

## The Rufford Foundation Final Report

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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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

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### Grant Recipient Details

<b>Your name</b>	Tamar Khardziani
<b>Project title</b>	Supporting Conservation of West Caucasian Tur ( <i>Capra caucasica</i> ) in Georgia
<b>RSG reference</b>	17.12.08
<b>Reporting period</b>	May 2009 – July 2010
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5980
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ycgroup@ymail.com">ycgroup@ymail.com</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	05.08.2010

**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
1. Estimate number of animals and evaluate current threats in the identified areas			√	Hunting is the main threat for tur population in Svaneti. At least 740 individuals are spread on Georgian part of tur habitat. According to our data, tur population has trend of decline. To compare dates from 2005 and 2007, population has decreased by 200-250 individuals in Svaneti.
2. Produce report for the development of long-term conservation strategy and provide them to the Ministry of Environment and other concerned institutions			√	<i>Capra caucasica</i> status report in Svaneti, the document summarizing all collected data including thematic maps was prepared. Above mentioned report was handed to all interested parties – Ministry, all stakeholders and local authorities.
3. Promote biodiversity awareness among local population and to strengthen links between the local society and governmental entities			√	During all fieldwork, biodiversity awareness activities were held with locals to share information about uniqueness of their native region and about the West Caucasian tur. Presentations and workshops with secondary school students in 11 local schools in various villages of Svaneti were held. Informational meetings with local government concerning tur current situation also has taken place.

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

We didn't encounter problem during the implementation of the project.

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

**3.1. Estimate number of animals and evaluate current threats in the identified areas**

**a) Questionnaire Survey**

The areas of high poaching pressure or "*Capra caucasica* hot spots", as we called them, were determined in Svaneti region by the questionnaire survey. It included questions about the local

populations' attitude toward the species, hunting sites, frequency and other issues concerning tur distribution and threats. The survey was done in July 2009 and 23 hunters from different villages were interviewed.

### **Results**

Each hunter kills on average two to three individuals during each year of active hunting period. They start hunting at the age of about 15-16. There are at least two hunters per village (hunters from another parts of Georgia and foreign hunters are not taken into account). Hunters kill on average two individuals per hunting. They preferably hunt on adult males.

Main hunting season mentioned by all hunters is from the end of August till the end of November. Only few of them mentioned about individual hunting in winter months. The parts of the hunted animals taken back home are the horns and the meat. The horns of tur are very popular present these days in the whole country.

Local hunters mostly don't take foreigners for hunting; they sometimes even don't let the people from other places, or villages to hunt on the territory nearby them.

All questioned hunters expressed their wish to take part in national park creation, future activities and ecotourism, especially if it will give them the source of employment and economic benefit.

### **b) Threats and Habitat Assessment**

Threats and habitat assessment using habitat suitability analysis and special field form to record current threats were carried out. The form incorporated the major threat types outlined in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

### **Results**

As it is shown hunting is the main threat for the species. The evaluation was based only on the local hunter survey and visitor sport hunters were not taken into account. But it must be mentioned that they also play dramatic role in the population number reduction.

In Svaneti, local population owns only cattle and grazing does not represent a threat for tur at present.

There are numerous peaks in Svaneti that attract alpinists from all over the world. Those peaks and their neighbourhoods comprise the main habitat of West Caucasian tur. So, the extensity of the threat from the tourists/alpinists is quite high.

### **c) Animal Count**

With assistance of local guides and hunters' areas for detailed studies were chosen and stratified. Animal counts in the selected areas using direct count method and adaptive cluster sampling (Thompson, 1992) was conducted. This sampling technique is suitable for rare and clustered species. During direct count binoculars and telescope was used. The count was carried out about an hour after sunrise in a clear weather by a team of three persons. Data was collected on group size and composition.

## **Results**

The animal count survey was conducted during the months June-September in 2009-2010. The local guides were taken to explore the territory easier as the place is very hard to access. Because of an intensive human disturbance animals are trying to hide in more and more impenetrable places and are very difficult to find; especially daytime when they find shelter on the highest rocky slopes unreachable for humans.

The tur groups found by us in different gorges of Svaneti were females with juveniles. Adult male tur groups were counted only in two gorges. For each gorge we have found out at least one group; after sex and age identification minimal group size were identified for each gorge. Using GIS, tur habitat was mapped, which was updated during fieldworks and by local guides and hunters. According to our data at least 740 individuals are spread on Georgian part of tur habitat.

