

**International Conference
«The Rufford Foundation and
Northern Eurasia Biodiversity Conservation»
15–16 of October 2021
State Darwin Museum, Moscow, Russia**



The Conference Report

Title: RSG Russia Conference 2021

Date: October, 15–16, 2021

Venue: State Darwin Museum, Moscow: Vavilov Street, #57

Country: Russia

Organiser: Wild Nature NGO

The Conference held at the State Darwin Museum in Moscow, Russia: in the comfortable and modern Conference hall equipped with relevant technical facilities as computer and projector, big screen and tribune.

Initially, the personal invitations were sent to the 180 the Rufford Foundation grant's recipients from 12 countries. We have got the positive feedback from 32 people and finally 23 experts (representatives of 15 the Rufford Foundation's projects) from 3 countries: Russia (17 people), Kazakhstan (5 people) and Bulgaria (1 person) were present in person. 13 oral reports and 1 poster were presented. All together 41 authors have submitted 16 manuscripts to the Proceedings of the Conference book: 9 – in Russian and 7 – in English. All the Conference papers have been uploaded to the web-site: rufford-conference.nethouse.ru. The regional Rufford Foundation Small Grants recipients and the Conference attenders list is below.

The Conference Participants list

№	Name	Country, region	Organization, position	Presenta- tion	Publica- tion
1	<i>Josh Cole</i>	Great Britain	The Rufford Foundation Grant Director	–	–
2	<i>Igor Fadeev</i>	Russia, Moscow	Darwin State Museum Leading Researcher	+	–
3	<i>Svetlana Baskakova</i>	Kazakhstan, Zhabagly	"Wild Nature" NGO Director	–	+
4	<i>Polina Shakula</i>	Kazakhstan, Zhabagly	"Wild Nature" NGO, the Conference facilitator	–	–
5	<i>Stepan Shakula</i>	Kazakhstan, Zhabagly	"Wild Nature" NGO, the Conference facilitator	–	–
6	<i>Pavel Kvartalnov</i> (RSG-2011-2012)	Russia, Moscow / Tajikistan	Senior Researcher in Lomonosov Moscow State University, Biological Faculty	+	+
7	<i>Igor Popov</i> (RSG-2008, 2011)	Russia, St. Petersburg	St. Petersburg State University	+	–

8	Mark Pestov (RSG-2006, 2008, 2010)	Russia, Nizhniy Novgorod	The Amphibia and Reptilia Conservation Society Coordinator in the Dront Ecocenter	+	+
9	Anastasiya Demidova	Russia, Moscow	Assistant prosecutor in Interdistrict Environmental prosecutor's office	-	+
10	Alexei Petrov	Russia, Moscow	Inspector in Federal Customs Service	-	+
11	Anna Filippova	Russia, Moscow	Employee in International Fund for Animal Welfare	-	+
12	Alexander Karpukhin	Russia, Moscow	Lawyer in Five Stones Consulting Law Firm	-	+
13	Sergey Titov (RSG-2019)	Kazakhstan, Pavlodar	«EntomoLife» NGO Director	+	-
14	Anton Abushin (RSG-2021)	Russia, Kalmykia	Researcher in "Chernye zemli" Nature Reserve	+	+
15	Tatiana Sviridova (RSG-2012-2013)	Russia, Moscow	A.N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences	+	+
16	Alexei Dondua (RSG-2010)	Russia, St. Petersburg	Senior Researcher in Beringia National Park	+	-
17	Ivan Taldenkov (RSG-2004)	Russia, Moscow	Senior Researcher in Lomonosov Moscow State University, Biological Faculty	+	-
18	Heliana Dundarova (RSG-2018)	Bulgaria / Kyrgyzstan	Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences	+	+
19	Tatiana Ivkovich (RSG-2011, 2014)	Russia, Far East	St. Petersburg State University	+	-
20	Anna Loseva (RSG-2017)	Russia, St. Petersburg		+	-
21	Nazerke Bizhanova (RSG-2020)	Kazakhstan, Almaty	Institute of Zoology of the Republic of Kazakhstan, researcher	+	+
22	Yury Yarovenko (RSG-2008-2009, 2011)	Russia, Daghestan	Professor in Caspian Institute of Biological Resources	+	+
23	Elena Yarovenko	Russia, Daghestan	Ph.D. Associate Professor in Biology Faculty of Dagestan State University	-	-
24	Konstantin Tirronen (RSG-2017)	Russia, Petrozavodsk	Ecological Centre	+	+
(25)	Olga Mochalova (RSG-2010, 2012)	Russia, Far East	Institute of Biological Problems the North FEB RAS	+	+
(26)	Pavel Weinberg (RSG-2009, 2012)	Russia / Armenia	North Ossetian State Nature Reserve	-	+

(27)	Georgiy Shakula (RSG-2013, 2015, 2018)	Kazakhstan, Zhabagly	"Wild Nature" NGO biodiversity expert	–	+
(28)	Alexandr Ischenko (RSG-2016, 2018)	Moldova, Chisinau	CEO in Moldovan Environmental Governance Academy	–	+
(29)	Anna Moldovan (RSG-2015)	Moldova, Chisinau	Laboratory of Systematics and Molecular Phylogeny, Institute of Zoology	–	+

In a week in advance the conference date, a press release was prepared, addressed to the PR-service of the State Darwin Museum.

The Rufford Foundation Grantees Conference Press-release text

1. The Rufford Foundation is a charitable, non-profit organization based in the UK, providing grants to environmental projects around the world. It was conceived as a fund to help young scientists at the initial stage of their career development, but there are no age restrictions, and any qualified project for the study and conservation of rare species and their habitats has a chance of funding. The Foundation welcomes long-term cooperation and continued activities on successful projects. Additional information can be found at: <https://www.rufford.org>

2. Conferences of the Rufford Foundation are a form of cooperation, acquaintance and reporting of the grant recipients of the Foundation. Before the coronavirus, up to 10–12 conferences were held per year – on a regional basis. The Moscow conference heralds a return to traditional format in the stream of a social revival amid a resurgent society amid the recession of the coronavirus pandemic.

3. The Moscow conference will be held on October 15, 2021 from 10:00 to 18:00 at the State Darwin Museum and is designed to unite the participants who carried out projects in the territory of "Northern Eurasia" – that is, in Russia and neighboring countries for the project investigators have been completed their projects over the entire history of the foundation's grant activities – since 2004 to the modern days. The main language of the conference is Russian, with a short simultaneous translation into English, when necessary. The conference was originally scheduled to take place in October 2020, then postponed to 2021.

4. We are grateful to those 23 participants who found the time, financial and intellectual resources and made an effort to make this conference held in the traditional face-to-face format. As a result, we have: 13 oral reports, 1 poster, 3 delegated reports (not the author, but his authorized representative will speak) and 3 absentee participation (just accepted articles for publication). The program and list of conference participants attached. The State Darwin Museum staff is welcome to attend.

5. At the end of the conference, the works of its participants will be posted on the website: <https://www.rufford-conference.nethouse.ru>, and the English summaries will be posted on the website: <https://www.rufford.org>.

