

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Dimitrija Savić-Zdravković
Project Title	Hidden Corners of Serbia – bridging the gaps
Application ID	30561-2
Grant Amount	£6,000
Email Address	thedimitrija@gmail.com
Date of this Report	25 th February 2022



1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Phase I – objective 1. Obtain equipment, design and print the promotional material				All promotional material contains the Rufford Foundation logo, NGO Biological Society "Dr Sava Petrović" logo and logo of the project.
Phase I - objective 2. Organize a team building for the team members in Niš				Team building had to be organised partially in Niš, partially online, due to recommendations by The Ministry of Health to ban public gatherings indoors due to the COVID19 pandemic. This did not influence the planned agenda which included preparation of the team, planning of the project activities and inviting volunteers.
Phase I - objective 3. Organize a "mini conference "and a round table debate				Due to Covid19 restrictions it was not possible to organise the live conference at the beginning of the project, therefore we organised an online conference in 2021. As planned, we used this opportunity to exchange ideas and debate about improving the conservation management and planning, problems and obstacles in nature conservation. One of the main themes was overcoming collaboration issues. We tried to emphasise social ecology and local people involvement in nature conservation and had a short educational presentation about communication and interviewing by MSc Marko



		Nikolić. We used this occasion to consult about our project and video documentaries. One of the topics was choosing the right species and facts for the "wild interviews" series. Since the conference was postponed, during the beginning of the project we organised a series of online consultations with the experts and the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and lectures with MSc Marko Nikolić on this topic.
Phase II - objective 1.		Due to Covid19 restrictions the
Communication with participants: Organizing the movie creation team and contacting protected area managers and planning the visit together		communication with the protected area managers was impaired, therefore not all the activities were executed according to the time plan and had to be adjusted accordingly. Nevertheless, by the end of the project implementation we managed to finish all predicted tasks in collaboration with the relevant institutions and authorities.
Phase II - objective 2.		During this phase, we
Scenario preparation for "Hidden Serbia" feature-film and "Hidden Serbia -wild interviews" short film series		collaborated with several experts from different fields and decided to investigate two main themes in a feature length documentary: first the local inhabitants and stakeholders - focusing on people's attitudes and awareness about species and habitat conservation; and second, conversing with protected area managers and rangers - focusing on difficulties and practices in management of protected areas in Serbia, investment in education of the locals and collaboration with research. We decided the name of the documentary to be "Hidden Corners of Serbia -



		the complexity of nature conservation". The feature film is available in Serbian (aiming predominantly at individuals and institutions that are working on nature protection in Serbia), whilst the "wild interviews" series is available in English (aiming predominantly on young generations that are familiar with English, but also aiming at broad international audience). All documentaries have available subtitles in both languages.
Phase III - objective 1. Filming for "Hidden Serbia" feature-film, - Interviews with the local inhabitants, - Interviews with Protected Area managers		Video material was obtained according to consultations with experts from the Phase I and the scenario from the Phase II projects. Fieldwork activities were slightly postponed and started in June 2020(following all the regulations proposed by the Serbian Ministry of Health), then had to be stopped several times and continued during the spring/summer of 2021 due to Covid19 restrictions and health problems of the organising team. During these activities, not only did we film the material for our nature documentary, but we also gained invaluable insight in local peoples' attitudes towards nature conservation, management capacity in those areas and discussed potential difficulties and ideas for improvement with protected area managers.
Phase III - objective 2. Filming 20 important species for "Hidden Serbia - wild interviews" series.		With proper organisation and fieldtrip planning we managed to capture very important species on camera, including: Parnassius apollo – the apollo butterfly; Cordulegaster bidentata - sombre goldenring;



Testudo hermanni – Hermanns' tortoise; Emys orbicularis - European pond turtle; and Darevskia praticola – the meadow lizard.

