

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Oleksandra Oskyrko
Project Title	Assessment of conservation status of habitats important for reptiles within the Southern Bug eco-corridor in the Steppe zone of Ukraine
Application ID	28002-1
Grant Amount	£4,855
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1. 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
The analysis of the modern distribution of the reptiles in the Southern Bug eco-corridor in the Steppe zone of Ukraine				This part of the project work is done completely. We collected data on the distribution of reptiles throughout the Southern Bug eco-corridor in the steppe zone of Ukraine. We created a database and maps.
Assessment of important habitats for reptile conservation				We've collected data on habitat ecological characteristics for reptiles in this territory. And we identified the most important habitats for the conservation of reptiles.
The conclusion on how the construction of Oleksandrivske reservoir and water level rising can affect the habitats and conservation of local reptiles' populations				We explored the areas that will be flooded and made predictions about the consequences. The results were added to the complaint to the Bern Convention, which was sent with other conclusions of scientists. The Bern Convention accepted our complaint and began its consideration. In 2019-2020, there were no public meetings regarding the next increase in the level of the Oleksandrivske reservoir. Therefore, we did not present our results there. But we plan to do it at the next meetings.
Organization of lectures				In March 2020, we organised only one lecture. We could not organise other lectures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine in Ukraine. Lectures were cancelled. But later (when the pandemic situation improved) we presented our project in the conference that Buzy Gard National Park organised (it was Nature Protection Day in Ukraine). And we presented our project during summer biological practice of the Richelieu school (summer 2020).
The production and distribution of the promotional and				First step was designing a unique project logo. Next, we prepared promotional and educational material

educational materials				(500 brochures, 150 t-shirts and 100 stickers). The t-shirts and stickers show the project logo.
Internet activity and sharing information				We had our educational activities through social networks (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube). We published various posts on the topic of reptiles. We also started creating short videos (#herpetologist notes) where we talk about different species of reptiles, their conservation and the important habitats for reptiles. We decided to write an article about the importance of snakes in the ecosystem in the spring (during high activity of snakes in Ukraine). The articles were published in < 10 local newspapers. The aim was to draw the attention of the local population to the correct behaviour during the meeting with the snakes.
Video creation				We created a video that should draw public attention to the problem of killing snakes by humans.
Writing a master's thesis				The master's thesis did not write on the topic of the project due to the change of timescale.
Submission of manuscripts to the journals				We have published a short note within the project. Other papers are in the process of preparation.

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

Some team members refused to participate in the project. Therefore, we had to radically change the composition of the team and include new members of the project team. As a result, the team leader had to do more work on the project than originally planned. But this did not affect the quality of work and results.

During the realisation of project tasks, the exchange rate of GBP to the national currency changed. In the very beginning of the project £1 cost 35,2 UAH (when the project was only planned). In the beginning of the project £1 cost 30,3 UAH. We should say that this fact didn't have a big influence on the volume of work. The project was fully fulfilled.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to cancel lectures. But we continued educational activities via the Internet throughout the quarantine in Ukraine. We also decide to create videos instead of lectures. The video was shared on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

We had changes in timescale because the project started in August 2019 (although the project was scheduled to begin in May 2019). Therefore, we have postponed the main field work to spring-summer 2020. This made it possible to collect more data than originally planned.

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

- The most important outcome of our project is the data about current distribution of the reptiles in Southern Bug eco-corridor in the steppe zone of Ukraine
- Assessment of important habitats for reptiles within Southern Bug eco-corridor in the steppe zone of Ukraine for further action to conserve biodiversity in this region.
- The positive effect was achieved during this project's education activity. Many of the people were involved in distribution of published materials (brochures, t-shirts and stickers). We got a large and very active audience on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube. We created a video and drew people's attention to the problem of killing snakes. We often commented on the situation with snakes in Ukraine on TV, where our video was also shown. Both our video and the topic of snakes were discussed on the radio.

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

Most of the planned activities implemented with the active participation of local people were not organised due to the COVID-19 situation. But some of the locals were providing us with useful information about the reptiles in this region and also were taking part in distribution of published materials. Also, Buck's Grand National Nature Park was taking part in distribution of published materials. The staff and administration of the park are actively helping us with the educational activities of the project.

