

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants 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 | Dušan Toholj |
| Project title | Wildlife conservation centre "Gorski Vuk" |
| RSG reference | |
| Reporting period | 1 September 2008 to 31 December 2009 |
| Amount of grant | £5,000 |
| Your email address | sbskyteam@yahoo.com |
| Date of this report | 25 December 2009 |

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 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Feeding place for herbivores | | | X | We made five feeding places |
| Trap for wolves | | | X | We set two traps (cages) |
| Feeding of herbivores | | | X | |
| Equipment for telemetric research | | | X | |
| Trapping of animals | | X | | We trapped two wolves |

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was no information on the exact number of wolves. This issue would not be started even now if there was no problem with misuse of poisons in the fight against the wolves. Poisons are, unfortunately, generally accepted as the only way of fighting against the wolves, which proved to be untrue, because the wolves rarely return to the slaughtered animal, but many other animals (griffon vulture, fox, rabbit and various eagles) find carcasses and become innocent victims. The solution to this problem requires a scientific approach.

The wider project of large carnivores preservation would be a good way of solving the problem. Wolf is one of four large carnivores which have become extinct in most parts of Europe, but still inhabits the Balkan Peninsula.

The study area is the south-eastern part of Dinarids, eastern Herzegovina. The climate in this area is very characteristic - hot summers, mild, rainy and rarely snowy winters. The flora is also characteristic for this kind of climate - deciduous forests (oak and hornbeam), chaparral and prickly juniper bushes. High and dense forest is very rare, because of the uncontrolled exploitation by people for firewood.

The territory of the pack, movements, wolf ecology, behaviour and pattern of daily activities were studied. This is the territory with the largest number of reported wolf attacks and that was the reason why we took this area as a field of research. Our research, based on biological researches in the nearest environment (SER, HR) showed that wolves aren't and can't be supernumerary. By following the traces on the ground, howling surveys and telemetric tracking of animals, we found that wolves are territorial animals who strictly observe a hierarchy in the pack and stay, as far as they can, away from people. The belief that wolves are wandering animals is wrong; it's proven that wolves are territorial animals, they don't leave their territory or harass someone else's.

Two studied wolves were captured using cage traps, immobilized by permitted veterinary means, and after some measurements and assessments were marked by VHF collar and released. Age was estimated based on tooth wear and date of capture. On the basis of age and general physiognomy and appearance of animals, we could assume the status of the animals in the herd (they were not alpha females).

Locations of animals were calculated from at least three positions (bearings) in the field with the most clear (strongest) signal, and are compared to known locations such as rivers, houses, and roads.

The presence of wolves can be determined based on attacks on livestock, howling, fieldwork, and telemetric research.

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

Unfortunately, jurisdiction over wild animals belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture, Department for Hunting, instead to the Ministry of Ecology, as it should be. This is the main reason why we haven't experienced a positive or at least professional reaction. On the contrary, the local Hunting Association presents our organisation, our work and us as if we are enemies of the people.

Fortunately, we had strong grounds in international law and conventions so, as a result of the conflict, the Law on the Protection and Welfare of Animals was elected, which made our life and work much easier. Therefore, the project gave the results!

Beside direct contact with nature, through telemetric tracking of wolves, we started to educate the population about the necessity of wild nature preserving. We should stop looking at nature as our enemy, it is and must be considered as friend and that's the only right way of finding the satisfactory solution for coexistence with nature.

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

At our initiative, bear has been declared as permanently protected species in the territory of Eastern Herzegovina. Also, chasing of wolves as a way of hunting is temporarily banned as long as the consequences of the last hunt are not eliminated.

At our initiative, a story about wolves as animal species, their needs, habits and the importance for survival of complete nature went public. Also we propagated the importance of adopting the European Convention on the rights and welfare of animals.

At our initiative, the Law on the Protection and Welfare of Animals was elected, the first law after many decades of hunting monopolistic power in this area. The Law regulates animal rights, at least on paper.

