

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	Ivan Djordjevic
Project title	IBA in danger. Reducing hunting pressure and improving life conditions on the most important wetland area for birds in Serbia.
RSG reference	18388-1
Reporting period	Twelve months, March 2016 – March 2017
Amount of grant	£4798
Your email address	ivan83dj@gmail.com
Date of this report	May, 2017

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
Breeding birds survey and detailed wintering and migratory bird census				We managed to conduct a detailed census of breeding bird's community in the area covered by the project with special attention on mixed colonies of herons, egrets and cormorants. Additionally, we used standardised methods to estimate number of breeding passerines and common bird species. Data on autumn and spring migration were collected. A bird ringing camp was held. International mid-winter water bird census has been successfully implemented despite the difficulties caused by extremely severe winter and very bad weather conditions. For many species, especially rare and endangered, we found that this is an area of much greater importance than it was considered earlier. Also, it is important to note that were recorded outbreak of avian influenza at a given location, what we promptly informed to competent institutions.
Human activities monitoring				My team was present at the project site during the entire hunting season, as it was planned, and we recorded and noted all of human activities related to birds. Moreover, we found that the (negative) human impact is even greater and more complex than previously thought.
Connection with hunters				Although at the beginning of the project there was a lot of resistance for cooperation with conservationists and disliking pressure among hunters (disagreements in the associations themselves, many poachers among them etc.), later we established cooperation in the field.

Raising awareness of the community about the importance of SNR Labudovo Okno as a very important habitat for birds.				Excursions for school children and their teachers from nearby settlements have been organised. Public events for the purpose of promoting the nature values of the project site and threats facing this area have been organised.
Communication with conflicting interested groups				It was not easy to make the first step and bring together all the stakeholders at the round table. But, though we had some difficulties at the beginning (not everyone responded, or responded in a small number) through two workshops we did it.
Information dissemination				We had guest appearances on local TV and radio stations. Recorded appearances and speeches have been regularly repeated throughout the year. Installation of information board about the project site values and threats is postponed; it has to wait for some local decision makers about the date for installation.

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

Due to very harsh winter and extreme weather conditions in parts of Europe, particularly in the south-east of the continent, in period January/February 2017 it was not possible to devote full attention to bird count. Instead, we focused on evaluating the situation and implementation of the temporary suspension of waterbird hunting in the whole country. Despite of all of those circumstances, International Waterbird Census was quite successfully held, but with evidence of many birds were in a poor state, suffering or dying.

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

i) Collected scientific data on birds

Inventory of bird species was done with special attention to the species of the conservation priorities. Although the avian fauna from the SNR Labudovo Okno is known to its richness, our new collected data indicate that this area is much more significant than previously thought.

ii) One of the most rewarding outcomes of this project for us was establishing cooperation with hunters. Through cooperation with hunters, mutual trust was established as well as some guidance on future joint engagements. We can say foundation for the future is created. After breaking the barriers between conservationists and hunters, members of hunting associations who want to obey

the law have realised that the only proper way is to work together with conservationists on improving and maintaining nature values. Hunters who want to respect the law are on our side, they do not want to have poachers in their own ranks:

http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news_id=339792&title=Ka%C5%BEnjen+lovac%2C+funkcioneri+izbegli+odgovornost

http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news_id=337097&title=Krivilov+na+Belom+Bagremu

iii) Raising awareness of the local community

Local people are now informed about nature values that surround them, and what are the species that are particularly important for the protection as what is allowed to do and what is not. New people are mobilised, some have begun themselves to be interested for environment and why is so important to protect the nature. Children from primary school learned about bird species and their importance in the ecosystem.

And also, we realised that this is just the beginning and how the informing and educating local communities should be given a lot of attention in the future, and to involve them in the active nature conservation. Unfortunately in Serbia (and in Balkans in general) nature conservation is unpopular in the public. There are many factors (social, economic etc.) that contributed to this situation in the past and in the present, too. Our constant work in the public and local community about values of the project site and the threats that face it contributed a lot in raising awareness about nature conservation in Serbia.

