

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	Vuk Ikovic
Project title	'Determination of the degree of vulnerability and distribution of Balkan Terrapin in Montenegro'.
RSG reference	16738-2
Reporting period	January 2013 to October 2013
Amount of grant	£5000
Your email address	vukikovic@gmail.com
Date of this report	March 09 th 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
Field study of the Balkan terrapin in Herceg Novi and Kotor in order to obtain data on density, population size, sex ratio, by Capture-Mark-Recapture (CMR) method, determine the number of nesting, and nutrition analysis.		x		<p>During 16 days of fieldwork we captured 161 individuals of which 20% were caught again. All necessary measures are taken and individuals are safely returned to their habitat. It was concluded that this aquatic turtles mostly eat plants.</p> <p>In order to fully determine dynamics of populations in these locations it's necessary to continue collecting data for at least one more season.</p> <p>Number and locations of nests are not fully defined because it's difficult to monitor the movement of aquatic turtles during the egg laying period. For this reason, in following period we plan to implement telemetry to a few individuals.</p>
Defining presence of Balkan terrapin on three habitats on which its presence is not confirmed yet (Ada Bojana, Sasko lake and Skadarsko lake).			x	<p>During the 6 days of fieldwork, we visited these three localities and confirmed its presence on Ada Bojana.</p>
Preparing of a project website, brochures, posters, and t-shirts; for awareness rising and educational purposes			x	<p>We did a project website by which we can in a simpler way present the importance of Balkan terrapin and its habitat. In the coming period we plan to publish through this website all activities that are related to these habitats.</p> <p>The materials that we made during previous project have been updated, adapted and distributed to the general public.</p>
Duplication of brochures, posters and t-shirts for awareness rising and educational purposes			x	<p>Brochures, posters and t-shirts are duplicated with the goal to inform and to attract the attention of both local community and Biologists (brochure is available at https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B2gRzGtoAek-OEt0SHpRekVzS2c/edit?usp=sharing).</p>

Broadcasting on radio and TV programmes because of the better informing and educating public			x	We did a guest appearance on a local radio program and national television. We uploaded video on YouTube channel of NGO Montenegrin Ecologists Society to make it available to the public. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp9vthG_8d4
Holding lectures in primary schools in Herceg Novi and Kotor, and making meetings with local fishermen's society.			x	Lectures on the topic of Balkan terrapin and its habitats were held at six elementary schools. Students showed great interest. On a meeting with local fishermen's society it was explained the importance of freshwater habitats and how fishing nets have negative impact on aquatic turtles. http://rivulata.drustvoekologa.me/druzenje-sa-osnovcima-primorskih-opstina/
Writing scientific paper based on fieldwork data.		x		Scientific paper is written but not yet published. We expect it will be published no later than the next 2 months.
Making meetings with decision makers on local and national level.			x	Most of the invited institutions responded participation. They agreed that the Balkan terrapin is endangered and that part of its habitat should have a certain level of protection. Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro expressed interest in joining NGO Montenegrin Ecologists Society in the planned monitoring of freshwater habitats of Montenegrin coast.

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

- a) High rainfall marked start of fieldwork and therefore data collection started 1 month later. Planned number of field days is completed but we have not be able to collect data at the beginning of the season so we will do it over the next exploration season.
- b) Determination of the presence of Balkan terrapin in the area of Skadar Lake and Sasko Lake included much larger part of work than we planned. There we did 4 days of fieldwork but since this is a large area, through the following activities, we will have to stay much longer in order to define presence of Balkan terrapin and determine the status of habitat.
- c) There is a lack of understanding of the local people for the tortoise protection. Financial problems and poverty for a large number of citizens, over the past 20 years in Montenegro, caused the lack of care for the protection of nature. Reform in education, more educational effort and enforcement of the penal policy is needed to overcome such problem.

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

- a) We obtained the first morphometric data for Balkan terrapin and the first data on the population structure of Balkan terrapin in Montenegro. With this we are provided with necessary input data for a rough estimate of population at the two sites. We listed endangering factors and determined activities for monitoring implementation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyY4UTgYhY4>
- b) Cooperation was established with fishermen and locals. During fieldwork we included number of fishermen and locals in project activities. Locals took us further acquainted with the terrain and places where they were watching turtles and help in capturing individuals. In this way we contributed in raising the awareness of local community about importance of their space for survival of Balkan terrapin.
- c) We started a cooperation with Environmental Protection Agency and environmental inspection. Environmental Protection Agency accepted the need to create management plan for freshwater habitats of Montenegrin coast. Following an appeal addressed to inspection related to illegally constructed mini dam on a river inspection visited the site and noted current situation. Two month latter inspection carried out the removal of dam.

