

Project Update: November 2019

In the previous period, promotional and educational activities have been increased, which included organising lectures and distribution of the promotional material to relevant stakeholders and general public in Dimitrovgrad. Training programme for high school students from the local high school in Dimitrovgrad (Gymnasium „Sveti Kirilo i Metodije“) has been organised, with future cooperation being also discussed ([link to the official highschool website with the news about the training programme - https://www.cargim.edu.rs/SR/vesti/hidrobiologija1920.htm](https://www.cargim.edu.rs/SR/vesti/hidrobiologija1920.htm)). Approximately 30 students were involved. Practical and field work was also organised for biology/ecology students from several universities, participating at the research camp in the village of Temska on Stara Planina Mt., where also several macrozoobenthos samples were taken for analysis.

They were introduced to the project goals and basic benthic macroinvertebrate organism groups.



Sorting out of samples from Stara Planina Mt. at Temska research camp. @Danilo Penić

In the process of further identification, we found many interesting and rare species for this region, for some of them these are the first records for the fauna of Serbia and even for Balkan peninsula. For example, *Thremma anomalum* and *Wormaldia subnigra* (Trichoptera) are protected and very rare species, found in our samples and identified after submitting the previous project update. *Synagapetus krawanyi* and *Rhyacophila hirticornis* (Trichoptera) are new species for the ecoregion 7 - Eastern Balkan. Another rare species for the fauna of Serbia is *Hydropsyche incognita* (Trichoptera) and only one specimen was recorded from one of our samples.

Although identification of all the organisms has not been completed yet, we had enough material to determine the streams of the highest conservation importance based on our results. Six stream sub-catchments from all three river catchments have been suggested for protection and a report with the results and these suggestions has been handed to the Agricultural and Environmental Protection Department of the local government of Dimitrovgrad municipality (attached as a separate document within the e-mail). Declaring protection of a new site turned out to be a long-term process which usually lasts for several years, even for the local initiatives. The next step is for the local government to adopt a resolution on initiating the procedure for protection of the suggested streams, after which follows the procedure explained in my previous update. In the process of development of the study for protection of the new area by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, additional watercourses can be added, so the research results from future identification will also be taken into account.

From our perspective, at this moment, printing of posters would not have much sense, so we decided to postpone their printing after the official announcement of the newly protected area, when a map of the area with a list and photographs of the present rare species will be printed and shared. For the current stage of development of the project, we decided that printing of memo pads (shown in the figure to the right) will be much more suitable and effective in the promotion of stream biodiversity conservation. A calendar design is also being prepared.



Due to reconstruction works of the gallery, the planned photography exhibition and presentation of the project results will be organized in the local public library in Dimitrovgrad in the next free term, which is the second week of December. An update about its organisation will be provided afterwards.