

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	Maja Arok
Project title	European Ground Squirrel Feeding Habits Analysis in Service of Long Term Conservation
RSG reference	20110-2
Reporting period	July 2016 - March 2018
Amount of grant	£4475
Your email address	arok.maja@gmail.com
Date of this report	March 10, 2018

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
Scientific study				We do not have complete results yet but our results so far support our original premise
Habitat restoration				
Education				We haven't had two rounds of lectures in same schools but we visited a larger number of schools instead

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

It was very difficult to have positive cooperation with the administrative officers from the National Park "Fruška Gora" Public enterprise. At multiple occasions were our e-mails and phone calls left unanswered and deadlines given to us from the Provincial Institute for Nature protection neglected on their side. This ultimately resulted in the last project activities being moved and the project lasted longer than we planned.

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

Scientific results – this type of study has never been done in Serbia (there are some data from the first half of the 20th century but those studies still considered EGS pests and were done on killed animals). We now have a substantial amount of data to prove that the animals are not pests, being that our lab results show high dietary preference of EGS to grasses and legumes.

Habitat restoration – "Neradinski do" pasture is home to one of the most abundant populations of EGS in Vojvodina (and Serbia), so we feel that its better state now will have a positive impact on the animals as well.

Education – being that this animal is tied to its habitat and cannot easily move to more suitable patches of land, we need to make people that live close to these habitats aware of the species, its importance and legal status. We feel that giving lectures to children achieves this task the best and therefore education is a big part of results as well.

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

Some locations covered by the project were in danger of being destroyed and ploughed by the local municipalities, which we were made aware of by locals who use the pastures as feeding grounds for cattle. We made efforts to stop this by alarming the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection. We taught lectures at local schools and the children seemed interested to know more about the animals. Unfortunately, due to school obligations and the risk of them getting hurt using the tools, we couldn't arrange for them to be involved in habitat restoration, but people from the neighbouring village joined us.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, maybe by conducting a larger scale study, one that would cover Serbia and its neighbouring countries, mainly Hungary and FYR of Macedonia or Bulgaria.

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

We conducted lectures at local schools, but scientific results will be published in relevant scientific 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?

July 2016-March 2018

We hoped to be done by late summer 2017, but due to very long and tedious job of getting the necessary permits and bad weather, the final stage – habitat restoration was moved to spring 2018.

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
Petrol	1575	1350	+225	
Meals	700	550	+150	
Promotional material: T shirts and badges	600	600	0	
Restoration – transportation and meals (600+500)	1100	800	+300	We had 20 volunteers, not 30 as stated
Digital camera	500	500	0	

Telephone bills, technical support for the video, permit requests, tools	0	200	-200	
Total	4475	4000	+475	

The amount asked from The RSG was 4475 £ sterling.

The official exchange rate on March 10th is 1£ = 132.3 RSD

The remaining money will be used for monitoring purposes.

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

Publishing the results and monitoring the locations for possible changes that may arise from insufficient knowledge in the local administrations.

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, all the presentations used in lectures, t-shirts and badges have The Rufford Foundation logo on them. Every address to the relevant institutions mentioned The Foundation as well.

11. Any other comments?

On behalf of the Project team, I would like to, again, thank The Rufford Foundation for giving us the opportunity to do some (in our opinion) important work. We feel that, even though, the project activities maybe didn't go as originally planned, we completed the most important tasks. Also, I would like to apologise for prolonging the project activities, I hope that this will not affect the Foundation's stance towards our project and us as a team.