

## 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	Natasa Nikpaljevic
Project title	Integrating Scientific Research with Community Education for Cetacean Conservation and Population Statues in Montenegro
RSG reference	21559-1
Reporting period	March 2017 – March 2018
Amount of grant	£4994
Your email address	drustvoprirodnjakacg@gmail.com
Date of this report	17 April 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
1. Regional population status update of bottlenose dolphins and striped dolphins.				The data we have collected forms the first year of the dedicated surveys and to draw the results on population status, we need to run the study in multi-year bases with the same data collection protocol. Saying this, there was a considerable decline on bottlenose dolphin sightings however for the conclusion a long term study has to be needed.
2. Annual and seasonal estimation of abundance and encounter rate of bottlenose dolphins and striped dolphins.				During our survey days, bottlenose dolphins were encountered on 74 days in every season and striped dolphins were encountered on 12 days also in every season. To analyse the encounter rate with a correction of the bias on the boat survey effort, 282 grid cells were created in the survey area and only 100 grid cells were used during analysis. The encounter rate was estimated on average 3.5 groups and 9.2 individuals per 100 km in Montenegro.
3. Delineating seasonal critical habitats (foraging and resting habitat) of bottlenose dolphins and striped dolphins.				Despite the slightly lower encounter rate of bottlenose dolphins when compared to neighbouring countries, this habitat reveals notable re-sighting numbers between and within years, as well as high presence of foraging, socialising and resting behaviours. Specifically, the coastal waters of Montenegro appear to hold several hotspots for bottlenose dolphins. Nonetheless, it is highly likely that offshore waters also hold important cetacean habitats, in particular for striped dolphins.
4. Creating an online Photo-ID catalogue of				We created an Photo – ID catalogue named CETAZOOM in aim to show

<p>bottlenose dolphins and striped dolphins where not only scientist but also local communities shared their sighting pictures and locations</p>			<p>people that we have dolphins, that they need our protection, to make them understand that protecting them we protect ourselves too and of course to involve people to help us.</p>
<p>5. Disseminating the project reports to Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro</p>			<p>We organised meeting and have disseminated project yearly report to Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro where we detailed explained the methodology and the results of this project. The yearly project report covers all cetacean info on coastline of the Montenegro and our 1 year project activities' results.</p>
<p>6. Launching an online cetacean sighting and stranding network to support the active involvement of local communities and to generate their enthusiasm and curiosity. This will also result with larger input of data, including the neighboring countries.</p>			<p>As we mentioned above, that was the purpose of creating website Cetazoom <a href="http://cetazoom.org/">http://cetazoom.org/</a>. By carrying into effect this website, we have targeted to take community's attention on marine mammals on Montenegro coastline and to make the public understand the importance of a healthy marine biodiversity for human's life. As a first long - term study on marine mammals in Montenegro, we also aimed to make stakeholders curious about marine mammals and tried to involve as many people as we can to our project. At the end, as a result of actively implementing the project activities, not only the public in Montenegro, but also the other neighbour countries recognised the studies and importance of the marine mammals for the marine biodiversity and human life.</p>
<p>7. Working closely with Montenegrin students both from public schools and University of Podgorica and involving them both to the project activities and our project team</p>			<p>We had 11 presentations to pupils and students to take an active involvement in our project in order to learn more about marine mammals and to do in practice their conservation and also to spread their knowledge. The presentation were generally so interactive that the</p>