The project topic and the events are actively discussed on Facebook. Moreover, not only the local community but people from all over Ukraine joined the discussion and shared their opinion and information.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, in future we are planning to continue this study. As the used field methodology was really effective (allowed to collect a big array of data), the same work is worth to be done in other regions of Ukraine (e. g. southern regions). Also, we are planning to enlarge the observable territory and for the comparison include other habitats. This will help us not only to make more detailed analysis of the negative influences, but also to develop more competent recommendations for the conservation. Also, we are planning to enlarge the number of public and education activities among the local people. We try to keep our project active and alive on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube. We plan to publish our data in the peer reviewed journals and will also participate in the international conferences and symposia on biology and nature conservation. On the basis of this work data on distribution of reptiles will be

included in the future edition of the Red Book of Ukraine and local red lists of the Mykolaiv region.

We are awaiting the outcome of the Bern Convention meetings on our complaint. The next meeting will be in December 2020. In the future, we will demand a state response to the situation with raising the level of the Oleksandrivske reservoir.

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

We are planning:

- To make publications in press (Ukrainian, regional, district newspapers and data portals), scientific and popular science editions.
- To place the results of the project on the websites of different conservation organisations (national nature park, non-governmental ecological organisations, etc.).
- We plan to attend conferences, symposia where we will present the results of our project.
- Results will be organised at the future actions, local hearings or meetings in the Mykolaiv region.
- Will try to keep our project active on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube.

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

Due to difficulties, the project began in August 2019 (although it was planned in May 2019). Therefore, all planned field work was in the spring and summer of 2020. But in general, the project was 1 year. Due to COVID-19, most educational activities had to be postponed to the summer.

8. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

During the realization of project tasks, the exchange rate of GBP to the national currency changed.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Equipment for field expeditions	200	260	+60	
Daily allowance for the team for field expeditions	1400	1350	-50	Include meals and beverages during expeditions

Fuel for field expeditions (the car)	1350	1400	+10	All planned expeditions were organized. Also, several expeditions were organized to additional territories.
Educational material design	350	300	-50	Creating a project logo and booklet design
Educational material print	1055	1000	-55	Printing 500 brochures, 150 T-shirts and 100 stickers
Lectures	500	150	-350	Only one lecture was organized
TOTAL	4855	4460	-395	
New activities				
Create a video		429		Include: rental of video recording equipment (cameras, Tiffen filters, lenses, lamps, stabilizers), rent locations/studios transportation of video recording equipment

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

Next step in continuing what this project had started is to share the results of the project, make room for more actions towards the investigation and conservation of nature in this region and further engage society and stakeholders in habitat protection not only for reptiles but for all flora and fauna.

For the development of more competent recommendations and the strategy for the conservation of the reptiles we need to continue studies of the limiting factors and identify the level of negative influence on the species.

We will be actively involved in the actions, local performances, and especially in future public hearings regarding the next increase in the level of the Oleksandrivske reservoir. And we will plan to present our results on the impact of increasing reservoirs on reptiles.

Also we will continue to cooperate with local organisations in Agency Mandry Gard, Association of cyclists Yuzhnoukraink and others), where we (together with the organizers) will tell tourists about the value of the steppe areas of the river valley.

10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

All the published materials (brochures, t-shirts and stickers) were provided with the Rufford Foundation logo. The Rufford Foundation logo was added to the project's logo that we created. In the publications in the press the Rufford Foundation support was mentioned. In future all the materials (based on the data collected during the project) will be provided with the reference or the Rufford Foundation logo. We will

also use the logo of the foundation in all future publications and presentations of this project.

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

Oleksandra Oskyrko - team leader, fieldwork, maps and data processing, and analysis, field key preparation, lecture, media and eco-educative activities, scientific articles preparation.

Oleksii Vasyliuk - leader of the non-governmental organization Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG), assistance with project financial management, Facebook and blog support, management of printing published materials.

Tetiana Shamina - communicator of the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group, media and eco-educative activities, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube support, work with the press.

Daniel Jablonski - international consultant, assistance with data analysis, scientific articles preparation.

The administration and all employers of Buck's Grand National Nature Park – fieldwork and eco-educative activities.

Important part of team were volunteers: **Dasha Shyriaieva, Denys Vynokurov, Victor Strenada, Roman Lysenko, Daryna Obikhod, Liza Kuznietsova, Tit Volynskiy, Danylo Boromenskyi and Julia Shcherbakova.** They helped in the field research.

12. Any other comments?

We would like to thank The Rufford Foundation for the financial support and the opportunity given to all of us in this project. It was and still is an unmeasurably valuable experience which could never happen without The Rufford Foundation backing us up.

As the team leader, I want to thank my teammates and volunteers for the support, energy, patience and time invested into this project. I hope that this project will stand as a base to the much larger nature conservation actions in Ukraine. We want to thank the Buck's Grand National Nature Park for the warm welcome, hospitality and support for our project.