Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Khatia Basilashvili
Project Title	Define the presence and distribution of endangered species on Egrisi ridge and promote the planning of appropriate conservation activities on the area
Application ID	27223-1
Grant Amount	£4912
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Date of this Report	04.03.2020

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
Defining the presence of mountain ungulates, West Caucasian tur *(Capra caucasica)* and Caucasian chamois *(Rupicapra rupicapra caucasica)* on the survey area				During the study, specimens of west Caucasian tur and Caucasian chamois were detected on the survey area. For *Capra caucasica*, this was the first photo-documentation event from the survey site.
Due to the survey, primary data about terrestrial large and meso-mammals diversity on the site will be available.				As a result of this survey, a primary checklist of large and medium-sized wild mammals, including eight different species, along with two endemic rare bird species, Caucasian snowcock Tetraogallus *caucasicus*, and Caucasian grouse *Lyrurus mlokosiewiczi*, was created.
Obtained information will be shared with stakeholders to support proper planning of further monitoring and implementation of conservation measures.				A general report of the project has been prepared in two languages for national and international bodies, as well as for a web blog on a social network. All the important data collected during the survey was presented in the general report. In parallel with our fieldwork, the main stakeholders working in the area were informed about our key findings (presence of rare species on the site).

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

Due to the rough and extreme characteristics of the focus area, we were prepared in advance for possible changes to previously planned actions. The main challenges during the project implementation were unpredictability of weather and climate conditions, along with difficult terrain.

Even though we knew the main tracks, we had little knowledge of the road conditions in non-touristic seasons, so we had to correct out planned schedule and main directions on the field for several times due to high snow cover, fast growing vegetation, etc.

To address this problem and cover the whole site and reduce the time required to reach the target places, we had to plan three different field directions instead of two; at the same time, we used horses instead of hiking. Due to the above-described conditions with given timing, it was almost impossible to follow the primary plan to place camera-traps randomly, therefore we had to rethink the methodology towards an opportunistic approach and at the same time consider geographically even distribution of camera traps.

In addition, there was a problem of finding ready-to-use equipment for mounting the camera traps in steep, rocky terrain. For that reason, we purchased camera trap mounts only for the forest zone use. Therefore, we had to invent our own DIY placement system to mount camera traps in the alpine areas.

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

During the study, we documented the presence of rare mountain ungulate species including western Caucasian tur (*Capra caucasica*), which was previously not known to inhabit in the area, and Caucasian chamois (*Rupicapra caucasica*). The latter is one of the most important flagship species of the Caucasian mountain fauna. During the study, the primary checklist of the fauna was compiled, including endemic and poorly studied mammals and birds inhabiting the study area.

We gained general knowledge of site-specific challenges of wildlife research, including mapping of less-used tracks, characteristics of wildlife disturbance and other important facts have been obtained. This knowledge will help increase the efficiency of planning future activities.

During the project implementation, several important awareness-raising activities were held anda general report for local bodies was prepared. For the general public, some of the information on the importance of wildlife conservation on the Egrisi Ridge was systematically published on social network. In parallel of the survey, all the findings were reported to the stakeholders, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. Hence, our recommendations were used as an expert position by ministry to prevent habitat disturbance in particular cases at Egrisi ridge.

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

Locals were actively involved during the project implementation. In the early stages of the project, we interviewed locals on distribution of wild species and used collected data for planning the expeditions. We hired horses and rented a house from locals during the project.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We decided to continue monitoring of target area to early summer 2020 at our expense. After this, we are looking forward to continuation of the study and are planning to apply for second stage of Rufford Small Grant.

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

The survey results were shared as a detailed report between local stakeholders, including research institutes, NGOs and government. The report included all the main findings and most of the raw data. Our team member will be present the survey results at the Rufford Turkey Conference 2020 with a short talk. The general report will be shared on the ResearchGate platform too.

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

The grant was used from May 2019 to February 2020, but the largest part of the grant was used for 2019 spring-summer period, when we purchased the technical equipment and when fieldwork took place.

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
camera traps	2189	1854	-335	
memory card	657	244	-413	Cheaper options were found on internet
camera trap mount	411	655	+244	Additional materials were needed to install camera-trap mounts on the rocky surface.
AA batteries	456	345	-111	Purchased camera-trap models are using 6 batteries (2 less than standard models)
Horse	150	820	+670	We used more horses than it was planned (we informed about this changing in interim report)
Fuel	266	256	-10	
House rental	190	428	+238	One extra day per expedition was needed to rearrange equipment before heading to

				the field.
Food and first aid	593	309	-284	
Total	**4912**	**4912**		Exchange rate from GBP to USD was 1.27, exchange rate from USD to Georgian Lari (GEL), was 2.76.

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

Our study detected several rare, locally and globally endangered species, including flagship species, western Caucasian tur and Caucasian chamois. For protection of detected species, the following steps are necessary:

- Study and monitor local populations of western Caucasian tur and Caucasian chamois in different habitats of the area, to define vitally important locations for local populations. We need to define critically important wild areas for other medium and large-sized mammals and local endemic birds, Caucasian snowcock and Caucasian grouse, to promote planning of future conservation measures.
- Define and monitor wild corridors and links to neighbor wild areas in Svaneti and Samegrelo for furture protection of migration corridors of the species, especially for Caucasian tur (Tekhuri Gorge, Khobistskhali Gorge).
- Evaluate direct impact of anthropogenic pressure (tourism, logging, overgrazing, poaching and infrastructural projects) to wild fauna on the site, for planning appropriate mitigation steps.

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?

We used Rufford logo at our general report, which was distributed to the local stakeholders. Logo was also used on the informational web blog and on the photos in social media platforms, when we first published about finding of rare species.

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

George Lemonjava, 30 years old, Tbilisi, Georgia. George was an organizer of the fieldworks (he planned routes, prepared camera traps installation protocols) and at the same time, he did data analysis. He prepared maps at the planning and the analysis stages.

Mikheil Potskhishvili, 30 years old, Tbilisi, Georgia. Mikheil was participating in fieldworks as a field researcher; He was also involved during the data analysis and report preparation.

Davit Kakhiani, 34 years old, Tbilisi, Georgia. David was participating in fieldworks as a field researcher. He was responsible on logistics at local level, including horse and

house rental, provision purchase etc. Took part in preparation of reports for local bodies.

12. Any other comments?

We thank The Rufford Foundation for the great opportunity and trust, looking forward to future collaboration.