

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
Full Name	Nur Bikem Kesici
Project Title	Conservation of Top Predators through Monitoring and Capacity Building in the Gökçeada Island (North Aegean Sea)
Application ID	27585-1
Grant Amount	£5,000
Email Address	nbkesici@gmail.com
Date of this Report	28.08.2020

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
Questionnaires with students & stakeholders, training packages. (activities 1 & 2)				Questionnaires were accomplished and training packages were provided. The first questionnaire and training package was conducted in the winter of 2019. In the spring of 2020, we performed our second training package via Zoom application due to pandemic and conducted the last questionnaires online. Other questionnaires that were applied to stakeholders were carried out on each survey period.
Gaining knowledge on the target species via seasonal boat surveys and land observations (activity 3)				Boat surveys and land observations were successfully conducted in the summer and autumn of 2019, and winter of 2020 (a total of 26 days). However, no surveys were carried out in the spring of 2020.
Stranding determination surveys (Activity 4)				There was no stranding case during our project.
Photo ID of the individuals present via the use of Discovery software. (Activity 5)				Species photographs were taken when encountered, and the images were analysed through Discovery software.
Publishing (Activity 6)				In preparation phase.
<b>Bonus activity*</b> Passive Acoustic Monitoring of the cetaceans				With the co-operation of DMAD, a passive acoustic monitoring kit was brought to the Gökçeada Island and acoustic patterns of some species were recorded.
<b>Bonus activity*</b> PAMGUARD software analysis				All recordings were analysed for over 2 months with PAMGUARD software.
<b>Bonus activity*</b> Gathered local ecological knowledge on the marine top predators				During the pandemic, we stayed in contact with the fishermen, harpooners and divers via social media platforms and via private conversations. Each top predator

				record in the island since 2016 was gathered including information of date, location and number of individuals.
<b>Bonus activity*</b> Illustrations for social media				An illustrator was paid for the preparation of social media posts and other visual aids such as informative leaflets and posters.

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

Since there was no study ever conducted before in the area, we did not exactly know where and when we would encounter these animals the most frequently. We encountered them only in the north-northwest of the island. Visual encounters only happened during the autumn season, but a very big number of the sightings from fishermen and harpooners were recorded in the spring season. Therefore, if we have had that information previously, we would save a lot of time and money in terms of survey efforts.

The weather conditions were difficult too. Even in the autumn we had mostly bad weather, with the wind blowing with more than 4-5 Beaufort scale almost every day of the planned survey. We had to postpone it to another week and waited for the next weather window to sail again, which costed us a lot more than planned. As expected, tough weather conditions worsened in the winter. We only had 1 day on the boat, and the rest we had to continue with land observations. We put our biggest expectations on the spring survey, based on the conversations we had with the stakeholders. We planned to make a long acoustic survey in the spring of 2020 in order to encompass the previous ones. However, we could not make it due to the pandemic.

We had an accident at sea; on the way back to the marina the brake system of the boat malfunctioned, and we crashed to the shore. The boat has put ashore for an unknown period of time, so we had to finish the survey in autumn unexpectedly. And our next surveys were plugged into jeopardy in terms of getting further permissions to use the boat again.

I think I acted a little bit optimistic when calculating the budget because honestly, I really wanted to make this project happen. Even though we were not able to conduct the 2020 spring survey, we still conducted the project with a much more budget than we anticipated in the beginning. Another problem with the budget was that it was the first time that I have cooperated with an NGO. Therefore, it was a bit challenging to correlate the project's budget with the NGO's own budget structure.

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

I would consider the most important outcome of the project as the establishment of MAPCON (Marine Apex Predator Conservation). As you can follow us from our

Instagram account, we are regularly posting updates from our work as well as illustrations of target species with brief comments about their ecology, threats to their population and their protection status in the Mediterranean. It has reached over 200 followers already. We are planning to keep this profile active for further research in the area.

Another important outcome was establishing the very first database through our visual and acoustic surveys, enriched with local ecological knowledge in the area. Through the cooperation of the stakeholders, we were able to collect the selected species data from the year 2016 until today. Moreover, we did not only achieve the first population data of the species in the area, but also the first acoustic data and the first acoustic recording of a sperm whale with this project.

Another important outcome that I would like to mention, was working with children. The first questionnaire which was conducted before the training package revealed how little they know about the marine ecosystem that surrounds them, and of course the animals that inhabit in this ecosystem. Most of them have never heard about dolphins or whales living around the island at all. After operating the training package via online and face-to-face presentations, the results coming from the second questionnaire was fascinating. After conducting the training packages, they were able to talk about terms like the ecosystem, food chain, marine habitats, top predators etc. From the beginning of the project until the end, they were always super excited to be a part of a conservation action.

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

The involvement of local communities helped us a lot during the tough weather, also during the pandemic. We were always in contact with them and had the opportunity to record every target species occurrence just as if we were there. Both the fishermen and other stakeholders were in great cooperation with us. I think they enjoyed very much being a part of the conservation action and that their opinion and sightings were valuable to us. I believe that further projects will be much easier to be conducted since we built a strong relationship with them and gained their trust. They ended up being one of the biggest supporters of the project. Besides, it would be great if we could present our project results to the key stakeholders such as the Gökçeada Municipality and the District Governorship. I have no doubt that such effort and cooperation with the students and local communities would be appreciated by them too.