We have to emphasise that, even though we filmed 20 species in total, as planned, two of the species we initially chose for our series were not filmed, Rosalia alpina - alpine longhorn beetle and Otis tarda - great bustard. Both species are very rarely found in nature and extremely hard to capture on camera, even with proper planning. (Take a look at their distribution in Serbia here: Below

The population of Otis tarda is very small in Serbia (nine to 11 specimens), who migrate during the year between the borders. Due to changes in the initial schedule of activities (due to COVID19 restrictions and health problems of team members) there was discrepancy with the peaks of activities of these species, and it was impossible to adequately record them.

https://biologer.org/sr/groups/33/species/18954 https://biologer.org/groups/30/species/13891

Phase IV - objective 1. Editing of the video material. "Hidden Serbia" feature-film - Combining the video material from the 1st project with the newly obtained video material into one documentary; and "Hidden Serbia wild interviews" 20 short films

In addition to the movies that planned were during the project, we managed to collect material for the production of additional promotional and educational multimedia content.

An example of this is an article about bat species of Serbia and their potential connection to COVID-19 was published at our website, after fieldwork and filming within "Resavska" cave protected area in collaboration with



chiropterologists Dr. Ivana Budinski and Branka Peiić: video material obtained durina this fieldwork was included in "Hidden Serbia" our which documentary series, emphasises the problems associated to human and wildlife conflict.

Additional examples are two feature length documentaries that we made about "Lalinačka slatina'' and pećina" "Cerianska Nature Monuments, that were officially premiered on 21st May 2021 at Cineplexx Srbija, the largest and most modern cinema in the south of Serbia, right before World Biodiversity Day. Besides the relevant institutions and stakeholders, the local people from our research sites visited the premiere as well. This was an excellent opportunity to discuss nature conservation with all relevant people in person.

We also decided to create one additional "Hidden Serbia" episode that highlights the examples of good management practices. This episode is intended both as a promotional and as educational tool for protected managers who area are struggling with issues of management in other parts of Serbia (we used this episode in the dissemination phase of the project and are using it in implementing а separate educational campaign for protected area workers).

http://hiddenserbia.com/slepi-misevi-stanari-pecina-ljubitelji-mraka/

https://www.juznevesti.com/Kultura/Premijerno-prikazani-filmovi-o-Lalinackoj-slatini-i-Cerjanskoj-pecini

https://magazinsana.rs/premijera-igrano-dokumentarnog-filma-lalinacka-slatina/



https://youtu.be/g9SSggRVFCQ						
Phase IV - objective 2. Examination of the created video material by The Institute of Nature Conservation and other authorities.		to Pr m ac ins po di lo oc be sh cc th	otection of Serbia and area anagers for examination, ocuracy check-up and spection, before public osting and further ssemination. This phase lasted inger than expected, since our documentary turned out to be almost 1 hour long, and nort "wild interview" series onsists of more than 20 videos at had to be examined by e authorities.			
Phase V - objective 1. Distribution of the videos to relevant institutions and media platforms		see for each put had provided the approved t	In of the videos have been and to the relevant institutions or their personal use and for ducational and promotional urposes but not all of them ave been uploaded to our roject's YouTube channel. It will publish video material or the YouTube platform according to the plan and rogramme of the promotional ampaign we planned at the reginning of the project. The ature film will be released in the ree episodes, to make it more opealing to a wider audience of watch, while a series of addition, we are applying to everal ecology and nature occumentary film festivals. The restriction of the film festivals have the policy of not allowing the oplicants to upload movies to allow the entire video aterial to YouTube for veryone to see. Our movies are already in the official election of two movie festivals,			