6. The next regional conference of the Rufford Foundation grantees implementing projects in Northern Eurasia scheduled to July 6–7, 2022 and will hold in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Following the Rufford Foundation mission, the aim of the conference was to encourage networking amongst RSG grantees and to promote the role that the Rufford Foundation plays in supporting conservation at a local, national and international level.

The main outputs of the Conference are:

- understanding the Rufford Foundation role in unity and fruitful work of the biodiversity experts,
- understanding the Research and Conservations results and issues in Northern Eurasia,
- Northern Eurasia experts network creation,
- attracting attention and organizing cooperation with the State Darwin Museum and the Wild Nature NGO.



Fig. 1. Everything is ready for the Conference. Facilitator *Stepan Shakula* is waiting for the beginning

We chose the standard format for International Scientific Conference as a series of participant's presentations, round table & discussion and the Conference resolution acceptance, certificates awarding, watching the movie "*Living Planet*", the State Darwin Museum exposition tour and informal communication of the conference participants. The full Conference agenda is below.

The Conference Agenda

10:00–10:10 Registration
10:10–10:15 Igor Fadeev – the Darwin Museum Leading Researcher. Address to the Conference participants
10:15–10:20 Svetlana Baskakova. Introduction Speech
10:20–11:30 Work of the section "<i>Biosphere approach to biodiversity conservation</i>"
Olga Mochalova. The Research and Conservation of Rare and Threatened Plants and Important Plants Areas of Magadan Region (Northern Far East, Russia). Poster
Pavel Kvartalnov. Recently rediscovered birds as umbrella species for vulnerable mountain shrub communities in Pamirs, Tajikistan
Igor Popov. Model for Conservation Research Inspired by the Small Grants of the Rufford Foundation
Mark Pestov. The issue of illegal traffic of Mediterranean tortoises (<i>Testudo graeca</i>) in Russia
Sergey Titov. Assessment of the Population Status of the Moth <i>Catocala deducta</i> and the Development of Measures to Preserve its Habitats in the Floodplain of the Irtysh River
11:30–12:00 Coffee break. The group photo

12:00–14:00 Work of the section "Vertebrates"
Anton Abushin. Research and Conservation of Steppe Eagle (<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>) in Kalmykia
Tatiana Sviridova. Conservation of agricultural landscapes for protection of rare meadow waders and other farmland birds on the territory of prospective regional nature park «Crane Country»
Alexei Dondua & Ivan Taldenkov. Protection of Spoon-Billed Sandpiper Breeding Ground in Northern Chukotka
Heliana Dundarova. Underground Habitats as a Unit for Conservation of Vulnerable Bat Communities in South-Western Kyrgyzstan
Tatiana Ivkovich. Studying fish-eating killer whale (<i>Orcinus orca</i>) feeding strategies in Avacha Gulf of Kamchatka and raising public awareness on killer whale conservation in Russian Far East
Anna Loseva. Haul-Out Site Monitoring of Two Seal Species in Intensively Developing Area of the Gulf of Finland, Baltic Sea
14:00–15:00 Lunch break
Nazerke Bizhanova. Turkestan Lynx in the Northern Tien Shan: conservation status and threats
Yury Yarovenko. Status and Distribution of Leopards in the Mountains of Daghestan
Konstantin Tirronen. Estimation of Arctic Fox (<i>Vulpes lagopus</i> L.) Population Status and Extinction Risk due with Climate Changes on the Kola Peninsula
15:00–15:30 The round table: "The role of the Rufford Foundation in the research and conservation of the Northern Eurasia nature. Difficulties and prospects of cooperation". Development of mutual recommendations
15:30–16:00 Discussion on and the Conference resolution acceptance. Certificates awarding
16:00–16:20 Watching the movie "Living Planet"
16:20–18:00 The State Darwin Museum exposition tour. Informal communication of the conference participants
October, 16, 2021. 9:30–22:00
Moscow sightseeing walking tour

The conference began with **Igor Fadeev** address and continued with **Svetlana Baskakova** welcome speech. The full text of the talk posted below while it describes some organizing moments and may be useful as a guide line and helps do not miss any focal points of the meeting. The speech was in Russian.



Fig. 2. **Svetlana Baskakova.** The Conference introduction speech

Introduction Speech

Dear audience!

We are glad to welcome you to this bright hall of the Darwin Museum in Moscow.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the participants for taking the time, resources, including financial ones, overcoming administrative barriers, not being afraid of the coronavirus and coming together here to present the results of your scientific and environmental activities, communicate with colleagues and tune in for further active and productive lifestyle.

I would like to introduce to you **Josh Cole** – the grant director of the Rufford Foundation, thanks to this foundation we have or had in the past the opportunity to carry out our small projects – important for nature and for the participants personally. Perhaps Josh found it harder than the rest of us to organize his trip, and we are all very happy to see him here, as it means, among other things, a slow return to normal life after a hard time of coronavirus.

About me. My name is **Svetlana** Valentinovna **Baskakova**. I live in Kazakhstan, in the south, in the Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve and I am the head of a small but proud public association called “Wild Nature”. In addition to purely environmental projects funded by the Rufford Foundation, we also organize meetings of grantees. In March 2019, a similar event for the Russian-speaking audience held in the Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve, now I am happy to announce the opening of the conference in Moscow. The next meeting will take place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, July 6–7, 2022, but we will talk about this later at the Round Table.

Before we go directly to the official part, i.e. to the reports, I would like to appoint some organizational moments.

You all have a conference program in your handouts. This is the most recent version, sent to you yesterday and printed tonight. I would like to draw your attention to a number of issues.

1. The languages of our conference are Russian and English. The choice of presentation and communication language remains with the author. We wanted to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere at the conference so that all participants feel comfortable and use the language that they and the audience are most comfortable with. In cases with difficulties in communication, please ask me to help with translation, I will do it with great pleasure.
2. The reports of our conference are arranged in a systematic order, i.e. first comes general questions, then botany, fish, reptiles, birds and mammals. This is all the more significant since we are in the Darwin Museum dedicated to evolution.
3. We have presented 1 poster report. **Olga Mochalova**, who lives in the Far East, delivered her presentation. Please have a look at this colorful and informative board during your breaks.
4. We ask the speakers to follow the schedule of their speeches and keep within the allotted 10 minutes. After 9 minutes from the beginning of the report, we will give a sign to the speaker with grimaces that there is 1 minute left of the speech time. Perhaps after the reports there will still be "a few seconds" for 1-2 questions / answers. Detailed questions can be asked to the authors during the Round Table, when we are just going to discuss cooperation.
5. We will not waste time getting to know each other now, let this intrigue persist until the start of the report. In this regard, we ask the speakers to preface their presentation with a few words about themselves, the place of work and life, and if there are co-authors in the hall, then introduce them too.

6. We have 3 delegated reports, i.e. their authors were unable to attend face-to-face and asked colleagues to present their results. These talks will only take place if there is time for them. The “alive attendees” will undoubtedly take advantage.

7. We are very pleased to note that people were eager to attend this conference, tried to attend, but not everyone succeeded: then someone handed over a poster, someone a presentation, Belarusian colleagues handed over stickers, they are in your folders. That is, many more people are invisibly present here than we see now in the hall. All received materials, in person or correspondent, as indicated in the invitation, will be available after the conference in electronic form. We will send you a link.

