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	Tatiana Sviridova
Project title	Conservation of agricultural landscapes for protection of rare meadow waders
RSG reference	14503-2
Reporting period	December 2013-December 2014
Amount of grant	£5997
Your email address	t-sviridova@yandex.ru
Date of this report	15 December 2014

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
Purchase of equipment				
Purchase of computer and field equipment.			**X**	Notebook computer, mist nets, boombox and other field equipment purchased.
Gathering of up-to-date and new field information on wader numbers and distribution				
Monitoring of breeding waders at permanent plots.			**X**	New data on numbers and trends in waders' populations (including three globally declining and threatened species: black-tailed godwit, Eurasian curlew and great snipe) were collected on two model plots. This contributes to long-term wader monitoring in the area.
Distribution and ecology of globally threatened great snipe.		**X**		The first stage of the study of great snipe ecology was started. 35 birds were banded on four leks. The first data on impacts of agricultural activities on great snipes were collected. Unfortunately, weather conditions during season 2014 were not ideal for this activity. *See more comments in item 2 of current report below*.
Prevention of grassland transformation to arable fields at the Apsarevski Site (agricultural part of the "Homeland of the Crane" Nature Reserve)				
Gathering information on waders at threatened farmlands – lands of new landuser in the reserve.			**X**	Up-to-date data on breeding localities of three focal rare wader species were collected and used for developing required conservation measures (*see below*).
Habitat mapping		**X**		Both suitable (haylands) and unsuitable (ploughed lands and shrublands) for rare waders habitats were mapped at Apsarevski Site, including farmlands of new landuser. Relevant information on the current state of grasslands in the reserve was collected in the field. Field data, satellite imaginary and aerial photos were combined in GIS and data analysis was started. The analysis was partly finished by the end of the project (*See note in item 3 below).*
Prevention of large-scale transformation of grasslands to arable			**X**	Fortunately, a single hot spot of 45 ha was discovered at grasslands ploughed in 2013-2014 by new landuser.

fields. Development of required conservation measures at Apsarevski Site.				Recommendations for prevention of loss of grasslands valuable for rare waders at farmlands of new landuser were developed on the basis of up-to-date bird and habitat data.
Reconciling conservation recommendations with new landuser (principal landowner in the reserve, holding 70% of lands). Initiation of implementation process.			**X**	Agreement on nature-friendly operations on valuable grasslands of new landowner was reached for the period of 2014-2015. It included: 1) re-seeding by grasses of 45 ha of previously ploughed lands at breeding site of Eurasian Curlews (implementation started in 2014); 2) no new ploughing for non-grasslands crops in 2014-2015; 3) annual mowing not less than 100-150 ha of grasslands in the reserve at hayland important for nesting of Eurasian Curlews (done in 2014); 4) initiation of activities on shrub elimination s on abandoned lands (to be implement starting from 2015).
Prevention of transformation of farmlands valuable for rare waders into lands for country houses for Moscow residents				
Participation in campaign against building of country houses on farmlands.			**X**	We continued activities initiated in 2012 to prevent construction of country houses on farmlands. Mitigation of this threat to farmlands and birds requires participation in official process of preparing plans of the area development during the next 20-25 years, which has started in 2013. The project leader attended all public hearings and other meetings related to this objective in two districts, which include most of land area to be incorporated into developed nature park.
Preparation and sending letters on the problem.			**X**	Several letters with maps of valuable for bird farmlands and recommendations on area development within the proposed nature park were prepared with an expert contribution of the project leader. These letters were officially send by the TAPNA, Russian Bird Conservation Union, BirdsRussia to concerned parties.
Preventing building of country houses on farmlands.		**X**		**1.** Wide-scale plans of building of country houses and other constructions (sport centres, industrial zones) on the borders of existing reserve (Apsarevski Site) and inside proposed territory of the nature park were successfully called off by Ermolino local administration. It was done based on results

				of public hearings and communications of the project leader with local authorities and representatives of Institute of Urban Planning. **2.** Similar efforts for prevention of building of country houses on farmlands were undertaken in Shemetovo administration of Sergiev-Posad district, however, without success. Reasons of the failure detailed below in item 2 of the current report.
Promulgating conservation measures in local communities				
Printing of educational stickers.			**X**	3000 stickers with rare meadow waders were printed and distributed among landusers, attendants to annual Spring Crane Field Sowing Fest and to annual Crane Festival carried out by the TAPNA in 2014, and among the project volunteers. Remaining stickers will be used for conservational and educational purposes in 2015.
Websites, mass media, etc.			**X**	Information about the project results and problems of conservation of meadows for rare waders was published and presented by the project leader, TAPNA Director and the project team volunteers at four conferences, in several interviews to mass media and in articles on the website of the Homeland of the Crane.