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

Under the current knowledge we have gained from our 1-year experience, I would love to take this project one step further by planning another 1-year seasonal survey, conducted merely in the northwest of the island. I have to admit that there still is the excitement of collecting the first top predator data in the area; visually, acoustically, local community based. However, this pandemic has disrupted our systematic data collection. Nevertheless, we have already seen how much there still is waiting to be determined and to be protected.

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

The data collected with the current project is being prepared for a publication for a peer-reviewed journal. Also, we will be looking for an opportunity to go to the Gökçeada Island and briefly inform the key stakeholders about our work with a presentation, thereby we could establish a cooperation between MAPCON and key stakeholders for future works.

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

The Rufford Foundation Small Grant was utilised across a 9-month period (3 months lost due to the pandemic). Each activity was taken place on time except for the spring season.

**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	Rufford Budget	Actual Amount	Difference Rufford v Actual	Comments
Education at Gökçeada Middle Schools	20		10	-10	Due to the pandemic, we could not meet with the students during the spring season: we conducted our training packages and the second questionnaire via Zoom.
Hooway 7x50 Waterproof Floating Marine Binocular w/ Internal Rangefinder & Compass (Army Green) *2 + Nikon Action Binocular (8x42) (*2)	500	350	720	+370	We bought one extra binocular because the one that one of us already had, turned out to be missing.
Asus Vivobook (X512UF-BR024T I5-8250U/8GB DDR4/1TB HDD/2G NVIDIA GeForce MX130/win10	350	350	675	+325	The stock of this model in Turkey was depleted. We had to look for another model with the features we wanted. The price became more expensive

					due to the exchange rate increase.
Canon EF 400mm f/5.6L USM Lens + Canon 5d Mark IV Camera	3500	3500	3461	-39	There is 39 GBP difference due to the difference in the exchange rates.
Transportation from İstanbul to Gökçeada [20 GBP*(3 Researches +3 volunteers)*3 round-trip]	480		360	-120	We couldn't conduct the spring survey therefore we 1 round-trip is missing.
Offshore Surveys = Boat will be rented from fisherman/ Sailors + repairment	2000		2200	+200	Normally it would cost 1500 GBP (500 GBP per season) but we paid 700 GBP more because of the boat accident. The accident considered to be our fault.
Land surveys for Kaleköy, Gizli Liman, Tepeköy, Kefalos (Petrol 4*20GBP) *2 round-trip	160		160	+160	The projected land surveys were carried out.
Accommodation in the island for a week (15 GBP*(3 Researches +3 volunteers) *10 days*3 times)	1680		2700	+1020	During the tourism season of the island (summer and autumn), the accommodation fee has increased unpredictably. (In this case, 15 GBP is the average of the 3 seasons)
Report production (Final report and Informative Leaflets) (Print=10*25GBP)	250		750	+500	The preparation of all visual materials such as illustrations and posters were carried out by an illustrator with a cost of 500 GBP.
Meeting with policy makers (10GBP*3 volunteers*2 meeting)	60			+60	The meeting with policy makers during the spring could not be held due to the pandemic.
Transportation of the Passive			300	+300	The acoustic kit, which is very heavy and uneasy

Acoustic Monitoring Kit					to transport, was transported from Muğla to the island.
Theodolite and Tripod	800	800	200	-600	We tried two different brands of theodolite, but we were dissatisfied. Therefore, a Swarovski brand telescope was rented instead of a theodolite.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9800</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>5056</b>	<b>+ 56</b>	

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

Public awareness and capacity building activities must continue in Turkey. As we have learned, this kind of attempts needs a longer time and much more effort (more than one or two meetings and talks) to remain permanent.

More than that, short-term studies won't reveal realistic and consistent results regarding species abundance and distribution patterns. For an accurate interpretation of the data, the research has to continue with multi-year sampling occasions. Therefore, survey effort has to continue for the baseline information that we have already started collecting!

**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, all presentations, both verbal and online, and posters contained the Rufford Foundation logo. Also, at the end of any submission for a peer-reviewed journal, The Rufford Foundation will be acknowledged for their contributions. Similarly, any documentation distributed related to the project also has the logo on.

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

**Nur Bikem Kesici** – Project coordinator who was responsible for conducting/supervising the project's core team. Also worked as social media account manager.

**Dr. Aylin Akkaya** – Operated scientific marine mammal surveys and trained the team on photo ID.

**Asst. Prof. Cem Dalyan** – Worked on a number of tasks such as coordinating the team, transportation, accommodation, communication with all stakeholders and capacity building activities.

**Patrick Lyne** – Patrick is an MMO/PAM specialist responsible for assembling and operating the PAM system. He also trained the volunteers on how to use it.

**Belen Yıldırım** – Worked as a researcher during boat surveys and land observations, as well as PAM recording and analysis.

**Suna Tüzün** – Worked as a researcher during boat surveys and land observations.

## 12. Any other comments?

We would like to thank The Rufford Foundation for the contribution they have made to our project. Without the support of Rufford, it wouldn't be possible to reach our conservation goals in the Turkish waters of the Mediterranean.