

## **Project Update: September 2016**

Right after receiving the 2nd Rufford Small Grant we have started intensive field studies. During four expeditions in August and September 2016, we have studied more than 35 plots of dry grasslands in central Ukraine (mainly Cherkassy region), including natural steppes and some rocky habitats, mostly not protected ones. Extensive interesting new data is received.

It is most interesting and unexpected that we have found five relict populations of the threatened snail *Granaria frumentum*, far outside its known range. This species is officially protected by Red Book of Ukraine and considered Endangered in Ukraine by IUCN criteria (Balashov, 2016). All these five locations are not protected. Presence of this threatened species, together with other collected data, gives serious reason to propose creation of the new protected areas in each of these five locations. Moreover we have found several new locations of the threatened snails *Pupilla bigranata* and *Mediterranea inopinata*.

On the basis of received zoological and botanical data we will propose to create about 15 new protected areas of different size (data is under processing and discussion).

As a scientific result of these expeditions we working on the paper in English that preliminary titled "Terrestrial molluscs of the dry grasslands of Dnieper Upland (Central Ukraine): relic populations of the threatened *Granaria frumentum* in 250 km from its known range" that will be submitted in some peer-reviewed journal.

In every of these four expeditions one to four students/biologists of Kiev University were involved, generally seven in number, which gives some educational outcome.

As an additional outcome of my 1st RSG, the school girl who was involved in one of the largest expeditions last year, Veronika Skvortsova, became a student of Kiev University last month. She will specialise on ecology and conservation biology and will continue her work on the land snails under the guidance of her new advisor Dr D. Lukashov, head of the Department of Ecology in Kiev University, who was a referee of my RSG projects.

Second edition of brochure from my 1st RSG was printed, many examples were distributed among the specialists, students and local people.

As an additional minor outcome we have slightly contribute to the another recent Ukrainian RSG project, of Lena Godlevska, by finding during one of our expeditions the notable colony of bats and giving this data to her.

Some photos from one of the expeditions on my Facebook page:

[https://www.facebook.com/igor.balashov.52/media\\_set?set=a.10154457787707206.1073741842.844757205](https://www.facebook.com/igor.balashov.52/media_set?set=a.10154457787707206.1073741842.844757205)

Photos of our team during the expeditions:



Searching for the snails