

Project Update: January 2018

Executive summary: The project is the continuation of previous two projects devoted to the research and conservation of waders in the forest zone of Ukraine (Polissia). It has two main goals: to study in detail population numbers, distribution, threats and habitat preferences of several target species of waders on breeding grounds and to promote conservation and sustainable usage of wetlands among local communities, especially among hunters. A big part of the project is also dedicated to the work with volunteers, to create a strong network of people who are able to conduct monitoring and conservation activities for long period in future.

Activities achieved for 2017 and planned for 2018:

Approx. period	Activity	What was done in 2017
Jan–Apr 2017	Preparation of materials for publication. On this stage, we plan to publish a short brochure to distribute it among local people.	The manuscript of the brochure was prepared and printed. Then it was distributed among target groups (hunters, foresters, local school teachers etc.)
Mar–Apr 2017	Field training for volunteers who will participate in data collection	Field training was conducted in parallel to the project but started earlier in spring. In total, 46 people took part in training. All of them were volunteers, 60% of participants were students of biology faculty of Lviv National University and Ivan Ogienko National University of Kamianets Podilskyi. The rest were local birders with low level of knowledge and experience. In total, 24 field days were spent on training. After the training, in September 2017 a majority of students passed formal web-based exam in bird identification provided by the Nord University (Norway) so now they are skilled enough to participate in the data collection in 2018. In 2017, five of the students already provided us with some data on waders breeding localities. This activity was not funded from the Rufford Booster Grant (co-funded activity)
Mar–Jun 2017	Survey/questionnaire among local communities to estimate their level of knowledge	The questionnaire was distributed in paper form among local hunters and foresters. It allowed to collect additional information and to estimate the level of awareness of target auditory. In general, it was very low. Not all respondents sent their feedback, but we still expect to receive more questionnaires back during this winter. In total 54 responses were

		received.
Jul–Nov 2017	first interim report and site update for the RSG website;	The first interim report was sent to the RSG in the end of May 2017.
Aug–Sep 2017	Field works in Rivne and Zhytomyr region; Main scientific part of the project. Includes counts of five rare species of waders on wet meadows /pastures, mires, and on floodplain bogs. Habitat studies.	This part of works in 2017 was the most successful and three teams managed to cover more than 280 breeding locations of target species (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i> , <i>Limosa limosa</i> , <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> , <i>G. media</i> , <i>Numenius arquata</i> , <i>Tringa tetanus</i> , <i>T. glareola</i>) and collected plenty of data regarding precise distribution and numbers of local populations. The data was included to Ukrainian dataset for the second European Atlas of Breeding Birds which is now in preparation. After finishing the processing, we plan to publish collected materials as separate paper(s). In the end of February 2018 we also are going to give oral presentation on the meeting of West Ukrainian Ornithological Society, in Lviv.
Aug–Sep 2017	Lectures/seminars for hunters on meetings of hunting society;	One lecture took place in Lviv region and was prepared specially for hunters. Another seminar with involvement of school teachers took place in Kamianets Podilskyi. Also our traditional small gatherings with workers of Rivne Nature reserve were held, where workers (mostly jaegers and foresters were instructed).
Aug–Sep 2017	Data processing and analysis. Entry of data to GIS database. Plotting data on maps.	All collected data was inputted to the MS Access database, queried and prepared to usage in GIS. Now we are working on analysis of the data using Maxent approach (an example on fig. 2) to model species distribution and foreseen potential sites for the next field season.
Aug 2018	Second interim report and site update for the RSG website; Preparation and submission of a scientific paper.	The second interim report was sent to the RSG in the beginning of December 2017. We postponed the submitting because data processing took much more time than planned initially.
Jan 2018	Equipment purchasing	Equipment was purchased in time (camera, tripod)

Study territory and data processing.

