

Project Update: October 2020

Due to unfortunate circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the authorities in Serbia, we had to postpone and reschedule some of the activities in our project (with the approval from The Rufford Foundation). Adding to this the fact that protected area managers were working on minimal capacity by the end of May 2020, we postponed most of the fieldwork activities and took more time to plan and prepare further project implementation.

Before the beginning of the project implementation we received the official papers from the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia for Conditions on filming and undertaking activities in Protected Natural Areas.

We started with the procurement of needed fieldwork and filming equipment, after which we printed out the promotional material for the project (containing The Rufford Foundation logo; NGO Biological Society "Dr Sava Petrović" logo and logo of the project). Team building for the team members was organised partially in Niš, partially online (due to recommendations by The Ministry of Health to ban public gatherings indoors), during which we were: organising the movie creation team and volunteers; contacting protected area managers and planning the fieldwork together; preparing the scenarios for "Hidden Serbia" feature-film and "Wild interviews" short movie series (during which we were communicating with the conservation experts and consulting with the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia). During this time, we organised a series of online consultations with the experts and lectures with Marko Nikolić about the social approach structuring in the videos and proper interviewing and communication with the locals.

Project fieldwork activities started in June 2020 (following all the regulations proposed by the Serbian Ministry of Health). During the fieldwork activities we were searching for the chosen species for the "Wild interviews" series; conversing with the local inhabitants and stakeholders (focusing on people's attitudes and awareness about species and habitat conservation) and with protected area managers and rangers (focusing on difficulties and practices in management of protected areas in Serbia, investment in education of the locals and collaboration with researches) and filmed all the aforementioned. During 4 months of active fieldwork we managed to capture on film several important species, some: *Parnassius apollo* – the Apollo butterfly; *Cordulegaster bidentata* - sombre goldenring; *Testudo hermanni* – Hermanns' tortoise; *Emys orbicularis* - European pond turtle; *Darevskia praticola* – the meadow lizard and many more, all of which will be a part of "Hidden Serbia - wild interviews" short film series. We managed to visit almost all of the planned Nature Protected Areas (seven out of 10), during which we gained invaluable insight in local peoples' attitudes towards nature conservation, management capacity in those areas and discussed potential difficulties and ideas for improvement with protected area managers, all of which will be a part of "Hidden Serbia" feature-film documentary about small protected areas.

Our activities led to establishment of cooperation of the NGO Biological Society "Dr Sava Petrović" with managers of two protected areas, and several NGOs, due to which two

feature length documentaries will be made about “Lalinačka slatina” and “Cerjanska pećina” Nature Monuments. This story was largely covered by local media:

- https://mediareform.rs/igrano-dokumentarni-film-na-lalinackoj-slatini-o-susretu-kralja-milana-i-naucnika-save-petrovica/?fbclid=IwAR1nJtNHb3u916xRr04R9jaC5MhKbqjPATnMh0antU05MD_BT XZ3gzDgym0 ;
- <http://hiddenserbia.com/o-skrivenim-uglovima-srbije-i-sp-lalinacka-slatina-u-medijima-video/> .

Our activities have been well accepted both by authorities and local stakeholders, because of which our team was invited to discuss future collaboration and implementation of our conservation strategies with several interested parties (such is protected area “Vodopad Lisine”, Natural History Center of Serbia in Svilajnac and others).

We have constantly been updating our projects’

- website (<http://hiddenserbia.com/>),
- Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/hiddenserbia/>) and
- Facebook profile (<https://www.facebook.com/hiddenserbia/>)

with reports from our fieldtrips, important news about conservation in Serbia and the region, as well as links to guest appearances of our team members on radio and television programmes. We decided to dedicate one part of our YouTube channel to the “behind the scenes” moments, describing the process of our video creation, which are now available at “Hidden Serbian adventures | The journey |” playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNEPoEm47DexvbplCYuHbeg>

Fieldwork activities will continue so long as there are favorable weather conditions, whilst the winter months are reserved for examining the obtained material from the authorities and contacting RSG grant recipients in Serbia in order to discuss possible cooperation and discuss about overcoming problems and obstacles in nature conservation. We are planning on starting the montage of the final video material and planning the organisation of a conference with RSG recipients, representatives of NGO, academia, institutions and stakeholders partially online (in case of COVID-19 crisis continuation).



Interview with Danko Jović, director of the Niš office of the Institute for Nature protection of Serbia, at Lalinacka Slatina Protected Natural Area. Photo by Dimitrija Savić Zdravković



Our team at Krupajsko vrelo Protected Natural Area. Photo by Milica Blagojević



Parnassius apollo, The Apollo butterflies, for the "Wild interviews" series. IUCN status Vulnerable. Photo by Miloš Popović



Team leader with praying mantis, *Mantis religiosa*, nymph in the field. Photo by Marko Nikolić



Interview with Managers of Vodopad Lisine Protected Natural Area. Photo by Marko Nikolic



Clear waters of Krupajsko vrelo Protected Natural Area in Hidden Serbia series. Photo by Milica Blagojevic



Darevskia praticola, the meadow lizard, for the "Wild interviews" series. IUCN status Near Threatened. Photo by Dimitrija Savić Zdravković