

## Final Project Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Uroš Pantović
<b>Project Title</b>	Long-term conservation of key biodiversity sites in Serbia – evaluation and designation of a new national network of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas
<b>Application ID</b>	23302-B
<b>Grant Amount</b>	£9.269
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<b>Date of this Report</b>	August, 2019

**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
Current update of the status of existing network of IBAs in Serbia				During 2018 and 2019, data was gathered in 24 existing IBAs in order to determine current population sizes of key bird species which trigger IBA nomination criteria for Serbia and to evaluate/validate the need for expansion or reduction of the current size of each existing site. Since the last IBA revision (2009) the criteria for nominating IBA sites has significantly changed (a number of species has been downlisted from relevant SPEC categories making them ineligible or significantly increasing the triggering population thresholds) and all current IBA sites needed to be revised under the new criteria. Upon completion of data analysis, two existing IBAs did not meet the new criteria and were not considered for submission to BirdLife International (BLI) for official revision. Four IBAs were divided into two, or in one case three, new sites with expansion of the total surface area nominated.
Establishment of potentially new IBAs in Serbia				Research on abundance and population sizes of breeding and/or migrating, wintering populations of key species was conducted in 23 potentially new IBA sites, which were chosen based on previous research. All of them were officially proposed as new IBAs, including an additional nine previously researched.
Official submission of proposed new network of IBAs for revision to BirdLife International				Data collected during the implementation of this project, data collected during previously implemented Rufford Small Grants and published data was collected

			<p>and deposited into the database of BPSSS, the BioRaS portal. This data refers to breeding and/or migrating, wintering populations of 114 bird species. Official proposals were developed for 74 sites (32 new sites, 42 existing / revised), assigning each of the triggering species adequate criteria according to their population sizes, migratory status and other ecological parameters per each site. All of this data, including data on population trends of key species in each proposed IBA, habitat types and sizes, threatening factors etc., was uploaded into the WBDB database of BirdLife International. Borders for each proposed site were delineated in QGis and sent as separate shp files, completing the submission process.</p>
<p>Promotion of the importance of IBAs for nature conservation and establishment of Natura 2000 network</p>			<p>During the course of the project we have informed the public of our efforts through internet and social media, newspapers and magazines. The importance of the IBA network for the future Natura 2000 network was highlighted in several meetings with relevant stakeholders and decision makers such as Institutes for Nature Conservation of Serbia and Vojvodina Province, Ministry of Environment and management bodies of nature reserves. The project and its progress was promoted to the wider NGO nature conservation community on annual assemblies of Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia.</p>

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

The unforeseen difficulties that arose during the implementation of the project were related with bad weather conditions during conduction of field research. A relatively mild winter in January 2019 caused the wintering populations of birds to be more dispersed on large rivers and lakes and other water bodies, making the winter count

more logistically challenging in man power and resources. It is important to mention that we were aided by numerous volunteers from the membership base of BPSSS during the winter counts in order to cover more ground, which resulted in providing very precise population estimates of wintering birds. Heavy rainfall during June 2019, in the height of the breeding season for most species, made field research very difficult, especially in mountainous areas.

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

**a). Proposal for a new network of IBAs officially submitted for revision by BirdLife International:** Proposals for 74 areas in total were developed and officially submitted. Each proposal contains data on population sizes and trends of key species for that site, types of habitat present, various geographical data and data on evaluated threats most dominant and official protection status (under national legislation) in each particular site. If fully approved, the newly proposed IBA network will almost be double in size compared to the previously defined network in 2009.

**b). Established precursor for defining potential SPAs in Serbia (Special Protected Areas) under the Natura 2000 banner:** The criteria and methodology used for nomination of IBAs is very similar to those used for defining SPAs, although somewhat stricter. Therefore, officially approved IBAs in practice must be regarded as future SPAs. This fact will make the process of establishment Natura 2000 in Serbia much easier in practice for relevant decision makers and stakeholders as it will significantly facilitate the transposition of the Birds Directive into the national legislation.

**c). Database for avian diversity of 74 areas established:** During the course of the project data was primarily collected for 114 target species, but of course during the conduction of field research we recorded the distribution and abundance of all species present. This valuable data set may have many applications in other initiatives and conservation projects in Serbia, such as the national atlas for breeding bird species, establishment of National Ecological Network and updating management and conservation plans of certain nature reserves.

### **4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.**

During the implementation of the project we have established very good cooperation with the people from local communities, especially with local nature conservation CSOs and management bodies of several nature reserves, which aided us with logistic issues during fieldwork. Our work contributed to better knowledge of the biodiversity of all nature reserves within our designated IBAs and will directly influence the annual management plans for those areas. In several nature reserves the managing organisation showed interest in establishing monitoring schemes for certain species of conservation importance. Also, we encouraged local CSOs and aided them in developing their project proposals for the local governments, as well as international nature conservation foundations.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Our plan for the future is to endeavour to define new areas as potential SPAs, which did not meet the IBA criteria, but might meet some of the SPA criteria. Also, we plan to invest time and resources towards monitoring of those IBAs which are officially classified as "IBAs in danger" because of one or a combination of threatening factors affecting their habitats and biodiversity. The good cooperation established with managing organisations of several nature reserves will enable us to develop and implement species-specific monitoring schemes in those areas.