fest Belgrade Green Vrmdza fest, where we won a price for best ecological movie. Nevertheless, all videos are stored online. and are available at this link: Feature film: Below Wild interviews: Below We uploaded shorter trailer versions of both series of documentaries, and also decided to dedicate one part of our YouTube channel to the "behind the scenes" moments, in which we are describing the process of video documentary creation, emphasisina importance of nature documentary in conservation today, and how it looks like working with our team: now available at "Hidden Serbian adventures - The journey playlist: Below In addition, we have been posting sequences from our videos and created educational material that was published on Facebook and Instagram platforms distributed to local and regional TV stations. We are also planning on distributing our "wild interviews" series to schools in the vicinity of protected areas that we conducted our project at. https://greenfest.rs/en/short-mid-length-films/mid-length-film/ http://www.fcs.rs/dogadjaj/vrmdza-fest/ https://mega.nz/file/kiZjGATI#pensFu2sYooKT5cOaBnzNNlpusXS-VfMIT6iGF5_jEM_ https://mega.nz/folder/ozow3lgJ#3n5VUusoPQHNF3tpBWRAxQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPLvHmpQkb8&list=PLaCRdZP6DrsWvkJ3O0aM 0APFd8aZNKrlz Phase V - objective 2. We have constantly been Updatina the website, updating our project Instagram and Facebook Website: Below profile Instagram: Below Facebook: Below with important news about



conservation in Serbia and the region, as well as links to guest appearances of our team members on radio and television programmes.

Visitors to our website can inform themselves about the localities that our project team

localities that our project team visited, and learn about their legal protection status: Below Our website dedicated an entire category to reports from our fieldtrips, as well as useful information for nature lovers, travellers, adventurers and mountaineers of Serbia: Below

http://hiddenserbia.com/

https://www.instagram.com/hiddenserbia

https://www.facebook.com/hiddenserbia/

http://hiddenserbia.com/skriveni-uglovi/

http://hiddenserbia.com/category/putem-planinara/

Phase V - objective 3.

Presentation of the results and discussing the issues of communication in nature conservation and management at Science conferences and Festivals

We presented our results at several conferences: Society of Bioloaists, SIMPLAST, EkoBioMorfa as well as Festivals Nauk nije bauk, Researchers Night and Nisville Jazz Festival. Most of the presentations were held online due to COVID19 pandemic restrictions and even though this limits the important personal contact to audience, it might have actually led to broader visibility of our presentations, since some of them were broadcasted online for several days.

We participated in the Erasmus project (led by the primary school "Car Konstantin" Niš) where our team members educated primary school children from Serbia, Greece, Spain and Bulgaria about species of conservation our "wild concern usina interviews" series.



Phase V - objective 4. Final presentation at the "Deli" center in Niš Phase VI - objective 1. Writing of the final report	Since the restrictions of COVID19 pandemics were on, we took the opportunity to invite representatives of NGO (Serbian Rufford Small Grant recipients, members of biological society "Dr Sava Petrović" and other NGOs), academia (University of Niš, Kragujevac, Belgrade and Novi Sad), and institutions (Institute for nature Conservation of Serbia, protected area managers and other interested parties) for an online final presentation. We presented our project to the audience and discussed ways to bridge the gaps between present parties to have more efficient nature protection in our region. We also discussed the ways protected area management was influenced by COVID-19 pandemics
Phase VI - objective 2. Final administration	Financial records were held by NGO "Dr Sava Petrović" representatives (organisation receiving the funds).

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Due to unfortunate circumstances of COVID-19 coronavirus reaching a pandemic, the recommendations of the World Health Organisation and the authorities in Serbia, we had to postpone and reschedule some of the activities in our project (with the approval from The Rufford Foundation). Adding to this the fact that protected area managers were working on minimal capacity in the peak of the season, we postponed most of the fieldwork activities for several times. We took every opportunity when we had more time to plan and prepare project activities in more detail, but nevertheless this caused the prolongation of the project finalisation.

As in the previous project, getting in touch with protected area managers at some sites still represented a problem. This caused problems in filming and in field research schedule. We confirmed that in many research sites there is inadequate management of the protected natural areas and not enough investment in education. Few of the managers are completely uninterested in cooperation with



