

Final Report

Activities covered within the first year of the project

The money from the Rufford Small Grants was received in February 2001. Since the writing up of the project there were sharp changes in the situation on the Balkans regarding the concerned countries - the political changes in FR Yugoslavia leading to its opening towards the European countries and the armed conflict in Western Macedonia. These dynamic processes lead to some problems and developments: difficulties in finding and incorporation of new data from the recent (and still going in some areas) armed conflict in FRY of Macedonia (for which the environment situation is not well yet evaluated by any government officials) and a chance for closer collaboration with the Yugoslavian colleagues after the opening of their country to European countries.

Activities done our team (four main active researches from Bulgaria and many partial collaborators from different countries - mainly Macedonia and Yugoslavia):

1. The project started with purchase of equipment to be use in the project and in later activities:

- As we received as donation a second hand IBM laptop computer, a need of a car appeared to be of extreme importance - we bought a second hand Subaru Justy 4x4 (4 wheels enabled) suitable both for travel for coordination meetings and field work during the project. A sum of money was used for one year international travel car insurance (obligatory for the Balkan countries) and also for fuel and maintenance during the year.
- CD-Writer and device with is making the CD RW external and easy transportable during travel. We had also supplied 100 blank CDs to be filled with information and distributed to our collaborators.
- 2 binoculars, sleeping bag, 1 mobile phone (GSM) and taxes (and bills) covered for it

2. Organization and funding of meeting (6 of April 2001) in Kavadartzi, Macedonia, for establishment of Balkan Network for study and protection of vultures and eagles, first of its kind. The meeting had gathered 14 participants from Bulgaria, FRY of Macedonia, Greece, and Yugoslavia, experts in their field as also representatives from the Ministries of Environment of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Macedonia. One of the important information shared on the meeting was the effect of the armed conflicts on the highly threatened vultures and eagle species. The meeting was predeceased by four days field trip in important birds of prey areas.

3. Field trip to Yugoslavia 5th - 10th of May 2001 covering some the affected by the armed conflict and NATO bombing areas.

4. More than 20 organizational trips to Macedonia and Yugoslavia were done through the year for seeking new partners and establishment of working collaboration with NGOs in FRY of Macedonia and Yugoslavia

5. Throughout the whole project period our team was collecting of written reports and other pieces of information. Over 200 pieces of printed copies or internet sources were collected,

covering the biodiversity of Albania, FRY of Macedonia and FR of Yugoslavia (including Republic of Montenegro and Serbia, and Kosovo province) and reports on preliminary assessment/measurements done on the effect of the armed conflict on the fauna of the Balkan Peninsula.

6. We had also established a database of government and non-government contacts in Albania, FRY of Macedonia and FR Yugoslavia (Montenegro and Serbia, incl. Kosovo), that would serve as a background for the following cooperative measures and recovery projects.

7. We had created map database both from published and Internet sources; including topographical, political and military action maps.

8. All the information collected so far is already bound in a Briefing Book and CD to serve as main source for discussion during the meeting in Tzaribrod, Yugoslavia planned for 13-14 of April 2002.

9. During the whole period we were seeking of new collaboration on expert and funding level to take part in recovery projects on Balkan fauna which were already found to need and urgent attention. So far members of our team are invited to take an active part in the newly planned cooperative Balkan Program for the vultures in Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria.

10. I was invited to present the situation with the Balkan lynx on international meeting in KORA, Switzerland on 28th of February 2002. After intensive talks with different experts from Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe and Cat Specialist Group/SSC we had managed to induce a Balkan Lynx research and recovery program, supported by Cat Specialist Group/SSC and KORA (Coordinated research projects for the conservation and management of carnivores in Switzerland), Switzerland. This program will form a second step preliminary planned project covering the period 2003-2005 to serve as a background for the recovery of this highly threatened population. The Balkan lynx is now found only in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia inhabiting mainly the areas affected by the armed conflict in Kosovo, the NATO bombing areas and the areas of the recent conflict in FRY of Macedonia.