

Project Update: May 2015

The first field research was completed during May 2015 as planned. We visited suitable habitats in over 25 UTM squares (10 x 10 km). Unexpectedly, combination of numerous deserted overgrown gravel mines and high underground water level offers vast area of suitable habitats for European pond turtles, especially around Velika, Južna and Zapadna Morava rivers. This brought us into a challenging situation of noting and capturing these shy and inconspicuous animals in jungle of shrubs and fallen tree trunks. We managed to capture and observe several turtles, but local fishermen confirmed their presence in almost all locations we visited. Some of these localities will be visited again.

We are pleased that not a single red-slider turtle was observed, implying that they are not yet widespread in the wild in Serbia. Additionally, we collected data on novel localities inhabited by Hermann's tortoises, took tissue samples and noted distributional data for other reptile species.



Left: Hatchling of *Emys orbicularis* in a pond Right: Waiting for a turtle - funnel trap next to a wonderful basking spot.