

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.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Rigers Bakiu
Project title	Promote the protection of Mediterranean monk seal (<i>Monachus monachus</i>) in Albanian coastal regions
RSG reference	19938-1
Reporting period	From 20/06/2016 till 04/07/2017
Amount of grant	£4850
Your email address	bakiurigers@gmail.com
Date of this report	04/07/2017

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
Increasing public awareness of monk seal conservation in Ionian Coastal Areas				<p>We have established a good network of contacts in Vlore and Himare with representative of NGOs, university, the municipality and other institutions. During this project implementation the municipalities were not so active and this was one of the main reasons why this objective can be considered as partially achieved.</p> <p>Some meetings were organised with the local organisations of Vlore and Himara for the raising the awareness and the creation of an alliance entitled "Protect the Mediterranean monk seal (<i>Monachus monachus</i>)", but these meeting never reached a positive conclusion for the creation of this alliance, though the Regional Administrate of Protected Areas in Vlore (RAPAV) are very optimistic and probably after this project implementation it will be created for the protection of this charismatic species at least in the area of Karaburun-Sazani.</p> <p>Another reason which disfavoured us for reaching this objective was related to the low number of observations and the only two observation came out just the last 2 months. It could be very fruitful to organise these meetings by showing them the photos of the monk seal from Albanian coasts.</p>
Sensitizing the fishermen and their organizations for the significance and the values of this endangered species				<p>At least five workshops were thought to be organised with the fishermen involved in the MedPAN project and other fishermen of Vlore and Himare, but we organised just two round table meetings and we informed them about the importance of this species</p>

			<p>and we got their opinion and suggestions on how to improve the biodiversity conservation in the region and promote the tourism by using monk seal for pesca-tourism development. Some of them suggested us the possible sites, where they have observed in the past the monk's seals and we installed the cameras based on their recommendations. They were surprised about some of the biological characteristics of monk seals and they promised to photograph and report all the observations to us even after the project end. We thought that these workshops were sufficient of their sensitising and we waited for the organisation of other workshops in case the observations of the monk seals were going to be registered by the installed cameras in the suggested sites. In these other workshops they could feel very proud of their suggestions and could intensify their collaboration, but unfortunately the cameras didn't registered any monk seals.</p>
<p>Establish a monitoring system of monk seals, by activating students and young fishermen to photograph and record in cases of the exposal of this species</p>			<p>In collaboration with RAPAV, Fishing Center Orikum and Orikum Fisheries Management Organisation fishermen, together with some young students a field work about recording the presence of monk seal was performed though there was no exposal of these species and no observation was registered in all the investigated areas.</p> <p>It is imperative to mention that due to the fact that we informed (especially Marko Cakalli) people from the coastal communities about the installation of cameras, they have afraid of them and for this reason it was observed a minimisation of illegal fishing, mostly of using dynamite in the Himara and Dhermi regions.</p> <p>In the project proposal it was</p>

		<p>mentioned to buy two professional cameras and five monitoring cameras, but due to the fact that there was a lack of observations we bought just one professional camera and three monitoring cameras. The monitoring cameras were installed and checked regularly even they transmitted the photos directly by using the phone netline.</p> <p>We were obliged to install just for some days the monitoring camera in Karaburuni peninsula and all these 10 months in Gjipe Bay, Himara and Dhermi. It was impossible to install the monitoring in the Cape of Stillo, because there is no Albanian companies phone net coverage in this area and there are present just Greek companies. Thus it would be very difficult to charge the phone credit every month like it happened in all the other sites.</p> <p>Furthermore practical training the groups of young people for using and monitoring monk seal was performed by me and Marko during the surveys by involving students, fishermen and other people from the coastal communities. Anyway, no certification was given to the students and the involved fishermen due to the fact that none of the monitoring cameras resulted to be efficient in capturing monk seals images.</p> <p>Anyway, some of the fishermen from Himara were trained on how to do good photos with the cameras and how to report them continuously to me and Marko even after project implementation ending.</p>
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

Many difficulties arose during the project implementation and they were due to organisation problems. I am going to explain them in detail:

1-The Center of Wildlife Ecology and Diseases Investigation (which was thought to be the unique centre of reference in Albania) was founded by the president of Royal Albania Foundation (RAF) and me, when I was working for Royal Albania Foundation and it was confirmed to be part of Agricultural University of Tirana. A lot of problems emerged out and my collaboration with the President of RAF (at the same time my colleague at the Agricultural University of Tirana) was interrupted, but I pushed ahead this initiative with the support of Marko Cakalli and the Regional Administrative Directorate of Protected Areas in Vlora.