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

During the field research we talked with all the people we met. We introduced them with this species and its threats and how they can contribute to its preservation. We talked about the Balkan terrapin as an indicator species of pure water, which they found very interesting. Many citizens have helped us in capturing individuals. We showed them the importance of removing weeds from the water channels and the importance of disposal of the building waste on legal sites. We also spoke about the negative impact of illegal fishing on the population Balkan terrapin. We also suggested a contact address where can apply illegal activities, such as: throwing rubbish, illegally collecting turtles from the wild, involving invasive species into nature and backfilling of water channels in order to build tourist facilities.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We have several plans to continue this work:

- continuing the research of the population to get more precise information on the state of population and its habitats,
- starting a campaign on the importance of this species with the local people,
- visiting potential habitats where Balkan Terrapin has not been confirmed yet,
- organise the work team for drafting the management plan for freshwater habitats of Montenegrin coast.

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

Information material (brochures and posters) are distributed to coastal municipalities, Environmental Protection Agency, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences – Department for

Biology, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism and local and regional ecological organisations.

We have constructed a web-page where everyone can inform on the project.
 (<http://rivulata.drustvoekologa.me/en/>) Also, the project is presented via facebook page of NGO Montenegrin Ecologists Society and on facebook page of biology student of Montenegro.

The results obtained during these two projects will be presented at the Rufford Small Grant Conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of March.

The project will be presented throughout the country and Europe by promotional material and through working meetings, symposia and conferences during which our organization will participate.

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

Month	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
Fieldwork	X		X				X		
Preparation of website brochures, t-shirts and poster.		X							
Duplication of brochures, posters and t-shirts				X					
Broadcasting on radio and TV programmes					X				
Holding lectures in primary schools						X			
Writing scientific paper.								X	
Meetings with decision makers									X

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
First fieldwork travel	280	311	+21	Prices for the fuel were higher than expected.
Second fieldwork travel	210	215	+5	Prices for the fuel were higher than expected.
Third fieldwork travel	360	363	+3	Prices for the fuel were higher than expected.
Daily allowance for fieldwork	1584	1584	0	
Daily allowance for lectures	72	92	29	This price includes the necessary fuel
Leaflet preparation, T shirts, Posters	390	390	0	
Balance	110	105	-5	Scale was 5 pounds cheaper.
Tablet device running	300	300	0	
Binoculars	130	130	0	
Web site	400	400	0	

Disposable equipments	320	435	115	We needed a larger number of nets for capturing tortoises. For this reason, we have spent an additional 115 pounds.
Meetings	844	682	-172	Because of the additional resources spent on equipment for capturing turtles we were forced to rent space for workshops at a lower price.
Bank commission (fee)	0	33	+33	This is a unexpected expense.
Total	5000	5040		

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

- Start collection of data on two new sites which are, for tourism purposes, planned to dry up and urbanise by new spatial planning documents and involve civil sector in order to understand importance of preserving natural habitats of their region,
- continuing the research population to get more precise information on the state of the population and its habitats,
- organise a European symposium about freshwater turtles in Montenegro and initiate the adoption of the convention about conservation of freshwater turtles in Europe,
- establish broader cooperation with IUCN and publish a regional scientific papers about threats to this kind in order to acquire official endangered status on IUCN list,
- in cooperation with Environmental Protection Agency and Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism form a working team for drafting the management plan of freshwater habitats on Montenegrin coast,
- being involved in the process of Environmental Impact Assessment for the habitats of Balkan terrapin,
- helping and include local community to understand and protect Balkan terrapin and its habitat,
- establishing temporary shelters for turtle seized at the borders. This sort of shelters does not exist in Montenegro yet,
- networking with colleagues from Croatia, Albania and Macedonia with the purpose of making a common action plan for this species

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?

The Rufford Foundation logo was used during the whole duration of the project. Logo is printed on the brochures, posters and T-shirts that were prepared during this project.

RSGF received publicity during this project, both on the national TV and broadcasts on the local radio stations, during our fieldwork, lectures on the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences – Department for Biology and several school and meetings with the decision markers.

11. Any other comments?

Thanks to the Rufford Foundation today we are one step closer towards the protection of certain habitats of river turtles and the results of this and previous projects have contributed to local community and decision makers are aware of the importance of this species and its habitat.

I am very grateful to the RSGF because it has recognized the problem of this kind. RSGF is the first foundation that funded the work on this problem. The data and samples we collected are unique and important for the future protection of the Balkan terrapin and its freshwater habitats. I also hope RSGF will continue the funding of these activities in order to resolve the problems and prevent the disappearance of this important species.