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

In 2013-2014 we participated in several public hearings organised by local authorities for discussion of plans of the area development for the next 20-25 years. As a result, practical recommendations for conservation of valuable farmlands (including prevention of construction of country houses on farmlands) were developed and implemented in the form of corrections to 20-year plans in the Ermolino local administration of Taldom district (successfully). Similar activities in parts of the Sergiev-Posad district were initially successful but failed to reach ultimate success in the second half of 2014.

Most of the difficulties in the Sergiev-Posad district originated from the strong lobby of landowners who had acquired extensive areas of farmlands during the last 10 years when chaotic redistribution of agricultural lands occurred and perspectives of selling lands for building of country houses emerged. Many of these lands are located in the Shemetovo local department of the Sergiev-Posad district. In this area all farmlands formerly belonging to large soviet agricultural enterprises were distributed among local residents in a framework of free privatisation of the 1990s. Unfortunately, most of these residents (landowners) gave up farming and eventually sold their lands. These lands were acquired for the purpose of re-saling by dealers not interested in agriculture or nature conservation. The best option of land resaling is for house construction. The situation is compounded by the fact that the authority of the Sergiev-Posad district have common interests with

many of land-dealers. Accordingly, the district authorities in the best cases do not want to aid the process of negotiations on nature conservation issues with landowners, and in the worst cases facilitate selling farmland for country houses construction.

Local Administration of the Shemetovo department was interested in mitigation of threats of wide-scale construction on farmlands. From 2012 to the middle of 2014 we worked in close cooperation with Head of this Administration on prevention of wide-scale construction development on agricultural lands. The head of the Administration for 2 years refused to sign new plan of the Shemetovo department area development for the next 20-25 years, because it implied conversion of vast areas of farmlands into lands for country houses. We contributed to the process with arguments of farmland value for biodiversity and nature conservation. Eventually, in July 2014 the Head of the Shemetovo department was disposed by the authorities of the Sergiev-Posad district, and in one month after that the first portion of farmlands entered the process of preparation for sale.

We have continued to undertake attempts to influence the Sergiev-Posad district authorities directly and via the authorities of the Moscow Region but did not succeed as they were ignoring any appeals so far and did nothing.

Unfortunately, weather conditions in 2014 were unfavourable for breeding waders, due to anomaly warm winter, low snow accumulation and dry spring followed by the absence of flooding of farmlands in the Dubna river valley (the principal river in the study area). Conditions were particularly adverse for Great Snipes, feeding only in the wettest sites with soft soil. Increased habitat dryness was recorded also on watersheds. We consider dryness to be the main reason for finding a single nest of great snipe in spite of intensive nest searches undertaken in the target area. It is likely that females gave up breeding in 2014. At the same time, no decrease in numbers of great snipe at known leks was recorded in spite of dry conditions. Thus, a lot of gaps and unclears exist on distribution and ecology of great snipe, resulting from adverse weather in 2014 and from cryptic behaviour of the species. Additional field surveys of the great snipe are needed in the future.

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

1) Threats of building country houses and other constructions on extensive (900 ha) areas of farmlands near the borders of the current reserve and inside the territory of proposed Nature Park were excluded from the official plan of the area development for the next 20-25 years.
In addition, collaboration with agricultural enterprises and local authorities was revitalised in the course of the campaign against reclamation of farmlands for construction of country houses.

2) New assessment of current condition of breeding habitats of waders at the Apsarevo Site was initiated in a form of new detailed habitat map.
This activity was not initially planned at a large scale in the framework of the current project. However, overgrowing of vast areas of farmlands with shrubs turned out to be more important problem for breeding meadow waders compared with ploughing of grasslands, as initially expected. Accordingly, we started detailed mapping of shrublands at the Apsarevski Site, which was not initially planned in this project.