<p>will result hands on experience in marine field and encourage them to continue as a researcher for their future career path.</p>			<p>participants have asked many questions about marine life and the way we work. We have explained and presented the methodology we use and the results of our activities. At the presentations for small pupils, we have organised interactive games to make them love the nature and marine life. We contributed so much for the Podgorica University students to become a researcher and to create awareness for the young generations.</p>
<p>8. Fishermen enrollment will increase their awareness on marine conservation where is heavily under the pressure of dynamite fishing.</p>			<p>For the fishermen, we prepared questionnaires aiming to learn more about the marine mammals' habitats. Due to the fact that fishermen are on the sea every day for their life, it is important to collaborate with them and to make them adopt the project activities. By implementing the questionnaires and also by renting the boats for survey from them, we have increased their awareness on marine mammals and involved them to the project.</p>
<p>9. Increase awareness of inhabitants of Montenegro on the cetacean species that are encountered in Montenegro and marine conservation.</p>			<p>Except our fieldwork, we also had a lot of public events, which include 18 beach cleanings, 11 presentations to pupils in primary and secondary school and in the university for the aim to educate and inform people and kids about the level of vulnerability and necessary of giving a support to wild cetacean species in Montenegrin waters.</p>
<p>10. At least one scientific publication on a peer reviewed journal.</p>			<p>Our scientific papers are in preparation, still not published except at Rufford conference where we performed with the abstract:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrating Scientific Research with Community Education for Cetacean Conservation and Population Statues in Montenegro;</li> <li>2. Preliminary Results of Critical Habitat Identification Utilised by Two Delphinidae Species in Montenegro</li> </ol>

			3. On The Behaviour of an Under-Studied Population of Bottlenose Dolphins in the Adriatic Sea.
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**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).**

During this project, we had some problems with the weather conditions, especially during the rain or snow we couldn't work with theodolite on the land surveys. Besides, we couldn't work on the boat surveys if the Beaufort Sea state was more than 3, because the visibility wasn't good and we had to stop our surveys couple of times. For this difficulty, we re-arranged our work plan in terms of covering much more surveys in the proper weather conditions. So, the survey day deficiencies have been compensated by doing extra surveys in the days with suitable weather and survey conditions.

The major problem on the beginning of this project was that the local people except fishermen didn't know that we have dolphins in the Adriatic Sea. Then, we started with our public events, and as the research of marine mammals was something new in Montenegro, people were quite conservative. Once the project activities have been implemented step by step, we were on TV and other social media channels, so the community started to recognize us and our activities. This made them milder towards the project.

We have been presenting our project to many stakeholders, fishermen, we did so many public events such as beach clean ups, school events, meetings with interested citizens, beach demonstrations and we tried to explain them the importance of marine conservation and environment in general and to involve as much people as we can, as a result of all this activities, the perspective of the public changed from a conservative one to a positive approach towards our activities and the marine life.

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

With the precious contribution of Rufford Grant, we have the chance to carry on long term, systematic and dedicated surveys in the Adriatic Sea, where suffered from lack of research. As a result of the project, we assume that the main outcomes of the project:

Even the current study is too young to make strong conclusions; after 1 year of project implementation period, we have concluded that the places Ulcinj, Utjeha and Boka Kotorska Bay on coastline of Montenegro are the important zones for dolphins. After 1-year study in the area, we concluded that the most important threats for the marine mammals are marine traffic, drift nets, noise pollution, plastic pollution and dynamite fishing.

After sharing all useful info about dolphin species on coastal line of Montenegro and our activities in presentations conservation events and tv, we have increased public awareness in Montenegro.

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

As a result of collaboration with them, local communities were keen to share information about dolphin sightings and the major threats on them. Especially, throughout questionnaires we prepared for fishermen living on Montenegrin coastline, we have revealed where they usually see dolphins and what's the main threat for them in their opinion. So, this involvement of local communities helped us to determine the critical habitats for marine mammals and change the communities to a positive one towards marine biodiversity.

During our scientific boat surveys, we have generally rented the boats from local fishermen. This enabled them to help earning their life and their attitude towards marine mammals become positive by involving the project activities.

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

This was the start of first long-term study on marine mammals in Montenegro. When we assess ourselves in terms of the first year activities, we think that we achieved to initiate a good start for the conservation of marine biodiversity in Montenegro. On the other hand, recognising the fact that public awareness on marine mammals has been spread up to a specific level gave us encourage to keep our activities alive.

We think that if we would keep working on marine conservation, the first year study would have meaning and develop the marine conservation one more step. If we find the resources, we would like to continue our conservation activities for the next terms.

