

Rufford Small Grants Recipients Conference Tsaghkadzor, Armenia, 27-30 September 2012



Report

The second Rufford Small Grants Recipients Conference took place in Armenia from 27-30th September, 2012. On behalf of Young Biologists Association (YBA) the principal coordinator of the meeting was Marine Arakelyan – leader of YBA Biodiversity Conservation and Research Group, coordinator - Sargis Aghayan, vice-president of YBA, and organizer – Arsen Gasparyan, president of YBA. Four active members of YBA were selected to help to organize the conference as volunteers.

The welcome reception of the conference took place on 27th of September and representatives of Ministry of Nature Protection, environmental NGOs, international organisations, scientific institutions and other organizations participated on it. The special guests of the evening were Mr. Khachik Hakobyan, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Republic of Armenia and Mr. Josh Cole, Grants Director of RSG Foundation. As result of meeting, new connections between representatives of local and invited organizations were established.

The working days of the meeting were 28-29 September. More than 20 participants from 8 countries (Armenia – 11, Belgium – 1, Georgia – 1, Croatia – 1, Iran – 3, Russia – 3, Turkey – 1, Ukraine – 1) attended conference, of which 15 conservationists presented their implemented and ongoing Rufford Funded Projects.

On 28th of September, round table discussion called “Cooperation and communication in conservation actions” was organised, where participants were discussing the ways of development of international conservationists’ teams, the role of conferences and meetings in further cooperation. Participants came out with a joint decision to make an international network of conservation oriented specialists and organizations under management of Young Biologists Association NGO.

Two field trips to “Dilijan” and “Sevan” national parks were organised, which are among biodiversity and cultural “hotspots” of Armenia.

The conference served as platform for many specialists in conservation biology working with the same taxonomic groups to meet each other and find the ways of cooperation. On behalf of YBA established “Borderless Conservation Network” provides multidiscipline environment to discuss local conservation issues on an international level and organize joint biodiversity conservation and research projects. At the time the network is operating on a Facebook page level. Currently we are creating the network concept, discussing funding possibilities and inviting more conservationists to join the network.

The conference gave an opportunity to meet many good friends and colleagues from different countries and to establish long-term collaborations with them. Some of these people had only been ‘known’ via e-mail and it was this special opportunity provided

by RSGF that enabled the meeting to happen. Each of the recipients, despite in house tensions of the countries represented, co-operated and shared amazingly well. It was a bridge building exercise initiated by a nature conservation conference.

We want express our thanks to Rufford Small Grant Foundation for this opportunity!