In 2005 and 2007, tur population monitoring were held by our group in the same gorges and using same methodology. According to our data, tur population has trend of decline. To compare dates from 2005 and 2007, population has decreased by 200-250 individuals in Svaneti. No animals were found in four explored gorges. We think that illegal hunting is growing up in the region and National park should be established as soon as possible.

### **3.2. Produce report for the development of long-term conservation strategy and provide them to the Ministry of Environment and other concerned institutions.**

*Capra caucasica* status report in Svaneti, the document summarizing all collected data including thematic maps was prepared. Above mentioned report was handed to all interested parties – Ministry, all stakeholders and local authorities.

### **3.3. Promote biodiversity awareness among local population and to strengthen links between the local society and governmental entities**

During all fieldwork, biodiversity awareness activities were held with locals in the studied area to share information about uniqueness of their native region and about the West Caucasian tur as an object of the highest ecological importance. The informal leaflets about the West Caucasian tur rareness, uniqueness and significance for tourism development as a flagship species in Svaneti were distributed among the locals.

Community awareness raising in Svaneti also included presentations and workshops with secondary school students. The presentation was designed for secondary school students and our team visited 11 local schools in various villages of Svaneti.

Public awareness is very important in the future conservational activities that are planned in the region. After creation of the national park and hunting farms that will also include the studied territory training in species conservation, management and marketing will be needed for those representatives of the local population who will be involved in the establishing of community based hunting farms and work as a national park staff.

Locals can also be involved in ecotourism that is developing very fast together with the common tourism in the region. They will be the best guides for the visitors and also get interested to see

more animals, e.g. turs alive and show them to tourists than to hunt. Special training and awareness programmes are necessary for this target group as well.

Informational meetings with local government concerning tur current situation also has taken place.

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

Four collaborators and three volunteers of Youth Conservationists Group were involved in the project. They have improved these skills working in team, communicating with local community and governmental institutions. Volunteers were involved in fieldwork and now they have experience in animal track identification, habitat analysis, GPS data and in a range of biological survey techniques. Due to limited time and budget we have chosen 11 most motivated local stakeholders who were involved in the project. Most of them are already involved in eco tourism (they work in local guesthouses or as a local guides). They know well the study area, local hunters and traditions. They are very interested to support conservation of West Caucasian Tur in Svaneti. It is planned to involve above mentioned persons and establish local supporting team in Svaneti, which could work actively in region on all problematic issues.

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

The results of our study once again underline that West Caucasian Tur is endangered and because of the intensive poaching pressure there is a big probability of its local extinction. In order to effectively manage this species, further study is required to monitor the population status and trends of this species. Working with local stakeholders and especially hunters gives us a hope that good planning and management of conservation measures can improve the situation.

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

*Capra caucasica* status report in Svaneti, the document summarizing all collected data was prepared and handed to all interested parties concerned and stakeholders. Soon materials will also be available on YCG website. We plan also to publish a scientific article on current status of Tur species in Georgia.

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

I used funds provided by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation in period from May 2009 till the end of July 2010. All activities have been implemented in accordance with the original work plan. Due to available funds for the study, additional fieldworks were added in 2010 year.

**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
Per Diem/Lodging	£1410	£1890	- £480	More people were involved in the fieldwork, study was expanded to 2010 and difference was added from Transportation and Seminars and meetings budget lines.
Transportation	£2800	£2540	+£260	Difference was shifted to the Per Diem/Lodging budget line
GPS	£380	£380	£0	
Binoculars	£210	£210	£0	
Leaflet	£300	£300	£0	
Seminars and meetings	£880	£670	+£220	Difference was shifted to the Per Diem/Lodging budget line
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 5980</b>	<b>£ 5980</b>	<b>£ 0</b>	

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

It must be mentioned that scientific data concerning habitat conditions, population size, recent threats and local community attitude toward this species are very scarce and without protective measures and effective conservation action there is a big probability of its extinction. Correspondingly, it now is the focus of the conservationists and scientists, alongside with other rare species. Area is proposed as candidate for National Park status and one of the strategic goals of Georgian biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP) is to implement a management plan for the conservation of Caprinae sub-family and *Capra caucasica* itself.

I think that important steps to save *Capra caucasica* will be establishing protected area in Svaneti and in close cooperation with local stakeholders implementing Tur management plan for Georgia.

**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?**

RSGF logo was used in informational leaflet on Tur and all conditions were agreed with RSGF.