

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	Iurii Strus
Project title	Fen mires of Ukrainian Polissia – highly important breeding areas for rare waders (Charadrii)
RSG reference	18157-2
Reporting period	26 Oct 2015 – 26 Oct 2016
Amount of grant	£4931
Your email address	yurastrus@gmail.com
Date of this report	17 Oct 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
Study of distribution of target species and creation of relevant maps in GIS			yes	This part of work was fully accomplished. We successfully studied the distribution of breeding sites of both species of snipe and curlew in west half of the Ukrainian Polissia zone as planned in the proposal. All locations were documented using GPS and then plotted on maps. Produced maps will be used in publications and where shared with local conservation organisations.
To prepare the proposal to Ministry of Nature Conservation of Ukraine in which we plan to justify establishment of special conservation regime on some important territories (e.g. leks, breeding sites etc.).		yes		After the completion of field works and data analysis we started to prepare such proposal. But eventually decided to wait with submission, and to get additional data to be more convincing when applying to the ministry. Some experienced specialists advised us to do so. In this year we decided to provide our proposals and recommendations only to local authorities. It is better decision, because if not successful, we will not be able to provide our proposal for same territory in nearest future. It is better to collect additional data on distribution of some other species of plants and animals and then try to submit to national government.
To distribute published materials (brochure and poster) among local schools, forestries, hunting societies, and in some remote villages.			yes	This objective was fully achieved. The brochure (http://bit.ly/2dcwMcl) and the poster were published and distributed mostly among hunters and forestry workers. Also among biology teachers and children in small village schools adjacent to study area.
To prepare several lectures/seminars for			yes	In spring 2016 we conducted the lecture for hunters on the annual

hunters and forestry workers.				meeting of their society in L'viv. Later we also prepared several smaller meetings (or seminars) for local forestry workers and hunters in the study area. On both lecture and meetings, we explained problems of species conservation. Basic nature protection legislation and some tips about identification and biology/ecology of target species.
Share of the results on the conferences		yes		The first conference, where we plan to share our results will take place on 22nd October 2016 in Skole, Ukraine, after the submission of this report. We will participate in that conference and already have registered. But because this event will be in future in relation to this report we mark this particular objective as partially achieved.
To share results through the website of West-Ukrainian Ornithological Society			yes	The goal is fully achieved. Information about the project is available on the website of the West-Ukrainian Ornithological Society (https://goo.gl/bMDhSz)
To provide databases and reports to local nature conservation institutions			yes	Databases with collected data and reports were provided to local conservation authorities.
To submit scientific paper			yes	The paper is in press and will be published in the next issue of Ukrainian ornithological journal "Troglodytes", after the mentioned conference. Actually we have collected a lot of data, and we plan to publish some additional publications.

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

This time we were better prepared to implement the project in comparison to our first project supported by the RSGF because we gained a lot of experience during that first project. Also political situation and economy in Ukraine become more stable. Therefore, we didn't encounter any major problems within the project.

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

1) This second project was the continuation of our first project. We finished the main scientific part of the project and covered all important areas of west parts of the Ukrainian forest zone. Therefore, now we possess up to date information about distribution and numbers of common snipe, great snipe and Eurasian curlew in the region. That information is important for the update of species' status in next editions of regional and national red lists. During implementation of the project we found many, previously unknown, breeding locations of mentioned species. In parallel we collected additional information about some other wetland species when it was possible. Now we can estimate the size of local populations of common snipe as 300-400 pairs, great snipe as 80-100 pairs and Eurasian curlew as 15-20 pairs. Those numbers are much smaller than numbers published in the last national red list (Red Book) and in pan-European review (for Ukraine; Birds in Europe 2, EBBA1). Basing on the results we can recommend to include common snipe to national red list with status near threatened. Also, in parallel we collected preliminary data on some other species of waders (lapwing, black-tailed godwit) which should be also included to national red list.

2) We visited many locations which were not studied for many years and performed counts there. Also we have found some new important locations. Therefore, we have created up to date GIS database that will be used in next years to improve conservation of species. Many of those sites are appropriate to be included to the Emerald network and in future, perhaps to the Natura 2000 network. Now Ukraine began active preparation of lists of territories that potentially will be included to those conservation programs. We plan to propose our sites also.

Also, we consider all collected data as part of the monitoring of rare waders in Ukraine which we plan to establish. We already started the monitoring, but only by our own effort. In future we plan to improve the monitoring by involving more volunteers.

3) We continued our educational campaign. This time we have distributed more published materials to wider audience and conducted five meetings with local people (mostly forestry workers and hunters). Surprisingly they were usually glad to get those materials and to listen about the ecology and conservation of species. Many of locals provided us with valuable clues about locations of important habitats and breeding sites of rare bird species, not only rare waders, but also some rare raptors.

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

Local communities (forestry workers, staff of nature reserves and hunters) were involved to the project as target audiences. Among those people we distributed the brochure and the poster about snipe, curlew, and other rare species and about mires in general. With hunters, we had also personal conversations on their annual meeting in Lviv and via hunting societies. Some of local forestry workers and hunters assisted us during field work. They provided transport (quadrocycles) to cross difficult parts of routes. Some local hunters even gave us clues where to search for breeding locations of rare species. So, during the second project people were not only passive listeners, but also active participants who helped us a lot.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, we plan to continue this project in next years. Now, after we conducted a lot of field surveys and collected big amount of data we would like to shift our attention to ecological education of local people (this is discussed in section 9). Of course scientific part is important and we will continue it anyway. In particular, we plan to include more species and habitat types to our study. But to achieve real conservation effect for studied species we strongly need to work with locals, especially with hunters. After this report we plan to apply again to the RSGF and in parallel to some other funds (perhaps ornithological societies). Another important reason, why we want to continue is that we would like to improve skills of our newly built team and to gain more authority among local scientific community, hunters, conservationists etc. This should benefit the influence of our team in conservation and science in future. We regard our project not only as scientific or conservational but also as a good opportunity to build strong team of motivated people.