8. As you can see from the program, we have a pretty busy schedule. There is 1 coffee break: from 11:30 to 12:00. During this break, we will need to arrange for an official photograph of the members before moving on to tea drinking. Further, there is a break for lunch: from 14:00 to 15:00, go to the cozy cafe of the museum, located on the 1st floor.

9. We will use the breaks not only, and even not so much for food, but for communication and other useful things. For example, you have a draft resolution of our conference in your folders. You have seen it before, it was sent to all participants. Now, once again, take a fresh look at the text and express your comments / suggestions, if any. The final version will be approved today at the end of the conference.

10. If someone needs to stamp business trips papers – hand them over to facilitator ***Polina Shakula***.

11. In the afternoon, at exactly 4:00 pm, we are invited by the Darwin Museum to watch the interactive video "Living Planet", which will take place in the lobby, upon leaving our hall. After that, and until the museum closes at 18:00, the participants will have the opportunity to independently wander through the halls of the museum, get acquainted with the exposition and continue our fruitful interaction.

12. Separately, we must thank the host, the State Darwin Museum, which, when organizing this event, did his best to overtake all organizational issues. It so happened that today the entire management team is busy at the quarterly report, but we will see the representatives of the museum at the end of the day and will have the opportunity to thank them personally. Read the guidebook in your handouts and return to the museum with your families and friends.

13. The last point in this long speech concerns the walking tour tomorrow. This optional activity will start at 9:30 am in the Alexander Garden and will last until late evening. Places to visit listed in a separate printout in your folders. Wishing to join, leave your contacts to the facilitator ***Stepan Shakula***, please.

The brief summary of the Conference participants achievements via their projects reflect the success of the Rufford Foundation policy. The bright examples are below.

The Conference participants' achievements

- ***Pavel Kvartalnov*** project in Tajikistan (RSG-2011-2012) is an example of where Rufford Funding has enabled disproportionately large and tangible conservation impacts to be delivered. Starting with the research of just 3 species of birds the project attract more experts and do much more for wildlife conservation. The initial species became an umbrella for vulnerable mountain shrub communities in Pamirs. The project made a great contribution to the new edition of the Red Data book of Tajikistan.

- **Anton Abushin** project (RSG-2021) is a prime example of how the local community was involved in protecting the habitats of the Steppe Eagle in Kalmykia, Russia.
- **Nazerke Bizhanova** (RSG-2020) is an applicant for the title of Ph.D and her field research on Lynx in the Central Tien Shan would not have been possible without the support of the Rufford Foundation
- **Sergey Titov** (RSG-2019) was looking for funds in Pavlodar University, but did not had enough while entomology is not a priority in educational process. His assessment of the population status of the moth *Catocala deducta* and the development of measures to preserve its habitats in the floodplain of the Irtysh River, funded by the Rufford Foundation was done on the high scientific level.
- The Rufford Foundation grant have provided seed funding to build capacity, identify conservation needs and development for future projects for **Heliana Dundarova** (RSG-2018). Her initiative in South-Western Kyrgyzstan to conserve underground habitats of vulnerable bat communities was just the first stage. The project planned to be continued as the replicable model in the South of Kazakhstan.
- **Tatiana Sviridova** (RSG-2012-2013) in a frame of the project for conservation of agricultural landscapes in the «Crane Country» National Park is doing a lot for schoolchildren engagement and growing the future generation of conservationists.
- **Mark Pestov** (RSG-2006, 2008, 2010) has managed to assemble a close-knit team of scientists, conservationists and government officials that is successfully fighting the illegal trade of reptiles.



Fig. 3. **Mark Pestov** (right) as a leader of the multidisciplinary reptiles conservation team

- **Olga Mochalova** (RSG-2010, 2012) collected a huge block of data on rare and threatened plants and Important Plants Areas (IPA) of Magadan Province in Northern Far East of Russia and published her data in updated edition of Red Data book of Russian Federation.



Fig. 6. Friendly and comfortable microclimate was a feature of the Conference/ *Mark Pestov, Svetlana Baskakova, Yuriy Yarovenko and Konstantin Tirronen* (from left to right)



Fig. 7. The Conference Participants group photo

The brief summaries of reports and presentations of both in person and correspondence participants are listed here and on the website of the Rufford Foundation grantees network: <https://rufford-conference.nethouse.ru/page/1346195>

The Report's Abstracts

1. *Fadeev I.* WELCOME SPEECH ON BEHALF OF THE STATE DARWIN MUSEUM ADMINISTRATION (in Russian)

In the speech the speaker stressed on the importance of such meetings not only for the organizers and participants, but also for the host – the State Darwin Museum and expressed the hope that today's acquaintances will result in fruitful scientific cooperation in the future.

1. **Mochalova O., Andriyanova E. & Khoreva M.** THE RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION OF RARE AND THREATENED PLANTS AND IMPORTANT PLANT AREAS OF MAGADAN REGION (NORTHERN FAR EAST ASIA, RUSSIA). RESULTS AND PROSPECTS (in English)

The report was designed as a poster (fig. 8).

During the two Rufford projects in 2010–2013 we determined threatened species and investigated their biology and distribution. Two rarest species, *Minuartia tricostata* Khokhr. and *Pulsatilla magadanensis* Khokhr. et Worosch., were identified as Vulnerable, they were examined in more details, and we began their long-time monitoring. The species have been included into the Red Data book of Magadan Region in 2019 and have prepared a proposal for their inclusion in the Red Data book of Russian Federation. The habitats of these plants need the special protection.



Fig. 8. **Olga Mochalova** botanical poster

2. **Iscenco A.** ECONOMIC VALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION WITH CHOISE MODELLING IN THE CODRU FOREST IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (in English)

Economic valuation of ecosystem services is a useful scientific tool for supporting conservation and sustainable management of natural ecosystems and protected areas. For this reason, the Codru Quest project financed by the Rufford Foundation was conducted in the Codru forest and the Codru Nature Reserve within it, which are situated in the developing country of the Republic of Moldova. The main objective of the project was to estimate and present the monetary value of benefits coming from ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation in this forest and protected area. The choice modelling technique was applied to survey 201 Moldovan citizens and then to calculate their willingness to pay (WTP) for better protection and sustainable management of the Codru forest ecosystem and its biodiversity. The results of the Codru Quest project showed that the respondents had been willing to pay about 0.77 EUR per person per visit for conservation of greater insect biodiversity and approximately 0.87 EUR per person per visit for better protection of endangered

species of both flora and fauna. This corresponds to a total WTP of 2688.19 EUR per year for the first attribute of the environmental “good” in question and 3027.92 EUR per year for the second one. These monetary estimates represent mainly the recreational, existence, bequest, and altruistic values that citizens of this developing country attach to ecosystem services and biodiversity in the study area.

4. **Munteanu-Molotievskiy N. & Moldovan A.** BEETLE COMMUNITIES AND THEIR CONSERVATION IN STEPPE AREAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (in English)

An investigation of beetles in steppe ecosystems of the Republic of Moldova was conducted. Five locations were investigated, two from the Balti steppe and three from the Bugeac steppe. As a result, a total of 563 beetle specimens, belonging to 98 species, 51 genera, and 15 families were collected. Among families recorded Carabidae was the one with the highest number of species. The ecological features of collected beetle species were revealed. The results show that steppes are still important biodiversity reservoirs within the boundaries of the country and urgent conservation activities are required.

