

Project Update: July 2019

The continuation of the work on species identification has shown the presence of several species endemic to the area of the Balkan Peninsula which are not legally protected - *Drusus botosaneanui*, *Odontocerum hellenicum* (Trichoptera), but also new strictly protected species - *Baetis melanonyx* (Ephemeroptera). With the continuation of species identification, a larger number of endemic and protected species is expected. Also, for representatives of certain species of some genera, there are no larval descriptions, so identification to species level is not possible at present, e.g., genus *Chaetopteryx* (Trichoptera).

At all localities where samples were taken from, species intolerant to pollution are present. This was expected as people from the surrounding villages have mostly moved to cities and there is a trend of constant depopulation of the remaining population. In this regard, water pollution by agriculture and municipal wastewater is not present.

Also, the claims of the hydrogeologists, previously consulted in connection with the work of the andesite quarry and its potential impact on water pollution, turned out to be accurate. There is a great diversity of species within the watercourses downstream of the quarry, even the presence of certain protected and endangered species has been recorded. There is a project for continuation of exploitation and a certain extension of the quarry. However, after inspecting the Environmental Impact Assessment Study, we believe that if all envisaged activities are to be respected, there should be no major problems. On the other hand, a new threat has emerged for the whole area covered by this research, and concerns the investigation of the presence of copper and gold ore for exploitation purposes. Findings show promising results in terms of rich ore findings, so that in case of eventual exploitation, all the basins of the studied watercourses would be endangered.

The pressure exerted on the representatives of state and local authorities in relation to the construction of small hydropower plants, in Dimitrovgrad municipality has resulted in the adoption of a resolution for removal of the planned locations for small hydropower plants from the spatial plan of the municipality for the area of our research. The adoption of such a resolution would certainly have not been achieved if there was not a great group of people and activists of the informal movement "Defend the Rivers of Mt. Stara Planina", who are daily making great efforts in the fight against the construction of small hydropower plants throughout the territory of Serbia. However, I am also convinced that our work on this project, and the presentation of results on the presence of protected species in the public, has made a certain contribution.

Beginning in August 2018, I began my internship in the local government of Dimitrovgrad municipality in the field of environmental inspection.

On the one hand, this gave me insight into the way in which the nature protection system at the local level is functioning. This, along with a consultation with experts of the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, enabled us to find a way which we can use for legal protection of the watercourses. In Serbia, protected areas are divided into three categories: Category I - protected areas of national and international importance proclaimed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia; Category II - protected areas

of regional / provincial importance proclaimed by the Government or the competent authority of the autonomous province (Vojvodina); **Category III - protected areas of local importance proclaimed by local governments.** In our case, it is necessary that the local government of the Municipality of Dimitrovgrad adopts a resolution on initiating the procedure for the protection of certain watercourses as a protected area of Category III, which is of local importance. This resolution then should be handed over to the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia. The Institute assumes the obligation to carry out additional research on the presence of other groups of organisms, and later on approaches the development of the study on the protection of the area. Watercourses can be protected in two ways - as a nature monument or as a protected habitat. Our form of protection will probably be in the form of a protected habitat. It is very important that we precisely determine the sites we propose to protect before adopting the Resolution, in order the most valuable watercourses to be protected.

On the other hand, this full-time job took away a lot of my time that I could otherwise use on project activities, primarily on the identification of organisms.

We organised several photo tours for photographing rare species, for the needs of the photographic exhibition planned for the end of the project.



Ivan Medenica taking a photograph of Serbian Yarrow (*Achillea serbica*) on Greben Planina Mt, a rare Balkan endemic species.

Some of our photographs that will be presented on the photography exhibition are shown on the following page.



For the purpose of promoting the project, a logo was created (designed by Djordje Vukojević) and a leaflet design was prepared for printing.

Additional promotional material is being prepared.

In the second half of July 2019, a traditional research camp on Stara Planina Mt, in the village of Temska, will be held. There, representatives of all the organisations, to whom we planned to present the project, will be present. Instead of visiting all the cities individually (where the individual organisations are stationed), I will take the opportunity of a joint gathering and visit the camp during two weekends, when representatives of different organisations will be present, in order to share promotional material and present the findings of our research.



ЦИЉЕВИ ПРОЈЕКТА

Наведене заштићене врсте нису ограничене на подручје обухваћено овим истраживањем, иако га одликују одређене посебности геолошке подлоге и вероватно хемизма воде. Оно је узето као показатељ њиховог присуства и у незаштићеним подручјима, за која се неретко сматра да не поседују посебне природне вредности. Напротив, очувана незаштићена подручја су од немерљивог значаја као део еколошке мреже, а њихова међусобна повезаност и континуитет су предуслов за дугорочни опстанак популација ретких и угрожених врста.

Посебно је скрајнута заштита биодиверзитета ретких врста бескичмењака, који су занемарени и приликом израда студија о процени утицаја на животну средину.

Прикупљање података о присуству ретких врста има велики еколошки значај са аспекта познавања њиховог распрострањења, како би се благовремено спречили потенцијални угрожавајући фактори на њихова станишта.

Заштита горњих токова река у незаштићеним подручјима је занемарена у законској регулативи Србије, будући да њима управљају локалне самоуправе. Како саме локалне самоуправе нису довољно укључене у заштиту природе, овим пројектом тежимо скренути пажњу представницима локалне самоуправе општине Димитровград на овај проблем, кроз њихово непосредно укључење у заштиту појединих водотока.

Узевши у обзир да су готово све реке, након проласка кроз релативно већа насељена места, загађене до мере да представљају ризик по здравље људи (укључујући Нишаву и Лукавачку (Габерску) реку у Димитровграду), заштита и очување планинских река се намеће као један од главних приоритета.

Овај летак је израђен у току реализације пројекта
"A Way to Increase Local Government and Public Participation in Protecting Macroinvertebrate Biodiversity of Local Streams in South-Eastern Serbia"
финансираног од стране **The Rufford Foundation**

Више о пројекту можете видети на:
https://www.rufford.org/projects/branislav_dimitrov

За додатне информације о пројекту обратите се на мејл:
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