



## EXPEDITION DIARY Ukraine 2003

By Ben Gilbert

9 August

Lists and packing, checking and forgetting - so it starts at the Biosphere base on the Suffolk Broads. Released, on the road and heading for some wolves on a sandy spit - Claudia and I sweat buckets and groove to some Japanese Rock'n'Roll as the Land Rover whines its way down South. So far so good and see you tomorrow or the next day when things start to roll over the water and into the EU wonder world!

10 August

Land Rover main beam failed to light up darkest Sussex last night, some kind of wiring fault. Checked fuses, yep, fuse hanging out. Fixed. Long, long day, boiling heat, busy roads, lack of sleep and after twelve and a half hours driving and loud music - Claudia and I had had enough. Bed.

12 August

15 hours on the road, check wheel nuts, fastenings on top, re-pack back, foot to the floor in every gear, shake, rattle and nearly roll a few times - arrive in Krakow bleary eyed - we only saw the tarmac, fumes and the lorries, which nearly carved us in half - there must be more to Poland than this.

13 August

Tarmac, stinky trucks, police checks - hanky panky grease my palm - hotels only booked by the hour - 2am stop for a sleepless night in a greasy truckers shack. Orest slept in the Land Rover in case the wheels went walkabout - Ukraine.

14 August

Trance state, hyper, red eyed and in Kinburnska.

16/17 August

Lots of packing, lots of work. Everyone here - Scientists, cook etc.

Saw a roe deer and a red fox with the biggest pointed ears imaginable. Claudia ran over a viper, she's so cruel that girl, it seemed ok, picked it up and a frog's head, statuesque and very dead, stared out and into oblivion from the shocked snake's mouth. Wolf tracks and pigs diggings. Zinovy saw three wolves together last month.

This place is hot, full of green reeds, dense scrub, tall grass and pine forest - you could hide an army here, in fact the Russian special forces used to practice on the peninsula. Great sea and great off road driving - not got stuck yet, but Orest and I are working on it.

20 August

Hot and lazy, reading a book on the beach, an empty sandy spit where I can see for miles each way and swim in a black sea. Think I'll go walkabout under the coming moonlight, let you know what I find in the silver forest.

21 August

Orest took me to a salt water mud pan where the thick oily mud smeared on one's body gives relief and cures to joints and whatever; we smeared ourselves with the thick shiny, obsidian nectar and baked in the afternoon furnace. 15 minutes later we were cooked, well done, and washing ourselves in another pan and smelling to high heaven of stinky sulphurous mud.

That night I swam in a black sea full of luminous creatures, igniting the smooth water with a million green phosphor sparkles, every movement ensuring another flare; and above this green brilliance, the Milky Way and its trillion stars echoing the fluorescence below. Even the jellyfish glowed in the dark making it easy to dodge their fiery demons.

22 August

Walked around a SaHa, which is a freshwater swamp enclosed by acacia, elder and oak trees – a very essential and unique piece of environment, each one marooned in this sea of sand and pines. Home to a multitude of flora and fauna, none of which I can really name, nevertheless we came across a huge moth, dark and patterned like a piece of delicate embroidery and the pattern of a skull clearly stamped on its back; they call it the Devil Head Moth in Kinburnska. It specializes in robbing bees' nests and can mimic the sounds of the queen bee and so ensuring its own safety. This place is a treasure trove of Nature.

26 August

One thousand mosquito bites, dam those demons of fire.

Saw a steppe eagle swoop down and take a viper in its savage talons.

Independence day for Ukraine - endless parties, days of them, vodka swilled like no tomorrow, every day seems like Independence day here, toasts and speeches that turn into epics, songs, dour songs of love and revolution - I went swimming and stayed well clear of drunken demon, splashed with the fluorescent angles and awoke with a clear head.

We had to move the Wolf Camp; the forest is dry as tinder in this heat, pines dying from a parasitic caterpillar, turning brown and withering into lifeless stalks - and there is no wolf activity on the transect. We scoured the landscape in search of a better location, tested the vehicle to the max, and found a site under the Russian olives near the beach. Zinovy and I traced a new transect, 4.5 km from coast to coast and found evidence of recent wolf tracks and as a bonus a badgers' set; these animals are in the red book (we have to assume the cover is red and not blue or pink). Volody is excited, very excited - badgers are so rare in the Ukraine and here in Kinburnska are four known sets. No study has been made here and it is not even known if they are a subspecies of the ones found elsewhere.

