

Project Update: May 2013

The project is greatly progressing as it was defined and expected!

For now we have held educational lectures all around BiH in May 2013. In Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka the lectures were held at Faculties and in Konjic in a local high school, since there is no higher educational institution. In total, more than 100 people attended the lectures. Educational leaflets were designed, printed and distributed for this purpose. We plan to distribute them also during the further period. We managed to activate a lot of students and involve them in the upcoming field work which is planned to start the last week of June 2013 when the weather conditions will allow us to perform the research. Great collaboration has been established with the assistants and students of the Faculty in Banja Luka and Mostar!

We established collaboration with the University of Salzburg where food preferences analyses will be conducted from the end of September until the end of December 2013 (contact persons: Veronique Helfer and Martin Zimmer: veronique.helfer@sbg.ac.at; Martin.Zimmer@sbg.ac.at) in their laboratory facilities. Food preferences analyses will include genetic analyses (PCR) of the salamander faeces and stomach flush collected during field work as well as morphological analyses of the collected pedofauna (microfauna). With the team of Salzburg we already set up and defined a common field work protocol. The same study conducted on the salamander from Mt. Prenj will be performed on Austrian samples (*Salamandra atra atra*) – Austrian vs. Dinaric samples in order to confirm the still debated subspecies status of the “prenjensis” (*Salamandra atra prenjensis*). Besides the comparative food preferences analyses of Austrian and Dinaric samples, this study will include also the comparative analyses of already defined morphological parameters of Austrian vs. Dinaric individuals. The Chytridiomycosis analyses will be performed at the Veterinary Faculty of Sarajevo, which has all the needed facilities for this analysis (real time PCR).

The mountain routes and research areas on Mt. Prenj, Mt. Cvrtnica, Mt. Treskavica and Mt. Maglic have been already established and saved as kmz. files for GPS tracking. All needed equipment for successful field work, has also been purchased. Currently we wait good weather conditions since everything is prepared and ready for field work. I remind you that the black salamander from Mt. Prenj, inhabits high mountains areas only above the altitude of 1,700m. In BiH, several days ago, we had new snow on the mentioned mountains and the areas of interest are still not approachable for purpose of sample collection. We look forward to realise the established collaboration with mentioned students and academic stuff!

During the upcoming period we continue with the educational programme and continue with the field trips and scientific part of the project.



