May 2015 we checked all known to us breeding sites and have searched for new during the expedition to West Polissia region.

So, apart of shifting some surveys from spring of 2014 to spring of 2015, and preparation of brochure in autumn of 2014 everything else was conducted as we have planned in the grant proposal.

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.

Local exchange rate (GBP/UAH) during the grant period fluctuated from 1/12 to 1/50. So it is impossible to state only one rate here. As different items were bought on different dates we state rate on that time for each item separately.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Transport (fuel)	917	1221	-304	Fuel was bought many times during project implementation, so exchange rate fluctuates from 1/21 to 1/33. Originally the amount of

				fuel was calculated like 8 l per 100 km. But because of bad state of roads in Polissia region actual fuel expenditures were higher so we used additional costs that we had saved on food, and used part of contingency costs that allowed us to visit some additional remote sites during field surveys.
Food/accommodation during the field activities	1750	1662	88	(exch. rate from 1/21 to 1/33) As we bought a lot of food in the same markets, frequently we had discounts as regular customers. This allowed us to save some money.
Booklet (5000 copies)	340	483	-143	(exch. rate 1/21.01) During submission of the project proposal, RSGF team recommended us to hire professional designer to design our booklet but without extending the budget. We did so. Price of his work was – 150 EUR (~107 GBP). As additional costs for designer were not foreseen we used part of contingency costs and cost saved in other items. Publishing of the booklet cost 373.5 GBP.
Communication costs	50	50		(exch. rate 1/20.10) These costs were used only for conversations through cell phones. We refilled our mobile phones accounts only once, in autumn 2014 and then used these costs throughout whole project period.
Purchase of GPS receiver Garmin Oregon 450 (2x)	584	570	14	(exch. rate 1/20.25) By the time when we received the grant costs, model Garmin Oregon 450 was absent in Ukrainian shops, so we bought two GPS navigators Garmin Oregon 600 which, by the way, were cheaper (285.05 GBP each).
Binocular Nikon Action 16X50 EX WP (2x)	208	214	-6	(exch. rate 1/20.25) Binoculars price + shipping from Kiev to Lviv. We didn't foreseen shipping costs.
Waders (rubber boots) (3 pairs)	75	97	-22	(exch. rate 1/20.10 and 1/31.5) At first we bought 3 pairs of rubber boots for each participant in field surveys. But one pair was damaged in autumn 2014, so we bought another one pair in spring 2015.
10% contingency	392	373	19	These costs were used mainly for additional fuel and used in different items above.

TOTAL (RSGF costs)	4316	4297	19	
Office equipment (laptop, scanner, printer etc.)	560	560	0	These costs were provided by State Museum of Natural History
Office expenditures	424	424	0	
Total	5300			

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

Eastern parts of Polissia in Ukraine are studied insufficiently. We suppose that there is high possibility to find valuable territories for snipe there, which are not included to existing nature conservation network. So, we think that it would be great to expand our study further to east. Also it is important to include some breeding territories of great snipe that we have found to nature conservation network of Ukraine.

Some artificially drained wetlands, which are still valuable for snipe, needs urgent restoration of habitats to preserve their value for snipe and other wetland animals. But land restoration is cost demanding activity, thus we think it will be impossible in Ukraine for a decade at least. Instead, control of overgrowing of wetlands by bushes (especially *Salix* spp.) should be done in several places in next years because it is much cheaper than regulation of water level but also effective to some extent.

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?

We have used RSGF logo in our brochure about snipe and project (<http://bit.ly/1JpoBoR>). Also logo is used on webpage devoted to project on the website of West Ukrainian Ornithological Society (WUOS) (<http://aves.org.ua/pages/snipe.htm>)

The RSGF received publicity through distribution of the brochure and through information on the WUOS website, because RSGF was mentioned in these materials/places as organisation which funds our project, and because of usage of logo. Also we mentioned RSGF as funding organisation in personal talks with other specialist and hunters in Ukraine.

11. Any other comments?

We would like to thank the Rufford Small Grant Foundation for the great opportunity to start our study of snipe in Polissia region. Without financial support from RSGF it would be impossible.