This is the Ukraine and there is a twist to the above - The President's daughter or cousin twice removed would like very much indeed to build a swanky resort on the coast for the wealthy or just those with big bags of 'don't ask where this came from' cash. So if we can collect important data re-wildlife and endangered species etc then just maybe the rich and famous will have to lounge in Mallorca, not Kinburnska.

Of course Wolf Camp is plumb bang on the best resort spot going. Strange that.

Jellyfish have gone home to jelly land and the sea is void of these fun spoiling monsters. Does anything eat jellyfish (answer: turtles do)?

Orest and I got stuck, the Land Rover straddled on a sandy ridge in the boiling midday sunshine - oh well shovels and sand ladders, jacks and grunts, we are almost experts at it.

Volody found some wolf scat, it had eaten wild boar. Hassled the tractor driver today to plough the new transect. He flashed a full set of gold teeth and promised to get straight to it tonight.

Bird Camp collecting mussels and cooking them in embers from the fire. They requested white wine and garlic, maybe tomorrow they will request a waiter.

28 August

Raccoon Dog in headlights. Apparently they were a common, albeit introduced, species on the peninsula; shooting soon took their numbers down. A guy from WWF told me he manages two wetland projects in the Danube Delta, one 10,000 hectares, the other 2,500 hectares - The Landscape Park on Kinburnska has 12,000 hectares of land, and that is a maze, so I guess The Danube Delta must also be a confusing swath of geography. The jackal has established itself there along with the European wildcat. The jackals swam across the Danube and have established themselves near Odessa, and it is reasonable to think they may swim to Kinburnska one day.

Saw a lot of nightjars in the headlights, a lot of hares, but nothing else. Vipers everywhere. Pig tracks galore.

Going to the other end of the peninsula in a few days to look for wolf tracks, see if they are established near the Biosphere reserve.

29 August

Saw the reed beds on the Dnieper estuary, behind the forestry buildings - before the river was dammed upstream they flooded every spring, but now there is not enough flood water and a channel has been built from the beach into the reeds - every spring it is opened and huge wild carp come in and spawn amongst the reeds. Small fish attract pelicans and other birds. But the fishermen complain the pelicans eat their catch and the Ministry of Fish and No Pelicans and Ultimately No Fish has banned the channel being opened this year, but the fish came anyway and were hauled away in nets; the pelicans ate cake.

31 August

Went to a Biosphere Reserve somewhere about 4 hours drive East - 36,000 hectares of virgin steppe and a breeding centre for the endangered Mongolian horse whose name I can't spell or pronounce. So successful has the breeding been that 30 were recently sent back to Mongolia (as Mongolia very efficiently exterminated most of its population).

Back home driving through the bumpy steps of Kinburnska late at night we spotted two white eyes staring at us, maybe a wolf, not a pig, that would have been off into the reed beds sharpish. We checked the sand, two separate tracks, two wolves within the last hour had passed, clear tracks with clear pad prints. Volody will be pleased.

1 September

Bee Eaters and Tree Frogs make a dawn chorus. Picked up Orest for the red eye run to Kherson train station. He has more wasps' nests at his house than all the black money in the local hotel.

2 September

Zinovy hacked around the steppe, found wolf crap and two sets of tracks - things looking good. Saw the white tailed eagle again.

Orest and I went to see the Scythian burial mounds on a barren salt plain where you can see flatness in all directions, interrupted occasionally by the odd grassy bump. They are said to be 4000 years old - saw cows on one, and on another a cemetery full of crosses and bright plastic flowers - the locals now use it, just as the Scythians may once have had. A few men were digging a grave and smoking cigarettes.

A few days ago we saw a stone statue, weathered and worn by the elements. There are seven of these statues, each more than 1000 years old, all looking eastward. On Easter Island all the statues look inwards, but I forget the rest of the story.

The moon is getting fatter by the day and Mars is still shining lamplight yellow. Found two dead dolphins; the seagulls think they taste just fine.

3 September

Weather changed. Raining for frogs. Went to the local SaHa, knee deep in mud, a real swampy quagmire, this place is huge, a lost world of reeds, rushes, tall grasses, bogs, beastly nettles, pigs tracks and pig wallows, no one comes here - it is almost impossible to walk without sinking with every step. Alders, willows, acacias, elders, wild garlic, and burdock are a few names in this jungle I know. Saw a great zebra spider, no zebras though. Some frogs, unknown, hopped out of my way, that makes three species I've seen counting the tree frogs and the sand frogs at Wolf Camp.

