

Project Update: April 2017

A survey of European ground squirrel (EGS) habitats has been conducted from June to October 2016. We had a lot of problems with bad weather conditions, but we succeeded to finish almost all filed work that we planned. From the 29 populations noted in literature we found only three which are still active (one on Stara Planina Mt, and two on Dukat Mt). Additionally, we checked another 19 new, potentially favourable sites and we have found three new small populations (one on Vlasina Plateau, two on Besna Kobila). Also, on two localities (Besna Kobila Mt and village Ploča) we found just a few single holes. In all cases area of occupied habitat patches was considerably smaller than the total area of potentially suitable habitat. During this field research, we also noted threats present on investigated localities, of which the most obvious have been lack of grazing followed by succession and frequent fires. Livestock grazing was observed just on three localities. All recorded EGS habitats have been in bad condition and improvement of habitat quality is necessary on all localities. We made contacted with managers of protected areas and discussed about future actions. Our results were presented on the 6th European Ground Squirrel Meeting that was held in Serbia, in November 2016 (<http://egs6th.bio.bg.ac.rs/>). Currently, we are in the final stage of making leaflets. Lectures are going to be held in next two months.



Left: EGS habitat - Dukat Mt. Right: EGS habitat – Stara Planina Mt



Active EGS burrow entrance



Left: Field investigation – Besna Kobila Mt. Right: Grass cutting on the EGS habitat - Vlasina Plateau