In addition, detailed geobotanical data were gathered for all grasslands of the Apsarevski Site (approximately 45 sq.km) in 2014. This data will allow to compare the current situation on meadows

(after many years of land abandonment) with the situation in 2004 (when similar geobotanical mapping was undertaken).

All habitat data will be processed and digitised by spring 2015 and used for further monitoring of habitats and rare waders in the reserve. As this work was not planned to be undertaken at such level of detail, about 50-60% of it was completed by the end of the project. New habitat data will allow us to make analysis of changes in wader distribution during the last 10 years in relation to habitat changes. Geobotanical data will also allow to assess changes in habitat wetness during the last 10 years and to make some prognosis of future changes.

3) The implementation process was started to prevent negative consequences of both ploughing of valuable for rare waders' grasslands and abandonment of farmlands at lands of new landowner in Apsarevski Site.
Conservation requirements for 2014-2015 were prepared by the project leader based on the results of GIS analysis and field surveys in 2014. The implementation by landowner was started in the second half of 2014. This should prevent crashing of breeding population of Eurasian Curlews in the Apsarevski Site, a core breeding area for this species declining both in the Homeland of the Crane and in the entire Moscow Region.

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

Representatives of local communities were immediate participants of our project. These were heads, land-managers and agronomists of four local and settlement government administrations and heads of large agricultural enterprises. Many of these people were interested in efficient development of farmlands and rehabilitation of agriculture in the region after tens years of land abandonment. Most of them were opposed to 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 hectares of farmlands both for birds and agriculture.

Educational activities involved local teachers and schoolchildren, farmers, students from Moscow universities, new (recruited for the project) volunteers of the Homeland of the Crane. These activities were realised in 2014 by means of distributing booklets on conservation of meadow waders (remains of publication in 2012 in the framework of the 1st RSG) and newly printed stickers with rare waders. In the framework of the current project approximately 25 volunteers contributed to different types of research, educational activities and activities 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 2015 we plan:

1) To continue working on implementation of new agreement achieved in the course of the current project regarding nature-friendly management of grasslands at the 3000 ha in the Apsarevo Site. This work will be done by the project executor in cooperation and with funding support by the Taldom Administration of PNAs and agricultural enterprise.

2) We will continue personal communications with landusers 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 results of the current as well as of the first RFS projects 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;
http://www.craneland.ru/?p=6230; http://www.craneland.ru/?p=6292;
http://www.craneland.ru/?p=6406; http://www.craneland.ru/?p=6537;
http://www.craneland.ru/?p=6663.

Project results (scientific and conservation related issues) were shared with ornithologists and conservationists in 2013-2014 at the following conferences:

1) Talk "Agricultural lands - refuges for wildlife or country-houses?" at the All-Russian Hunting Conference (with a special focus on problem of farmland reclamation for country houses' construction; February 2013, presented by T. Sviridova and O.Grinchenko).
2) Talk "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 (with a focus on problem of farmland reclamation for country houses' construction and consequent irreversible destruction of seminatural bird habitat important for rare species conservation; February 2013, presented by T.Sviridova and O.Grinchenko).
3) Talk " Land abandonment and polarization of agriculture – what are the challenges for waders?" at the annual conference of the International Waders Study Group (with a focus on response of waders to long-term abandonment of farmlands and current agricultural rehabilitation; September 2014, Estonia, presented by T.Sviridova, D.Koltsov and S.Volkov).
4) Talk "New data on rare breeding waders at the north-east of the Moscow Region " at the V Conference "Distribution and Ecology of rare bird species of Nonchernozem Center of Russia" (included all new data on rare wader species gathered in 2012-2014 in the framework of the first and second Rufford Foundation grants; December 2014, presented by T.Sviridova, D.Koltsov and 5 more co-authors).
5) Talk "Status of rare waders of Nonchernozem Center of Russia at the turn of the XX and XXI centuries" at the V Conference "Distribution and Ecology of rare bird species Nonchernozem Center of Russia" (included new data on 3 target wader species from the project area; December 2014, presented by T.Sviridova).

Project leader participated also in the Workshop “Threats and protection of meadow birds in Europe”, held on 29 September 2014 in Haapsalu, Estonia.

