

## 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

Grant Recipient Details	
<b>Your name</b>	Radu Mot
<b>Project title</b>	Human dimension importance in safeguarding connectivity between large carnivore populations
<b>RSG reference</b>	46.01.10
<b>Reporting period</b>	June 2010 – May 2011
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5,939
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:greenlightserv@gmail.com">greenlightserv@gmail.com</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	July 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 achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Set up and training a team from the local community			x	Three persons within the local communities were trained to assist the project team and to conduct field surveys, to conduct interviews and to communicate human-large carnivore interactions and mitigation methods.
Determining large carnivore movements and frequented passages			x	Field surveys identified large carnivore tracks/signs which paired with GIS maps of habitat suitability and terrain permeability produced the map of possible major dispersal/migration routes of large carnivores. A set of recommendations based on field survey methods' assessment was produced.
Identifying and classification of possible human-large carnivores conflicts sources			x	The conflict map of the area was produced based on a classification of potential conflict sources – considering probability of occurrence, economical and emotional impact.
Assessment of official natural resources management plans & recommendations of alternative methods		x		Due to a change in land ownership in the area, the forest management plan was suspended, and the impact of management practices implementation could not be assessed. As at present the local council don't have a local development strategy, we will use the scientific and socio-economic data collected during the project to develop a future sustainable development local strategy.
Socio-economic assessment and general attitude survey of the local community towards wildlife and usage of natural resources			x	The assessment produced insight on efficiency of different approaches and valuable data for the public awareness campaign and for future efficient management/conservation actions within the area.
Public awareness campaign in the project area			x	School children were the main target of the action and the results were encouraging as their interest in the issue was very high. Implication of local teachers was also significant, and development of future educational programmes was discussed.

Issuing the project report and dissemination of results		x		<p>Due to high amount of data acquired through the socio-economic assessment and attitude survey, the compilation of data and issuing the reports is still in development.</p> <p>Already partial results were presented on several national and international meetings and were used in documents and for initiatives related to the ecological corridors in Romania.</p>
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**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).**

As the sociological assessment highlighted particularities and complexity of the most sensitive issue that would affect the functionality of the ecological corridor – the willingness of local community to accept the presence of bears, a species that they are not accustomed anymore - we decided to tailor the questionnaires, the awareness materials and discussion topics in a way that will not create undesirable overreactions within the community at this stage. Level of knowledge and present attitude was evaluated and driving factors of interactions between local people and wildlife were identified. However, predicting local people’ behaviour triggered by a future more significant bear presence in the area is still a challenging task as locals weren’t yet confronted with relevant interaction experiences.

We found out that there were no persons acting as true opinion-vectors and no consistent groups of interest within the community. However, the survey showed that information is passed within the community very quickly and we decided to conduct individual discussions explaining the role of large carnivores, conflict mitigation methods and legal damage compensation schemes, rather than to organise group discussions (more time-efficient but with questionable impact in the given context). Forestry practices have an important impact on functionality of the ecologic corridor and assessment of management methods was an important component of the project. Due to a change in forest ownership within the area, no forestry activities were conducted during the project period. As a result, we investigated the theoretic impact of the existing forest management plan and made general recommendations.

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

1. As a result of field surveys and especially engaging local persons in the activity, we were able to document for the first time the bear presence in Zarand area, both during autumn foraging migrations and spring dispersals. Data were used to highlight the importance of the area for bear populations’ connectivity, essential for assuring favourable conservation status of the separate population in Central Carpathians. As a result, the project area was proposed as a Natura 2000 site.
2. A research study undertaken by members of the project team extended at landscape level the GIS methodology used during the project. Considering large carnivores as umbrella-species, the study was the basis of protection status assignment for Zarand area and other nine areas (at present pending official designation as Natura 2000 sites). Together with

actual Natura 2000 sites, the new proposed sites will form a functional ecological network between Central and Southern Carpathians in Romania.

