

Project Update: January 2017

The start of the project was in July 2016. It all started with procurement of the equipment and contacting the local authorities, Universities and NGOs.

The first outdoor activity was fieldwork with the students from University of Niš, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, at the territory of Vlasina lake- landscape of outstanding features. We conducted fieldwork at the sites with aquatic ecosystems. A list of presented amphibians was made, and samples of macrozoobenthos collected. We got in touch with authorities and collected some invaluable information. The authorities agreed to inform us about the changes in old and new water bodies and any unusual activities there. We have established contacts for further cooperation with fisherman also. At the end of the fieldwork a presentation of the project and importance of aquatic habitats was conducted for students from the faculty and local people.

The second activity, I and my team members, conducted on the territory of Stara planina Mountain- park of nature, with master biology students from University of Niš. We had the same field protocols as in Vlasina: we made lists of present amphibians in aquatic ecosystems and collected samples of macrozoobenthos. An educational presentation was also held for the locals and the students from University of Niš.

All the interested students participated in the training course which consisted of theory and practice: determination of amphibian species, collecting samples of macrozoobenthos, cleaning samples and determination of the species. We also brought few exchange students from Czech Republic to our field trips. They were glad to help us and learned a lot about unique high mountain aquatic habitats in Serbia and species of amphibians and macrozoobenthos who exist in them.

T-shirts were designed and printed for the purpose of promotion and education. Front side of the shirt contains sketches of aquatic species who represent the project trademark: *Chironomus riparius*, *Hyla arborea*, *Triturus cristatus* and *Ephemerella ignita*. The logo of the Rufford Foundation and Biological society „Dr Sava Petrovic“ are on the back. Designed by Dimitrija Savić.



Badges were also made, with three more highmountain aquatic species: *Ichthyosaura alpestris* (alpine newt), *Bombina variegata* (yellow belied toad) and *Perla bipunctata*. The logo of the Ruffod Foundation and Biological society „Dr Sava Petrovic“ are also present. We gave them to locals and volunteers for the promotion of our project. Designed by Dimitrija Savić.



We opened facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/aquaticecosystemsofserbia/>

Also, we opened website, which is currently under construction: <http://aqueousserbia.com/>

In July, a member of our team, Dimitrija Savic, completed 13 day long Summer University, Supported by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe. With specialisation on „Aquatic and social ecology: theory and practice“, at Samothraki Island, Greece. She presented the aims of our project there and gave the badges to the participants. We got important advice on realisation of the further field activities and involvement of the local community.

Second part of the project took place in September: fieldwork in Vlasina lake and Mountain Stara planina. The same as before, we collected samples of macrozoobenthos, made lists of present amphibians in water bodies and took pictures. During this part of the project we interviewed some residents about their knowledge on aquatic systems: new water bodies, droughts, amphibians and other biota. We provided them with our contacts, so they could inform us about any activities they notice in the researched areas.

With biological society Biološko društvo "dr Sava Petrović" and the members of the project of Olivera Stamenkovic: http://www.ruffod.org/projects/olivera_stamenkovi%C4%87, we organized two educational activities:

- research and educational excursion on Stara planina mountain in the village of Crn vrh, where students and members of the biological society were trained for hydrobiological fieldwork and research on freshwater ecosystems;
- and a summer course for determination of the most common groups of freshwater macroinvertebrates. The course was intended for students of Biology and Ecology with aim to get students who are interested in Hydrobiology facilitate laboratory work.

In December we conducted presentations at the Universities in Serbia. Presentations were organised in cooperation with the Faculties of Science in Nis, Kragujevac and Novi Sad and the Faculty of Biology in Belgrade, as well as biology student associations at all four universities (BS „Dr Sava Petrović“ Niš, NIDSBE „Josif Pančić“ Novi Sad, BID „Josif Pančić“ Belgrade, EID „Mladen Karaman“ Kragujevac). During the presentation of the project interested volunteers were able to apply for participation in further field research.

Photos from some of the activities:

