

## INTERIM REPORT

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Define the presence and distribution of endangered species on Egrisi ridge and promote planning of appropriate conservation activities on the area

### *A brief summary of project status for June-August 2019:*

- *During the project implementation, we obtained the first photographic proof of our target species. Occurrence of endangered subspecies of Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra caucasica*) on Egrisi ridge was proved;*
- *We collected signs (pellets) of occurrence of globally endangered West Caucasian tur (*Capra caucasica*);*
- *Almost all of our camera-traps are already on the site; duration of trapping days has already extended 1000 trapping-days all over the site. Primary data will be available by end of the August 2019.*
- *Along with camera-placement, we mapped the signs of wild species occurrence on the site (pellets, tracks), we plan to continue sign mapping during the camera trap revision too.*
- *We contacted most of stakeholders, including the “ministry of environmental protection and agriculture” and informed them about our ongoing project.*
- *We are collecting information about threats on wildlife (including poaching, tree logging, etc.) from local residents and local NGO-s.*
- *To raise awareness about importance of Egrisi ridge wildlife, we launched a page on social media; Page has gained a popularity in recent months.*
- *Due to difficult accessibility to the camera-trap placement sites, we need to reorganize saved funds, to hire horses for longer duration, than was planned before.*

### **Fieldwork and first findings**

We began field study on May 2019. Most of the camera-traps are already on the site. During the next survey, in late August we will get primary camera trap recordings for about 1000 trapping days.

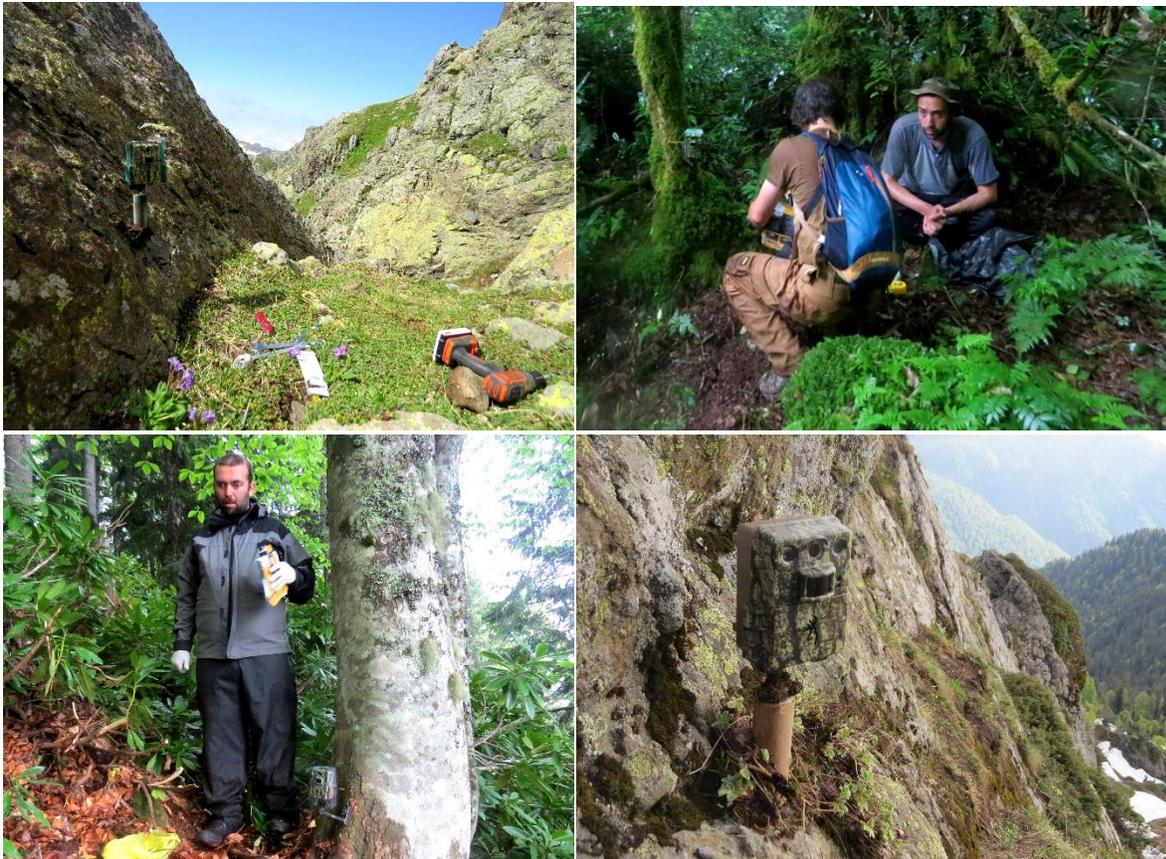
We are happy to announce that we obtained the first photo evidence of Caucasian chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra caucasica*) from the survey area; this is proving its presence and urgent need for protection.

