

Project Update: September 2019.

This year's field activities started on schedule, at the beginning of May. Our project team, together with master students, bachelor students and volunteers collected the population parameters at four research localities in East and South Serbia during the months of May and July. At the Kunovica research locality we were accompanied by the students of the Faculty of Science and Mathematics, University of Niš, undertaking the course "Conservation biology", as well as members of the Biological Society "Dr. Sava Petrović" (BDDSP). A total of 29 bachelor and 10 master students took part in the field work in the month of May, followed by 19 volunteers (members of BDDSP). At the Kunovica research locality monitoring of Hermanns' tortoise has been established ever since 2009 representing one of the longest conservation monitoring programs in our country and being a part of large research cofounded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Serbia. At the other three research localities monitoring program has been established in 2016 through my first Rufford Small Grant (18761-1) and we aim to achieve the same, and even longer tradition of monitoring in those additional areas, thus ensuring the survival and conservation of Hermanns' tortoise in the entire country.



Project team members – arrival to the National Park Đerdap

Considering that this is the 4th year of our field activities, we established a successful collaboration with the managers of the “Đerdap” National Park protected area, at the territory of which is one of our selected research localities in eastern Serbia. This year, our research was cofounded by the protected area managers in the form of accommodation for our entire team of researchers. Our project team was located in one of the visitor centers managed by the Djerdap National Park.



NP Đerdap Visitor center – our accommodation



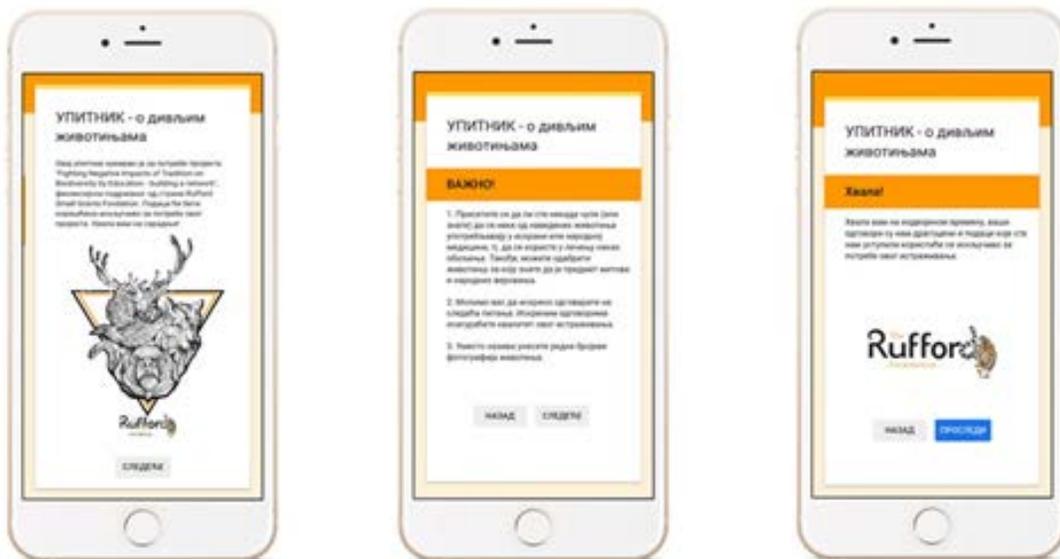
Mater students at Kunovica research locality – field activities in July



Left: MSc Bojana Vidojković. Right: MSc Miloš Krstić.

Out of 10 master students who are conducting herpetology research at the Kunovica research locality for their master thesis, three have successfully defended their Master Thesis this year: Milan Blagojević, Bojana Vidojković i Miloš Krstić.

Interviewing of the local inhabitants was successfully completed as well. Surveying was conducted at the same time as the field research on the tortoise populations. Before the field work started, Android app was created for the volunteers, receivers of our micro grants. Alongside the App, an online survey was created (<https://forms.gle/r4QSqEtvLuUaYK9UA>) available at <http://wildbalkans.com> website as well.



The User Interface of the Android App for online Surveying

The online survey was distributed and disseminated through social networks of our partner organizations. A total of 800 people were surveyed in Eastern Serbia, which is quite a remarkable achievement. We are planning on intensifying the promotion of our micro grants and involving new volunteers throughout Serbia.

Website, <http://wildbalkans.com> established during my 2nd Rufford Small Grant project, now already represents a place where young researchers present their research result, share news and experiences. In the forthcoming period we will work on the promotion on the website itself and invite new authors to write texts and share their stories. Additionally, the website will contain a gallery of nature photographs. The website contains primarily texts in Serbian language, but within this project, an English version of the website will be established expecting to receive great attention in the future.

In order to promote and visit primary and secondary schools, we printed an information brochure (next picture) and an additional 100 copies of the book about Local folklore beliefs concerning wild animals.



The project brochure about our project aims and goals and important information on researched species

The preliminary results of the research were presented at the 13th Symposium on Flora of Southeastern Serbia and Neighboring Regions (<http://www.sfses.com/en/home>), held from 20-23. June 2019. on Stara Planina mountain. The abstract is available in the abstract book, at the following link:

<http://www.sfses.com/docs/Book-of-Abstracts.pdf> (page 101)



13th Symposium on the Flora of Southeastern Serbia and Neighboring Regions, Stara planina Mt., 2019.