Bought some honey from Orest's neighbour, thick, deep syrup from the acacia tree flowers that grow all around this SaHa.

Nearly time to buy a cow or sheep or dog or horse or Team Member to drag around the peninsular and attract the wolves to trigger the passive infrared and record onto film.

4 September

Drove Wolf Camp around at night (driving very carefully in accordance with The Great Off Road Charter 2003 - a book I keep along side my stamp collection, antique Toby jugs and scrabble set), countless hares and nightjars, maybe a fox or badger, no wolves or pigs, no raccoon dogs or roe deer.

This morning the Wolf Camp temperature read 12.9; I strolled to the sea, it measured 18.3 - so best sleep in the water for a cosy night if you forget your sleeping bag.

Good light for photography today, contrast, clouds, shadows and definition, unlike the bleaching sun of previous days.

Dropped off Wolf Camp at the top end of the old transect - a great place on the Dnieper estuary. Picked them up later at the South end on the bay - another great location with a lot of herons hanging out on the seashore. They found wolf prints at the top end, a young animal had passed that night.

A plane flew overhead, a twin winged job, like the planes from WW1, same sound effects too - apparently they are still made. It likes to land on the orchid fields as it is an easy landing strip. Zinovy goes crazy. If you see a plane full of bullet holes rotting in the sand, just think of orchids and conservation, try not to think about the carnage littering the bleached sands of Kinburnska.

Such is life in Ukraine. And it is cold now, people requesting blankets. Bring a hot water bottle - and the hot water.

6 September

Saw an huge grasshopper, Saga Pedo or something or other, the largest non flying grasshopper around - and very, very rare.

*(8 September*

*Sieglinde Dittman puts in her thoughts: My first day in Bird Camp. Yesterday Petro showed us how to pick up birds out of the net. Now it is 7am and it is my turn to do it. I am stressed, and the bird is stressed, too. I have got one going out of the net, the other is still there. Oh no, I can't believe it - they are both in the net! I have never held a bird in my hand. In childhood there were frogs, hamsters, rabbits and dogs, but no birds. Will it be painful for this little friend? Then he is free of the strings - and in the same moment free in the air! OK. I think we will meet again in the next three days! We bring 15 birds to Petro, how to call them, nobody knows without Petro. Luscinia luscinia, Sylvia borin, Sylvia atricapilla, Ficedula parva and Lanius minor - at the end of the day I can distinguish between S. borin and S. atricapilla and I know, why all the members of Bird Camp are able to declare clearly - 'This is a Shrike!' In the evening we count: 70 birds were ringed, measured. Not bad.*

*I had a nice, interesting time, was lazy in the middle of the day with sunbathing and swimming. After the days in the Wolf Camp (also interesting, but more activities) it is a good recreation before starting work on 17th September in Dresden.)*

9 September

Last night set up night camera with movement sensor and infrared outside a jerboa bolt hole. It took an age for me and a TM to get the settings right, a trial and error routine until we thought the trigger was correctly positioned. Volody tutted that it would not work, technology etc etc... We returned this morning to find a short film of a jerboa, the first ever recorded evidence of this subspecies occurring only on the Kinburnska peninsular!

I found Volody looking at small wolf tracks on the new transect very close to the beach and Wolf Camp. I nonchalantly passed him the camera, seemingly uninterested in the matter, and waited. Volody saw a ghost, or maybe God, went goggle eyed, jumped with joy, kissed the TM, hugged me, and became a scientist who had been looking for something never really believing he would find it, and now there it was on film at last. Maybe he was just plain in love or something. I left before the vodka was produced - this party may go on for weeks.

10 September

No badgers again. They are a subspecies invisible I think. All these late nights and early mornings - I need a holiday.

Marsh Harrier flew into garden looking for sparrow breakfast - sparrows got away just in the nick of time.

Bird Camp can't catch fish. That is science. But they can cadge a few herrings or something from a local fisherman. Petro marinated them in some Black Sea delicacy and left them out all night. In the morning they were gone, gobbled up by...Orest's dog?

Full moon tonight. Wolf Camp howling and setting camera up in the reed beds. I'm having a night off - after all there are wolves out there!

Milked Orest's cow. Prefer to buy it in a bottle myself. Actually I only pretended to milk it so I could say I have if I ever go to a milking maids' party.