researchers and have lack of understanding for the importance of monitoring programmes that are necessary to be implemented.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- 1. Promoting awareness, education and active participation in nature conservation through video campaign: "Hidden Serbia" feature length documentary is representing the beautiful nature and wildlife of Serbia and focusing on the human aspect of nature conservation, social ecology and local people involvement in solving nature conservation and management issues. In addition to this feature film, "Hidden Serbia wild interviews" series of short fun facts documentaries had managed to motivate the audience learn about species inhabiting protected areas of Serbia, present on the IUCN Red List and protected by national and international legislation.
- 2. Strengthening networking between RSG grant recipients in Serbia helped in bridging the gaps. We started speaking out loud about the important problems in nature conservation and started working on overcoming the obstacles together. Furthermore, we improved direct communication between RSG grant recipients, representatives of NGO, academia, institutions, stakeholders and locals. This helped in addressing key conservation and management issues in small, protected areas in Serbia.
- 3. Improving mutual understanding between the locals and scientists and institutional representatives through direct communication. Providing educational video material about the small, protected areas and species that inhabit them rose awareness about the importance of conservation, threats the nature of Serbia encounters and ways to help mitigate those. Educated local inhabitants can further help change public perceptions and may therefore indirectly help towards conserving species and habitats.

4. What do you consider to be the most significant achievement of this work?

5. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

First and foremost, all the nature protected area managers were contacted at all 10 research sites and were aware of our project activities. At the end of the project, we provided them with all our video material from our "Hidden corners of Serbia" series. Many of local inhabitants were more than happy to take part in video creation. Most of the locals were interested in our project and some even participated in our online conference. Several local people (mostly nature activists) came to the premiere of our movies and participated in the discussion about protected area management. Local people who live in the areas we visited have contributed little to negative influences on species and habitats and to conservation of natural protected areas but are also the ones most adversely affected by it. Thorough the world indigenous people are in the worst position due their dependence on local biological diversity, ecosystem services and cultural landscapes. Indigenous people continue to be excluded from the decision and policymaking, which increases the



direct impacts of nature conservation planning on their livelihoods. The local peoples' knowledge about their lands provides a crucial foundation for community-based adaptation and mitigation actions on both nature conservation and area protection. Therefore, we believe that the local people involvement in our project is of crucial importance.

6. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. Serbia and the Balkans has a rising young researcher community which should try and collaborate more tightly in order to improve the status of protected areas and species in the region. We realised there has never been a systematic study of the problems and obstacles nature protected area managers face, therefore there is not sufficient data on the impact of those problems on law implementation and effective conservation and management in protected areas. We would like to explore these issues in detail to propose adequate measures to the authorities.

The way of communicating science has changed in this time of global pandemics, and involving multidisciplinary approaches is a necessity to overcome current obstacles. Video campaign is proving to be an invaluable tool in science communication which could be implemented in modern conservation strategies. Considering that most of the protected areas in Serbia do not get enough funding for promotional and educational activities, the video content created with this project is and will be a practical tool for conveying the idea of the importance of nature conservation.

During this project we visited few additional sites, protected natural areas that could be of potential concern for future projects. During this time, we talked to the managers of the "Stara Planina" (Balkan Mountains in Serbia) protected area, as one of the largest and most important biodiversity hotspots in the southeastern Serbia. The "Stara Planina" area was declared a nature park in 1997, as an area extremely valuable from the point of view of the diversity of flora and fauna and their communities, as well as geological, geomorphological and hydrological characteristics. The interviews with the managers are included in our feature film. "Hidden corners of Serbia" documentary series has moved and connected many people, not only did we bridge the gaps but we created new pathways of collaboration. In this time of crisis and online communication, multimedia is a crucial and substantial key to nature conservation. We will continue using all our capacities, gained knowledge and skills, to conserve nature the best way we can.

7. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

Our entire project is about sharing, educating and spreading the word!

The social media profiles and website of the project that have been created for the first project have been active thorough this project and are constantly updated with new information. Our YouTube channel is updated with new documentaries.