5. **Popov I.** MODEL FOR CONSERVATION RESEARCH INSPIRED BY THE RUFFORD FOUNDATION (in Russian)

Inspired by the first grant from the Rufford Foundation, the speaker applied an original method of analyzing the need for scientific research in various fields of environmental science (Fig. 8) and outlined priority regions and species for himself. Thus, research was done on the Pond Bat *Myotis dasycneme* in the Gulf of Finland, on the Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* on the Ladoga Lake, on the Sperm Whale in the Russian Arctic, on the Polar Bear around Franz Josef Land, on the Pearl Mussels of Iturup Island, on the European Mink on Gogland Island in the Gulf of Finland, on the Black-capped Marmot *Marmota camtschatica* and Snow Sheep *Ovis nivicola* in Kamtschatka, on the Atlantic Sturgeon *Acipenser oxyrinchus* in the Russian section of the Baltic Sea and on the Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris* of Urup and Iturup Islands in Russian Pacific.

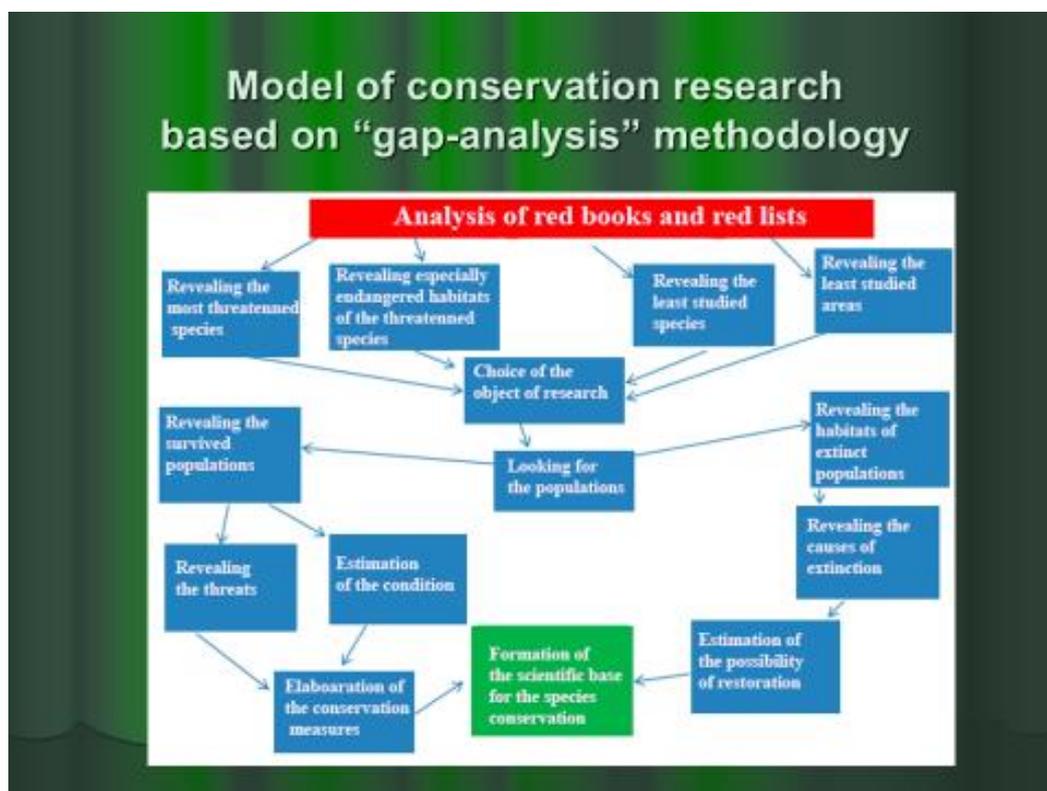


Fig. 9. Model of conservation research based on “gap-analysis” methodology. Illustration from **Igor Popov** presentation



Fig. 10. *Igor Popov* (right) shares with *Nazerke Bizhanova* (left) ideas for interdisciplinary projects inspired by the Rufford Foundation

6. *Titov S.* ASSESSMENT OF THE POPULATION STATUS OF THE MOTH *CATOCALA DEDUCTA* AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEASURES TO PRESERVE ITS HABITATSIN THE FLOODPLAIN OF THE IRTYSH RIVER (in Russian)

Sergei Titov's research is devoted to a rare species of Moth *Catocala deducta* in the Irtysh floodplain in northeastern Kazakhstan. As a result, conservation measures were developed to protect this rare species and original author's traps for insects were invented.



Fig. 11. *Sergey Titov* (left). His innovative methods for catching insects were interesting for many colleagues

7. **Gnetneva A., Pestov M., Denisov D., Karpukhin A., Alekseeva A., Demidova A. & Frolov V.** THE ISSUE OF ILLEGAL TRAFFIC OF MEDITERRANEAN TORTOISES (*TESTUDO GRAECA*) IN RUSSIA (in Russian)

The article summarizes the results of monitoring of illegal traffic of Mediterranean tortoises (*Testudo graeca*) in Internet in Russia made by the project «Red List? Not for Sale!» supported by the Fund of the President's Grants. During February–September 2021, the project discovered 54 sale offers related to not less than 74 specimens. The article considers legal status of the species, legal regulations defining liability for illegal traffic, problems of the legal practices. Certain recommendations are provided: adjustment of the legal regulations, improvement of legal practices arrangement as a result of interaction between biologist-experts and the representatives of the law enforcement agencies. Special attention is paid to the issue of returning of the tortoises, which were withdrawn from the traffic, to their original habitats.

8. **Abushin A.** INTERMEDIATE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT "STUDY AND CONSERVATION OF THE STEPPE EAGLE (*AQUILA NIPALENSIS*) IN THE REPUBLIC OF KALMYKIA" (in Russian)

The report contains information on the interim results for the project “*Conservation and research of the Steppe Eagle in the Republic of Kalmykia*”. The major goal of the project is to create a program for long-term monitoring and conservation of the Steppe Eagle in Kalmykia.

The following work was carried out within the project: inventorying distribution lines dangerous for birds and assessing the death rate of birds on them, monitoring breeding groups of the Steppe Eagle in Kalmykia and assessing the modern population size. To study the migration paths and raise awareness of the local population 2 nestlings of the Steppe Eagle were tagged with GPS satellite transmitters. Also, the method of attracting the Steppe Eagle for reproduction to artificial nests under conditions of flat steppe was tested as part of the project.

Based on the research findings, the population of the Steppe Eagle in the Republic of Kalmykia was overrated, owing to redetermination of the boundaries of the nesting range and revealing new areas of increased number. Nonetheless, the endangered species situation remains unstable: the process of population rejuvenation continues, the number of abandoned breeding sites increases. The main threats to the Steppe Eagle: bird's death on distribution lines, exploitation of food reserve by the local population, loss of habitat due to development, increased factor of disturbance and poaching.