One last thing: Why do they call it The Black Sea? Nobody here can tell me that. Can you?

11 September

Sparrow Hawks and Marsh Harriers dive bombing the bird nets - one small bird eaten alive.

Wolf Camp did not film a thing - too dark, too near hay makers, too rubbish at operating camera, maybe they never left the camp fire!

Took Bird Camp on a tour of Yagorlitski Bay, went deep, long way out to the edge of the Biosphere Reserve, no houses, no people and no forest. There are acres and acres of salt and sand flats, dry lagoons, muddy lagoons, water lagoons and steppe. The salt producers forbid the forest to be planted around the salt pans, and now there is an eerie, desolate landscape, a surprise from the endless pines, planted without thought for the environment. I drove around this beautiful landscape, with red salt grasses and reeds. A real treat to be here. In one dried out pan I counted at least 30 pigs crossing - no wolf prints.

Petro counted herons (11 million and three), red shanks, hobbies, red footed hawks, egrets, the lesser spotted dolphin catcher, so many birds - how does he remember them all? I say 'Mmmmmm, yes Petro, left or right here?'

Got the Land Rover stuck, eel grass proved slippery, too slippery, wheels spun, dug in, under eel grass - shale, sand. Glue?

Two TM's fascinated by the procedure of sand ladders, spade and jacks. Twenty minutes later back on the eel grass and wriggling back to camp.

11 Buzzards and an Osprey with a fish. Not bad for a day out.

Wolf Camp wanted more filming. Back to badger the badgers. Simple use of sensor - placed it on the ground outside the hole. No playing about from 10 yards!

Full Moon, cloudy sky, cool wind. Saw a boy in a woolly hat and warm coat - does he expect snow? I stopped to give him a lift, but he smiled and walked into the forest and the oncoming night. I've noticed the locals drinking more than usual, hotel shut up - it gets to minus 20 in the winter and plus 40 in the summer. What do you think that does to you?

13 September

I could write a lot about today, but I'll keep it clean, give you the washed and well scrubbed version, no I won't, I'll talk about wildlife and the such. So, second slot, very rare wildlife and should really be in a zoo, or at least in a cage, have gone. They enjoyed themselves, might have even liked me a bit, but probably not - got roaring drunk last night - some danced (I hid under the table) and decided to donate good money into the artificial bird breeding islands on the salt pan lagoons. Zinovy was well pleased, gave a lecture in Russian, Petro translated and was also over the moon at this generous offer. Six islands are to be built in the high saline lagoons.

Went to Nikolaiv zoo today, saw the elusive badger, not like the UK's at all, smaller, sleeker and rather pretty. Saw wolves, yes wolves from Kinburnska - two young and fine looking wolves that Zinovy rescued from the hunters. I said hello, tried to chat, but they looked away, gazed at freedom through iron bars and ignored my interest. Do you blame them?

Back on the road, night, dark night - saw a fox and then a stoat - dodging hedgehogs and it started to snow, piling down and covering the windscreen. Not snow, but moths, millions of them wasting away on the glass. Never seen anything like it, nor had Orest.

Back on the peninsula, a jerboa frozen in the headlights - we stopped and it gave us a performance for about two minutes, its long tail looking like a really long tail!

14 September

Kinburnska deserted, a wind-swept barren landscape with weather to match - last night it rained and poured and blew the house down, well almost - Bird Camp flattened. Tents twisted, poles dislodged, gazebo demolished; Petro, red eyed and blasted, peered out of his tent at midday followed by the base camp dog. Was a wild night at Bird Camp. I repaired the mess and staked the tents down with the gazebo poles. Talked to Zinovy - asked to use the old fishing hut in these windy gales.

Saw a bird soar, high as a kite, but not a kite, Osprey I think, and yes it tucked its wings up like a three dimensional W and dived to the water, snatching a small something from the lagoon. Never seen that before.

I think today, a rare thing some may say, about what I've done here. First comes to mind is the Land Rover, the valuable experience of driving this vehicle in very difficult terrain. Next comes the GPS gear and video gear - learned a heap about that, and radio equipment. The wildlife - I have spent a lot of time tracking on foot and think that is the best way here, to spend days on end walking, looking, checking - there is a lot here, hidden in the trees, reeds, the SaHa and steppe, waiting for a moment when we are all asleep or round the corner to sneak out, because that is what they do - sneak from the huntsman and his dogs, and the Land Rover I expect.

