

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	Maja Arok
Project title	Research and Conservation – Building a better future for European Ground Squirrel (<i>Spermophilus citellus</i>) in Serbia
RSG reference	http://www.rufford.org/projects/maja_arok
Reporting period	1 year
Amount of grant	£4866
Your email address	maja.arok@yahoo.com
Date of this report	22.July 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
Gathering data on species distribution and mapping occupied and potentially occupied habitat patches			+	We have successfully examined a number of habitats and detected some that were not discovered yet. The production of habitats map is in the process and it will probably be used in defining the Natura 2000 habitats in Serbia.
Census on local populations within the area of Central Banat			+	We have successfully counted 18 European ground squirrel (EGS) colonies in the summer of 2014.
Local community education			+	We visited several schools and talked to students about the work that we do and its importance.
Restoration and revitalisation of several EGS habitats			+	Three very large EGS habitats were restored, where approximately 0.5 t of waste was removed from each. Also, overgrown vegetation was cut off.
Labelling important habitats for EGS			+	Every revitalised and restored habitat and couple of very large habitat patches for EGS were labelled with informational board.

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

We had some technical issues, mainly concerning our car. These were the consequence of the rough terrain that we had to drive through.

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

1. Habitats map – it will have great use in the future conservation activities.
2. Local community education – we feel that the children that we talked to really had an insight into diversity of wildlife in their immediate surroundings and why is important to protect it.
3. Habitat revitalisation – All of our activities toward revitalising habitats for European ground squirrel (EGS) were a huge success. From each habitat approximately 0.5 t of garbage of different sort was collected and disposed on legal landfills. A lot of people from local communities, including children, showed each day and helped. Also, we conducted a brief lecture about what we are trying to do and why.

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

Local community participated in revitalising activities during which some of them for the first time saw EGS and heard why EGSs are such important part of steppe ecosystem and what are the main threats for squirrels and what they can do to prevent further habitat degradation. The main benefit for local communities was cleaning and disposing of waste from pastures, because those sites slowly starting to become illegal dumps. So, in addition to helping EGS populations we managed to prevent creation of illegal dumps that represent a sanitary problem.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We are planning to continue research and conservation activities for the European Ground Squirrel. During this year's work we recognised a lot of habitats that require revitalisation and restoration, not only in Banat area, where our activities were concentrated, but in the whole Vojvodina region. Also, we want to continue to establish good connections with local communities, ecological societies and other interested parties and educate them, so they can help us in this process of establishing long-term positive effects in EGS habitats.

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

The habitats map will be used in defining Natura 2000 habitats in Serbia, and also for any other conservational activity aimed toward European ground squirrels. Also, the results of restoration actions were shown in a few local media.

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

Funds from RSG was used from beginning of Jun 2014 to end of Jun 2015. All activities were completed in 1-year period. In discussion with botanists we learned that restoration and revitalisation had to take place in exact time in late spring/ early summer after plants, that we were cutting off flowered, but before they spread theirs seed. In our original plan, we anticipated that this part would take place in autumn 2014, so we had to prolong our period of activities to start of summer 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
Petrol for transportation	1523	1400	+123	
Petrol for transportation of volunteers	358	358	0	
Field meals and water	1230	1230	0	
Field meals and water for volunteers	270	300	-30	
Tablet	200	200	0	
Binoculars	170	200	-30	

Field boots	50	50	0	
Sweatshirt	205	0	+205	As we had unexpected expenses we decided to redirect this money for covering unexpected costs
T-shirt	255	200	+50	
Posters	20	85	-65	
Poster design	0	50	-50	We didn't take this matter into consideration when we made the budget list
Educational brochure	75	0	+75	Being that the cost of brochures was higher than we expected and demand for posters was great, we decided to print more posters (500) and no brochures
Informational board	510	510	0	
Informational board design	0	50	-50	We didn't take this matter into consideration when we made the budget list
Unexpected expenses	0	200	-200	Car wash, car repairs, telephone bills
TOTAL	4866	4833	+33	

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

The important next step is to try to educate not only as much as possible local people, but also young ecologists, especially students of biology and ecology, about the work we do and try to provide long lasting positive effects on restored habitats, through monitoring.

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?

The RSGF logo was used on t-shirts, posters and informational boards we made during this project. RSGF received a lot of publicity during our project activities. Every member involved in project was informed that the project was sponsored by Rufford Small Grant Foundation, and what is the mission of your foundation. Also, the foundation was mentioned in the media reports.