Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Mikhail Rusin
Project Title	Conservation of rare mammals of Southern Steppes in Ukraine
Application ID	20669-2
Grant Amount	£4,200
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Date of this Report	9 October 2018

1. 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) to make a survey in Southern Ukraine for the presence of rare small mammals				We completed all the activities we planned and even more in some cases. We visited Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odessa and Zaporozhe Regions where we recorded many localities of protected species: both confirmed old ones and found many new. But unfortunately we had to record that many old localities disappeared and in general for most of our target species there is a decline in numbers and area of occupancy.
2) create maps of distribution of rare mammals in the region				We made maps for *Cricetus cricetus*, *Spermophilus suslicus, Ellobius talpinus, Spalax zemni, Spalax arenarius*, *Spalax leucodon*, *Sicista lorigera*
3) prepare data for the Red Book of Ukraine and IUCN Red List				Our collected datasets would serve as a backbone for the reassessment of the named species to the New edition of the Red Book of Ukraine (to be published in 2019 due to Ukrainian law). Also it is used for preparing reassessments to IUCN Red List (*Cricetus cricetus* from LC to VU; *Spermophilus suslicus* from NT to VU).
4) prepare National Action Plan for speckled ground squirrel				The Plan is still under preparation, because there are yet lot of uncertainties, but we hope to elaborate it in 2019.

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

There were few obstacles during the field trip (i.e. car broke in sandy dunes in Kherson Region), but we managed to overcome them quite easily. Perhaps one of the unforeseen difficulties was poor results with endoscope camera to inspect burrows of small mammals.

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

1. We collected the largest dataset of verified localities of protected small mammals in Ukraine.
2. We recorded several strong populations of protected species which could serve as source for conservation and/or restoration of endangered species.
3. We are the first who started to emphasize the importance of small mammals' conservation in Ukraine.

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

We involved volunteers in our fieldwork, distributed information booklets about conservation of ground squirrels and hamsters between local people, explained that the species are protected and overall rare and require protection. We are building network of local enthusiasts both to collect data and to promote species conservation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, we will continue our work on protected small mammals in Ukraine. In 2019 we will contribute our results to the new edition of the Red Data Book. We hope that this would allow strengthening the conservation of this species. We will continue gathering new information, monitor populations, and propose scientifically grounded conservation efforts. In 2019 we are organising the 1st Ukrainian Mammal Mapping Conference that has next goals: create a broad network of mammal watchers, gather data on mammal diversity in Ukraine, make the data publicly open, and discuss conservation issues of mammals in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

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

Part of our results is already shared in the form of datasets published in the monograph 'Findings of animals from the Red Book of Ukraine' (in Ukrainian). Also we share our results with interested parties who are into conservation of mammals.

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

The fund from the RSG was used during activities April 2017 – August 2018. This timing was enough to fulfil what we planned to do.

8. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Travel expenses	1200	1200		
Accommodation	500	630	+130	In some places prices was higher than we expected
Squirrel traps	200	50	-150	We used handmade traps thus required only to purchase materials (mesh, wire and some tools to produce them)
Longworth traps	630	0	-630	We didn't purchased Longworths
Sherman traps	1000	1500	+500	Instead we bought more Shermans
Pesola Spring Scales	70	70		
Endoscope camera	100	100		
Tent	300	300		
Consumables	120	300	+180	More consumables costs
T-Shirts	60	80	+20	Slightly higher prices than we expected
Bank costs	20	20		
Total	**4200**	**4250**	**+50**	

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

Finalize the programme for conservation of ground squirrels and start its implementation. Develop a citizen science project that could help to increase awareness in small mammal data gathering and their conservation.

10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, the RF logo was used in awareness booklets concerning the conservation of hamsters and ground squirrels, all team members had t-shirts with a ground squirrel and RF logo, the logo was used in presentations in the Annual Meeting of

International Hamster Workgroup and on local presentations.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Maria Ghazali – field participant and coordinator;

Victor Busel – field participant;

Nedko Nedyalkov – invited expert;

Lukasz Kob – volunteer;

Lukasz Synoviecki - volunteer

12. Any other comments?

We are grateful to the Rufford Foundation for the continuing support which really helps to collect data on species that are so much overlooked and very unpopular between rural populations and dramatically understudied.

Our field team visiting Black Sea Biosphere Reserve, May 2017.

New locality of *Stylodipus telum* – a species from the Red Book of Ukraine. May 2017.

Spalax zemni – an endemic species of blind mole rats that can be found only in Ukraine. Red Book of Ukraine and IUCN (VU). May 2017.

Recently a new species of birch mice was described, that is distributed in Ukraine. In IUCN it is now listed as Vulnerable as it has less than 10 active localities. We recorded the largest population of this species in Kherson Region of Ukraine. May 2017.

A young speckled ground squirrel (*Spermophilus suslicus*) in Mykolaiv Region. One of our beloved species from the largest colony in Ukraine. May 2017.

Ground squirrel captured in hand-made live-trap near the city of Mykolaiv. May 2017.

Cricetus cricetus near the city of Mykolaiv. This species faced severe decline during past decades but despite all the efforts of International Hamster Workgroup the common hamster is listed as LC in IUCN. July 2017.

Live-trapping of common hamsters in Odessa region. August 2018.

Releasing small mammals after the use of humane Sherman traps. North Odessa region. June 2017.

Releasing small mammals after the use of humane Sherman traps. September 2017.

Recording *Spalax* activity in Mykolaiv region. June 2018.

Spalax mounds on Khortytsya Island in Zaporozhe region. June 2018.

Degradation of farmlands is one of the most important threats for wildlife in Ukraine. Early crops and ploughing the land immediately after the harvest leave animals like common hamsters (and other protected species) with little to no food, and no shelter from predators. Odessa region. August 2018.

Burning of farmlands is another large threat for wildlife. Hamsters are left with poor food and shelter. Odessa region. August 2017.

Good farmlands may still be found in Southern Ukraine. The multi-crop system allows hamsters to survive. South Odessa region. August 2018.

Wild hamsters can survive when the farming is more traditional and not exhaustive. South Odessa region. August 2018.

Small mammal survey in Kherson region. May 2017

Using camera traps to record small mammals. Kherson region. May 2017.

We haven't found any protected small mammal species on Dzharylhach Island. But there are lot of larger species. July 2017.

The only small mammal we found on Dzharylhach Island – common vole (*Microtus arvalis*). July 2017.