3. For the first time in Romania, intensive social assessment was carried out in order to evaluate the relationship between local communities and the functionality of an ecological corridor. The results will be used to tailor both conservation actions and socio-economic projects that will safeguard the ecological function of the area and will support sustainable development of the local community.

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

Involvement of local persons in the project activities was seen from the beginning as important and proved to be also highly efficient as the first occurrence of a bear in the area was discovered by a local team member. In many instances, a local sociological survey operator proved to be more efficient as respondents were willing to communicate more openly. Also, information about large carnivore role and damage mitigation measures was more easily disseminated within community by local persons. Especially involving school children proved to be efficient as they acted as opinion-vectors, spreading the information to their families, neighbours and friends.

The project didn't target concrete benefits for the local community. However, identifying human-wildlife interaction patterns and communities' needs, recommendations produced as results of the project will be used to implement future projects/initiatives directly beneficial for the community.

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

Yes. As the project highlighted priority aspects which should be addressed in order to minimise current and future possible conflicts between humans and wildlife within the area, trying to find solutions for these conflicts will be the next logical step. This would be beneficial for local communities (by diminishing the economic losses significant in the context of a prevalent subsistence agriculture) and to large carnivores by reducing direct mortality, maintaining natural-prey and increasing the acceptance level for species in the area.

Implementing mitigation solutions should be paired with an efficiency / impact assessment and with on-going large carnivore monitoring in the area.

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

Reports targeting general public through media and professionals (protected area managers, local managers, conservationists and sociologists) will be made available and presented. Importance of sociological studies complementing conservation projects will be highlighted, management recommendations for forestry, hunting, and recommendation for a local sustainable development strategy will be based on case-study approach which we hope will be useful in designing a management plan for the future protected area.

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

The anticipated duration of the project was 12 months. The field work was completed within the anticipated period. Due to high amount of data collected during the socio-economic assessment, processing and correlation of data were not entirely completed in the anticipated period. As a result, completion of the detailed technical project report and dissemination materials tailored for media and different professional sectors are still in development.

**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
Technical equipment (GPS device with accessories, photo camera with accessories, audio recorder)	750	728	-22	
Field equipment (wind coats, boots, etc)	470	470	-	
Fees for local team	2,150	2,150	-	
Fuel	244	305	+61	During the project period, fuel prices rose several times
Awareness materials (publishing rights and printing 250 brochures and two extra large posters), print and copy costs for project materials	1,535	1,507	-28	Two schools within the project area were closed and children were moved to the other two schools remaining. As a result, we produced only 2 posters but double in size.
Multimedia devices for school presentation)	100	135	+35	Renting costs for proper devices exceeded the estimated amount and we decided to purchase a wide monitor instead.
Food (for local team, snacks for school children)	240	240	-	
Report prints and media kits	450	450	-	Currently in development
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.939</b>		<b>+46</b>	

The assumed exchange rate was 1£ = 5,0 ROL (Romanian Lei). During the project period the exchange rate varied between 1£ = 4,8 ROL and 1£ = 5,2 ROL.

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

We will try to implement practical conservation projects paired with socio-economic initiatives for the local community and will use the results to promote similar approach throughout the ecological network between Central and Southern Carpathians.

A success-model of sustainable development and conservation is extremely needed in the present context when implementation of Natura 2000 concept is seen by the majority of local communities as a barrier in their economic development as would non-discriminatory restrict usage of natural resources.

**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 RSGF logo was used on the educational brochures and large posters produced during the project and will be used on the disseminating materials.

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation was mentioned as supporting our study in the Research Report documenting designation of new Natura 2000 areas for large carnivores in Romania, in presentations made during national and international meetings/conferences, in documents related to the issue of safeguarding the last ecological corridor between Central and Southern Carpathians in Romania and in articles featured in international magazines and websites.

**11. Any other comments?**

I would like to thank for the support offered by The Rufford Small Grants. It was essential for our work and it is very appreciated by the entire project team.