

Project Update: June 2021

We took the opportunity to finish all fieldwork activities and complete the interview sessions that we were not able to undertake during last year due to Covid19 restrictions.

We visited a few additional sites, protected natural areas, that could be of potential concern for future projects. During this time, we talked to the managers of the "Stara Planina" (Balkan Mountains in Serbia) protected area, as one of the largest and most important biodiversity hotspots in the southeastern Serbia. The "Stara Planina" area was declared a nature park in 1997, as an area extremely valuable from the point of view of the diversity of flora and fauna and their communities, as well as geological, geomorphological and hydrological characteristics. The interviews with the managers will be included in our feature film.

Since it was not possible to organise the live conference at the beginning of the project (due to Covid19 restrictions), we organised an online conference to exchange ideas and debate about improving the conservation management and planning, problems and obstacles in nature conservation. One of the main themes was overcoming collaboration issues. We tried to emphasise social ecology and local peoples' involvement in nature conservation and had a short educational presentation about communication and interviewing by MSc Marko Nikolić. We used this occasion to consult about our project and video documentaries creation. We came to the following main conclusions through our discussions:

- Serbia and the Balkans has a rising young researcher community which should try and collaborate more tightly in order to improve the status of protected areas and species in the region.
- The way of communicating science has changed in this time of global pandemics and involving multidisciplinary approaches is a necessity in order to overcome current obstacles.
- The video campaign is proving to be an invaluable tool in science communication which could be implemented in modern conservation strategies.
- Considering that most of the protected areas in Serbia do not get enough funding for promotional and educational activities, the video content created with this project is and will be a practical tool for conveying the idea of the importance of nature conservation.

The two feature length documentaries that we announced previously "Lalinačka slatina" and "Cerjanska pećina" have been officially premiered on the 21st of May at [Cineplexx Srbija](#) right before World Biodiversity Day. We took the opportunity to invite representatives of NGO (Serbian Rufford Small Grant recipients, members of biological society "Dr Sava Petrović" and other NGOs), academia (University of Niš, Kragujevac, Belgrade and Novi Sad), institutions (Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, protected area managers and other interested parties), stakeholders and local people from our research sites. We presented our project to the audience and at the end of the premier discussed ways to bridge the gaps between present parties in order to have more

efficient nature protection in our region. We also discussed the ways protected area management was influenced by COVID-19 pandemics.

About "lalinačka slatina" documentary: The introduction to the film shows a short history of researching the flora around Nis from the perspective of our great scientist Dr Sava Petrović. The film has elements of a documentary / informative format in which all significant aspects of the protected area are presented through image and narration. The central part of the film is divided into nine thematic units: 1-land; 2-water; 3-living world; 4-vegetation; 5-flora; 6-fauna; 7-risk factors; 8-protection; and 9-scientific research. The film shows a total of 20 species of plants, of which *Stachys milanii* Petrović, *Camphorosma monspeliaca* L., *Allium guttatum* ssp. *dalmaticum* (A. Kern. ex Janch.) Stearn., *Consolida regalis* Gray., *Adonis flammea* Jacq. and *Galatella villosa* (L.) Rchb.f. are of particular importance. There are also 12 representatives of macroinvertebrates, four representatives of amphibians and reptiles, 20 representatives of birds and one mammal. Participants: screenplay and direction-Dimitrija Savić Zdravković, Marko Nikolić; text - Dimitrija Savić Zdravković, Jovana Cvetković, Marko Nikolić; camera - Marko Nikolic, Dimitrija Savic Zdravkovic; aerial footage - Marko Nikolic; original music for the film - Jayus jazz; narration - Aleksandar Mihailović; actors - Aleksandar Mihailović (Dr. Sava Petrović), Stefan M. Mladenović (King Milan Obrenović), Milan Ilić (soldier). The realisation of the film was contributed by: Aleksandar Dragišić, MA, Danko Jović, Slaviša Petrović, Boban Rajković, Marko Zdravković, Miloš Popović, PhD, Bojan Zlatković, PhD, Maja Jovanović, Vladimir Žikić, PhD, Sasa Stanković, PhD, Maja Lazarević, PhD, Đorđe Vukojević, Danica Popović, Jovana Mircic, Ana Samardzic, Marko Stojanovic, Dejan Pesic and Nenad Tasic. The production of the film and the entire project was supported by the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Nis, the Student Cultural Center, the Faculty of Science, University of Nis and Natural History Museum Belgrade.

