

## The Rufford Foundation Final Report

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

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. 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. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Paul Bartlett
Project title	Collaborative action to save wild populations of <i>Betula megrelica</i> - an endangered, alpine tree in the western Caucasus.
RSG reference	15890-2
Reporting period	02/03/15 to 31/01/16
Amount of grant	£5,000
Your email address	paul.bartlett@stonelanegardens.com
Date of this report	29/01/16

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
1. Detailed field studies carried out by an international team comprising botanists from NBGG (National Botanic Garden of Georgia), IoB (Institute of Botany), SLG (Stone Lane Gardens) and BGCI (Botanic Gardens Conservation International).			☑	Field studies carried out in September 2015. Fully mapped distribution on Mt Jvari and Mt Migaria. Seed and material collected. Field notes taken. New field studies carried out on surrounding mountains, resulting in one new population discovered on Mt Ashki.
2. Development of an integrated action plan that identifies site-specific measures for in situ conservation of <i>B. megrelica</i> .			☑	Attended meetings with IoB, the Georgian agency for protected areas and the Ministry for Education and Science. Also met with shepherds, foresters and School in Samegrelo. Conservation action plan developed to focus on education of population (particularly young people) and protection of habitat. A pilot education programme is now being drawn up for implementation in 2016.
3. Establishment of conservation collections at NBGG, IoB, Bakuriani Alpine Botanic Garden and SLG.			☑	Seed from many individuals within all provenances was collected in September 2015. IoB are coordinating ex-situ collections at Bakuriani Botanic Garden and NBGG. Seed will be germinated Spring 2016 for these collections. SLG will germinate seed Spring 2016 for ex-situ collections in UK.
4. International promotion of the project activities as a model for best practice in integrated conservation.		☑		Project featured on websites of BGCI and SLG. Promotion in UK media local to SLG. Focus of an illustrated talk in town local to SLG. Information boards being produced for visitors at SLG and NBGG. BGCI have an opportunity to promote more at their conferences and workshops, and this is an area that requires further effort.

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

The terrain around all the mountain areas we studied was much more difficult than anticipated. In particular the density of vegetation, causing slow and arduous progress. This made mapping of the areas very difficult. To overcome this, we approached areas from many directions and viewed areas from adjacent hills. Local shepherds were usually unable to interpret maps, so using local knowledge for route-finding was not reliable. Our drivers were better able to understand our requirements.

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

Firstly, finding a new population of *Betula megrelica* on a different mountain – I was convinced the species could exist in similar conditions on nearby Mt Ashki. So to find a large and healthy population in a very remote area was a great personal achievement as well as very important for the survival of the species.

Secondly, working with IoB and NBGG on this project has been very rewarding. Their enthusiasm and knowledge will be the key elements that make the project work in the long term.

Thirdly, the support and project management skills of BGCI – they brought myself and the Georgians together and allowed me to plan and work efficiently, knowing I had their backing in areas of politics and policy-making that are beyond my expertise.

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

Initially we had meetings with shepherds and foresters to understand their use of the forests and mountain areas. We then met with the main local school (Chkhorotsku) to discuss ways of working collaboratively to educate the local workforce and protect the habitat. We then met with Government agencies to discuss ways in which they could influence the local land use.

Our Pilot Education Programme will focus attention on educating the students at the Chkhorotsku School, with outside funding providing the teacher and resources.

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

Yes, this is a long-term project. The fieldwork is relatively straightforward, but the conservation of the habitat is far more challenging. We hope to change the attitudes of the local population over time and we feel that education of the next generation is a very important element. The very isolated habitat of *Betula megrelica* needs further study too, as there could be many important species of flora and fauna existing here.

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

We have published information online and used the media to help reach out to the public. My full report will be published on the SLG website. We are also using social media to publicise our work and hope to submit articles to national magazines.

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

The main expenditure was between August and October 2015 during the fieldwork phase. Since then expenses have been on data collation, production of reports and further discussions with our Georgian colleagues, with the final expenditure being a payment to IoB in January 2016 in settlement of their outstanding costs.

**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
Return flights from London to Tbilisi	500	388	-112	Cheaper flight
Return trains from Devon to London	170	143	-27	Cheaper train
Expenses of hiring Georgian botanists, drivers, trucks and car. Cost of fuel and field equipment.	2250	2379	129	Extra costs of hiring one extra truck and driver for Mt Askhi. No NGO costs, but extra botanists.
Food and Accommodation	1000	712	-288	Cheaper accommodation
Data collation/Report writing	1000	1400	400	Data collation expenses higher
<b>Total</b>	4920	<b>5022</b>	102	The deficit of £102 has been taken from our other funding.

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

Firstly, the implementation of the Pilot Education Programme. We employ a teacher to educate the students of Chkhorotsku School about their environment, rare species and how human activity impacts this. We can then measure the effectiveness of this direct and localised approach. If this is effective, then we will support IoB to lobby for a change in the National Curriculum to reflect this approach. Secondly, we lobby the protected areas agency to give the area 'protected area' status. This highlights it as a region worth protecting and may start to influence local policy. In this respect we may be able to collaborate with groups and individuals interested in protecting other threatened flora and fauna in the area. Thirdly, we continue with the ex-situ collection maintenance. Fourthly, we continue to publicise the project both locally and internationally.

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

Yes. The Rufford logo appears on the SLG website with a link to your site. I am using it on any literature concerning the project and you are mentioned as a funder in any press releases. You were also publicised during my illustrated talk in Chagford in November 2015. SLG are in the process of

producing a visitor information board about this project and you will be highlighted as a funder on that board.

**11. Any other comments?**

I am very grateful to The Rufford Foundation for recognising the importance of this project in providing a second grant. I expect to be applying for a Booster Grant to continue this project with the continued support of BGCI.