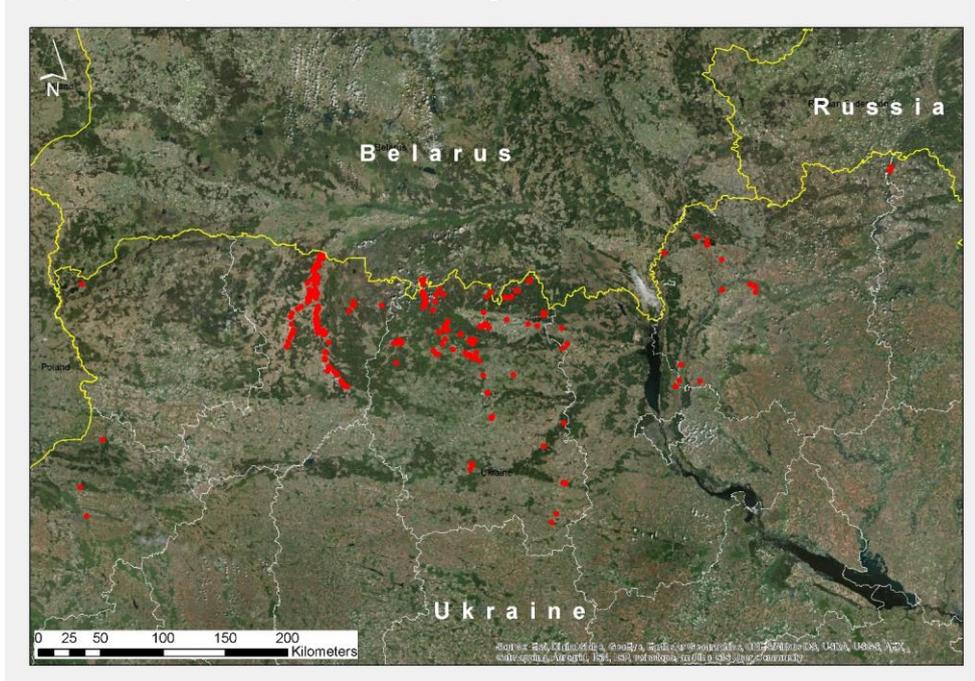
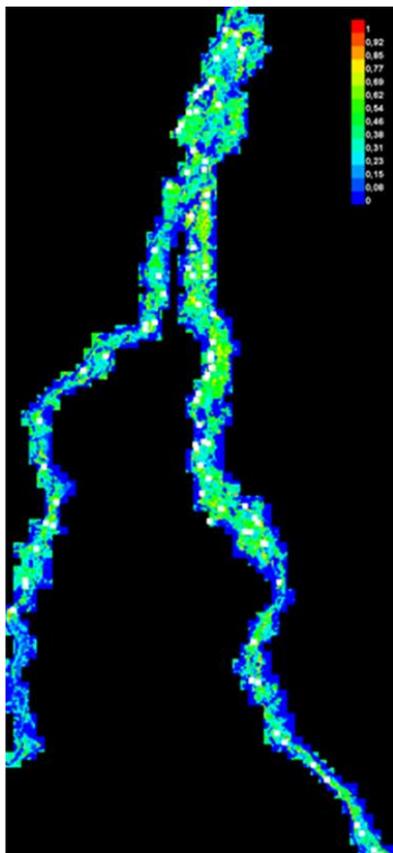


Fig 1. The region of surveys in 2017. Red dots indicate sites where we found breeding 'colonies' of waders. In 2018 we plan to fill some gaps in already covered areas and to shift field works to eastern parts of the Ukrainian Polissia (more attention to Kyiv, Chernigiv and Sumy region).

Conservation. The main conservation effect of our works, as it was planned in the proposal, is related to education activities. As indicated above we conducted some seminars and lectures, also prepared many volunteers for future data collection and practical activities.



Also, some of visited sites deserve to be included to currently elaborate Emerald network in Ukraine. We plan (during this winter) to prepare few proposals to the Ministry of Nature Protection in Ukraine with descriptions of those sites. Of course, the final result depends on ministry decisions and bureaucracy by some sites have really good chances to be included to the final network. In the beginning of December 2017 our team attended special seminar concerning data submission of proposals to the national Emerald network. Now we are working on it.

Fig. 2. (On the left side) The example of spatial data processing using Maxent approach. The map shows probability (from 0 to 1) of occurrence of the lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* in valleys of Goryn and Sluch rivers. The same approach is now applied to whole dataset in order to find perspective locations for surveys in 2018 and following years.

Also we share our data with Rivne Nature reserve, national atlas project and there is plan to include the data to next edition of National Red Book which will be published in 2019.

During next field season we are going to continue same activities.

Some photos taken during field works and trainings of volunteers in 2017.



Fig. 3. An example of wetlands on the study territory with low anthropogenic pressure and high habitat quality, Zhytomyr region, Polissia.



Fig. 4. Alarming Wood Sandpiper on its breeding territory, Zhytomyr region, Polissia.



Fig. 5. One of the project participants Mykola Veselskyi while conducting wader counts and moving through difficult terrain.



Fig. 6. Male of Black-tailed Godwit near the nest.



Fig. 7. Iurii Strus, explaining key identification features of grassland waders to volunteer fieldworkers.



Fig. 8. Another day of volunteer training Tuzlovsky lymany lagoon complex.



Fig. 9. Another day of volunteer training in the valley of Vereschytsia river.