

## 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole Grants Director**

---

Grant Recipient Details	
<b>Your name</b>	Okan Ürker
<b>Project title</b>	Reviving Oriental (Anatolian) Sweetgum Forest in Southwestern Turkey
<b>RSG reference</b>	16444-2
<b>Reporting period</b>	December 2014 – December 2015
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5,000
<b>Your email address</b>	okan.urker@gmail.com
<b>Date of this report</b>	12 JANUARY 2016

**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 ensure the ecological integrity of the forest by identifying suitable corridors between dispersed forest fragments and by replanting these areas by sweetgum trees, making the fragmented forest the whole again.		X		<p>We designed and applied some activities such as current distribution analysis, wildlife research, aroma therapy forest experiment, sweetgum plantation festivals, meeting, reporting and preparing of scientific papers for this objective.</p> <p>There were a lot of incorrect, inaccurate and misleading information before the project. That caused the decrease the conservation motivation of public authority. Current distribution analysis caused to right conservation efforts for the Anatolian sweetgum forests. Also related data which obtained during the project encouraged the public authority and civil society.</p> <p>Wildlife research strengthened our hand regarding why corridor methodology should implement.</p> <p>Aroma therapy forest experiments have created a very strong impact on public opinion how we conserve and sustainably use the forest.</p> <p>Our main problems against to making the fragmented forest the whole again were legal protection status and private ownerships on the corridor areas which we aimed to reforestation. Strict protection rules stopped us against to plantation on the protected forest areas.</p> <p>On the other hand, a lot of private properties (mostly citrus plantations) which occupied the forest slowed our plantation efforts. Despite we planted nearly 10,000 sweetgum saplings within the scope of our sweetgum plantation Festivals and lobbying with Regional Forestry Departments, those were not enough for sustainable conservation.</p> <p>That's why at the end of the second project, we founded a nature protection association on national scale titled as NATURA. NATURA aims to creating proprietary in sweetgum forest conservation and sustain our conservation efforts.</p>

<p>To create a permanent behavioural change in the outlook of society's sweetgum perspective. We are believed that at the end of the study we are able to preserve the forest with the biopolicies to be developed benefiting from the</p>		X		<p>We designed and applied some activities such as therapy forest experiment, poster, short movie and viral advertisement making and delivering, lobbying and communication, sweetgum plantation festivals for this objective.</p> <p>We attended two national ecology congresses and presented some details from the project. We gave four national interviews, one national radio speech and 17 regional interviews. From the second project we published two articles, one of them on a popular science magazine and the other one was on a national peer-reviewed journal. Still we are preparing four articles for international peer-reviewed journals and one article for national peer-reviewed journals from the second project's results.</p> <p>Our social media group on Facebook (<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/sigla/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/sigla/</a>) has visited over 10,000 times. We prepared our animation-short film for youths and published it on Youtube (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KFNOiglCsg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KFNOiglCsg</a>) and distributed to our social media groups, the public institutions, schools, NGOs and other related stakeholders. The video has been watched over 5,000 in 3 months.</p> <p>We held the sweetgum workshop with supports of the Municipality of Marmaris. After this workshop, we created the Sweetgum Working Group. Working Group consists of Mugla Sıtkı Koçman University, Mugla Regional Forestry Department, Marmaris National Parks Department, Metropolitan Municipality of Mugla, Municipality of Marmaris District, Mugla Regional Directorate of Water Affairs, Mugla Regional Directorate of Health Affairs, Marmaris City Council and some local and national nature conservation NGOs. Sweetgum Working Group aims to follow and apply our Sweetgum Action Plan during 2016. This second project was really effective but not enough on creating material and moral values which belong to the sweetgum forests.</p>
--	--	---	--	---

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

The most important problem was the Turkish Republic's Parliamentary Elections. This extended election process slowed our lobbying issues between May and November. Especially our Sweetgum Action Plan was affected negatively from this process. But we entered the acceleration process starting from November 2015; nearly one third of lobbying issues had been done within 2 months.

Strict protection rules stopped us against to plantation on the protected forest areas. Turkey inhibits the afforestation or rehabilitation activities on the first degree Natural SIT sites. That's why we argued with the General Directorate of Natural Heritage Conservation and imposed to annotate the sweetgum forests must need special conditions.

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

1. Sweetgum Working Group aims to follow and apply our Sweetgum Action Plan during 2016.
2. NATURA Association for Nature and Culture aims to creating proprietary in sweetgum forest conservation and sustain our conservation efforts.
3. Wild Life Action Plan strengthened our hand regarding why corridor methodology should implement.