2-Me and Marko are not working anymore for Royal Albania Foundation (neither working for the Center of Wildlife Ecology and Diseases Investigation) and we had no possibility to cover the staff cost expenses and due to this fact I included our salaries in the budget of the project, as offered by the Rufford Foundation small grant.

3-Illegal traffic presence nearby Karaburun-Sazani was another problem, which convinced us to take out the camera trapping devices from the Karaburun Peninsula, though we had the permission from Regional Administrative of Protected Areas in Vlore (RAPAV) for installing these cameras in Karaburun and we did several surveys together with the representatives of RAPA. You need to take present that in Albania drug trafficking is becoming a serious problem and just have a look to the newspapers. Several motorboats are trafficking these areas recently and the caves are used for hiding the drugs. Thus, we thought that it was quite sure that the cameras were destroyed by these persons in case they would found them.

4-Some difficulties arose with the municipality's cooperation, because at the beginning they promised us, but during the project implementation, most of their representatives were involved in political meetings and they had no time to be present in our meetings with the fishermen and other coastal communities' representatives.

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

05052017 in Gjipe Bay and 26052017 in Vlora Bay

Outcome 1. The first assessment of Monk seal presence in Albanian coastal areas by using monitoring cameras and involving the coastal community/the fishermen.

In May and June 2016 we did some informal meetings with representatives of the Municipality of Vlora, the Director of RAPAV, fishermen and marine aquaculture sector representatives in Vlora. I explained to them the general aim and the objectives of this project and one of the poster was attached at the RAPAV meeting room. During this time we were in contact with an Italian company for buying the monitoring cameras and bringing them in Albania. It took a lot of time to bring them here (first it was bought just one of them and it was tested in Albania, because none of this model has been tested before in Albania; after this we bought other two monitoring cameras).

In July 2016, me and Marko begun with doing all the necessary tests with the monitoring cameras and with the help of an electronic engineering expert we modified the power supply and we used motorcycle batteries instead of AAA batteries.

It was really difficult to install them in these areas due to the terrain and the difficulties for reaching the highest points of the rocks (you can see the photos of Figure 1 and Figure 2). These monitoring cameras captured on trigger photos for a time period of 11 months and they were placed in different locations based on the suggestions of the fishermen and the local people.



Figure 1. A camera trapping photo after installation of it near the Cave of Pirates (in Albanian language: Shpella e Pirateve), between Dhërmi and Himara.



Figure 2. Some photos during the installation of the monitoring cameras and the performed tests for receiving camera trapping photos by emails.

As it is shown on the map of Figure 3, we were not so lucky to have photos of monk seal in all the sites, where the monitoring cameras were installed. We did two surveys in collaboration with RAPAV members (before and after the observation of monk seal by a group of tourist and divers near Karaburuni peninsula on 05/05/2017).



Figure 3. In the map are shown all the investigated sites and the sites, where it was registered the presence of monk seals.

Outcome 2. Sensitised fishermen and divers from Vlora and Himara reported and helped us on registering the monk seal presence in Albania.

We organised two meetings with the fishermen (in each of the cities, Vlora (in September 2016) and Himara (in February 2017), respectively) and one fast workshop with the students from Agricultural University of Tirana (master students), which was held in Vlora with the support of the Fisheries Management Organisation of Orikum. These students took part even in the meeting with the representatives of Marine Aquaculture in Karaburun peninsula and they explained us that they have seen a monk seal near the cages on 12th November 2016, but they had no photos or videos.

We were glad to let you know that just after these meetings, on 5th May 2017 a group of divers and tourist (Diving and Tours Vlore) registered a video (Figure 4) just at the suggested site by Mr. Durmishaj, who is president of the Fisheries Management Organisation of Orikum; He was present during the surveys we did on September and July.