We have established collaboration with several media representatives; therefore, our activities have been shared to their platforms as well:



http://bddsp.org.rs/skriveni-uglovi-srbije/

https://www.svetnauke.org/19226-skriveni-uglovi-srbije-sacuvajmo-nase-vode-od-zaborava

http://www.zzps.rs/novo/index.php?jezik=_la&strana=vest&n=578

https://www.mixcloud.com/superradionis/coolminacija-2332019-najava-sata-za-planetu-biolo%C5%A1ko-dru%C5%A1tvo-dr-sava-petrovi%C4%87/

This story about our documentaries was largely covered by local media:

https://mediareform.rs/igrano-dokumentarni-film-na-lalinackoj-slatini-o-susretu-kralja-milana-i-naucnika-

<u>savepetrovica/?fbclid=lwAR1nJtNHb3u916xRr04R9jaC5MhKbqjPATnMh0antU05MD_B</u> <u>TXZ3gzDgym0</u>

http://hiddenserbia.com/o-skrivenim-uglovima-srbije-i-sp-lalinacka-slatina-u-medijima-video/

http://bddsp.org.rs/svecana-premijera-filma-lalinacka-slatina-u-sinepleksu/

Our activities led to establishment of firm cooperation of the NGO Biological Society "Dr Sava Petrović" with managers of several protected areas, and several NGOs, due to which our documentaries are used in educational and promotional purposes thorough Serbia. We are invited to speak about, or projects results at all of the research several times of the year.

8. Timescale: Over what period was the grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The grant was used over the period of February 2020 to June 2021, which was longer than anticipated. As we highlighted before, most of the changes in the project schedule were due to COVID19 crisis and inability to perform tasks at scheduled times. Personal circumstances (I had the fortune to get pregnant and had a baby at the end of the project) led to additional postponing of the final report submission.

9. Budget: Provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
1. I Phase – Equipment costs	1300	1383	+83	Equipment was more expensive than predicted (prices have changed vastly due to Covid19 pandemics and shortage of supplies)



2. I Phase - Promotional material design and printing costs	550	379	-171	We got the discount form the printing company. We redirected the remaining money to the bank account maintenance equipment purchase
3.1 Phase - Team building costs	50	47	-3	
4.1 Phase – Initial mini conference costs	650	163	-487	Since the mini conference was organised predominantly online, we used the funds to supplement additional fieldwork (item 5)
5.III Phase – Fieldwork expenses	2100	2457	+357	We had additional fieldwork due to several unpredicted changes in schedule, we used the remaining funds form the item 4 and 7 (we had 15 additional days of fieldwork for our team to achieve the planned goals of the project)
6. IV Phase - Montage of the final video material	450	437	-13	
7. V Phase - Dissemination - final presentation at "Deli" center	100		-100	The dissemination was organized online, so the remaining amount was distributed to items 6, 8 and 9 to supplement the shortages in the budget.
8. V Phase - Website, Facebook and Instagram profile hosting and maintenance	300	298	-2	
9. VI Phase - Management overheads/indirect costs/ final administration	500	558	+58	This item was more expensive than predicted, since we had to pay for the bank account maintenance, so we supplemented it form the item 7
TOTAL	6000	5722	-278	

NOTE: The total budget of GBP 6,000 was 03.03.2020. transferred to the organization's account in the amount of EUR 6,729.3. As in the Republic of Serbia the official currency is the Serbian dinar - RSD and in the territory of the Republic it is possible to pay only in that currency (for organizations and legal entities) the entire amount of 6,729.3 EUR we had to convert into RSD. After the conversion of the Euro into RSD, at the exchange rate of 1EUR = 117 RSD, we received the final amount of 787,328.1 RSD. At the time of creating the budget and applying for the project, 1 GBP was 137.351 RSD; it follows that 787,328.1 RSD / 137.351 (exchange rate GBP / RSD) =



5,732.23 GBP, which leads to a loss of 267.77 GBP (6000 GBP - 5,732.23 GBP) when converting money at current exchange rates. Therefore, we had to recalculate the amounts per item according to the percentage within the budget, we added the column entitled "Budgeted amount after conversion" to present the real amount per item that we got.

In addition to the total budget by The Rufford Foundation we had Terms and Conditions for filming budgeted by external source in the amount of 100 GBP.

10. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Our project implementation has made us realise several important issues in the management of protected areas in Serbia and in species conservation. We believe that the next steps should tackle those issues:

The lack of financial investment (predominantly governmental) leads to a neglect of many protected areas, especially if they have no commercial value and are not promoted as touristic sites. Most of the finances are dedicated to main infrastructure problems (which are still many), which leaves very little, or no funding for research work. This is predominantly true in the southeast of the country – it is important to investigate public policies in the field of environmental protection and try to establish needed investment in nature protection. Structured video campaign could help motivate potential investors and government representatives invest more in protested areas.

Many of the managers in protected areas are unqualified for the position (with very little or no education in natural sciences and conservation). Most of our research protected areas are under jurisdiction of public communal companies or tourist agencies that have lack of understanding for the importance of monitoring programmes that are necessary to be implemented – all nature protected area managers should undergo a series of educational trainings with a multimedia campaign that is focused on good practices in nature protection, for which our "Hidden Serbia" feature film can be of great service.

Many of the managers have a lack of communication with the scientific community (especially young researchers) and, even though open for collaboration, are unaware of the possibilities for research and conservation activities that could be undertaken within protected areas they manage – we started bridging the gaps between included parties, and this should be continued with a mandatory gathering of all important parties in nature conservation every year.

There is a necessity of implementing a systematic educational campaign of the "common people" - Most of the "attractive" sites have been overly visited by tourists for the past 2 years (which was influenced by COVID-19 pandemics and restrictions for international travel). This had both positive and negative impacts on the sites: hidden corners of Serbia are being revealed and appreciated more, but the lack of environmental education and improper manners in nature lead to many problems. The real impact of these factors is unknown, it is necessary to conduct research thoroughly to systematically solve these problems. It is necessary to examine how



much funds Nature Protection workers receive, how much they need, what are the sources of funds and how to use them in the most adequate way in the protection of these areas.

Nature protected area managers, the Institute for Nature protection and the Faculty of Science and Mathematics are supporting the idea of our project and we are currently planning future collaborations.

11. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The Rufford Foundation logo is present in the entire promotional material (leaflets, badges), as well as in all the nature documentaries, with a special mention in the credits of every movie. The foundation and the conservation grant the foundation provides have been presented at every promotional activity and dissemination we undertook. The foundation will be mentioned in every future documentary, conferences and festivals that we are to participate in.

12. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

MSc Marko Nikolić – sharing the experience of previous Rufford projects (RFSG grants - 18761-1, 22238-2, 26448-B and 34161-D) and knowledge on local folklore and peoples believes in conflict with nature protection and forming the interview schemes. Mr Nikolić provided additional expertise on nature documentary and nature photography making

PhD Miloš Popović – help in coordination throughout all the project activities sharing his knowledge of conservation strategies and good practices in collaboration with protected area managers. Mr Popović provided very interesting video material and expert advice both on scenario making and conveying conservation messages (leader of three previous RSG grants No 9495-1, 14884-2 and 24652-B and a referee for my 1st RSG project No 24565-1).

MSc Djordje Vukojević – coordination, fieldwork planning and visual identity of the project.

MFA Dunja Ćirić – giving artistic insight into the movie series creation and helping gain appeal and visually striking video campaign. Communication with experts in the field of art, taking care of the visual identity and presentation of the project aims and goals

Slobodan Marković – working with the volunteers, organizing promotional activities and helping in the field.

Marko Zdravković – helping in logistics, driving and cooking in the field. With his artistic background he was providing advice on video campaign implementation and led the strategic marketing.



We have to mention few important people that have made a valuable addition to or team along the way:

- The videos in our YouTube "The journey" playlist have been created in cooperation with Danica Popović, a student of Journalism, who joined our team as a volunteer and is creating video and written reports about our work. Having a journalist in our team brings a very different and important perspective to our research work.
- An entire category of reports form mountain areas of Serbia, useful information for nature lovers, travellers, adventurers and mountaineers of Serbia are written by Milica Blagojević for our project's websites.

13. Any other comments?

I would like to take the chance to thank The Rufford Foundation. I want you to know how much your support and understanding for conservation and research work helps young scientists, especially us women, and helps us continue working with the same passion despite all the obstacles!

We are looking forward to future collaboration with your foundation.