

Project Update: August 2018

The project officially started in the second half of October 2017. During this phase of project implementation (October 2017-July 2018) our work consisted of the following:

1. Analysis of the current status of existing Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Serbia.

Detailed analysis of current network of IBAs was conducted, which consisted of collecting and examining all existing published and unpublished data relevant to distribution and population dynamics of target species for the IBA programme. The results obtained from this desktop research and analysis enabled us to define data gaps for certain species and IBAs and to plan and prepare fieldwork accordingly. Data relevant to 42 existing IBAs and 11 potential new sites was reviewed and analysed. Also, during this period firm cooperation was established with BirdLife International towards official review of the new network of IBAs and it was agreed that the review will be scheduled for July/August 2019. The above mentioned activity was conducted from second half of October to December 2017.

2. Data collection/Fieldwork.

Fieldwork was organised in form of individual (1-day) surveys and expeditions, lasting from 2-7 days. The main objective of the conducted field research was to collect current data about distribution and abundance of target species for IBA nomination.

Individual surveys were conducted during December 2017 and January 2018 on large waterbodies (lowland rivers, lakes, ponds, fishponds etc.) and were aimed at collecting data about wintering populations of various water birds, primarily waterfowl, but also many other target species, such as the common crane (*Grus grus*) or white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*). Surveys were carried out in 15 existing and one potentially new IBA.

A total of 16 field expeditions were organized and carried out from March to July 2018 with the aim of collecting data about distribution and populations size of target breeding species in existing and potential IBAs (Table 1). Six expeditions were organised in the period March, April and first half of May 2018 and were focused on collecting data about breeding species of hens, owls and woodpeckers, while 10 expeditions were organised during the second half of May and June 2018 for other breeding species (raptors, passerine species). During the conduction of field research special attention was also given to recording threatening factors for target species and their respective habitats, which will additionally be analysed during evaluation of borders of existing areas and delineating new ones. Expeditions and surveys during this period were carried out in five existing and 11 potential new IBAs.

Based on the preliminary analysis of the data collected during this phase of the project we can conclude that there have been significant changes related to abundance and composition of breeding species, distribution range as well as habitat quality in many researched sites since the last revision in 2009. Therefore, some of the existing IBA sites will have to be subjected to re-delineation and designation under new criteria/species.

Table 1. Overview of conducted field research expeditions

Date	Location (IBAs; potential sites)	No. of researchers	No. of species	Target species recorded	Additional information collected
12-15.03.2018.	IBA Bosutske šume	6	52	Black Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, White-tailed Sea Eagle, Black Stork, Great white Egret	Habitat: lowland oak forests with fragments of preserved natural grasslands and marshland.
28-29.03.2018.	IBA Obedska bara	5	64	Black Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Eagle, White Stork, Black Stork	Habitat: lowland oak forests with fragments of preserved natural grasslands and marshland.
02-05.04.2018.	IBA Cer	4	51	Black Woodpecker, European Green Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher, White-tailed Sea Eagle	Habitat: the scope of deforestation is intensive, especially at the base of the mountain.
10-14.04.2018.	IBA Valjevske planine	4	57	Black Woodpecker, European Green Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher, Golden Eagle, Western Marsh Harrier, European Honey Buzzard, Woodlark	
20-27.04.2018.	IBA Golija	4	78	Boreal Owl, Hazel Grouse, Short-toed Snake Eagle, White-backed Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker, European Green Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher, Woodlark,	
03-06.05.2018.	Kamena Gora	5	773	Pygmy Owl, Boreal Owl, Hazel Grouse, Three toed Woodpecker	Habitat: Mixed coniferous forest (spruce and silver fir), intensively logged.

12-14.05.2018.	Velika Plana (Pomoravlje)	4	51	Ortolan Bunting, Red Backed Shrike	
15.05.2018.	Bor-Negotin- Zaječar	4	86	Ortolan Bunting, Eagle Owl, Nightjar, Woodchat Shrike, Corn Bunting, Corncrake, Honey Buzzard	
16.05.2018.	Ozren i Devica (Sokobanja)	4	82	Garden Warbler, Red Backed Shrike, Golden Eagle, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Ortolan Bunting, Corn Bunting	
17.05.2018.	Svrlijske planine	5	49	Ortolan bunting, Red Backed Shrike, Rock Partridge, Black Stork, Golden Eagle, Peregrine, Barred Warbler,	
18.05.2018.	Vidlič	5	54	Red Backed Shrike, Rock Partridge, Barred Warbler, Corncrake, Long-legged Buzzard	
25-26. 05.2018.	Stolovi i Goč	4	85	Red Backed Shrike, Short toed Snake Eagle, Barred Warbler, Dipper, Red Breasted Flycatcher, Collared Flycather, Black Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker	
28.05- 01.06.2018.	Suva planina	4	50	Red Backed Shrike, Rock Partridge, Common rock thrush, Alpine Accenator	
10-11.06.2018.	Dukat	4	80	Red Backed Shrike, Stock dove, Barred warbler, Nightjar,	
12.06.2018.	Široka planina - Trgovište	4	82	Red Backed Shrike, Booted Eagle, Woodchat Shrike	
13-15.06.2018.	Rujen (Preševo)	4	65	Olive-tree Warbler, Eastern Orphean Warbler, Turtle Dove, Woodchat Shrike, Calandra Lark, Wood lark, Red Backed Shrike	

3. Promotional activities:

The project was announced and promoted to the wider ornithological and scientific community, as well as relevant governmental authorities (Institute for nature conservation of Serbia and Institute for nature conservation of Vojvodina province), during the annual winter assembly of Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia. Currently, two articles aimed at general public are pending to be published via internet media and another article is being prepared for the national ornithological magazine "Detlić".



Left: landscape of Stara Planina. Right: Project team.



Left: Eagle owl nest. Right: Rock partridge.