

## Project Update: July 2021

Since the beginning of our project, we did several promotional activities and organised the first fieldwork in June 2021. We designed a logo, printed promotional material and made Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages for the project. We organised several educational activities with students from the Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade, when we showed them how to handle and measure snakes, how to check for the presence of food, injuries, parasites and to examine the reproductive status of an animal. During these activities, they have learned how to collect data in the field and gained the knowledge required to join us in the next fieldwork on Mokra Gora.

During fieldwork, we planned to survey three localities – one from the literature and two new ones. The first thing that we have noticed is that the vegetation was not yet fully developed as it should be at this time of the year. People from locale village Draga and nearby town Tutin said that the weather was unstable, with the rise in temperature at the beginning of the year (February, March), and snow in late April. Along with slower vegetation growth, we noticed not so many Orthopterans, which are the meadow viper's primary prey. Sudden and drastic temperature fluctuations and scarcity in prey could affect meadow viper activity. However, after a thorough search, we found a shed skin and confirmed that meadow viper is still present at the locality where it was found some years ago.



At the same locality, we noticed a construction site, and our friend from mountaineer's society Beleg, told us that it is going to be a small mountaineer house. The increased visits and wandering around meadow viper habitat can cause pressure on this already fragile population. Another anthropogenic activity that can have a negative effect on this population is logging in the near proximity of this site.





As for the other two localities where we went, we found meadow viper at one, while at the other one the presence of viper was not confirmed. However, since there is a chance of finding it there, this whole area should be taken into consideration for legal protection. During our fieldwork, we also spoke with local people and some members of the mountaineering society Beleg about the importance of snakes and protecting flora and fauna found in this part of Serbia. They shared with us their knowledge and impression of the wildlife they are encountering, and we agreed that they will send us photos of snakes they find during hiking. This successful fieldwork is giving us hope that the meadow viper habitat can be protected and that people who spend time in nature will respect it and help in its protection.