15 September

Saw two foxes last night, one with a black tail.

Weather is miserable, raining and damp - good for frogs.

18 September

John - you missed a treat - I forgot to tell. On Kherson red-eye run I followed Zinovy on the sand; he hit floor with me following, sand skating across the steppe as the dawn cracked and I woke up. He tried to leave us standing - no way - I was wide awake by tarmac! He now thinks I'm OK, one of the lads, except I don't drink vodka but he's got over that.

So, interesting day yesterday. Took Wolf Camp on an extended tour. Looking for wolf tracks elsewhere, try to get a picture of what is really happening to the wolves in this area.

Went to the Salt Works, acres of dry pans, glistening in the morning sunshine, the place I had seen so many pigs tracks. Zinovy came with us, seemed really interested in the day's agenda and agreed to help in this survey of missing wolf tracks. First stop was a wildlife enthusiast who lived by the tarmac - he had not spotted wolf tracks on the peninsular for at least a week, but a calf had been taken two weeks previously in this area.

Next we drove to the Biosphere Reserve between the salt pans and the burial mounds, crossing the protected vegetation and, on finding a fire tower climbed it for a panoramic vista of the peninsular. Red deer still roam this spot.

We found a warden and Zinovy established that wolves were in this area, but seldom passed into Kinburnska these days. He had heard wolves howling near some vegetable fields and pointed the way. We soon found tracks, a pair of young wolves, and some shit full of water melon seeds - the warden had been right.

Next on the list we drove to an old village, 2700 years old to be exact, where pottery had been produced, now it was only sand dunes with ceramic pieces scattered around from the robbers who still dig for treasure.

Driving on the beach through the eel grass we saw the same two wolf prints heading towards the mainland.

Into the bleak, windswept plain where the burial mounds stand the test of time and cultures - across the empty fields to a sanctuary that used to belong to the Scania Nova reserve, a vast steppe land with shepherds and nothing else. We saw another pair of wolf tracks - making the total number of the day 4.

Across a huge forests, bigger than the whole of Kinburnska and there we found 4 wolf tracks - now it is 8 wolves for the day.

And to round things off we ended up in a peat bog wetland reserve - Karda Shinski, battling through reeds 4 metres high, a jungle quagmire of bog, water, reed, sedge and nettles where it was impossible to see for more than 2 metres in any direction. This is the home to a small colony of pygmy cormorants and beaver. I climbed a tree and saw reeds to the horizon in every direction and imagined the mosquitoes, wanting blood for free. Zinovy had done research here on the pygmy cormorants but now seemed more interested in finding the claw traps used to hunt beaver - we found two of the iron crushers and took them away.

Zinovy claims that the bottleneck that makes up the peninsular has a twofold effect on the wolf - it can get the game that wanders into this area as things tend to get stuck here, but it is also a really good place for the hunter, a place where everyone knows everyone else, everyone is married to a cousin at least, the geography makes for easy hunting where wolves can be forced into a desired area by the use of vehicles and find themselves trapped by the sea with no way out except through the hunting net. Now wolves are savvy to such things and tend to sneak in and out without settling.

Anyway, back to business - there is a head, whose head I don't know, sitting in a bag in the LR, ready for something's dinner, maybe a lone wolf, maybe a fox. We'll give it a go - let you know.

Yargorlitski Bay tour for Bird Camp, checking for birds in the shallows and lagoons. Herons, egrets, Montague harrier or eagle or something, bee eaters and a steppe eagle - carefully identified with books and boffins - a very rare sight here indeed, just one hanging around. They have not been seen for years.

Bird Camp keep catching Devil Head and Hawk Head Moths in the mist nets. They went fishing in the lagoons using an old net, planned the net position with regards to the herons eating breakfast. Science and fishing don't mix, they caught a few tiddlers.

Abundant pig tracks and diggings in the dry mud ponds - and a wolf tack, maybe a few days old - took a photograph. Found a giant jerboa hole near the birch groves.

Wolf Camp went to film the badgers at night, a moody dark twilight, a few spots of rain, problems with the sensor, but we really aborted the mission as I did not want to leave two TMs on a black night with poachers blasting 500m away; they hacked up the transect in a black Discovery with the plate covered up and stopped, examined the goodies and drove off. Orest phoned Zinovy, who needed the plate number of course. Better safe than sorry.

