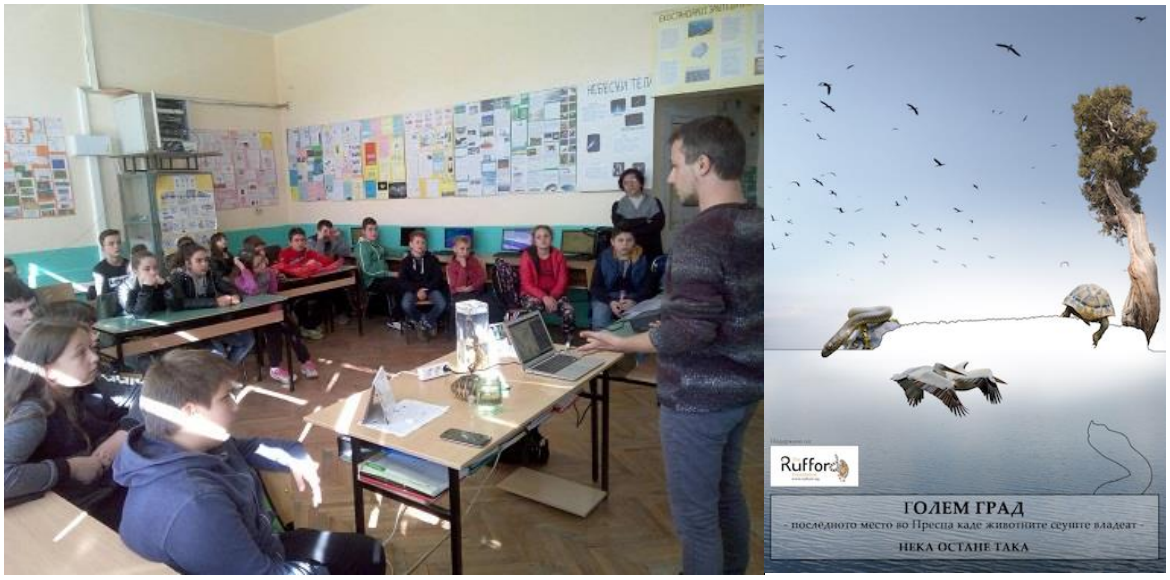
Project Update: October 2017

The island's scientific and conservation values were summarised in promotional material. Posters were disseminated at the Institute of Biology in Skopje, as well as schools in the Prespa area. Pupils sat through educational sessions, where they had the opportunity to witness the incredible diversity of their area and learn the science and conservation benefits that a place such as Golem Grad Island offers. We used this opportunity to break acquired stereotypes about snakes and therefore the island, and motivated local youth to visit and find new appreciation for such wild laboratories.

Information boards about Golem Grad and v. Konjsko were created and await set up. These contain crucial information about their biodiversity, the conservation lessons we can learn from them, as well as the main threats they face. We encourage visitors to respect the local flora and fauna and take active participation in their conservation.



Left: Educational activities at one of the schools in the Prespa area. Right: Poster depicting the island's diversity with a powerful message: "Golem Grad - the last place in Prespa where animals still reign. LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY!"

September 2017

Following the successful field session in May 2017, monthly sessions followed, concluding in September 2017, and adding up to a total of 32 field days. As planned, a week in June 2017 was dedicated to the mainland tortoise population in v. Konjsko. Unfortunately, threatening practices have continued, such as removing vegetation with fire and uncontrolled disposal of garbage.

Nine biology students and conservation enthusiasts were trained in capture-mark-recapture (CMR) field methodologies, and are now fully prepared and motivated to initiate their own projects, and continue their formal education with conservation in mind. The databases have now been enriched with more than 3000 new entries of CMR data that are now awaiting analyses. We are expecting invaluable information

regarding adult and immature tortoise life-histories, and their responses to a stochastic environment.

Tortoises that had been caught in a fire meant to remove/control vegetation.