

Project Update: June 2018

We were quite busy in the first few months of my butterfly project! The activities officially started in April 2018 with meeting of the project team at my house in Zaječar. One of the activities was a Wikipedia marathon (co-financed by Serbian Wikimedia), that helped us to open new articles about butterfly species that live in Serbia. A total of 153 species are now covered in Wikipedia and articles can be accessed through the category „Dnevni leptiri Srbije“. The most important part of the meeting was to plan the field activities for *Zerynthia* sp. in more details, to designate target species that should be specially covered during this project and to agree on common methodology used in the field. Finally we made a short field trip in the vicinity of Zaječar to test this methodology in practice and to ensure that all of our team members understood project activities and aims.

Zerynthia cerisy and *Z. polyxena* field survey started just after the meeting, with a lot of people joining the study! We tried to cover only the areas where this species were not recorded previously, which resulted in amazing species distribution maps and great data about species ecology. To see what we achieved for only a few weeks of these butterfly flight period take a look at the maps in Biologer database:

<https://biologer.org/sr/groups/9/species/147>

<https://biologer.org/sr/groups/9/species/148>

As I mentioned, we agreed to pay more attention on several target species in order to get better insight into their distribution. The species that should be specially looked for include:

- *Euphydryas maturna* (in order to search for new sites)
- *Euphydryas aurinia* (also to search for new sites, especially in the lowlands where distinct and more threatened subspecies flies)
- *Melitaea brithomartis* (as this species is potentially new for Serbia)
- *Muschampia tessellum* (also potentially new for Serbia and should be searched for around Vidlič Mt.)
- *Erebia triaria* (also potentially new for Serbia, maybe on Mokra gora Mt.)
- *Colias myrmidone* (which is probably extinct from Serbia)
- *Colias caucasica* (in search for new sites in the mountainous areas)
- *Parnassius apollo* (with an accent on Eastern Serbia that were historically known but not visited in the last 40 years)
- *Leptidea morsei* (which is probably extinct in Serbia, but potential sites could be found in Fruška gora Mt. and close to Đerdap)
- *Lopinga achine* (potentially extinct in Serbia, may be found around Majdanpek or Vršac)
- *Carcharodus orientalis*, *Melitaea ornata*, *Pyrgus cinarae* (all recently discovered species, thus the distribution should be studied in more details)
- *Polyommatus escheri* (previously listed for Serbia by accident, but may be found in Jerma where its host plant was recorded)
- *Pseudophilotes bavius* (findings in the south of Kosovo should be checked, but it could be hard to achieve this)
- *Apatura metis* (in order to get better insight on its areal in Vojvodina region)
- *Erynnis marloyi*, *Hipparchia sentes*, *Pseudochazara anthelea*, *Tarucus balcanicus*... (which should be searched for in the south since this species are found in Mediterranean and could possibly reach our country)

After the Zerynthia surveys we started the quest for target butterflies and our success can be monitored daily on the maps in biologer.org. Among the interesting findings, we recorded *Euphydryas aurinia* at the very south of the country, close to the border with Macedonia. We had no luck with *Polyommatus escheri*, but found suitable habitats with abundant host plant used by this species. The same is true for *Muschampia tessellum*, which was recorded in Bulgaria only 30 km away from Serbian border on similar habitats.

Although there were not many surprises regarding the species recorded so far, we made a great progress on data collecting and already have nice new records for the target species. Biologer.org software and its Android OS application got many improvements over the past few months and the project is now co-financed by our colleagues from Croatian organisation Hyla. It is likely to grow beyond the boundaries of Serbia and to help gather distribution of many different taxa in the near history. In Serbia we got over 80 users in this short time period and more than 7000 data from the field!

Among other news, Marko Nikolić and several other recipients of the Rufford Small Grants have started a website on address wildbalkans.com. The idea is to share all our projects on one place, but this web page should grow in time to cover different kinds of projects oriented towards nature conservation in this part of the world. We also like to share beautiful pictures here in the gallery and to write some articles about nature photography. Although the idea is new and still available only in Serbian, we will try to translate this page to English as soon as possible and expect to receive great attention in the future.

Last but not the least, we got a new project logo drawn by my father, Aleksandar Popović, that should fit perfectly with my previous Rufford projects.