I have a different idea for badgers. Sit up on a dune on a full moon with night sights, camera at the ready, the infrared light set by the set entrance and once we see activity start the camera rolling. Maybe at least find out if they are different to mainland badgers. Problem is the infrared battery only lasts 3 hours and we have one only. If badgers decide on a sleep-in we're stuffed as we have to set it on and then walk away..no radio control.

Giant spider in loo, getting bigger, fell on my head, the fat bastard could hardly move as it has eaten so many flies.

Black Discovery nearly ran a TM over on the beach this morning.

Found fresh wolf prints on the steppe.

Weather warming up again. Mosquitoes must be really hungry now.

Ha! But now it's raining again!

19 September

A very smart TM told me that the Black Sea is called such because the Greeks quite ancient set sail in this jelly sea, and experienced dark nights, storms, monsters, but no wolves and, I suppose, shit their pants and called it the Black Sea. Volody reckons that the weather was much worse in the old days and perhaps it really was a Black Sea.

Saw a very small roe deer near Bird Camp, it hopped and skipped into the grass clearly displaying a black stripe down its back.

Sunset through charred trees and a textured sky, looking like a sombrero, fire orange and melting into the Black Sea which is quite blue.

Dragged the head around, down the new transect, staked it into the sand - god it stinks -eyes and tongue lolling - set the camera up and came back this morning.

Nothing on film but fresh wolf tracks very close by to now really smelly head. Get the TMs to crawl across the sensor near the vile, rotting flesh, just to check it works; I pretend to be technical, in charge, just so I don't have to gag by the wretched thing.

What will eat this? Could anything but a maggot find it delicious?

Maybe tomorrow a wolf. Volody assures me the wolves will dine with pleasure!

20 September

No wolves of course - but tonight the camera is drying out as condensation has turned it off - a dark night, two pairs of eyes stared at us in the headlights, and last night a TM saw large eyes in the burnt forest.

No filming, so do you think the cow's head will be eaten?

Orest told me that 7 years ago petrol was so scarce that no one had cars in Kinburnska - horses and carts were in use and there were over 70 horses used for transport. At that time no roads criss-crossed the peninsular. He used to bring the cows in on horseback and twice caught 4 wolves chasing the cattle; he lost 2 large cows and two calves to wolves. Once petrol became available the horses became sausages and now the horses left are semi-wild and their offspring wild.

21 September

Head still there - minging or what!

The bait station area is called Joshua's Dunes. Volody says Joshua once owned them but has now moved out due to the smell.

A boat is cruising the beach, an old gun metal grey trawler. They shoot the birds coming out to sea. Volody phoned Zinovy but the police don't have a boat and were out to lunch - dining on shell duck no doubt.

25 September

No Wolves!

A TM saw a wolf in the burnt forest, a fleeting glimpse of a young wolf disappearing into trees.

Got Wolf Camp doing a badger set/hole count - recording locations of holes, footprints and activity. Maybe next year a full count and numbers can be established.

Saw a badger toilet, been eating apples.

And then saw a badger close up. Not like European badgers, this one fat and small, all dark with a flatter face - not like the one in the Gola Prista museum. So maybe it is a subspecies. DNA testing through scat?

Petro wants to move Bird Camp to the top spit next year. Good spot, Zinovy agrees.

Dolphins along the coast every morning - swimming not washed up!

Weather is good, warm and dry.

26 September

No wolves on camera!

Took TMs to Berisan Island by boat. The Greeks settled there in 640 BC and had a temple for travellers. Homer Simpson is supposed to be buried there.

Well we did a viper count - zero - they don't like the Greek cooking. Plenty of grass snakes in the sea - where was the grass?

And then we did a cormorant nest count - 1600 - really. They have only been nesting for two years. And some gull, red book, the lesser fish eating spotted I think. Zinovy wants to get the Island into the Kinburnska Park. During the winter months the sea freezes and animals come to Berisan, and we saw evidence of fox. Berisan means Wolf Island, and we suppose wolves used to trot across the ice for a visit.

Saw loads of dolphins on the boat journey. Zinovy told us that Kinburnska Peninsular means 'Cape as thin as a hair' after the thin spit near Okchakiv.

And I saw wolf tracks by the black mud bath, they were wet and fresh and ten minutes later dry, must have frightened the two wolves off seconds before I arrived.

Well it is over. Nowt to say but bye --so bye everyone.