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*Photo 1 Rupicapra rupicapra caucasica –The first photo evidences of the presence of chamois, from the Egrisi Ridge (June 2019).*

Along with camera-trap placement, we took opportunity to monitor and map signs of wild animals, including pellets, tracks, etc. Due to expert's opinions, one of our collected samples most likely belongs to the West Caucasian Tur. If this is confirmed – this will be the first direct evidence of tur presence on Egrisi ridge.



*Photo 2, (2, 3, 4, 5) Camera Trap installation, process*

Due to the especially snowy winter in 2018 camera-trap placement took longer than was planned and consequently, high snow cover was presented in spring-early summer 2019 too. Due inaccessibility of

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whole site in one expedition, we had to break down placement process in three stages (e.g. three expeditions). Eventually we managed to cover all of the survey area as planned before.



*Photo 3(6;7) Heading to placement areas, June 24*

Accordingly, we assume that we will need at least four expeditions for camera-trap revisions and removal.

## **Meetings with stakeholders**

We officially informed the “ministry of environmental protection and agriculture” of Georgia about ongoing project and announced our readiness to provide data needed for future protective measures at the site. They happily agreed. We had a meeting at the faculty of life science at the Ilia State University and agreed to exchange all needed data for future research of the site. We informed NGO NACRES (responsible for emerald network representative in Georgia on our project.) We plan future communication with these institutions.

To raise awareness about the importance of Egrisi ridge wildlife, we launched a page on Facebook. Page link: <https://www.facebook.com/Egrisiridge/>

We regularly update information on the site, including informational posts about wild species and the need of their protection. Page has gained popularity in recent months.



*Photo 4 with local residents from village Mukhuri*

## **Budgeting**

We already purchased all of the requested field equipment, including: camera-traps, mounting equipment, memory-cards and batteries.

We made some budget savings mostly caused by local tax breaks for scientific-research projects. In addition, we purchased the exact model of memory cards, cheaper than previously planned:

- Camera-traps: saving of 193 Pounds;
- Memory cards: saving of 430 pounds;
- Batteries: saving 112 of pounds;
- Total: 735 pounds.

On the other hand, due to hard accessibility of the survey area, we need more frequent and prolonged use of horses, so we ask for your permission to redirect saved budget for horse rental, for two reasons:

- For more effectiveness: as previously planned, we used horses to carry gear and camping equipment to alpine area and then hiked to different points. This approach took much more time, and led to less camera placement-per day. It is much faster and effective to visit camera placement places horseback.

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- For safety reasons: as there is no mobile phone coverage area or any settlement nearby the site (some points are away from settlements for about 15-20 kilometers), in case of emergency it's safer to have horse for faster access to mobile-phone coverage area or settlements.

We are ready to answer all additional questions about ongoing project and next planned activities. In addition, please, check: photos from the expedition, attached to the mail.

Best regards,

Khatia Basilashvili