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

Upon completion of the official revision by BirdLife International our immediate plan is to publish a paper, which will contain all relevant information about each approved IBA site – data on population sizes and trends of key species (and also of other species which are of national importance), criteria used for site nomination, data on most dominant habitat types, geographical data. We plan to publish this paper in the scientific journal "Zaštita prirode" issued by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia or in some similar journals from the Balkan region. For the future we will endeavour to find funding to publish a book about the new IBA network in Serbia, describing in detail the entire process that preceded its establishment. The results of our project will be officially presented to the wider nature conservation public, including representatives of relevant governmental institutions, public enterprises, nature reserves and other relevant stakeholders, at the annual assembly of Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia in November, which this year marks its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Project report will also be published on BPSSS web site.

Apart from this, when we receive the results of the official revision, we will promote them through several media outputs (TV shows, web and social media, newspapers) via numerous media contacts that BPSSS has established over the years.

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

The project was implemented from November 2017 until August 2019. Implementation exceeded one month in length compared to the project proposal.

**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
Laptop computers (2 units)	920	934	+14	Price has changed a bit.
Game call whistle for Capercaillie (9 units)	109	109		
Game call whistle for Hazel Grouse (9 units)	109	109		
Speakers for sound reproduction (9 units)	337	373	+36	Price has changed a bit.
MP3 devices for sound reproduction (9 units)	588	570	-18	Price has changed a bit.
Project uniforms for fieldwork (9 units)	977	977		
Backpack for fieldwork (9 units)	558	558		
Food costs during fieldwork	1050	1300	+250	Additional resources from BPSSS projects and managing organisations of nature reservations.
Travelling costs for all members of project team during field research	2616	2958	+342	Due to the scope of field work, unfavourable weather during breeding season 2019, additional traveling cost occurred. Difference covered by funds diverted from printing of promotional material.
Costs of accommodation during field research	450	650	+200	Additional resources from managing organisations of nature reservations.
Travelling cost during the media campaign	185	185		
Costs of design for project brochure	70		-70	Project leaflet from the previous Rufford Small Grant was modified and reprinted in order to save some budget for additional fieldwork.
Costs of printing promotional material	900	500	-400	Project leaflet from the previous Rufford Small Grant was modified and reprinted in order to save some budget for additional fieldwork
Costs of media campaign and final press conference	400	400		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9269</b>	<b>9623</b>	<b>+354</b>	

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

For the future, further efforts need to be invested in tackling threats (habitat destruction, poaching, wildlife poisoning) primarily in those sites in Serbia which are officially listed as IBAs in danger, but also in other sites which have similar threats. Another important step would be to further develop cooperation with managing organisations of nature reserves which exist within current IBAs and to develop monitoring schemes for priority species in those sites.

A part from this, one of the most important things long-term would be to monitor the eventual implementation of the Natura 2000 programme in Serbia, especially designation of SPA sites and to ensure that our newly developed IBA network is fully integrated in this process.

**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. We used the RF logo on project leaflets. Also, we have used the logo in all presentations during the promotional activities of the project and meetings with relevant stakeholders, including governmental institutions and nature conservation CSOs. We have promoted conservation efforts of RF in all published articles about our project.

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

Our project team consisted of the following members:

**Uroš Pantović** – team leader; responsible for overall project planning and implementation, communication and reporting; responsible for carrying out field research, data analysis and preparation of official proposals for IBA revision.

**Draženko Rajković** – field research coordinator; responsible for planning and organizing field research for all target species, data analysis and preparation of official proposal for IBA revision.

**Marko Šćiban** – responsible for organizing and coordination of winter counts of target species, field research and aiding the rest of the team for preparations of official proposals for IBA revision.

**Ivan Djordjević** – field researcher.

**Radislav Mirić** – responsible for field research and aiding the rest of the team for preparations of official proposals for IBA revision.

**Dimitrije Radišić** – responsible for field research and aiding the rest of the team for preparations of official proposals for IBA revision.

**Nikola Stanojević** – responsible for field research, data analysis and preparation of official proposal for IBA revision.

**Saša Rajkov** – responsible for data management within the BPSSS database and delineation of borders of all IBAs in GIS software.

**Miroslav Vračarić** – field researcher.

## 12. Any other comments?

On behalf of our project team and all participants of the project I would like to thank you once again for your continued support of our conservation efforts and this project. I believe that we have achieved a crucial milestone in bird conservation in Serbia with the development and official establishment of the new network of Important Bird Areas. This work will without a doubt serve as a foundation for numerous other conservation initiatives and programmes.



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