Fig. 12. **Anton Abushin's** Steppe Eagle Research and Conservation presentation

9. **Shakula G.V., Shakula F.V. & Baskakova S.V.** DYNAMICS OF THE GREAT BUSTARD *OTIS TARDA TARDA* POPULATION IN KAZAKHSTAN: RISES AND DOWNS (in Russian)

The article contains material on the number of Great Bustards in the South, South-East and East of Kazakhstan from 1999 to 2021. The analysis is given by seasons based on the authors' own observations in 2005–2021 as well as on literature sources. The number of Great Bustards is subject to large fluctuations from year to year; the largest number of birds was observed in winter. The complete 250 titles bibliography for the region is the particular value of the article.

10. **Sviridova T.V. & Grinchenko O.S.** CONSERVATION OF AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES FOR PROTECTION OF RARE MEADOW WADERS AND OTHER FARMLAND BIRDS ON THE TERRITORY OF PROSPECTIVE REGIONAL NATURE PARK “CRANE COUNTRY” (in English)

Two projects on conservation of rare waders in agricultural landscapes in the north of Moscow Region (Russia, 56°41'N, 38°00'E) were carried out with the support of the Rufford Foundation in 2012–2014 in an area known as the Homeland of the Crane – Important Bird Area, included also in a shadow list of Ramsar Sites. This area is a mosaic of various wetlands (raised sphagnum bogs, birch and black alder forests, willow swamps and oxbow lakes) alternating with agricultural lands such as floodplain meadows, hayfields, arable lands, pastures and abandoned lands. For highly developed Moscow Region it is a unique locality with still existing habitats suitable for Common Cranes *Grus grus* and many other rare birds, including declining and threatened breeding waders – Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Great Snipe *Gallinago media*.

Plans to establish Nature Park in this area have been developed since the end of XX century. However, implementation of these plans has been suspended in the 2010s, and conservation community has made efforts to maintain the value of the area until establishment of Natural Park there. Special attention in these efforts was paid to conservation of rare breeding meadow waders, in particular, with support of the Rufford Foundation. These efforts were successful as above-mentioned wader species along with other birds still breed in the area in relatively high numbers. In 2020 a project of Nature Park “Crane Country” with new extended boundaries was included in the recent official governmental “Scheme of development and localization of SPAs in Moscow Region”. Almost half of an area of prospective Nature Park is represented by agricultural landscapes.

11. **Dondua A. & Taldenkov I.** PROTECTION OF SPOON-BILLED SANDPIPER *EURYNORHYNCHUS PYGMEUS* BREEDING GROUND IN NORTHERN CHUKOTKA (in Russian)

The resumption of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper monitoring was necessary to find an answer to the question: why is the number declining? Intensive color-banding of Spoon-billed Sandpipers was made for creating the base for the future population monitoring and for potential recording of these birds along the East Asian – Australasian Flyway to reveal important staging and wintering areas for the species.

The project idea was in evaluation of the bird's survival rate through calculation of returning rate of previously banded birds and comparison with data of mid 80's.

Repeating of spring counts of displaying *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* males on Northern Koliuchinskaya Gulf (Belyaka Spit and adjacent territories) and comparison with results of the same counts undertaken at 1973–1974, 1986–1988 and 2002 helped researches to understand of species population number trend.

Evaluation of population productivity, identification of natural threats and human impact on breeding population' productivity did show the critical status of the population. Making efforts on public awareness campaign within and beyond species breeding range and improving collaboration with conservation organizations on the local level and worldwide became a necessary component of the project.



Fig. 13. Spoon-Billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* – the breeding endemic of Russia and one of the rarest species of waders in the world.

The picture from *Alexey Dondua & Ivan Taldenkov* presentation



Fig. 14. *Pavel Kvartalnov* (left) and *Sergey Titov* (right) found many common topics for discussion

12. **Kvatralnov P.V.** RECENTLY REDISCOVERED BIRDS AS UMBRELLA SPECIES FOR VULNERABLE MOUNTAIN SHRUB COMMUNITIES IN PAMIRS, TAJIKISTAN (in Russian)

Gallery forests and shrub thickets along river valleys in mountainous and arid regions are known as highly vulnerable natural communities. In 2011–2012 an international group of Russian and Tajik biologists surveyed these communities in the lowland and mountainous regions of Tajikistan, with financial support from the Rufford Foundation. We described the reptile fauna and refined the bird diversity of the lower reaches of the Vakhsh and Kafirnigan rivers, refined the bird fauna of the river valleys in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, and for the first time described the features of the biology of several bird species. In Gorno-Badakhshan, data on vegetation and invertebrates has been collected. This report presents the results of ornithological observations in Gorno-Badakhshan, carried out in the valleys of the Gunt and Pyanj rivers (Ishkoshim and Shugnan Districts), as well as in the environs of Murghab (Murghab District). We found two bird species not recorded previously in Tajikistan: the Brahminy starling *Sturnus pagodarum* and the Tickell's thrush *Turdus unicolor*. Breeding has been proven for the Brahminy starling. Both species need old parks and relict poplar groves for nesting. Information was obtained on the distribution and nesting biology of the Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, that was observed for the first time in the Pamirs in 1937 only and had not been studied there. This species inhabits in the thickets of sea buckthorn, willow and dig-rose in river valleys and along the edges of agricultural fields up to altitude of 3420 m above sea level. Spreading from lowlands into the mountains, the Cetti's Warbler retains characteristic features of biology such as a tendency to polygamy and to have more than one nesting cycle in season. Cetti's Warblers start egg laying at the end of the first week of May; the known brood size is 4 chicks. We have made descriptions of five nests. For the first time for the Pamirs, the nesting biology of the Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus sindianus* was described. The species inhabits in floodplain thickets with the participation of sea buckthorn, dig-rose and tamarisk, at altitudes of 2000–3650 m above sea level. The species is predominantly monogamous (although one case of polygamy has been recorded). Chiffchaffs start egg laying at an altitude of 2600 m in the first week of May, at an altitude of 2770 m – from the first days of June, at an altitude of 2800 m – from mid-June. The clutch size is 4–5 eggs. We made descriptions of 14 nests. The Large-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus orinus* currently inhabits in the river valley of Pyanj and its tributaries only in Gorno-Badakhshan and in Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan. The species is common in floodplain thickets and shrubs at the edges of agricultural fields at altitudes of 1800–3200 m. Large-billed Warblers start laying eggs in early June, but nests with fresh clutches were found till mid-July at least. The clutch size is 2–5 eggs. The species is monogamous, the male shows increased care for the chicks, is able to rise them after the death of the female. We made descriptions of 59 nests. Based on to the results of our research, the Brahminy Starling, the Mountain Chiffchaff and the Large-billed Warbler were listed in the Red Data book of Tajikistan (2017), that gives hope for the preservation of not only these species, but also the entire community of gallery shrub thickets in Gorno-Badakhshan.

