

Project Update – September 2024

In May 2024, we uploaded a web presentation to HabiProt web page summarizing our project goals and main activities. We also gave a short overview of sandy areas in Serbia and the history of studying true bugs in sandy habitats. Our web presentation can be found on the link below.

<https://habiprot.org.rs/en/stenice-pescarskih-travnih-stanista-panonskog-regiona-2023-2024/>

These days we finalized the last field activities for our comparative study on pollinators and true bugs. We still process our data on pollinators but we can give general impressions of this experiment: (i) populations of pollinators in sandy habitats decreased drastically with the beginning of summer; (ii) open sandy grasslands were poorer in species number and abundance of pollinators than habitats with bushes; (iii) habitats overgrown by hawthorn were richer in pollinators than those with junipers and (iv) hoverflies seemed to be especially sensitive to increasing seasonal aridity in sandy habitats. We expect what was observed in the field will also be confirmed with the analyses later, and hope the results will provide more detailed information on what is going on with pollinators in sandy areas.

The thing that probably skewed our experimental data is the extremely dry and hot summer the whole of Europe experienced this year. Summer 2024 was an ecological catastrophe by many parameters and its consequences were especially visible in the already arid Pannonian Region. Maybe, our one-year experiment is not the best overview of current pollinator trends in the Pannonian sands but can suggest what can permanently change within insect communities of the region in the future.

In the coming months, we will continue to work on our true bug material and data collected during this two-year-long project. The fall is also the perfect time for promotional activities and we are planning to give a couple of lectures.

Figure 1. Two main types of bushy species in sandy grasslands (Deliblato Sands Special Nature Reserve, Serbia).

Figure 2. Proliferation of invasive common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) at the same location during the season (Bócsa-Bugac sandy area, Kiskunság National Park, Hungary).