Figure 4. In this photo you can see the head of the monk seal coming out of the water.

We didn't install the monitoring cameras there, because we did some tests and it was impossible to get photos by email. Anyway we got the photos from these divers and tourists.

Furthermore, the meeting with the fishermen of Himara resulted to be successful, because it was just one of the fishermen, who informed us about the presence of

monk seal in Gjipe Bay and we ran, got the motor boat and registered a video by using the professional camera (Figure 5; the quality is not so good due to the zooming of the images and the observation of the monk seal at a long distance from the coast even it was registered with a digital camera canon EOS 700D – it turned back after observing us, because previously it was directed toward the coast). This video was registered on 26th May 2017.



Figure 5. In these photos you can see the monk seal turning back and the head together with the tail of it.

Outcome 3. Creation of the platform/network for further development into an alliance entitled "Protect the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*).

We had a meeting even with the Major of Himara and he promised us that he will support us in creating the Alliance for Monk Seals protection and create the conditions for protecting monk seals nearby Himara and Saranda, in the caves and beaches, where it will be /has been observed. Anyway, due to the political situation in Albania, all the mayors were involved in the political elections from May till July 2016 (when we had the government elections) and we had no chance to organise other meetings with them.

However it is important to mention that all the fishermen, divers and aquaculture workers have been informed about the presence of Monk seals in the investigated

areas and we have built a network with them and the RAPAV. Soon, RAPAV will implement a similar project for improving the monitoring of the marine protected areas by using our methodology and we are going to assist them technically. It is also important to mention that though RAPAV have implemented project of bigger amount of money, they never had the chance to use this new methodology, we implemented for the first time in Albania and we are glad of it, thanks to Rufford Foundation. We have recommend them that to take care of the caves of Karaburun peninsula, because the observed individual near Karaburun could probably be a female, because we have seen from the video some signs on it skin that suggest us that it has moult; generally they moult prior weaning their pups. We hope to seen soon their pups in Himara and Vlora.

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

Local community from Himara, Vuno, Dhermi and Vlora were involved directly through the workshops and they were informed about the project implementation and the importance of conserving monk seals near their costal area as benefit for developing pesca-tourism and the tourism.

During the fieldwork we also had communication with local people and fishermen who helped us in the field or with transportation (mostly in Himara and Vuno). It is also important to mention that a lot of important information was given to us during each of the organised meeting with them.

Furthermore, through informal communication we informed local inhabitants about importance of monk seal in the Ionian coastal areas; we had an informal meeting with the major of Himara municipality and he promised that he would support further initiatives regarding monk seals conservation in the area.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

As I mentioned in the project proposal, which was funded by the Rufford Foundation, I will continue to implement other projects in Ionian Coast about several species conservation, improve the preservation of coastal biodiversity and sensitise the local communities for sustainable development of the region. Actually, I am implementing another interesting project, which is the first initiative in the Albania about the Sharks and Rays conservation in Albania.

Regarding this work, based on the promises and the established collaboration with RAPAV, I will assist them on installing monitoring cameras in the Karaburun peninsula and Sazani Island, which can be a good instrument even for reducing the illegal fishing presence in these areas, though they are continuously monitored by the rangers. It is imperative to mention that they assisted personally on the installation of the monitoring cameras in the Karaburun peninsula and now they are convinced that it is a good methodology for improving the monitoring in the area.

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

The results of the project will be shared by website (Rufford website) and by posters present in the meeting room of Himara and Regional Administrative of Protected Areas in Vlora.

Results will also be presented as lectures and 2-3 published papers (popular and scientific).

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

Project funding was used for 1 year (June 2016-July 2017) and majority of activities were done during this period. Many problems arose during this project implementation and we were not satisfied of the results, but this was related to the logistic and in field work difficulties.