In 2012-2014 10 scientific and related to conservation articles, abstracts and other materials were published on the problem of meadow wader conservation in the target area:

1. Sviridova T.V., 2012. Waders and rehabilitation of agricultural lands. *In Information Materials of the Working Group on Waders. №25. Moscow: pp.57–58.* [Кулики и возрождение сельского хозяйства (Московская область). // Информационные материалы рабочей группы по куликам, №25. М.: 57–58.]. *In Russian with short English summary.*

2. Sviridova T.V., Grinchenko O.S., 2013. Project «Conservation of waders in the agricultural landscapes (rare bird species and rehabilitation of agriculture) ». *In Information Materials of the Working Group on Waders of Northern Eurasia. №26. Moscow: pp.58–61.* [Проект "Сохранение куликов на сельскохозяйственных землях (редкие виды и возрождение сельского хозяйства)". // Инф. мат. Рабочей группы по куликам Северной Евразии. №26, Под. ред. Т.В.Свиридовой. М.: 58-61.]. *In Russian with short English summary.*

3. Sviridova T.V., 2013. Nesting of waders on arable lands in Moscow Region. *In Information Materials of the Working Group on Waders of Northern Eurasia. №26. Moscow: pp.71–73.* [Гнездование куликов на пашне в подмосковье. // Инф. мат. Рабочей группы по куликам Северной Евразии. №26, Под. ред. Т.В.Свиридовой. М.: 71-73.]. *In Russian with short English summary.*

4. Sviridova T.V., Grinchenko O.S., 2013. Current conservation problems of IBA “Homeland of the Cranes (Dubna marshes and adjacent area)”: new realities of the 21st century. *In Problems and outlook of Bird Conservation in Russia. Proceed. of the All-Russian Conf. dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Russian Bird Conservation Union (Moscow, 7-8 February 2013). / Ed. Dr. G.S. Dzhamirzoev. Moscow-Makhachkala: pp. 174-177.* [Современные проблемы сохранения КОТР "Журавлиная родина": новые реалии XXI века. // Охрана птиц в России: проблемы и перспективы. Материалы Всероссийской научно-практической конференции с международным участием, посвященной 20-летию Союза охраны птиц России (Москва, 7-8 февраля 2013). Отв. ред. Г.С.Джамирзоев. Москва-Махачкала: 174-177.]. *In Russian.*

5. Sviridova T.V., Grinchenko O.S., 2013. Agricultural lands - refuges for wildlife or country-houses?". *In Conservation of Animal Biodiversity and Hunting Economy of Russia. Proceed. of the 5th International Scientific-practical Hunting Conference (Moscow, 14-15 february 2013). Moscow: pp.77-80.* [Сельскохозяйственные земли - рефугиумы для сохранения биоразнообразия или дачного строительства? // Сохранение разнообразия животных и охотничье хозяйство России. Матер. 5-ой международн. научно-практ. конф. (Москва, 14-15 февраля 2013). М.: 77-80.]. *In Russian.*

6. Grinchenko O.S., Sviridova T.V., 2013. Nature conservation in the north of the Moscow Region. Current problems and approaches for their resolving. *In Environmental Problems of Moscow Region. Proceed. of the Conference. Moscow, Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, International University of Nature, Society and Man "Dubna": pp. 98-102.* [Сохранение дикой природы северного Подмосковья. Современные проблемы. возможные решения. // Экологические проблемы Подмосковья. Сборник трудов конференции. М.: РАЕН, Международный университет природы, общества и человека "Дубна": 98-102.]. *In Russian with English summary.*

7. V.V. Kontorschikov, O.S. Grinchenko, T.V. Sviridova, S.V. Volkov, A.V. Sharikov, 2013. Description of the square 37VDC1. Moscow Region. *In Fauna and bird population of European Russia. Yearbook of the Program "Birds of Moscow and the Moscow region", №1: 317-321.* [Квадрат 37VDC1. Московская область. — Фауна и население птиц Европейской России. Ежегодник Программы "Птицы Москвы и Подмосковья", №1: 317–321.]. *In Russian,* ***Results will be included in the next edition of the EBCC Atlas of European Breeding Birds.***

8. Sviridova T.V., 2014. Features of shorebird nesting in plowed lands of moscow region in the 1980s to 2000s. *In Russian Journal of Ecology. Vol. 45, №. 4: pp. 291–296.* [Особенности гнездования куликов на пахотных угодьях Подмосковья в 1980-2000 гг. // Экология, №4. 287-293.]. *The article has 2 version (full text) – in Russian and in English version of the journal.*

