The ‘Caucasian Black Grouse (CBG) Research, Monitoring and Conservation Management in Georgia’ EIP Project started in January 2004 and is scheduled to run for two years. The Project aims to provide the scientific basis for the effective conservation management of this endemic, rare and globally threatened species (considered “Data Deficient” by The World Conservation Union) as well as to create the capacity to perform appropriate conservation management in Georgia. The Project is being implemented by the Georgian Centre for the Conservation of Wildlife (GCCW) in partnership with BirdLife International, the University of Idaho and the World Pheasant Association (WPA).

One of the research components of the project is a population biology study using radio-telemetry, a method that has never been used on the CBG, to collect information on the biological aspects of this species. Radio-telemetry equipment has been used at two sites: Lagodekhi Nature Reserve in the eastern part of the Great Caucasus; and Shavsheti mountain range in the western part of the Lesser Caucasus (Akhaltsikhe district). To date, 14 birds have been radio-marked (6 females and 8 males). Although the study is not complete, preliminary conclusions are as follows:

- The density of CBG population is significantly higher in the Greater Caucasus Mountains than in the Lesser Caucasus;
- Females of CBG tend to stay at the lek (mating) site throughout the year;
- Males of CBG disperse from the lek site, but usually return to the same site the following year; and
- Protection of lekking sites from disturbance seems the most effective way of conserving CBG.

Two of the project staff have recently attended the European Black Grouse Conference in North Wales, UK to give a presentation on the Project. Approximately 60 experts on Black Grouse attended and gave positive feedback on the work carried out so far and gave useful recommendations. GCCW is now preparing presentations for the upcoming Grouse Symposium in France in September 2005. To raise public awareness of the species in Georgia, newspaper articles, press releases and conferences have been given, and a book entitled “Galliforms of Georgia” is being produced.

A similar project has been running in Turkey with Doga Dernegi acting as the Implementing Partner in association with BirdLife International and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.