13. **Dundarova H., Altybaev K., Mamatkalykov P., Momosheva G., Nizamiev A. & Sultanbek kyzy B.** UNDERGROUND HABITATS AS A UNIT FOR CONSERVATION OF VULNERABLE BAT COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH-WESTERN KYRGYZSTAN

This study was conducted in Southwestern Kyrgyzstan – transboundary territory in Central Asia. The presence of limestone rocks from the Carboniferous and Devonian age determines the availability of many underground sites. These characteristics make the area an important place for cave-dwelling bat species. Assessment of bat abundance, species richness, and conservation priority of each cave was estimated using the Bat Cave Vulnerability Index (BCVI) for the first time outside the tropics. The method revealed that two underground sites (Mine of Fersman and Baritovaya cave) are the most threatened and in need of protection. These caves are easily accessible and under constant anthropogenic pressure. Significant maternity colonies of *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, *Rh.*

lepidus, *Myotis blythii* and *M. emarginatus* were confirmed in five caves (Mine of Fersman, Baritovaya, Azhidar-Unkur, Duvankhan/Jarganat-Unkur, and Chil-Ustun caves), where the most abundant summer colonies are found for *M. blythii* in two of them (Azhidar-Unkur and Duvankhan/Jarganat-Unkur).

In addition, we report for first time a maternity colony of *Rhinolophus lepidus* in Kyrgyzstan due to its long-term erroneous definition as *Rh. hipposideros*. The results show that the conservation status of *Rh. hipposideros* must be reviewed and changed to “Near Threatened” or “Vulnerable” for the Central Asia region. The study will be used as a baseline for future conservation research on cave-dwelling bats and underground habitats in the region.



Fig. 15. *Heliana Dundarova* (left) continues to answer questions during a coffee break. An agreement was reached to continue her project on bats in Kazakhstan in partnership with Wild Nature NGO

14. *Shakula G.V. & Shakula F.V.* MENZBIERI MARMOT *MARMOTA MENZBIERI* CURRENT STATUS IN CENTRAL ASIA (in Russian)

Menzbieri Marmot is a narrow endemic of Western Tien Shan and listed in IUCN Red Data book as "Vulnerable". The species occurs in Central Asia at the junction of three states: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan – in the range of the alpine steppes on altitude of 2300–3500 m above sea level. Gentle slopes with smooth over meso-relief – moraines are the most favorable for Marmot's habitats. They prefer small-earth soils, suitable for digging holes. Colonies are confined to springs, marshes and snowfields, where the animals are provided with a juicy plant food during the summer season.

In Kazakhstan, it occurs in a very small area in the north-eastern part of the Karzhantau ridge in Sayram-Ugam National Park on an area of 140 km², where the total population does not exceed 3000 animals. The main research was done there. The sites in the upper of Baldabrek, Silbili and Maidantal rivers in Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve were observed as well. A short trip was taken to the isolated population of the species in Besh-Aral Nature Reserve in Kyrgyzstan. Analysis of literature sources about former Menzbieri Marmot habitats in some areas of Tajikistan is given.

15. **Shakula G.V. & Shakula F.V.** THE REVIEW OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS ON MARMOTS IN THE AKSU-ZHABAGLY NATURE RESERVE. PART II. YANUSHKO P.A., 1943 (in Russian)

The article consists the original text of written in 1943 manuscript about Red Marmot in Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve distribution. The areas and habitats have been outlined. The total number of Red Marmot evaluated in 420–450 individuals. The map of the findings and schemes of living holes illustrate the data.

16. **Shakula G.V. & Shakula F.V.** THE REVIEW OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS ON MARMOTS IN THE AKSU-ZHABAGLY NATURE RESERVE. PART III. YANUSHKO P.A., 1945 (in Russian)

The article consists the original text of written in 1945 manuscript about Red Marmot and Menzbieri Marmot in Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve. The areas and habitats have been outlined. Reasons of number declining are proposed. The map of the findings and schemes of living holes illustrate the data.

17. **Ivkovich T.** STUDING FISH-EATING KILLER WHALE (*ORCINUS ORCA*) FEEDING STRATEGIES IN AVACHA GULF OF KAMCHATKA AND RASING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON KILLER WHALE CONSERVATION IN RUSSIAN FAR EAST (in Russian)

The main aims of the work were: scientific studies, communication with local stakeholders and raising peoples' awareness, e.g. booklets, posters, lectures & mass media involvement. Materials and methods used: informing local communities and local authorities, building base for Killer Whale conservation, collecting prey samples from the Killer Whale hunting spots (141 samples were collected in 2011–2016), observing hunting behaviour – group hunting & solitary hunting, registering age and sex – adult males, adult females & juveniles, photoidentification – each Killer Whale was individually recognized.

The main threats discovered: overfishing and fish stock depletion, quickly increasing number of whalewatching boats in the area. These reasons led to low birth rates and calves survival



Fig. 16. Killer Whale *Orcinus orca*. The picture from **Tatiana Ivkovich** presentation

18. **Loseva A.** HAUL-OUT SITE MONITORING OF TWO SEAL SPECIES IN INTENSIVELY DEVELOPING AREAS OF THE GULF OF FINLAND, BALTIC SEA (in Russian)

The project goals: abundance estimation of the Baltic Grey Seal during molting, approbation of camera trap method for the Baltic Ringed Seal monitoring on haul-out sites, determination of the dynamics and factors affecting the presence on haul-out sites for the Baltic Ringed Seal.

Shipboard survey of the Baltic Grey Seal was implemented from the yacht “Ritsa” on May 27–30, 2018. The methodology of the Working Group on Seals of the Baltic Region was applied. A total of 843 individuals were counted at haul-outs. The total number in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland is 1050–1400 individuals. The accounting results had overtook the number of animals in 2012 almost twice. Recommendations were worked out for the preparation of the Red Data book of the Leningrad Province. The project results were presented at an International Conference "Marine mammals of the Holarctic – 2021.



Fig. 17. **Anna Loseva** is doing a great job with haul-out site monitoring in the Gulf of Finland, Baltic Sea

19. **Tirronen K.F., Panchenko D.V., Tirronen F.M. & Jerina K.** CURRENT STATUS OF THE POLAR FOX *VULPES LAGOPUS* L. POPULATION IN KOLA PENINSULA, RUSSIA (in Russian)

The Arctic Fox population in the Kola Peninsula occupies in intermediate or connecting areas between foxes populations living in Scandinavian Peninsula and Russian Far East. Our research indicates the extremely bad status of the Arctic Fox population in Kola Peninsula. According to our estimates, the current population does not exceed a few dozen of adults and the population is isolated. The thorough research from the 1930th contrasts strongly with decades of complete lack of interest in studying and monitoring the population, which is not even listed as endangered species in the regional Red Data book. In fact, the work performed here filled a more than a half-century gap in the study of the population and allowed us to state the urgent need to resume research and immediately take active measures to protect and restore the species in the region. The real threat of the Arctic Fox extinction in Kola Peninsula exists now.



