Project Update: August 2020

We started our mowing experiment on a saline grassland near Kruševlje village in May 2020. This area has been recently proclaimed as a protected area "Gornja Mostonga", mostly thanks to its valuable saline habitats (two alkaline lakes, marshland and grassland areas). In one of its abandoned grassland fragments we set up our experiment when the vegetation was in its peak and the characteristic halophyte *Lepidium cartilagineum* (distributed only in the northernmost part of Serbia) was blooming. We mowed five experimental plots where the associations with this plant were present. Next to the mowed plots we also selected five unmown/ control plots. The first sampling was done in June 2020 and it will be done monthly until September 2020. Ambient data loggers (Fig. 1) are set in the field before every sampling occasion and microclimate parameters (temperature and humidity) are measured, while the sampling of true bugs is performed the next day.

It was interesting to observe how *Lepidium cartilagineum* recovered well in mowed plots and was blooming again in July 2020 compared to the control plots where the plant was fruiting (Fig. 4). This prolonged blooming phase in mowed plots might be beneficial for rare pollinators in saline grasslands, to keep them there for longer during the season.

A mowed plot in June.

An unmowed plot in June.

The experimental area in July with a mowed plot on the left and a control plot on the right.

Ambient data logger installed in the field.