

## Project Update: August 2017

Throughout our first field trip in March, we visited almost 15 potential locations of which eight have been chosen as study sites (Jazovo, Rusanda, Okanj, Sečanj, Konak, Margita, Vlajkovac, Idvor). We have made a few changes in originally selected locations, so instead of pasture near Farkaždin we collect true bugs on a site near Idvor. Also, instead of pasture by Lokve, we work on a grassland near Vlajkovac village. We have concluded that pastures in Farkaždin and Lokve are not representative enough for our study, since they are degraded, vegetation cover is very short and scarce, and there is a lack of characteristic halophilous plants. Without these plants, there is a small chance to find true bugs that are saline specialists, whereas the determination of their distribution in Serbia is one of the main goals of this project.

The richest samples of true bugs were samples from May. Specimens of saline specialists *Henestaris halophilus* and *Conostethus hungaricus* were registered at all study sites, and next to *C. hungaricus*, the most numerous in May 2017 were populations of *Amblytylus nasutus* and *Acetropis carinata*. In May 2017, we collected dozens of individuals per transect at almost all localities, in contrast to samples collected at some localities in April, June and July 2017 which often consisted of only a few individuals of true bugs. This peak in abundance in May 2017 was already observed during our previous project covered by the Rufford Small Grants.

Our general impression is that saline grasslands in the Banat Region are often and too intensively grazed by cows and sheep. Consequently, these grasslands are quite uniform, with lower species diversity than similar areas in Bačka. Also, pastures near settlements are almost regularly converted into illegal dump sites, additionally, burning of reed fields in wetlands of Banat sometimes unintentionally harms the nearby saline grasslands too.



Left: Transect set up. Right: *Amblytylus nasutus* – one of the most abundant true bugs in saline grasslands during spring.



Left: Collecting of true bugs by sweep netting. Right: An overgrazed pasture in "Rusanda" Nature Park.