

Project Update: February 2016

August, September and October, 2015

Immediately after the approval of this project in August 2015, we started with planned activities. We ordered necessary equipment for project implementation: GPS (Garmin, Etrex 20), photo camera (Canon, PowerShot SX400IS) and photo traps (Bushnell, Trophy Cam HD). While waiting for ordered equipment to arrive, we organised preliminary field trips at our localities with the aim to find appropriate places to set up photo traps and wires for hair trapping. Furthermore, we have contacted local land managers, government and hunters with the aim to include them in our project and to get information on wolves' presence at our locations and information where to set up our photo traps. These first steps are very important for further research, because this is the first project based on wolf monitoring in Bosnia-Herzegovina and our aim is to conduct project at the best way as it is possible.

November, December and January, 2016

Considering the fact that, beside wolf monitoring, we genetically analyse them, we attended The 4th International Hunting and Game Management Symposium in Velenje, Slovenia (in November 2015), where we presented data about genetic diversity and population structure of grey wolf from Bosnia-Herzegovina and talked with experts from different parts of Europe who perform non-invasive sampling with the aim to exchange experiences about field work. Paper *Genetic variability and population structure of grey wolf (Canis lupus) from Bosnia-Herzegovina* will be published in the Balkan Journal of Wildlife Research.

We also participated in the 3rd Symposium of Biologists and Ecologists of Republic of Srpska (in November 2015), which was held at the Faculty of Science in Banja Luka, University of Banja Luka. We took this opportunity to present our project to students, government representatives, but also to researchers from Bosnia and neighboring countries, such as Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. For developing of good monitoring and management plan for grey wolves it is crucial to actively involve local communities, not just in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also in its surrounding countries, especially in countries which have protected its wolves such as Croatia and Slovenia.

The most important field activities we have performed in this period are:

1. Setting photo traps at the wolf transects.
2. Setting hair traps.
3. Finding signs of wolves' presence (paw prints, faeces, blood).

First we have set up photo traps at two locations (at wolf transects), Čemernica and Janj. At each location, with the help of hunters and local land managers, we have constructed feeding places for wild animals. These feeding places have been supplied twice a month or more often if it is necessary, and they are also under frequent monitoring in order to determine presence of wolves.

We have performed numerous field trips and have observed wolf traces, paw prints and faeces but we haven't had a visual contact with wolves yet. Having in mind all collected signs of wolf presence and based on information's we have received from hunters, we can conclude that at the location Janj two packs of grey wolf individuals are present, one pack with five and one pack with seven members, with two to three lone wolf individuals. These two packs don't cooperate with each other and they are completely separate. At the location Čemernica one pack of four adult wolf individuals has been existed, but two members (both females) were killed in December 2015. We didn't have success with hair trapping, but this was expected according experience of other researchers we talked to in Slovenia doing non-invasive sampling.

Also, we have set up photo traps at the third location, named Vlašić, and we will have more information's of wolves' presence in this territory very soon. During all this period we have conducted field trips at all our locations and together with local land managers have monitoring wolf population.

Very important fact is an excellent and successful cooperation with local land managers, government and hunters. They are ready to help, they have already helped and they will continue to help and support our work on wolves monitoring and protection.

The fact that is devastating is the number of animals killed in the last 3 months. Approximately 20 animals were killed in the small area that includes our locations too and that's not finally number. This number of killed individuals stress the importance of this project and importance of wolf protection at the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Statistic analyses (for the last 100 years) also show decline in wolf population from this territory and we are afraid that this decline trend has been continued.