

Project Update: June 2023

In the past month we continued the population studies of European pond turtles in two localities: Kraljevac and Malo Crniće. In Kraljevac we involved the biology and ecology students at the University of Belgrade, through lectures (Photo 1.) and field work. They had a chance to handle the turtles and go through the field protocol, from recognising the sex and the unique marking number, to measuring the captured turtles.



Photo 1. A moment from the lecture at Kraljevac held by Ana Golubović (photographed by Marko Maričić).

In Malo Crniće we had an incredible session! Along with the highest number of captured turtles per season for the locality (50 individuals!), we achieved promising collaborations:

1. We prepared an official report and personally presented our findings in the Mlava River oxbow at the meeting with the municipality officials. The locality in question is the habitat of several strictly protected species by the law. We warned the municipality officials of the effects of the illegal dumping site, with recommendation to prevent further garbage disposal, and revitalise the habitat. We got very positive feedback and hope it will all result in habitat revitalisation.

2. We collected adult females and brought them to the colleagues from the Department of Radiology and Radiation Hygiene at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of University of Belgrade. The radiographies successfully revealed the percentage of gravid females, and the clutch sizes (Photo 2.)! The colleagues from the Department of Radiology and Radiation Hygiene are very keen to help with the proposed work, and we are looking forward to continuing this collaboration. The next day turtles were brought back safely and released into their habitat.

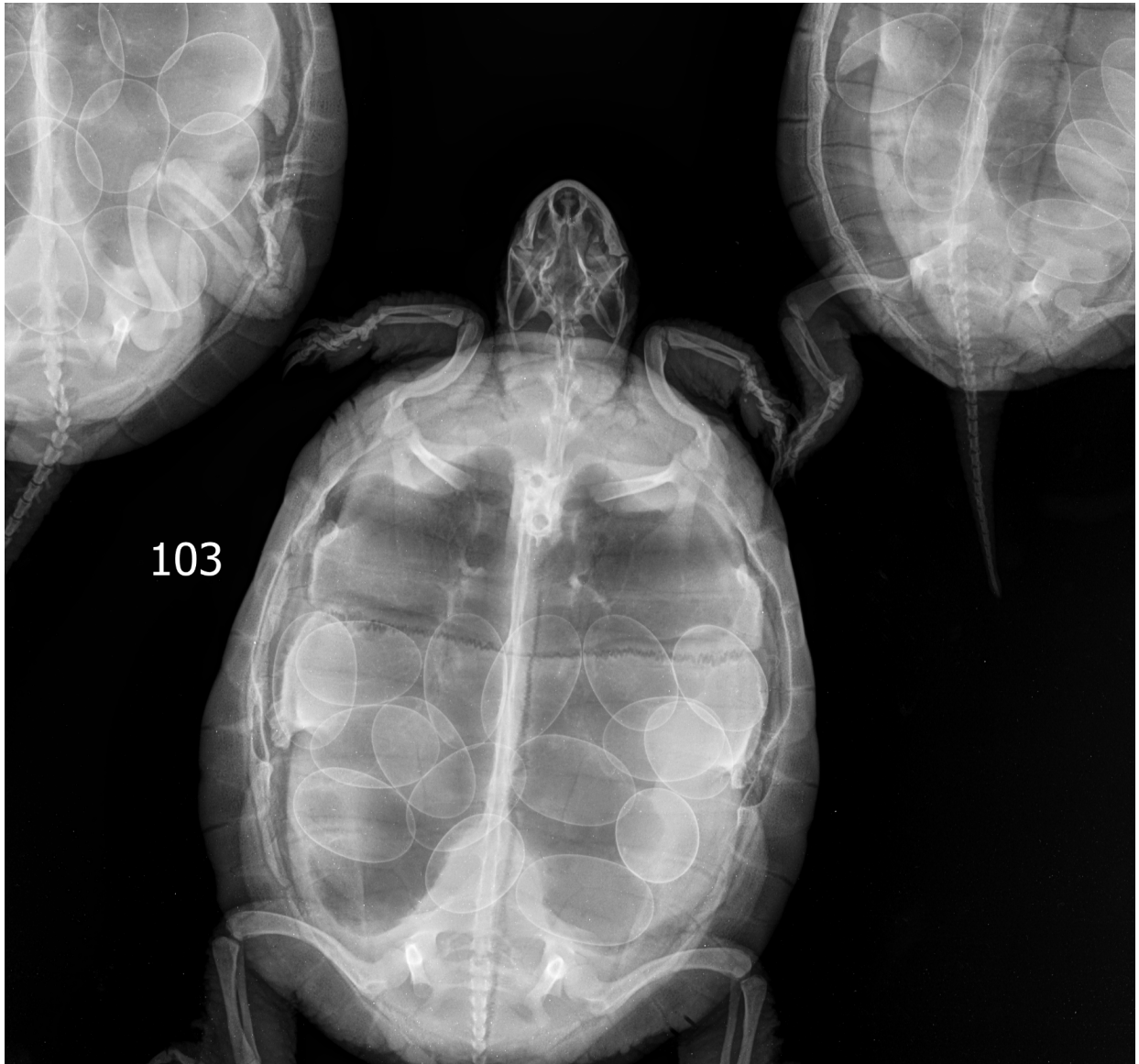


Photo 2. A radiography image, revealing to us one of the crucial demographic parameters - the fecundity data of *Emys orbicularis*, gathered for the first time in Serbia! (radiography taken by the enthusiastic members of the Department of Radiology and Radiation Hygiene at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Belgrade).

For World Turtle Day, we organized a photo contest via Biologer.rs to promote citizen science and draw the public attention toward the turtles and their habitats. Our winners are Agnes Erdos in the European pond turtle category and Aleksandra Petrović in Hermann's tortoise category.

The winning photos can be admired at the Facebook:

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=199974183003902&id=100089739634724&sfnsn=mo&mibextid=RUbZ1f

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Csy8uAboom6/>

We congratulate the winners once again, and we hope they like the promo material which we sent as a reward.