

SGSII-24 the European Ground Squirrel, New Breeding and Publicity



Ministerstvo životního prostředí

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Project name: Establishment of New Breeding Sites of the European Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*) and Public Awareness as Part of the Action Plan

Project Nr.: MGSII - 24

Project location: Brno (South Moravia Region), Hluboka nad Vltavou (South Bohemia Region), Vlasim (Central Bohemia Region), Praha

Financial support: EEA Grants, Small Grants Scheme (SGSII) entitled “Action Plans for Endangered Species II”, support area 1: “Realisation of Approved Action Plans and Management Plans for Endangered Plant and Animal Species”

Total Resources: 883,587 CZK incl. VAT

Financing: Financial resources from EEA Grants are assigned in the amount of 751,049 CZK, which is 85% of the anticipated total project expenditure. The state budget grants financial resources in the amount of 132,538 CZK, which is 15% of the anticipated total project expenditure.

Project duration: 1.4.2015 – 31.12.2016

Project partners:

- ZOO Brno
- ZOO Ohrada (Hluboká nad Vltavou)
- ZO ČSOP Vlašim (Czech Association for Nature Conservation, NGO)

Project guarantee:

- Mgr. Jitka Větrovcová, AOPK ČR, Division of species protection, E: jitka.vetrovцова@nature.cz

Overall summary of the project and its impact on the species of interest

This project met all expected goals and outcomes and was officially finished on December 31, 2016.

Its main contribution to the protection of the European Ground Squirrel (EGS) in the Czech Republic lies in building appropriate breeding facilities and establishing three new breeding sites of this critically endangered species. These sites should serve in the future as sources of individuals for reintroductions that are planned within the Action plan for the EGS. Most activities of the project were somehow connected to this main output or were focused on public awareness regarding

the EGS and this project...(overall summary full text).

Project Objective and Scope:

The key objective of this project was to establish three breeding sites of the European Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*) on the premises of the cooperating partners in order to allow subsequent repatriation of the animals to selected historically suitable sites as planned in the action plan. The project therefore sought to build appropriate facilities, such as breeding equipment – volaries, to allow breeding of this critically endangered species, and subsequently to catch the source animals and place them in these facilities. The source animals used in establishing these breeds were acquired in Slovakia, based on granted exception from the Slovak Ministry of the Environment. The reason for such a solution is the fact that the current fitness of Czech colonies of the European Ground Squirrel is not so good as to provide for a greater number of caught animals without possible adverse effects, and also the fact that importing these individuals is considered desirable and also suitable from the genetic viewpoint. The new breeding sites were planned to be established on the premises of the Brno zoo (away from visitor areas), the premises of the Rozovy animal rescue station near Temelin, which is administered by the zoo in Hluboka nad Vltavou, and the premises of the animal rescue station of the ZO CSOP Vlasim. It was assumed that each site would be started with 30–40 animals. The project included keeping detailed records of the caught animals, including initial genetic and parasitological analyses. These details are also planned to be kept after the project ends. Public information about the project was provided as part of the obligatory publicity via this website and seminars, an information board was made and installed on the premises of the paraZoo in Vlasim in the visitor area and several propagation materials were produced.

Project Activities:

Pedological Research

This activity was performed first and was important for verifying whether the pedological conditions at the planned breeding sites are suitable, as the European Ground Squirrel spends a major part of its life underground in its dens. Every site was assessed by professionals from the viewpoint of its landscape configuration, and probes were made to determine the underground water level and moisture in the pedological profile - parameters which can be limiting for the occurrence of the species.

Preparation of the Area and Building or Modifying the Volaries

This activity included two sites where new breeding facilities were built, i.e., Brno zoo and the Rozovy rescue station near Temelin, and one site (the animal rescue station in Vlasim) where the existing volary was only modified to satisfy the requirements for European Ground Squirrel breeding. These facilities were proposed by the project partners, taking into consideration the existing experience in this field and discussing their suggestions with the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (NCA CR).

Catching, Transport and Release of the Animals in Volaries; Subsequent Monitoring and Care

The well-known and well-proven procedures which were already used in earlier action plans and are used in similar projects abroad, were the basis for the methodology for this activity. The catching was done during the period determined in the letter of exception (15/04–31/08) at specified sites in Slovakia. The catching was carried out by a specialised local Slovak group which has broad experience in these activities. After transport, the animals were placed in pre-bored dens and carefully monitored. The subsequent care includes regular feeding. Every year control catching is planned to be carried out, when new animals are fitted with chips to determine their breeding fitness.

As expenses incurred abroad are not eligible under the EEA rules, most of the work carried out as part of this activity was financed from the resources of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (NCA CR).

Genetic Analyses

Genetic analyses were carried out by currently known and established methods from the obtained samples. The genotypes of the relevant individuals were obtained from the analyses and genetic variability in the breeds was determined and can now, for instance, be compared with other populations or the genetic variability of selected populations in the past.

Parasitological Analyses

Parasitological analyses were also carried out by currently known and established methods. Thanks to this, the infestation rate of the breeds by various parasites was determined and compared with other populations. Parasitological examinations are also planned, to a smaller extent, in subsequent years as part of control catching.

Education and Public Awareness

The CSOP Vlasim NGO prepared an informational panel which contains information about the European Ground Squirrel, the action plan and the plan for reintroductions and these breeds as part of this project. The panel is A2 size and is located in the so-called paraZoo in Vlasim which is open to the public, unlike the premises of the animal rescue station.

Project Coordination and Management

Project coordination and management was carried out by an employee of the applicant – the coordinator of the action plan for the European Ground Squirrel.

Project Publicity

As part of the project publicity, overall three seminars (an introductory seminar, „European Ground Squirrel Day“ in zoo Hluboka nad Vltavou and an expert meeting of broader action plan implementation group) were held and this website was established and updated on a regular basis. Thanks to financial savings in the project, several thematic propagation material were produced as well.

Photos:



Partner logos:



Zoo Brno a stanice zájmových činností,
příspěvková organizace