Fig. 18. *Konstantin Tirronen* knows everything about Polar Fox and other big carnivorous of the Russian Far North

20. *Bizhanova N., Grachev A., Saparbayev S., Grachev Yu., Bespalov M. & Zhaparkulov T.*
 TURKESTAN LYNX IN THE NORTHERN TIEN SHAN: CONSERVATION STATUS
 AND THREATS

The article provides the information on the main issues in conservation of the elusive felid – the Turkestan Lynx (*Lynx lynx isabellina* Blyth, 1847) in the Northern Tien Shan, Kazakhstan. As a result of the research, conducted from 2013 to 2021, we determined the modern Lynx distribution and the main threats to the Lynx population in the area. The Lynx occupies all large gorges of Ile Alatau, Kungey Alatau, Terskey Alatau and Uzynkara ridges, with its comparably stable populations in protected areas – Almaty Nature Reserve, Ile-Alatau National Park and Kolsai Kolderi National Park. Based on results obtained, we determined the main threats for the Turkestan Lynx: habitat loss, its degradation and fragmentation; forest fires; depleted prey base; infrastructure development; unregulated tourism, as well as poaching and killing by herders. Further studies on the Lynx ecology and biology, as well as stationary monitoring and ecological education among the local residents needed for the conservation of this rare subspecies of the Eurasian Lynx.



Fig. 19. *Nazerke Bizhanova* (left) made the great presentation about Turkestan Lynx Conservation project in Tien Shan

21. **Yarovenko Yu.A., Babaev E.A. & Yarovenko A.Yu.** STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION OF PERSIAN LEOPARD *PANTHERA PARDUS CISCAUCASICA* IN MOUNTAINS OF DAGHESTAN (in Russian)

The leopard's habitat in the Caucasus is shrinking. According to research carried out in Dagestan, there is reason to believe that the local population of the leopard has survived here. It is necessary to confirm this assumption and take urgent measures to preserve it in Dagestan (Eastern part of the Greater Caucasus).



Fig. 20. Facilitator **Stepan Shakula** (left) provides technical assistance to **Yuri Yarovenko** (right) during his presentation on Persian Leopard in Dagestan

22. **Weinberg P. J. & Malkhasyan A.G.** DISCONTINUOUS HABITAT OF THE WILD GOAT (*CAPRA AEGAGRUS ERXLEBEN*), NUCLEAR TYPE OF SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF THE SPECIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSERVATION OF THE WILD GOAT IN ARMENIA

In mountains of Alpine type, e.g. Eastern Greater Caucasus and Zangezur Range, Wild Goat (*Capra aegagrus* Erxl.) habitat is continuous and unbroken, because topography is continuously precipitous and rocky. In lowland and mid-mountain areas, where terrain is mainly hilly and rolling, there are separate local cliff massifs, or river canyons. Under such conditions, Wild Goat distribution is fragmentary and nuclear-type. Spatial and social structure of the population consists of the main site and peripheral sites are often situated within radius of 5 km. Main site, where major part of adult females lives, forms the reproductive nucleus containing 100–500 animals. This site is usually large and precipitous enough to secure survival of the nucleus, even under considerable anthropogenic pressure. Peripheral sites are much smaller and harbor 1–50 animals. Local populations fluctuate, due to the strengthening and weakening of anthropogenic pressure, often only central nucleus surviving during declines. Patchy discontinuous spatial structure of the Wild Goat population on the one hand makes protection easier, because the protected area is smaller, but increases risk of losing the local population on the other hand, in case of insufficient conservation.

The Round Table "*The role of the Rufford Foundation in the research and conservation of the Northern Eurasia nature. Difficulties and prospects of cooperation*" session was quite short in time, but became the most interesting part of the Conference and did attract a lot of attention of participants.

The participants expressed their gratitude to the Rufford Foundation as a consolidating power to gather all together the field researches from the Northern Eurasia geopolitical region.

During the Round Table the following issues were discussed and the following mutual recommendations, suggestions or requests for collaboration with the Rufford Foundation were worked out.

1. It would be great to go back to the scheme when funds were given to individuals but not to organizations, since transferring money through official bodies absorbs up to 30% of funds from an already small grant budget. In addition, many researchers work for government agencies in their home countries, which are prohibited to receive any funds from foreign foundations. As a result, talented researchers at the beginning of their careers are forced to either abandon planned research or look for an outside organization, which leads to unnecessary costs and generates corruption. This is a big issue in many post-Soviet countries, in particular in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.
2. Many grantees from remote parts of Russia wanted to take part in the Moscow conference but did not find funding to travel. In this regard, the question arose: is it possible to ask for funding from the Rufford Foundation for participation in a similar conference and whether it is possible to initially include in the proposal budget the costs of transport and accommodation for participation in the regional reporting conference of the Fund. If so, can this be done for the Mongolian Conference in 2022?
3. We are happy that we managed to get together in person, because Zoom-format does not replace live communication. We hope that at the next meeting, the technical capabilities will allow us to connect remote participants as well, and conduct an online broadcast and save a recording of the conference for later viewing on YouTube.
4. There was also a request from the participants: can the Rufford Foundation support and finance (partially or completely) the holding of an environmental conference with wider participation, not only for the grant recipients of the Fund. For example, the Great Bustard Alliance as a conservation network in Central Asia has been unable to find funding for such a thematic conference for several years.
5. The discussion at the conference showed that many grantees do not have enough information about the conditions for continuing their projects. Some participants, whose projects did not pass, did not try to improve them and make another attempt or did not attach importance to the questions asked by the foundation, ignored them and as a result, some wonderful environmental initiatives were not completed. Finally, the participants agreed to share their experience on writing good applications, explain to each other the procedures of the Rufford Foundation, exchange the latest information on changes in the Fund and support projects of colleagues - all within the Northern Eurasia online network of the Rufford Foundation grantees.
6. **Svetlana Baskakova** spoke about the great positive experience of the network created for Central Asian grantees at the Rufford conference in Aksu-Zhabagly in Kazakhstan on March 16–18, 2019 (although the memoranda were not signed). As a result of such an informal association, the participants helped each other in many ways, in particular in:
 - sending each other the publications necessary for the colleagues scientific work;
 - organizing the expedition on Pallas' Cat (Kazakhstan-Russia);
 - organizing the Kyzylkum expedition (Institute of Zoology + Wild Nature) in Kazakhstan;
 - invitation of three people from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by the fourth one participated in a conference, to Baku, Azerbaijan on December 04, 2019 as a result

they became the stakeholders of the large-scale international organization – Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES);

- support for the project on Killer Whales (online vote to amend Russian legislation to protect Killer Whales – and it worked!) although the representative of this project – *Tatyana Ivkovich* – we met in person only at the Moscow conference;
- getting recommendations for three people from the Rufford Foundation grantees network for the jobs in Reneco for the Houbara Conservation Project.

7. The network of the Northern Eurasia experts created at this conference can already start the joint projects and initiatives implementing:

- rescue of reptiles in the trenches of Kazakhstan (Russia+Kazakhstan);
- collaboration on bats on passage and wintering, caves preservation (Bulgaria+Kazakhstan);
- cooperation on *Acrocephalus orinus* – search in Kazakhstan and in Kyrgyzstan (Gulcha river), catching in mist nets (Dzhungarskiy Alatau, Billikol) (Russia+Tajikistan+Kazakhstan);
- rare fishes of Kazakhstan conservation (three agencies from Kazakhstan).

8. The last discussed at the Round Table question was about the previous publications. Many participants have already published works on projects funded by the Rufford Foundation. It was decided to collect such publications from open sources of the Internet and upload them in a separate directory of the Rufford Foundation grantees website with free access.

