

## The Rufford Foundation

### Final Report

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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**

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Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Jelena Šeat
Project title	True Bugs (Heteroptera) of Halophytic Habitats in Vojvodina (part II) – Opportunities for true bugs conservation in the Banat region
RSG reference	21146-2
Reporting period	December 6, 2016 - March 31, 2018
Amount of grant	£5,000
Your email address	<a href="mailto:jelenaseat@yahoo.com">jelenaseat@yahoo.com</a> , <a href="mailto:jelena@habiprot.org.rs">jelena@habiprot.org.rs</a>
Date of this report	March 27, 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
Census of true bugs of halophytic habitats in the Banat region and distribution of saline specialists in Vojvodina				With two Rufford research projects we covered the whole territory of Vojvodina province. It is known now where and when saline specialists, species of the biggest conservation importance, are present, but also with gathered data we have information on the best locations for the true bugs in northern Serbia.
Collecting data on ecology and human activities that endanger true bugs and their habitats				Basic data on vegetation cover, community composition and threats are collected, however, more profound knowledge on these issues should be obtained with future research projects.
Presentation of our research results to the scientific community				The main article on the ecology of true bugs from Serbian saline grasslands is still in preparation, however, we presented our project in September 2017 at the Symposium of Entomologists of Serbia.
Promotion on importance of conservation of halophytic habitats and true bugs				We held several lectures, made a poster on true bugs – saline specialists and a web presentation mostly dedicated to the general public and biology/ecology students.
Expanding the true bug research team				Colleagues Nikola Milić and Mirjana Ćuk, both plant ecologists, joined our team and helped us with collecting and analysing vegetation data.

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

Fortunately, we didn't have any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project.

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

- a) A lot of valuable faunal data was gained; we recorded seven new species for the Serbian fauna and nine species were rediscovered after more than a century. In total, 180 species of true bugs are recorded in halophytic habitats, and these are now among the best-studied habitat types for true bugs in Serbia.
- b) We started with collecting data on ecology of true bugs and set up a base for further studies on community composition, trophic relations, management impact and planning conservation strategies.
- c) Definitely, the most important outcome of the project is our collaboration with Hungarian colleagues from Szeged and Budapest. They are well experienced heteropterists, with a huge knowledge on true bug taxonomy and fauna in the Pannonian region. However, this collaboration is more significant for me personally, since I got a scholarship and enrolled PhD studies at the University of Szeged where I will continue to work on true bugs from saline habitats for my thesis.

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

In contrary to the Bačka region (studied in the first Rufford project), in the Banat most of the saline grasslands are pastures, often highly degraded by overgrazing. Therefore, through lectures and promotion material we tried to give information to local herdsmen on how an intensive grazing regime influences local biodiversity and plant cover, and how they can prevent expansion of weed species, a poor quality food for their herds.

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

Considering that my PhD thesis is related to the same topic as these two Rufford projects are, I will certainly continue to work on true bugs from halophytic habitats. However, the focus of future studies will be more on community seasonality, conservation management of saline grasslands and how to provide optimal conditions for true bugs and other residents of these habitats.

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

The phase of active promotion by lectures for the general public was finished by the end of the project. Still, we continue to distribute our promotional material occasionally through different environmental or conservation-related events in Serbia, such as Night of Biology in Novi Sad at the Department of Biology and Ecology, Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad. Also, web presentations of this project are available on the website of the HabiProt Association, and shared by the Facebook group Insects of Serbia and HabiProt's Facebook page.

As already mentioned, we are preparing an article for publishing, but we also submitted a poster presentation for the next European Hemiptera Congress in June

2018. This event will be very important, not just for promotion of our scientific results, but it will also improve the visibility of our research team in the scientific community.

Last but not least, we will also present our project at the Rufford Small Grants Conference in Serbia in September 2018. Truly good impressions from the RSG conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2016 make us very proud that HabiProt is taking part in organizing the conference this year.

**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 grant was used from December 2016 to February 2018. As aforementioned, we didn't have any unexpected problems during the project realisation, and there were no difficulties in harmonizing timetables for anticipated and actual activities.

**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
Traveling costs during promotion and preparation period (fuel, bus and train tickets)	230	263	+33	We had a framework plan where and when we will hold our lectures, but we held some extra lectures after the promotion phase of the project.
Fuel costs for field work (650 km x 8 field trips)	480	520	+40	During the submission of the project proposal we couldn't calculate that we will run more fuel to access locations where we were accommodated.
Car maintenance	170	145	-25	We used a newer/ better car this time and had less costs of maintaining.
Accommodation costs (6 £ x 40 overnight x 5 persons)	1200	1176	-24	Accommodation costs per person were a bit higher than anticipated, but we had fewer overnights in the field.
Food costs during field trips (6 £ x 48 days x 5 persons)	1440	1410	-30	-
Equipment and materials for field and laboratory work	290	306	+16	We decided to buy better quality equipment but the costs were a bit bigger.

Projector	470	470	-	-
Preparation of promotion material	130	130	-	-
Printing of 50 polo-shirts	300	402	+10 2	This item was much more expensive than we expected, but this phase was at the beginning of the project, so we proceeded with the plan, and printed all 50 pieces.
Printing of 100 posters	160	136	-24	We got a discount on printed posters.
Postal costs	130	95	-35	We didn't know that some delivery costs of our equipment and promotional materials will be free of charge.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>5053</b>	<b>53</b>	

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

We should continue to cooperate with Hungarian colleagues, because they have decades of experience in the management of saline grasslands and marshes. We should use their knowledge and make conservation plans which are the most suitable for halophytic areas in Vojvodina. Also, Hungarians have a long tradition of invertebrate ecological researchers on different groups, and they are willing to help us start similar studies in the Pannonian part of Serbia too.

We will continue with the collaboration with the Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation and the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia. These institutions are in charge of declaring new protected areas and wild species of national importance, they can do the most on the legal protection of natural values of the Vojvodina Province.

**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?**

Yes, we used the Rufford Foundation logo in all promotional materials (posters, polo shirts), also, in our web and oral presentations. In acknowledgement sections of research papers we always mention that the funds were provided by the Rufford Foundation.

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

**Jelena Šeat** (project coordinator) – True bugs collecting and identification, organising of field work, lecturing, in charge of writing and preparation of scientific communications, as well as, preparing of all needed reports for the state authorities.

**Bojana Nadaždin** – Bojana was assisting in the true bugs collecting and identification, organizing meetings with managers of protected areas and local NGOs, in charge of writing and preparation of promotional material.

**Nikola Milić** – Nikola is an MSc ecology student; he was working on collecting and analysing vegetation data, but he was also very helpful in assisting in the project promotion.

**Mirjana Ćuk** – Mirjana is an experienced plant ecologist and she was supervising Nikola's work.

**Students** – 2 BSc students, members of the student society "Josif Pančić" from Novi Sad, joined us several times for field trips, helping with the true bugs collecting and organizing the true bug collection in the lab.

## 12. Any other comments?

We are very proud that our work on the project is widely recognized by colleagues from Serbia and abroad. Also, national institutions related to nature protection consider us as experts in our field of research and this year invited us to participate in the research project coordinated by the Provincial Institute of Nature Conservation. It is a great pleasure that young colleagues ask us for help and to supervise their projects. Our work inspired students, mostly interested in entomological research, to start implementing their own ideas. This chain reaction when every grant winner inspires new people to start and apply for their own project can be beneficial not just two young Serbian conservationists, but also to the Rufford Foundation and the future of nature conservation in Serbia.