At our initiative, corrections to the Hunting Law were made. This law stipulates that no activities on the protection and study of wild animals can not take place without the consent and approval of the Hunting Association. This needs serious reform, but this is a good start.

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

In most European countries, the wolf is protected as a species. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the countries of former Yugoslavia. Among 6 states that have arisen from Yugoslavia, Croatia is the only state which declared a wolf as protected and important species. In other countries, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, hunters' prejudices about wolf as bloodthirsty animal from which people have no benefit, still rules. Unfortunately, even the government (influenced by the hunting lobby) does not

understand the importance of preserving biodiversity. One of the most important results of the project is that we managed to draw attention of public to the problems which nature is faced with.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Minimum period of tracking which is needed to determine the size of pack home range is 9-12 months. We hope that this project will never end.

The size of home range of tacked wolves is 140-160 km², and their home ranges occasionally overlap. The size of home range enlarges in winter, due to lack of food, while during the summer there is more food available - domestic livestock, wild prey, etc. Wolves have significantly evolved and they much more rely on human sources of food, (livestock,slaughter house dumps, etc.). This is why they travel short distances, much shorter than is thought. Wolf meeting places are usually near the water, due to their own needs and for easier raising of young. Wolves naturally colonize the territories that provide the conditions for life so that tracked packs, especially tracked animals often go outside of home range, close enough to people to find food but far enough to avoid being killed. As long as there is competition between man and wild animals, projects which propagate coexistence of man and wild nature will be needed.

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

Results of our work were presented to the public on the conference in honour of 4th October 2009 - The World Animal Day. We also sent the report of our results and achievements to the authorized Ministry.

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

RSG was used in anticipated period and little longer (September 2008 to December 2009). The project has specific activities and objectives so it can't be told that it is finished. Thanks to RSG, the project was set on its feet. The project itself will last much longer than one season or 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.

| No. | Budget Lines | Project RSG (KM) | Other (KM) | Funds | Sum Project (KM) | Sum Project (£) |
|-----|---|------------------|------------|-------|------------------|-----------------|
| | A. CONSTRUCTION | | | | | |
| 1 | Feeding places for wild mammals | 337,00 | | | 337,00 | 134,58 |
| 2 | Trap for wolves | 167,00 | | | 167,00 | 66,69 |
| | SUM A (£): | | | | | 201,27 |
| | B. FOOD FOR WILD MAMMALS FOR 12 MONTHS | | | | | |
| 1 | Clover, 2500 kg | 1000,00 | | | 1000,00 | 399,34 |
| 2 | Corn, 1250 kg | 1000,00 | | | 1000,00 | 399,34 |
| 3 | Salt, 300 kg | 300,00 | 274,00 | | 574,00 | 229,22 |
| | SUM B (£): | | | | | 1027,91 |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---------|--------|---------|----------------|
| | C. EQUIPMENT | | | | |
| 1 | GPS Vista HCx | 600,00 | 45,00 | 645,00 | 257,58 |
| 2 | Collars for tacking of wolves | 5000,00 | 415,70 | 5415,70 | 2162,73 |
| | SUM C (£): | | | | 2420,31 |
| | D. GENERAL EXPENSES FOR 12 MONTHS | | | | |
| 1 | Fuel-Diesel | 2000,00 | 305,00 | 2305,00 | 920,49 |
| 2 | Food for people | 389,00 | | 389,00 | 155,35 |
| 3 | Maintenance of the vehicles | 1000,00 | 125,00 | 1125,00 | 449,26 |
| | SUM D (£): | | | | 1525,10 |
| | TOTAL SUM (£): | | | | 5174,59 |

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

As long as there is competition between man and wild animals, projects which propagate coexistence of man and wild nature will be needed.

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 posters which calls for stopping the violence toward animals (wolves). It was also used on Conference which we organised to represent project activities: 4th October 2009 – World Animal Day, 8th November 2009 –SBS Team Day, etc.

RSGF logo also appears on all parts of equipment used for telemetric tracking (reciever, antenna, collars, GPS).