

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants 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				
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Your name	Didem AMBARLI
Project title	Assessment of Current Condition of Steppes in Central Anatolia for
	Conservation Purposes
RSG reference	29.04.09
Reporting period	May 2009 - August 2010
Amount of grant	£5950
Your email address	<u>didem.cakar@dkm.org.tr</u>
Date of this report	27.03.2011



1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not	Partially	Fully	Comments
	achieved	achieved	achieved	
Fill the gaps to understand ecology and current status of grasslands of the region		\checkmark		After days of intensive fieldwork on many survey sites, a considerable amount of data were collected and analysed. The result will establish a basis but since the land is huge, 1,000,000 ha, and quite rich in biodiversity, more work is needed for a complete picture of grasslands of the region.
Provide basic information on the interaction between the level of human use/disturbance and the health and integrity of steppe ecosystems			~	Knowledge of local people living on grasslands for many generations (and not the statistics or the official documents) was the most valuable source of information to link the current steppe condition to human use. Interviews with locals on the past and current use of grasslands provided many interesting information that are linked to steppes through analyses and evaluations.
Reveal the current condition of steppe ecosystem in the region		~		Through the findings obtained at survey sites, the current conditions of steppes are inferred. We claim that they are valid for 90% of the region except some micro-level differences in habitat and use.
Produce conservation guidelines for grasslands of the region			√	The results were adequate to produce basic rules for grassland conservation in the region
Link plant communities with bird and butterfly communities and provide information on their utility as surrogates		~		Bird and butterfly data were linked to vegetation at different scales, i.e. birds at the landscape level and butterflies at the microhabitat level. Although data worked to serve the need, it was seen that a complete list of species together with their abundances are necessary to question their utility as surrogates.

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

There were two main difficulties that the project leader suffered a lot:



- Managing the fieldwork team: The field team proposed has changed considerably due to personal excuses. The bird fieldwork was completed on time but the butterfly fieldwork was postponed to establish a new team, which proved to be quite hard since there are few people who can collect butterfly data in a systematic way.
- Timing of the fieldwork: The calendar of the fieldwork was based on experiences from previous years. However, the climatic conditions of 2010 were different from those of previous ones. Since the field team is based in Ankara (700 km west of the study region) it was quite difficult to guess the flowering stages or the flight periods of butterflies at different elevations. A drier than usual year at some sites which affected the data collected.

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

- Elevation, bedrock type (especially gypsum), soil depth and human use (especially a history of former forest or arable land) came out to be the most important factors determining the current conditions of steppes. Representing a variety of those factors in designing conservation networks is crucial to represent the whole steppe biodiversity of the region.
- The conservation guidelines are the most important outcome of the work. As a summary, prevention of land abandonment is a crucial action for sustaining biodiversity of many steppe types since the diversity is linked with human use. Therefore, agri-environmental schemes should be developed for this need. Legal protection of steppes with extraordinary biodiversity, such as the gypsum steppes, is needed. Activities like mining, afforestation-reforestation should be carefully planned or avoided at those sites. Planned grazing is necessary in general, but it is vital for high mountain landscapes with high livestock numbers.
- The field teams had many discoveries: *Polyommatus dama*, an endemic butterfly species thought to be extinct, was rediscovered in mountains of Malatya. Food plants of some butterflies were discovered. Also several bird species were recorded to breed in the region for the first time, i.e. bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) and pale rock sparrow (*Petronia brachydactyla*). They also recorded anecdotal notes on the endangered leopard (*Panthera pardus*) on at one of the mountains of the region. These all show that the region was under searched and it deserves more attention from nature conservationists.

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

Since the study was research-based, it did not have steps targeting benefits of locals. But as a part of research, the project team did interviews with locals to learn land use history of the sites, as mentioned above. Most of the information used was obtained from locals of old age: villagers, muhktars or sometimes shepherds. During the conversations the project team provided information about the work and importance of steppes for biodiversity and need for conservation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

It was agreed that detailed soil analysis and erosion may provide valuable information on explaining level of diversity of some sites. As a further study, soil samples will be taken on sites and will be analysed by relevant laboratories in Ankara. The work will be supported by The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Restoration and the Protection of Natural Habitats. During fieldwork, detailed questions will be asked to locals to enable better understanding of micro-level changes in diversity of steppes.



The organisation, for which the project leader works, Nature Conservation Centre (DKM), recently established a Grassland Conservation Program and the project leader became the coordinator of this programme. As a follow up of the project, the project leader will lobby the implementing government organizations, especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks, for putting conservation recommendations into use in Central Anatolia.

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

The data and the results will be shared in various media and as much as possible to aid similar work and to deliver conservation recommendations to implementers.

As a priority, the results will be delivered to the MARA in an official way. Meetings can be held for lobbying for the recommendations to be implemented.

The results and conservation recommendations will be shared over two web pages: Steppe Conservation Program of DKM and webpage of Biodiversity and Conservation Lab of Middle East Technical University (METU).

Biodiversity data collected will be uploaded to Nuhun Gemisi (Noah's Ark) Database of Turkey. It is the only official database managed by Ministry of Environment and Forestry where biodiversity data is stored, updated and used for conservation purposes.

The study is the basis of PhD study of the project leader. Details of method and results will be published in the thesis within a year. By this means it will be available to scientific community. Follow-up scientific papers are also planned.

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

The planned time period was May 2009-August 2010. The fieldwork was finished in July 2010. Identification of plant specimens took longer than expected. So there was a delay in finishing the analyses and submitting the final report.

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	Actual	Difference	Comments
	Amount	Amount		
A. Fieldwork Costs				
Car rental	1350	1471,78	-121,78	Some additional bird fieldwork took place. Two separate teams so two hire cars worked at the same time for 6 days in 2010. This caused an increase in the planned budget.
Fuel	800	1076,03	-276,03	
Accommodation	2750	1774,29	975,70	The teams stayed in guesthouses most of the



				time. This decreased the accommodation costs.
B. Consultancy				
Bird Consultancy	300	541,27	-241,27	Three birdwatchers worked, two of them
Butterfly Consultancy	300	500	-200	were paid. So the cost increased.
C. Equipment				
Digital Camera	200	350	-150	Money left from accommodation is used for a better digital camera.
GPS	200	200	0	
Total		5913,37	36,62	

The consultancies were paid with exchange rate indicated in the project proposal 1 ± 2.45 TL. For the other costs, the average rate of the fieldwork season was used 1 ± 2.3950 TL.

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

Our study forms a basis for understanding the ecology and biodiversity of Turkish steppes. Another study, the Anatolian Biodiversity Research project revealed the highest priority steppe sites for conservation. The next step would be the implementation of the results and recommendations developed by those two projects. This needs increasing awareness of related government bodies and putting grassland conservation to their agenda. So first of all lobbying activities is needed to initiate pilot follow-up studies actively conserving steppes.

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

The project did not produce any printed material.

11. Any other comments?

Many thanks to RSG for providing support for this baseline study for the first time in Turkey, when some Turkish scientific foundations did not understand the importance of it yet. The experience, knowledge and the outputs will be used to the best effect in developing similar studies, lobbying conservation of grasslands in Central Anatolia and putting steppes on the conservation agenda of Turkey.