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

Besides all our conducted promotion activities of project such as using our websites and other social media tools, public awareness activities, dissemination of project report; we are going to keep sharing the ongoing conservation activities by using our websites, facebook pages, instagram accounts and by organizing public awareness activities. This will enable us to promote the project and also the Rufford Foundation to a wider community.

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

RSG was used from March 2017 – March 2018.

Month	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Prepare and print the leaflets, posters, stickers and finalize the Montenegro Dolphin Project website														
Informative meeting about the project activities with Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro.														
Informative meeting about the project activities with University of Podgorica and Institute of Marine Biology, Kotor														
Boat surveys, each month twice														
Land surveys at Ulcinj, Bar, Budva and Kotor survey stations. Each station visited once a month, in total four survey days will in each month, totalling 48 survey days.														
Academic lectures will be organised at the Department for Biology and Faculty of Mathematics & Natural Sciences at the University of Montenegro														
April 2017 and September 2017=Conervation														

Education will be given to the pupils in the public schools in Ulcinj and Bar.														
Final project report with conservation implications disseminated to the Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro and Rufford Small Grant														
June, July, August 2017= Public talks in Ulcinj, Bar, Budva through the help of Ulcinj, Bar and Budva Municipality.														
March 2017, April 2017, February 2018=TV talks in the local TVs														
January 2018= Photo-ID catalogue will be shared with the neighbouring countries.														
Informal talks with fishermen														

**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.**

The Project Budget has been approved by the Trustees of the Rufford Foundation as GBP 4.994,00 and sent to the recipient as EUR 5.577,77 on 11 April 2017. We kindly submit the detailed budget below.

Item	Budgeted Amount £	Actual Amount £	Difference £	Comments
Theodolite and its tripod	79	58	20	We used our own theodolite and the item was used for its tripod.

Rangefinder=To estimate the distance between cetaceans and the boats	158		158	This item was saved and used for other budget activities.
Garmin GPS and 76c cable connection	21	25	(5)	
Meeting with Environmental Agency	88		88	This item was used for other budget activities.
Boat surveys=Boat will be rented from fishermen	3,016	2,959	57	We have conducted around 20 scientific boat surveys during the project.
Land surveys from Bar, Budva, Kotor, Ulcinj, Bar and Herceg Novi	754	851	(97)	We have conducted around 45 scientific land surveys from different observation spots on coastline of Montenegro. Overspend was compensated by saving from other budget items.
Educational materials	182	335	(153)	For all educational materials such as booklets, posters. Overspend was compensated by saving from other budget items.
Academic Lecture and Conservation education	250	684	(434)	Spent for all presentations at University, high schools and other institutions. We compensated the overspent by saving from other budget items.
Project Report	446	98	348	A yearly report has been prepared covering all results of the project and submitted to the Ministry and other institutions.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,994</b>	<b>5,011</b>	<b>(17)</b>	

(\*) The exchange rate **GBP 1 = EUR 1,1169**, which was the rate calculated based on approved project budget in GBP (4.994,00) and received amount in EUR (5.577,77 ) on 11 April 2017, was used.

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

- To write a new project proposal for the next stage and organize a research camp for marine conservation.
- To educate more students in order to provide bigger team for the research for the aim to get better knowledge about dolphins in Montenegrin waters.
- To share our results with other institutions and scientists in the neighbourhood countries.

**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?**

The Rufford Foundation logo was used in all presentations and printed booklets, pamphlets and posters prepared during this project.

We think that the Rufford Foundation received publicity during our project activities among the local communities and researchers. Beside, during all our presentations and lectures, the publicity of the Rufford Foundation was at the forefront.

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

**Natasa Nikpaljevic**, Project Coordinator

**Aylin Akkaya Baş**, Scientific Director and Consultant of the project

**Ana Vujovic**, Public Awareness Director and Consultant of the project

**Mehmet Akif Erdogan**, ArcGIS expert

**Elisa Gaggioli B.S.**, Volunteer Supervisor

And more than 40 volunteers coming from different countries

**12. Any other comments?**

Thanks a lot for the financial support of RF. The data are precious and necessary for next work on conservation of this species and give us a chance to spread our mission, knowledge, passion and vision for better future for marine mammals.

