

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 | Dr. Mark Pestov |
| Project title | Study and Conservation of the Mediterranean spur-thighed tortoise (<i>Testudo graeca</i>) in the Caucasus, Russian Federation |
| RSG reference | 23.04.08 |
| Reporting period | July 2008 – June 2009 |
| Amount of grant | £4900 |
| Your email address | vipera@dront.ru |
| Date of this report | 26.11.2009 |

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 |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| An estimation of distribution and number of Mediterranean tortoises in the Caucasus, finding key places where they are found and an estimation of their protection. | | + | | This is a long-term objective planned for several years. |
| Prevention of illegal catching and selling of tortoises in collaboration with the State structures for Nature Conservation. | | + | | 2009 was the first year when we didn't discover Mediterranean tortoises in illegal trade in the Caucasus. In October 2009, we initiated the confiscation of three adult tortoises that were in illegal trade by the specialists of Moscow city Department of the Use of Natural Resources and the Environment Protection. |
| Collection of tortoises, which were illegally caught, from their owners and returning them to the wild. | | + | | In 2009, we returned 2 tortoises back to the wild. These tortoises were passed us by the locals of Gelendzhik town. |
| Setting up the Center for rehabilitation and nursery for Mediterranean tortoise. The main task of the Center will be the creation of methodology for keeping this species and reproduction. | | + | | Work on the foundation of the Center for rehabilitation and nursery of spur-thighed tortoises is successfully being carried on. |
| Making wide public support of the project (publications, TV- and radio-releases, and so on). | | | + | We prepared several articles for newspapers and magazines that were published. There was a video release on TV of the Republic of Abkhazia. We made pocket-size calendars where original tortoises and the RSGF logo are depicted. |

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

Unfortunately we were unable to continue the part of the project referring to Dagestan in 2008 – 2009 due to military and political complications. Our colleagues in Dagestan advised us to carry on the project there when the situation improves.

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

1) We collected new data on the spur-thighed tortoise population and its distribution in the Caucasus. In Abkhazia, we discovered a small area which is comparatively difficult to access and therefore rarely visited. The density of the tortoise population in this area is 10 per 1 km - this is a lot! Now we are working on well-founded suggestions of including this area in the State Pitsunda Myuserski Reserve for the Government of the Republic of Abkhazia.

2) This year it was the first time we didn't find tortoises sold out illegally in the Caucasian seaside resorts. We believe that it happened also thanks to our efforts and we contributed to this result too.

In October 2009, we initiated the confiscation of three adult tortoises that were in illegal trade by the specialists of Moscow city Department of the Use of Natural Resources and the Environment Protection. In spring 2010 we are going to return them to the wild in Krasnodar territory.

3) We continue working on the foundation of the first Russian Rehabilitation and Nursery Center for spur-thighed Tortoises based in a private safari park (Gelendzhik town, Krasnodar territory, the Russian Federation). The work is a success. Now, two enclosures (an area of 500 m²) have already been built. About 20 tortoises are kept there. The conditions of keeping them are very similar to natural ones.

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

Working on the project we found lots of new friends, partners, and sympathetic people among the locals in the Caucasus. Without their help the search for new tortoises' habitats and prevention of illegal trade would not have been really efficient. In fact, a non-formal network *Tortoises' Friends* has been created.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes surely, we are going to continue working on research and conservation of the spur-thighed tortoises and perhaps some other rare or endangered reptiles in the Caucasus.

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

We are distributing the information about results of our project through popular and scientific publications, mass-media, and the internet and during direct dialogue with colleagues.

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

RSG was used over the period of July 2008 to June 2009 as planned.

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 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|---|
| Travel expenses | 1000 | 1720 | + 720 | Specific expenses are not always the same as the budgeted amount, since we had to adjust the actual expenditures to the actual needs. The total of the expenditures is the same as the total of the budget. The amount has been spent exclusively on the project. We have all our expenditures documented and can confirm them. |
| Vehicle Rental and Field Vehicle Gas | 900 | 590 | – 310 | |
| Equipment | 600 | – | – 600 | |
| Salary for Assistants and Consultants | 700 | 860 | + 160 | |
| Field Supplies | 300 | 590 | + 290 | |
| Publication expenses | 360 | 150 | – 210 | |
| Telephone/fax/postage | 100 | 75 | – 25 | |
| Miscellaneous | 300 | 275 | – 25 | |
| Overhead expenses | 640 | 640 | 0 | |
| Total | 4900 | 4900 | 0 | |

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

We hope to widen the coverage of the project so as to include Dagestan (North Caucasus) and probably Azerbaijan and Armenia (South Caucasus).

We hope to organize efficient functioning of the nursery in Gelendzhik town so that the tortoises could breed in captivity. We think it is important to broaden our international contacts. We plan to visit Turkey and study their experience in their *Testudo graeca* nursery.

We are planning to raise fund to continue the project. At the moment, we are in position to carry on the project until the end of 2009 after Second RSG due to sponsorship we received from International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Society for Nature Conservation of Germany NABU.

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?

We used the RSGF logo on the pocket-size calendars with tortoise photos. We always mentioned RSGF as the project sponsor in all publications, TV and radio interviews.

11. Any other comments?

We are most grateful to RSGF for their support, which was the second time you supported our project and we are most willing to continue. We apologize for the delay in preparing the final report. We continued working on the project (expeditions in the Caucasus) even after the period of the Second RSG and wanted to show more results for the RSGF.