

Project Update: August 2018

At the beginning of August I have been honoured to participate the Rufford Conference, "Conservation across Caucasus" held at the Iliuni Institute for Alpine Ecology in Kazbegi (Stepantsminda), Georgia. During my lectures I have pointed out diseases observed and most important conclusions from my 1st and 2nd RSG Project, as well as conservation measures we aim to adopt in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have discussed the understanding of disease development in vertebrates and how to propose specialized long-term in-situ conservation strategies in order to protect species and/or habitats. After such a wonderful conference, we had a field trip into the breathtaking Caucasus after which I had left for capital city – Tbilisi. After Georgia, I have travelled in Turkey in order to assess the health of sand tiger sharks in a Viasea Aquarium in Istanbul, which is also an important part of my work and effort.

Through July, we have organised an extremely successful field expedition in Klek – with the aim to better understand the habitats and potential prey of elasmobranch which, permanent or temporary, inhabits the waters of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The field studies consisted of the series of underwater research activities primarily during the night, between 11.00 PM and 1.00 AM. Underwater activities included uses of a self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (scuba) and snorkelling. Target depths were from the coastline up to 25 m. I have also managed to get down under the aquaculture facilities during the night at the depth of 23 m in order to assess the influence on the bottom habitat remodelling and to seek for some smooth-hound shark species which are often encountered in this area. During the field trip we have encountered over 50 identified representatives of echinoderms, crustaceans, cephalopods, plathyhelminthes, gastropods, bivalvians and more.



PHOTO 1: Lecture the effects of pollution on elasmobranch health and specific disease development in wild population by Andrej Gajić at the conference, Conservation across Caucasus in Kazbegi, Georgia. ©T. Shvelidze.



PHOTO 2: Andrej at the top of the Temo Narikala Fortress in Tbilisi, Georgia during the Rufford conference, Conservation across Caucasus.



PHOTO 3: Warty crab, *Eriphia verrucosa* (Forsskål, 1775), feeding on the corpse of the Gilt-head (sea) bream, *Sparus aurata* Linnaeus, 1758, in the coastal zone of the Klek peninsula (Bosna and Herzegovina). ©A. Gajić / Sharklab ADRIA.