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
Leaflets	200	0	+200	No leaflets were produced because we thought to prepare and print them after some observations of monk seal individuals were registered in the investigated sites by using camera trapping methodology. Unfortunately even those few observations were registered near the end of the project implementation.
Posters and Banners	100	25	+75	2 normal letter posters x 7 GBP = 14 1 special letter poster x 11 GBP = 11 GBP
Workshops	2000	254	+1746	3 workshops x 67 GBP = 201 GBP 2 informal meetings expenses with the majors and the RAPAV members = 53 GBP
Photographing and Monitoring	1600	1241	+359	3 monitoring cameras (model: fototrappola tc 26 MMS) cost: 3 x (61 GBP (post expenditures) + 202 GBP) = 789 GBP 1 Digital Camera Canon EOS 700D cost: 412 GBP Cost of three special Batteries: 40 GBP The expert in electronic engineering provided us with a device for charging the

				<p>batteries and we didn't buy this device for charging the batteries.</p> <p>We didn't include here the cost of the phone calls and the cost for charging the credit of the sim card in the cameras.</p>
<p>Renting cost of Motorboats</p>	250	897	-347	<p>In the project proposal the cost, the Renting cost of Motorboats was this: 5 times x 50 GBP = 250 GBP.</p> <p>We rented two times the motorboats from Fishing Center Orikum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 166 GBP 2. 232 GBP <p>Tot. 398 GBP</p> <p>We bought the gas 4 times and we travelled by using the motorboats of some fishermen (4 x 27 GBP = 108 GBP).</p> <p>We used for traveling from Tirana toward Vlora (5 times), Himara (4 times) and Saranda (1 time) a Toyota RAV4 2005:</p> <p>Vlora traveling cost – 5 X 33 GBP = 165 GBP Himara traveling cost – 4 x 40 GBP = 160 GBP Saranda traveling cost – 1 x 66 GBP = 66 GBP (total. 391 GBP).</p> <p>We didn't include here the depreciation cost of the car, because the wheels were consumed and all the services were performed with our expenses.</p> <p>We didn't include here the cost of accommodation and the cost of the meals.</p>
<p>Staff cost</p>	700	2260	-1560	<p>It was previously explained that we are not working anymore for the Royal Albania Foundation and for this reason our salaries on doing these terribly difficult job (climbing, going by motorboats in dangerous areas) are these:</p> <p>Marko Cakalli – 10 months x 70 GBP = 700 GBP Rigers Bakiu – 12 months x 130 GBP = 1560 GBP</p>
<p>Totals</p>	4850	4677	+173	<p>1 GBP = 1.139 EUR; 1 GBP = 150,94 ALL</p>

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

It would be necessary to limit the impact of tourism and fisheries onto Karaburun and other sites, where the monk seals were observed/suggested by fishermen and other coastal community members. It would be necessary to have more information about their localisation (caves and other sites) in order to prepare some informative tables for informing the tourist about their presence in the area.

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

Logo of the RSGF was used in all materials produced in this project.

1. Rufford Foundation website.
2. Lecture/presentation slides.
3. Posters.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Marko Cakalli - Master student of Fisheries Management and Aquaculture; He has a lot of practical experience as diver and participated in creating the network of contacts with fishermen of Vlore and Himare.

Marko Cakalli was involved in installing and taking care of all the related activities about monitoring the hypothetical sites in Himara/Saranda and Vlora, where it could be observed the monk seal. Furthermore, he was the contacting point with all the fisherman of Himara and Saranda and He assisted the Leader of the Project during the surveys and the organisation of the workshops in Himara and Vlora.

Rigers Bakiu - Head of the Aquaculture and Fisheries Research Group (actually changed into Aquaculture Research Group) of the Aquaculture and Fisheries Department, at the Agricultural University of Tirana.

Rigers Bakiu was the Leader of Project and as the Manager of the Project he was responsible for preparation of the power-point presentations, organisation of the workshops, preparation of the poster and the cooperation maintaining with the Directorate of Regional Administration for Protected Areas in Vlora. Furthermore, he managed the offered grant from the Rufford Foundation and informed the Grant Administrator of Rufford Small Grants Foundation about all the realised activities.

It is important to mention that Kastriot Korro was not involved in this project implementation.

12. Any other comments?

We would like to thank Rufford Foundation for funding and all the cooperation during project preparation and reporting. It would be our pleasure to continue the cooperation with Rufford Foundation.