9. Sviridova T., Kontorschikov V., Ermakova V., 2014. Successful nesting of the Eurasian Oystercatcher on arable lands in Moscow Region. *In Information Materials of the Working Group on Waders of Northern Eurasia. №27. Moscow: pp.51–52.* [Успешное гнездование кулика-сороки на пашне в Подмосковье. // Информационные материалы рабочей группы по куликам Северной Евразии, №27. М.: 51–52.]. *In Russian with short English summary.*

10. Sviridova T.V., Koltsov D.B., Volkov S.V., 2014. Land abandonment and polarization of agriculture – what are the challenges for waders?". *International Wader Study Group. Annual Conference 26-29 September 2014. Haapslu, Estonia: p.34. In English, Abstracts of talks.*

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 RSG for the current project was used over originally planned timescale - from December 2013 to December 2014. Field work on bird surveys was done in April-July. Habitat mapping was carried out mostly in August-October. Most of the data and GIS analysis was done in July-August and October-December. Negotiations with land users, local and regional authorities, participation in discussions for solving the problem of country houses building on farmlands valuable for birds and public awareness activities were carried out throughout entire project duration.

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)	1072	1191	+119	More fuel was used as the season was dry and we could drive for longer distance in floodplain already in May.
Food/accommodation during field activities. 14 £ per day X 165 field/working days	2310	2310	0	
Purchase of Notebook computer (1 item)	1300	1296,8	-3,2	
Purchase of mist nets (two items) and other materials for bird catching and	180	152,27	-27,73	Original bedsteads for mist nets turned out more expensive than planned

measurement (ropes, paint, bedsteads, ruler).				budget allowed. Accordingly, we decided to use self-made bedsteads and the total amount decreased.
Purchase of Boombox (1 item)	200	159,2	-40,8	Price of this item decreased in the period from September to January, and a cheaper model appeared on the market.
Printing of educational stickers 3000 items X 0,2 £ per item (planned)	600	492,5	-107,5	The difference was due to change in exchange rate of pound to rubles from September to March.
Communication costs (mobile phone and internet)	200	213,85	+13,85	This item could not be precisely calculated at a stage of the project planning.
Contingency	135	181,38	+46,38	This item was used to cover *flashlight with batteries* (£ 111.76); *payment for official request in All-Russian landuser data base* (£ 9.36); *medicines* (£ 14,8) and *stationery* (field diaries for students etc. - £ 46.3).
Total	**5997**	**5997**	0	Employed exchange rate (after transferring money via bank from pound to dollars and then into roubles) was 1£=53.4 rubles

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 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 polarization of agriculture.
2. To carry out in the nearest year's studies of breeding success of rare waders at lands with different agricultural use.
3. To expand the project scope to conservation of other than wader's wildlife of agricultural landscapes.
4. To educate and involve local schoolchildren and teachers in wader monitoring and conservation.
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 Rufford Foundation 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 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=6230*). The RSGF Logo and the project contribution in 2013-2014 to conservation work in the "Homeland of the Crane" (8,5% of a total annual budget) was highlighted in presentations at four conferences in 2013-2014, including annual Conference of the International Wader Study Group.

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 the next significant step towards nature-friendly agriculture in the "Homeland of the Crane" and other aspects of long-term conservation of agricultural landscapes for rare waders as well as meadow' biodiversity in whole. Results of this project will allow us to plan the next steps for elaboration and implementation of needed conservation actions 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 conserve valuable for rare waders grasslands and to develop nature-friendly agriculture in the "Homeland of the Crane" area. Significant contribution to the implementation of this project in its part on habitat mapping and satellite imagery interpretation was made by Dmitri Koltsov (expert of Transparend World) and Innokentiy Smetanin (aerial photography). Assistance in the great snipe investigation was provided by Dr Alexander Sharikov and his students Anna Bazhanova and Olga Smirnova from the Moscow State Pedagogical University, volunteers Vadim Avdanin, Svetlana Korkina, Ksenia Lyubimova, Victor Golovnuyk and Mikhail Soloviev. Special thanks to nature-photographers Igor Bartashov, Mikhail Ivanov and Vyacheslav Zabugin. My sincere thanks to Pavel Tomkovich from the Zoological Museum of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, Ian Burfield from the BirdLife International 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.