We made a presentation emphasising the important species that we captured on camera within "Lalinačka slatina" documentary (it will be uploaded in the attachment entitled "Biodiversity of Lalinacka Salt Marsh on camera").

About "cerjanska pećina" documentary: This unique cave was protected within the group of speleological objects of northern Calafat called the Propala and Mala Propala caves, by the Institute for Nature Protection and Scientific Study of Natural Rarities of the People's Republic of Serbia in 1955. The movie represents a unique cave ecosystem covered with a veil of ancient legends. The film highlights a new, environmentally friendly way of using caves for tourist purposes in unregulated conditions - better known as wild caving. Danko Jović, MA, and Nebojša Petrović Trša, MA, led us through the Cerjan Cave and talked about a bout cave jewelry, canal system, groundwater, troglobionts and the historical course of cave exploration, based on the text in the book about „cerjanska pećina “. Movie sponsors: Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia; Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia. Production: PE Directorate for Construction of the City of Nis; Independent expert associate for nature protection Slaviša Petrović. Executive producer: The M.E.N.T.A. society Nis Scenario: Dimitrija Savić-Zdravkovi; Danko Jović, MA; Narration: Aleksandar Mihailović. Movie music: "Hope" Dejan Ilijić, DYAD II. Camera and aerial footage: Miroslav Mitic, MMD Studio. Assistant cameramen: Ivan Milosavljevic and Marko Zdravkovic. Directed and edited by: Boban Rajkovic. The realisation of the film

was helped by the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia and the Biological Society "Dr Sava Petrovic". The official trailer of the movie about "Lalinačka slatina" salt marsh protected area is available at our project's YouTube channel here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1DIC0A1ZJo&list=PLqCRdZP6DrsVeZXYWNnuihKPtIA-WQ2qI&index=6&ab_channel=HiddenCornersofSerbia; and the official trailer of the movie about "Cerjanska pećina" cave protected area here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXw0OoJqv8w&list=PLqCRdZP6DrsVeZXYWNnuihKPtIA-WQ2qI&index=7&ab_channel=HiddenCornersofSerbia

Text about our work on the documentaries is present at the project website. Several additional media covered this event:

- <http://bddsp.org.rs/svecana-premijera-filma-lalinacka-slatina-u-sinepleksu/>;
- <https://www.juznevesti.com/Kultura/Premijerno-prikazani-filmovi-o-Lalinackoj-slatini-i-Cerjanskoj-pecini.sr.html?fbclid=IwAR1T3e3MdEhArXWRHXu7Qo1ExgoebkekNcGaqY-YzDK5MmjKcCg5OX3f1Fg>;
- <https://magazinsana.rs/premijera-igrano-dokumentarnog-filma-lalinacka-slatina/>

New "behind the scenes" videos have been uploaded to our YouTube "The journey" playlist (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNEPoEm47DexvbpICyUHbeg>)

We are now working on finalising the series of 20 short films (about 20 species of conservation concern, that inhabit Serbia) and one feature documentary film (about hidden gems of Serbian nature in small, protected areas, issues in their conservation and attitudes of people towards their protection). All of which will be uploaded to our project YouTube channel. The videos will be sent to the Institute and Area Managers for examination, accuracy checkup and inspection, before public posting and dissemination.

All activities were adapted to follow the recommendations of the World Health Organisation and the authorities in Serbia on the COVID-19 pandemics (with the approval from The Rufford Foundation).



Official premier of two nature documentaries "Lalinačka slatina" and "Cerjanska pećina" on the 21st of May at Cineplexx Niš. @Miroslav Mitić



Our team at the Official premier of two nature documentaries "Lalinačka slatina" and "Cerjanska pećina" on the 21st of May at Cineplexx Srbija. @Hristina Zdravković



Filming hydrobiological research activities at the protected natural area "Lisine – Veliki Buk" waterfall. © Danica Popović