

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Recovering Ukraine's Lost Steppe: a Unique Opportunity
Country	Ukraine
Organisation	CABI Bioscience
Project Ref. No.	162/11/026
Report date	5 November 2002

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

The contract from DEFRA for the project was sent out on 26 June. The agreed baseline timetable and project outputs for April-October 2002 specify:

- **September.** First quarterly seminar held in Kiev [timing of this and all subsequent seminars is approximate; numbers of participants of individual seminars are likely to vary from five to perhaps thirty, and lengths of seminars are expected to vary from about 90 minutes to a whole day].
- **September.** Project leader to visit Ukraine for two weeks.

In addition, the project proposal in its final form specified the following activities:

- **April.** Project starts; e-mail communications between senior participants about implementation of project, existing management plan of Opuk reserve refined in response to support from Darwin Initiative; first contacts with Ukrainian Ministry of Defence through Embassy level introductions; objectives of project communicated to Ukrainian Ministry of Defence.
- **May.** Website about project established; press releases about project.
- **May.** Opuk reserve visited; land for living collection of Crimean steppe plants designated and checked [within the boundary of Opuk reserve there are at least 10 ha of land heavily encroached by couch (*Agropyron repens*), a noxious weed; part of this currently valueless land will be used]; clearance of that land begun.
- **May.** Villages adjacent to Opuk visited; relevant objectives of project explained to villagers; villagers taken on for project work; clearing [plastic and other rubbish] and well rehabilitation on the reserve begun [Opuk reserve is in a very dry area; water is extremely important for all work restoring the reserve; at present only one of the five wells on the reserve functions]; building suitable for a reserve office and visitors' centre identified [at present reserve staff are accommodated more than 50 km from the reserve; possible closer buildings suitable for use are known to exist on the reserve and in the nearby village, but the optimum way to use them has not yet been established]; trips to Ukraine by British partner begin.
- **June.** Preparation of cleared land ready for sowing and planting [in the first year of the project, only a small area is likely to be used, increasing in future years]; surveying the reserve; study tour to see UK examples of alteration in farming practice for nature conservation.
- **June.** Start of collecting seeds and transplants of steppe plants from suitable locations in Crimea by project participants and, after **training**, by students and local people from villages near reserve, leading to **institutional capacity building** at **Nikita** through establishment of a seed bank of Crimean steppe plants; sowing and planting to follow at times determined by steppe experts.
- **September.** Quarterly seminars for Ukrainian Ministry of Defence administrators and invited members of the Ukrainian armed forces begin in Kiev, organized by **MC** (estimated 15 participants throughout project) [these may be publicized **15A, 15C**].

Progress against that timetable was as follows:

- **May.** E-mail access established for Dr Isikov in Crimea; Russian summary of project objectives produced and distributed to main participants.
- **July.** Dr Isikov collects seeds of *Triticum boeoticum* for sowing on Opuk Reserve, and makes plans

for visiting reserve.

- **July.** Dr T.V. Andrianova attends 3rd BioNET-INTERNATIONAL Global Workshop in Pretoria (not strictly part of project, but following up my previous Darwin Initiative project in the former Soviet Union). Dr Charchoghlian (Yerevan, Armenia), Dr Nam (Almaty, Kazakhstan), Dr Baikov (Novosibirsk, Russia) and Dr Ryss (St Petersburg, Russia) all involved in previous Darwin Initiative project in the former Soviet Union also participated with help from me, but at no cost to the present project.
- **August.** Dr Isikov visits Opuk reserve, discusses work plan with reserve director, clears first areas of land for sowing seeds, sows seeds, and initiates rehabilitation work on spring and three wells, repair of small building within reserve area, and the clear-up operation of rubbish from on the reserve.
- **August.** Mrs T.I. Krivomaz attends 4th International Congress on Systematics & Ecology of Myxomycetes in Brussels (not strictly part of project, but following up my previous Darwin Initiative projects in the former Soviet Union and generally in line with the Darwin Initiative's previous support of mycology in Ukraine).
- **August.** Dr T.V. Andrianova attends 7th International Mycological Congress in Oslo (not strictly part of project, but following up my previous Darwin Initiative projects in the former Soviet Union and generally in line with the Darwin Initiative's previous support of mycology in Ukraine); Dr Andrianova elected to the Executive of the International Mycological Association, meaning that mycology in Ukraine now has a truly international dimension.
- **September.** Spring and three wells rehabilitated, small building repaired, huge quantity of rubbish cleared from Opuk Reserve. Laptop computer delivered to Dr Isikov. Project leader visits Ukraine for two weeks, including a discussion about the project with British Embassy in Kiev, a visit to Crimea and talks with the director of Opuk Reserve.

Comment. A good start has been made with work on Opuk Reserve. Preparation for seminars is a little behind schedule. First study tour of Britain rescheduled for October 2002. Strategic support has been provided to keep alive earlier Darwin Initiative work on mycology in Ukraine. The website has not yet been put into place.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments, that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will effect the budget and timetable of project activities. Have any of these issues been discussed with the Department and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

The arrival of the contract for this project in late June meant a proper start was not possible before July. From May to August Dr Minter's work was severely disrupted by large-scale reallocation of rooms at his workplace in Egham. Dr Minter's other Darwin Initiative project in Cuba required a lot of attention in organizing the decommissioning, packing and transport of a donated scanning electron microscope. Dr Minter's home computer system was upgraded over the summer to a broadband internet link (without cost to the project), and this meant file transfer protocols for organizing new web-pages were unavailable for some time. The project is therefore a little behind schedule in respect of seminar organization and its website, but it is now catching up. It is possible that knock-on effects may be felt over the next few months, but at present there seems no cause for anxiety. No other problems were encountered.

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures.

No. The Darwin Team in Ukraine sends its warm thanks to the Darwin Initiative for continued support.

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