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

During the second project we did three sweetgum plantation festivals. One of them was done in Koycegiz within the World Forest Week in March 24th 2015. About 200 students (elementary, high school and university degree) had attended to the first festival. Nearly 2000 sweetgum saplings were planted during the festival. The festival took place in the press with four national and 20 local news. Also during the festival we gave one regional interview. The second festival had been done in Fethiye District in April 2nd 2015. About 100 students from Fethiye Vocational School's Environmental Protection Department had attended to the second festival. Nearly 1000 sweetgum saplings were planted during the festival. The festival took place in the press with one national and eight local news. Also during the festival we gave two regional and one national interview. Our third festival was held in Marmaris District in April 15th 2015 following the Sweetgum Workshop which was held in Marmaris in between 14th-15th November 2015. Nearly 100 local people and youths attended to this festival. Because of the weather conditions we couldn't plant sweetgum saplings. Instead of plant sapling, we made a nature education tour and trekking inside of the sweetgum forests in Marmaris District. In that event, we also visited to old-traditional sweetgum oil producing facilities to show the locals their current situation.

Except of the festivals, Sweetgum Working Group consists from the local community representatives such as Mugla Sıtkı Koçman University, Mugla Regional Forestry Department, Marmaris National Parks Department, Metropolitan Municipality of Mugla, Municipality of Marmaris District, Mugla Regional Directorate of Water Affairs, Mugla Regional Directorate of Health Affairs, Marmaris City Council and some local and national nature conservation NGOs.

To strengthen to our corridor methodology's application, we diversified to our stakeholders. Now we are co-working with the Koycegiz Hunters and Shooters Association that is one of the very powerful stakeholders in the eyes of locals and local authorities. They want to sustainable hunting in the forest openings of the sweetgum forest by planting as corn, wheat, sesame, etc. We agreed with them in case of they do plant and conserve sweetgum saplings where we show the zones. This situation went to regional development agency project of Turkish Government. If we are handling this job, then we win one stakeholder group too.

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

First of all, we will follow the second project's some unfinished issues such as article preparing and tracking, reporting to the stakeholders etc. Then we will continue to our wild life action plan and aroma therapy forest experiments. Thirdly we will motivate and follow the Sweetgum Working Group in 2016 for the implementation of our Sweetgum Action Plan. Finally we will looking for new grants to create proprietary in sweetgum forest conservation. That's why we will continue to our work with NATURA to sustain our conservation efforts.

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

We want to share the results of this project via our NGO (NATURA)'s routes of communication which we had worked during the project.

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

We didn't exceed the time period. Also we didn't have any time scale problem.

## 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
Coordinator	400	400	0	There was no changing
Equipment	1500	1500	0	There was no changing
Publications	100	100	0	There was no changing
Transportation-Intercity	400	450	-50	Indirect flights got to rise the costs
Transportation-Local	250	200	+50	Regional forestry departments supported us in local transports
Field Trips	250	600	-350	We had to visit study areas more than we planned. Also due to anthropogenic factors we had to frequently control the photo traps.
Meetings-Verbal History Surveys-Interviews	250	250	0	There was no changing
Mapping	400	300	+100	Volunteer supports

Poster, Short Film & Viral Advertisement Preparing	500	300	+200	Volunteer supports
Sweetgum Plantation Festival	500	450	+50	Our stakeholders supported us during the organisations
Communication	200	200	0	There was no changing
Stationery and Press	150	150	0	There was no changing
Cargo	100	100	0	There was no changing
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>0</b>	

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

We nearly succeed the main project aim. But the project results need to be applied as with all other projects. That's why in next future we will work for applying and watching the results of this project.

### 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?

We used to RSGF logo on our surveys, field forms, photo trap warnings, maps that we produced during the project, presentations related with project, plantation festivals etc. On the other hand we wrote two articles, attended two national ecology congresses and one regional workshop during the project, and we acknowledged to RSGF for its supports. We also gave some interviews to the local and national newspapers and local-national media's during the project. Also we used RSGF Logo and mentioned about Rufford's supports on our animation-short film for youths.

### 11. Any other comments?

This grant is a crossroad for my conservation career. First of all, unfortunately today greenwashing and green colonialism have taken over the conservation society of Turkey. I proved independently research and conservation could be done in Turkey with this grant. On the other hand, I've found a chance to raise my scientific thinking capacity, networking and lobbying skills. After 3 wonderful years with Rufford's support, I can honestly say that I am a real expert on Anatolian Sweetgum Forests in the eyes of Turkish Conservation Authority. Thank you all Rufford team for all support to me.