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

Some results of our project were submitted for publication in the ornithological journal "Troglodytes". Results from previous project were partially used in our brochure and were published (and presented) on the conference in 2015. A lot of information is available on webpages of the West-Ukrainian Ornithological Society. Apart of that we plan to present materials on several conferences in nearest future. In following years, we also plan to include project results to some bigger publications (a book or an action plan).

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 grant was used as planned during the whole year. Initially we planned to start in December 2015, because we didn't expect to win the grant so fast. But we got funds earlier and started to prepare materials for publishing in November 2015. Field works were conducted as planned in late spring and in summer 2015, because this depends on natural cycles. Lecture for hunters was conducted in March 2016, when annual meeting of hunters took place. Data analyses, preparation of maps and reports were performed in late summer – early autumn as planned.

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.

Exchange rate of GBP/UAH fluctuated during the grant period from 1/33 to 1/38. Fortunately, we converted main part of the grant money to UAH when the rate was almost the highest – 1/37. In general rate was quite stable during 2016 in comparison to our first RSGF grant period of 2014-2015 when local currency (UAH) lost 300% of its value.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Transport expenditures (fuel for two cars; ~10 000 km)	1500	1486	-14	In our second grant we foreseen bigger fuel expanses and more money. Therefore, our real expanses almost perfectly equals to budget amount. This time we used two cars. One (minivan) for long trips on relatively good roads to use less fuel, and another one (off-road track UAZ) provided by the Rivne Nature reserve to drive on bad forest roads. Also some money were spent to fuel quadrocycles that were also provided for free by local reserves.
Food and accommodation (5.7 GBP * 4 persons * 70 days)	1600	1600	0	Everyone in the team obtained 5.7 GBP per day (400 in total ;) and used this money for buying food and for accommodation. Participants were free to buy what they want to eat and

				to redistribute money as they wish within field trips.
Anti-mosquito costume	122	132	+10	We have bought slightly better models which were a little bit more expensive.
Poster (proff. design and publication; 500 copies)	712	721	+9	Prices in publishing house had risen slightly, so we spent more money.
Brochure (proff. design and publication; 500 copies)	690	683	+13	Prices in publishing house had risen slightly, so we spent more money.
Buying photo on stoks for publications	50	0	-50	We have found few local birdwatchers and photographers who provided us photos for free.
Communication costs (cell phone bills)	50	50	0	In the beginning of field works we used this money to fill our cell phone accounts
Expenditures on seminar/lecture organisation for forestry workers and hunters	207	230	+23	We have used all the money allocated for this purpose from funds provided by RSGF. Also received some help from local hunting association. They provided some facilities for free. Therefore it is difficult to estimate real expenses for this item.
Total (RSGF)	4931	4902	-29	Total difference between planned and real budget is 29 GBP
Spotting scope Yukon 6-100x100	120	118	-2	The spotting scope was purchased immediately after the grant approval, so price was exactly the same as indicated in proposal.
Office expenditure and equipment	576	592	+16	This item was funded by other organisation, State Museum of Natural History in national currency (UAH). Because rate of currencies fluctuates it is always difficult to match real expenses to planned.
Total	5627		+28	

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

It is clear that main reasons of population decline of all three studied species can be divided into two groups.

- 1) Loss of habitats.
 - a) Decrease in areas of traditional pastures.

- b) Artificial land drainage in 20th century.
 - c) Afforestation of abandoned lands, including wetlands.
- 2) Direct human effect.
- a) Illegal hunting during migration.
 - b) High disturbance during breeding season.

We found that in Ukraine it is impossible to implement measures directed on habitat restoration (vegetation or water level management etc.) because such actions require landscape-scale works and huge money investments what is impossible in current stage of development of our country. But we still can do a lot in direction of ecological education of local people. We found that hunters, forestry workers, sometimes even staff of nature reserves and national parks (!!!) are ignorant in fields of nature conservation, and usually know very little about non game species of animals (e.g. waders, raptors and passerines). In the near future we plan to work mainly in the direction of ecological education of local communities. We already have done a lot by conducting seminars, distributing published materials, in personal discussions and so on. Even our frequent appearance in the study region creates in people's minds idea that nature conservation is important, at least for some people in the country. Other important direction is continuation of our study, to be able to assess species trends, statuses and habitat conditions. In other words, to monitor situation through many years. This knowledge is important for species statuses assessments in future editions of local and European red lists, and this information will be included to publish materials that we distribute among people.

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?

Yes. The logo was used in published materials (brochure and poster), on the page devoted to the project on the website of west Ukrainian Ornithological Society. Also RSGF was mentioned as a financial supporter in the submitted publication. Also we plan to use the logo in our presentation at the conference in October.

11. Any other comments?

We want to thank the Rufford Small Grant Foundation for the financial support of our projects! This support was essential for us to start the research and to create the team.