The main output of this session is a unanimously accepted by participants the Conference Resolution as a great step for the regional network creation for the biodiversity experts in Russia and beyond to develop joint projects in a future.

The Conference Resolution

On October 15–16, 2021, an International Conference on the Research and Conservation of Biodiversity of Northern Eurasia held at the State Darwin Museum in Moscow. The conference was organized by the Rufford Foundation and conducted by Wild Nature NGO, Kazakhstan. The conference was attended by the Foundation's grantees: 23 experts from 4 countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria/Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Within the framework of the conference, the problematic aspects of biodiversity research and conservation in Eastern and Northern Europe, Transcaucasia and Central Asia were discussed.

The participants noted that the exchange of the points of view and research results made it possible to identify important regional and global aspects of biodiversity conservation, and unanimously agreed:

1. To state the high importance of the organization by the Rufford Foundation of such discussion platforms and the need to continue and expand the expert dialogue on the exchange of experience in the field of biodiversity conservation.
2. To create an on-line network of field and academic experts in the form of an informal non-profit association of stakeholders, open for free entry and exit, with free participation.
3. Gather at the Rufford Foundation grantees conference in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, July 6–7, 2022.

The mission of the new created network is to assist in organizing, conducting and coordinating scientific activities in the field of studying and preserving the biodiversity of Northern Eurasia within the framework of the natural, humanitarian and social sciences and the realization of the creative potential of scientists.

The main tasks of the network being created are:

- exchange of scientific, educational, methodological and organizational information between experts in the field biodiversity and related sciences in the territory of Northern Eurasia;
- involvement of the network members in joint fundamental and applied scientific research of nature, in international projects, complex scientific expeditions, conferences and publications;
- maintaining high professional scientific standards in biodiversity research and conservation;
- propaganda of ideas of nature conservation and promotion of network members initiatives;
- expanding the network by attracting a wide range of biologists, experts in related sciences, journalists, politicians and businessmen;
- involvement of students and schoolchildren in research and environmental projects;
- holding regional conferences of the Rufford Foundation grantees;
- demonstration of the diversity of scientific research of the network members on the website of the Rufford Foundation grantees: <https://rufford-conference.nethouse.ru>;
- providing support to network members in applying for funding from the Rufford Foundation and other sponsoring organizations;
- integration with other networks and conservation initiatives.

The policy to reduce the use of single-use plastic materials

In order to reduce the use of disposable plastic materials, the format of conference handouts (such as the program of the official part and the program of the excursion, list of participants, resolution draft and certificate) has been reduced to A5 format and printed exactly according to the number of participants (24 items). All posters and the signs of the conference were printed on paper, not on plastic. No disposable plastic caps, spoons or dishes were used during coffee breaks and lunch.

Reusable badges were used, in which only the paper base was replaced, on which the name of the new participant was printed. These reusable badges were saved from a conference held on March 17–19, 2019 at Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve, Kazakhstan.

We urged participants to join the campaign to reduce the use of plastic and, at the end of the conference, hand over folders, badges and other reusable handouts for reuse them at the Mongolian Conference on July 6–7, 2022.



Fig. 21. The Conference Certificate is awarded to *Yuriy Yarovenko*

Certification

The certificates of participation as well as the guidebooks on the Darwin Museum exposition were awarded to the speakers on the closing ceremony at the end of the official part of the first day.



Fig. 22. The Certificate sample

Watching the movie *"Living Planet"*, the self-guided State Darwin Museum exposition tour and informal communication of the conference participants was the final of the first day agenda.

The second Conference day, October, 16, 2021 from 9:30 to 22:00 was dedicated to the Moscow sightseeing walking tour, guided by native Muscovite. The itinerary (in Russian) can be download from the <https://s2.siteapi.org/e952239c2a274cb/docs/n4ar244zb2848c8o80gswwwwcccg4ss>

Post-conference work

The full texts of the reports and presentations of both in person and correspondence participants are posted on the website of the Rufford Foundation grantees network: <https://rufford-conference.nethouse.ru/page/1346195> in the section "Collection of Moscow conference papers" and can be downloaded both article by article and as a whole 179 pages electronic book for free.

For the first time on the website <https://rufford-conference.nethouse.ru/publications> with the consent of the authors, the other works (articles, books, methodological developments, programs, etc.) of the Rufford Foundation grant recipients, published on projects prior to this conference and freely available on other Internet resources, have been brought together.



Fig. 23. The cover sheet of the Conference Proceedings e-book

On behalf of the Conference' participants and biodiversity experts of Northern Eurasia we would like to say thank you to the Rufford Foundation for sponsoring the research and conservation activity in the region and for the great opportunity to get altogether for sharing ideas and regional experts network creation.

The participant's testimonials

1. **Mark Pestov.** Glad to meet you personally. The conference left a good impression – there were many interesting people and reports. Thank you for the group photos from the conference – pleasant memories.
2. **Alexey Dondua.** Our conference is over. In fact, it was a rather funny "get-together", which brought together about twenty people. Tatyana Sviridova – the only person I did know before, ornithologist, performed her report. We have watched with delight the extraordinary initiatives that the Rufford Foundation is funding for. Well, we performed "with a bang" – we very emotionally told the audience the tragic story of the nesting group of Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) on the Belyak Spit – from the time of its heyday to its complete disappearance. Aroused intense interest and lively discussion.
3. **Ivan Taldenkov.** And again, thank you very much for the fact that this meeting took place. It was great. And, quite unexpectedly for ourselves – some kind of huge ideas for thought about what we have been doing for many previous years, and what we are going to do. Thank you! And all the very best.
4. **Pavel Kvartalnov.** Thank you for a perfectly organized and interesting conference. I listened to the reports with pleasure, and would have stayed, but they called me from work, asked to come early.

5. **Yuri Yarovenko.** Thank you !!!
6. **Heliana Dundarova.** I am very glad that you managed to organize the conference and get to know us. I also think about what we talked about – Rufford's projects and this is what I want to ask if you have information for cave zones in Kazakhstan.
7. **Anton Abushin.** Thank you very much! Special acknowledgment for photos of my speech from the conference and a group photo for the news portal on the web-site of my Nature Reserve “Chernye Zemli”.
8. **Nazerke Bizhanova.** Thank you very much for everything! I am very glad that you liked my speech! I think a small post should be made on the web-page of our Zoology Institute in Almaty. Thanks to the fact that you introduced me to the staff of the Darwin Museum, I received excellent data from their collections! Thank you very much! Thank you very much for your responsiveness, and I will be glad to cooperate with you in the future.
9. **Sergei Titov.** In turn, I thank you for your warm welcome and for the memorable photos! I am very glad to meet you personally! You are a very nice and interesting person!
10. **Svetlana Baskakova.** Thank you very much to all the participants for finding the opportunity to come. It was very nice to see you with my own eyes. I am glad that people are working for science, both Russia and Kazakhstan, were represented with dignity.
11. **Stepan Shakula.** It was hard work, but I am happy we did it.

Compiled by **Svetlana Baskakova & Stepan Shakula**

November, 13, 2021. Moscow, Russia

Looking forward for the Mongolian Conference