

## Project Update: November 2023

The first project activity after the funds arrived on the bank account of Biological Society "Dr. Sava Petrović" was the preparation and printing of promotional material, as well as the purchase of the necessary field equipment. Promotional material with the logo of the BS "Dr. Sava Petrović" and the Rufford Foundation was designed by Dimitrija Savić-Zdravković.

After these activities were done, we conducted a 2-day meeting of team members in order to create a work plan with concrete dates, to determine in detail the methodological approach to field work and to divide the necessary equipment for the project implementation. Furthermore, we created a standardised survey with a focus on the occurrence of wildfires in Protected Areas (PAs) and experiences of Protected Area Managers (PAMs) in emergency situations, which will be used during the implementation of the project item "Surveys and meetings with PAMs".



Picture 1. T-shirt logo

After that, we started with the implementation of the project item "*Lycaena helle* research" and defined priority localities for field research. To do so, we used Google Earth program to locate wetlands along mountain stream, which *Lycaena helle* prefers and which will be prior for research in order to estimate relative abundance of whole population of *Lycaena helle* on the territory of National Park Stara Planina. In June 2023, we conducted research on previously known populations of this species on the stretch Babin zub - Midžor. For that purpose, we used the Lincoln-Petersen Mark-Recapture method in order to estimate the relative population abundance and prepared dataset for further statistical analyses after fieldwork is done.

The period after "*Lycaena helle* research" was done for season 2023, we used to visit PAs throughout Serbia and survey PAMs and representatives of other institutions mentioned in the project proposal. Also, we started the implementation of the project item "Literature review" with the goal to create an online repository and collect information available in online form for the creation of the "Protected areas - Dealing with fires" manual as the most important product of this project.

During the implementation of project item "Surveys and meetings with PAMs" while conducting surveys at one of the PAs near the city of Niš, the Lalinačka Slatina Nature Monument, in a conversation with PAMs, we came up with the idea of an even more effective way of helping in the management of PAs that face the problem of wildfires. Therefore, in cooperation with the NM Lalinačka Slatina PAMs, we started the project "Implementation of measures for the early detection of wildfires in a high-risk area of exceptional biological value - the Lalinačka Slatina Nature Monument" ([LINK](#)). Project financed by UNDP, in cooperation with the Embassy of Sweden and the European Investment Bank (EIB). The project aims to install thermal imaging cameras in the II degree of protection of the area in order to minimise the impact of wildfire on the protected species of flora and fauna of the area. Furthermore, we conducted a detailed survey of population of the surrounding settlements about the problem of wildfires and the main causes of their occurrence ([LINK](#)). Therefore, this is an excellent opportunity for advanced training for the RBG project team to approach wildfires in PAs more effectively, since they represent the main team involved in the implementation of this project. The project has received an excellent response so far, and we plan to continue with similar collaborations at other PAs in the future.

In September 2023, in front of BS I participated in the XIV Symposium of Entomologists of Serbia with international participation. The topic of my presentation was: "Estimation of the seasonal population size of the species *Lycaena helle* at the locality Ponor - NP Stara planina", where I spoke about the results of the marking study of the species *L. helle* conducted during the 2<sup>nd</sup> RSG project (<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Milan-Ilic-2>).

Until next project update, following activities and timescale in project proposal we plan to work on further review of the literature, archive and planning documentation, legislations, etc. and the creation of an online repository, as well as the further collection data necessary for the creation of manual "Protected areas – Dealing with fires", through

surveys and verbal communication with PAMs and representatives of other relevant Institutions.



Picture 2. XIV Symposium of Entomologists of Serbia. Presentation of the results 2<sup>nd</sup> RSG. © Miloš Popović.



Picture 3. XIV Symposium of Entomologists of Serbia. Participants at the Symposium during the discussion. © Milan Ilić





Picture 4. Members of the RBG team and BS "Dr. Sava Petrović" during the implementation of the project "Implementation of measures for the early detection of wildfires in a high-risk area of exceptional biological value - the Lalinačka Slatina Nature Monument". © Danica Popović.