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

We directly included representatives of local communities (hunting organisations, professional fishermen, carpenter) in our project, some of them to be members of our team and help us with the monitoring (hunters and fishermen). Some of hunters assisted us during field work. When we distributed brochures to them, also had personal conversations with them on the field. Fishermen have directly benefited from this engagement in terms of earnings for boat service, also carpenter for making our information board. When we organised excursions and public events, children from the surrounding villages, their teachers and other local people were the main target group we worked with.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, our work is not complete and we plan to continue. Although we set out to do on collaboration with hunters, and it is a unique example in this country - we have only just scratched the surface. New steps should be taken to expand educational activities and raising awareness and to strengthen involvement of all local residents in the project. We plan to continue our bird ringing programme there. We gained

very interesting data of ringing recoveries by ringing and also reading colour rings by using spotting scopes and digital camera. Therefore we will try to apply for the 2nd Rufford Small Grant for next season and if it passes continue our work.

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

Our collected data are already on disposal and available for the competent institutions (Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, Institute for Nature Protection, Inspectorates). Some of our data will be in first Red Book of the Birds in Serbia, which is in preparation to publish in 2017. Several articles, describing the project's goals, conservation contributions and main activities were written and are currently pending to be published in ornithological journal and popular magazine for bird watchers.

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 project was implemented and RSG was used from March 2016 till March 2017, which is in the line with proposed project.

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.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Fuel costs for team members during the project	1023	1370	-347	We used transport more than we thought.
Boat rental and boat driver services	900	630	+270	Less than was planned at the beginning of the project.
Spotting scope	600	720	-120	The price for the proper spotting scope was higher than we firstly thought.
Printing brochures /education and promotion material for hunters with costs of reader and designer	640	500	+140	We found a cheaper solution.
Food and beverage for team members	500	850	-350	We underestimated costs at early stage.
Trail-camera, solar charger and postage costs	545	0	+545	After purchasing and long period of waiting, we decided to stop this buying and to redirect funds.

Workshop hall and organization expenses	320	525	-205	Instead of one, we held two workshops, hence the higher price.
Production of informational billboard	270	170	+100	Much cheaper than we thought.
Total	4798	4765	+33	Difference consumed in the exchange rate difference in relation to the planned.

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

We have already done part of the job and have created contacts with people who can help us achieve our long-term objective – to improve conditions for birds and other wildlife on this strategically crucial site for migrating, wintering and also breeding birds. Hence, the most important step is to continue this project and ultimately make this site safe for birds' lives. It would be very important to continue and rise to a higher level work with local community in protected area. It is very important that the local community recognise the value of natural areas in which they live, to understand the importance of nature, to accept the concept of sustainable development and protected areas, which are widely spread in other countries, and that is a benefit of living and working in a protected natural area.

After previous engagement regarding the project activities, some guidelines and specific activities for our further work we can set:

- To continue with monitoring programmes.
- To identify habitat use of flagship species (indicator species) and to determine what are their specific requirements and needs.
- Cooperation with hunters is fundamental, and to set up on a higher level.
- Local community education should become one of the priorities in the sphere of our work and involving local community to detect wildlife crime.
- Absolutely urgently improve and secure the breeding sites of ibises, terns and waders.

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. We used the RF logo in all oral presentations we gave on the workshops and on local TVs. We used the logo on presentations at the IUCN Red List Workshop, held in Serbia in June 2016. Several articles, describing the project's goals, conservation contributions and main activities were written and are currently pending to be published in ornithological journal Ciconia and popular magazine for birdwatchers Detlić (also some of them have yet to be written) and RF will be clearly highlighted in the acknowledgements sections.

11. Any other comments?

On behalf of the team, I want to thank to RSGF for the trust. I also hope that RSGF will recognize as a good example and continue the funding of these activities.