

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

Your name	David Grabovac
Project title	Conservation of Great Bustard (<i>Otis tarda</i>) on its last breeding site in Serbia
RSG reference	11079-1
Reporting period	April 2012 – November 2013
Amount of grant	£5660
Your email address	davcogr@gmail.com
Date of this report	18.12.2013

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Tracking the great bustard in the field			+	Our database contains more than 40 sightings of great bustard outside and on the border of the protected area. The field work brought a detailed population structure (nine females, one adult male and two to four sub adult males), as well as two sightings of chicks, which has not been recorded since 2008. During our field visits we recorded one endangered nesting site, of which we made detailed recordings, we sent the data to the Nature Protection Agency and helped in the protection of the nest.
Education of farmers and hunters		+		The education campaign was the most challenging part of our project. The biggest problem was the low involvement of the farmers and the negative attitude from the hunters. Our work included several meetings and debates with them; during this time we slowly worked towards a reasonable cooperation. We gave brochures and T-shirts for everyone who participated.
Assisting and helping the Protected Area manager			+	With our contribution, the ranger service was much more effective, and the Nature Protection Agency is reconsidering the routes of the rangers in the protected area. Our field presence made it possible to implement modern great bustard protection measurements in the field.
Great bustard poisoning			+	In 2008 there were two adult male great bustards found dead, from suspected poisoning. During our project we did not find any signs of strong poison usage in the field, and during our meetings with the farmers we put an accent not to use any pesticides near the great bustard habitat.
Popularization of great bustard protection in the public			+	During our project we made public appearances in conferences, meetings, led groups for the European Bird watching Weekend in the great bustard

				habitat, wrote articles in popular and scientific papers, opened a great bustard protection Google list for everyone who wants to be included in our work. We made a site for great bustard protection. http://www.velikadroplja.rs/en/ Everyone who actively participated in great bustard protection got brochures and T-shirts.
Design of brochures, T-shirts			+	/

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

There were a few unforeseen difficulties, mainly from human factors. The Hunter Association which is the manager of the protected area did not realise the importance of our contribution to great bustard protection, and they continuously tried to discredit our work and limit our presence on the field. In order to successfully finish our project, we had to get support from the Serbian Institution of Nature Protection and the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection. With their backup, we had unlimited access to the great bustard habitat, and managed to collect data. All this delayed the planned activities, hence the lateness of the project. The farmers and cattle herders were unfriendly in the beginning, but after we explained our goals, we built up a good cooperation.

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

Digital great bustard database outside and inside the protected area

One of the most important outcomes is a GIS based great bustard database that is continually filled with data from the field. This represents a unique database for Serbian fauna, and now contains more than 400 records. We tried to collect all the legitimate sightings since 2008. This database is the cornerstone on which further activities concerning great bustard protection will be based.

Popularization of great bustard protection

Unfortunately in Serbia nature protection is unpopular in the public. There are many factors that contributed to this situation in the past and in the present, too. Our constant work in the public and also in the local community contributed a lot in raising awareness about the last minute of great bustard protection in Serbia.

The Association for the Protection of Great Bustard

During the spring of 2013, a group of young enthusiasts formed The Association for the Protection of Great Bustard. This organisation is formed with the purpose of taking over the management of great bustard habitat from the hunters and securing the long term protection of the species. This is the only option that can provide a sustainable future for this endangered species.

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

Our experiences with local communities were very different. The hunters lobby is very strong in the villages surrounding the great bustard habitat, and our presence was not welcome all the time. But with cattle herders and farmers we had better experience, we managed to convince them to plant great bustard-friendly crops (oil seed rape, alfalfa), also, one of the farmers will get Hungarian grey cattle, which is used intensively in Hungary in the great bustard habitat management. We made excellent connections in the local schools, and took visits in the protected area with local children.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

There are a lot of plans to continue our work. In April 2013 I took part on the CMS Great Bustard workgroup meeting in Sarvas, Hungary. There besides learning from the top great bustard experts, I made connections with a lot of them. Since then, I have contacted them with my questions concerning great bustard protection and got very useful answers from them. With the Association for the Protection of Great Bustard, we will organise work groups, which will be open for anyone who wants to join, and plan detailed agro-ecological activities in great bustard habitat. Also, there is a plan to build a fence around the main nesting site and implementing great bustard-friendly agriculture for land users.

We got calls from TV stations and independent movie makers who wish to make a movie about great bustards in Serbia.

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

The data gathered during our field work is going to be published in our scientific journal *Ciconia* this spring but there are already a lot of options to follow our work: there were two publications in Detlic magazine for bird lovers in Serbia <http://www.pticesrbije.rs/detlic.html>, we have a site, an e-mail list and a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/velikadroplja> dedicated to great bustard protection. Also, there were a few short articles in the newspapers and radio stations. Our printed material and T-shirts were very popular also.

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

Our project was planned from March 2012 to July 2013. Due to some letter of recommendation misunderstandings I finally received the grant in April 2012. So the activities started in April 2012 and went on until the end of November 2013. Our biggest problem was during our field work, because the Hunters Society marked us as unwanted, so we had to acquire written permissions from the Serbian Institution of Nature Protection and the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection. These permissions took time, so some aspects of our project were a few months late.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Fuel cost	1200	1600	-400	The project team made much more field surveys than planned. This was essential for the detailed knowledge of the population as well as the database. We covered the difference in the fuel from the money for the food.
2 GPS devices	275	350	-75	The prices of quality GPS devices went up, so they were more expensive.
Printing of 2x500 brochures	1250	1250	0	Our brochures were very popular, because they were printed in A3 format and on the background there is a great bustard poster.
1 Telescope with tripod	750	600	+150	We managed to buy a telescope and a tripod on a discount, this way the difference was spent on binoculars
Travelling and food cost for excursion	485	300	+185	During our excursion a lot of people brought their own food, so the difference was spent on more fuel.
Printing of 400 promotional T-shirts	850	1000	-150	The T-shirts were printed in colour, so their price was a little bit more than expected
Travelling cost during media campaign	300	200	+100	We were able to manage a lot of our media campaign getting to or from the nature reserve, so the travelling costs were less.
Postal costs	250	200	+50	We were able to give a lot of printed material out in person, so the postal costs were smaller
Costs of lectures and catering for hunters and farmers	300	300	0	/
TOTAL	5660	5800	-140	

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

The protection of great bustard is a very complex problem. We have to continue the monitoring of the species; we have to implement agro-ecological (great bustard-friendly agriculture) measures. We need to take control over the hunters, and coordinate their activities towards predator control and to limit the hunting in the breeding season. We need to popularise bird watching in the reserve and to organise many more field trips for groups and individuals. We must make sure that the nesting birds are protected a 100%, this can be achieved through 24 hour monitoring by volunteers.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, the RSG logo was used in printed material (T-Shirts, brochures) and on the websites <http://velikadroplja.rs/en/partners> . The RSG foundation was also mentioned on TV stations and in public presentations. Many of our friends heard about RSG for the first time during this project.

11. Any other comments?

I and my whole team were sincerely honoured to conduct this project. The timing of it was almost in the last minute for the Serbian great bustard population and our work contributed a lot to make a grim situation into a more enthusiastic one. Our work will continue but it would not have had such strong beginnings if it hadn't been for The Rufford Foundation. This project gave the Serbian great bustard protection programme the push it needed and now we have the cornerstone on which to build on.

