

## **Project Update June 2009**

### **Report of supplying the feeding places and functioning of the wolf traps**

All five feeding places for herbivores contain silos of corn, hangers for hay, salting and watering places. Feeding places are being supplied twice a month and more often if it is necessary. Occasionally we monitor feeding places in order to determine number and species of herbivores which are visiting feeding places. The most commonly used way to determine the species of herbivores which are present on feeding places is by tracking trails on the ground. That method confirmed the presence of wild boar and roe deer. We confirmed the presence of the bear on basis of faeces. Wolf traps are activated in places which are verified as fixed paths of wolf motion. The points for placing the traps are chosen based on tracking trails and analyzing wolf's scats nearby.

### **Report of using GPS and VHF necklaces for the telemetric tracking of animals**

We bought a GPS (Garmin: eTrex Vista HCx). As well as for orientation and navigation, the GPS will also actively be used during telemetric tracking of wolves to determine the exact position of the animal. Equipment for telemetric tracking of wolves was ordered and bought from a Mexican manufacturer Telenax, based on the recommendation of manufacturer Vectronic, that now only manufacture GPS equipment (a lot more expensive). We bought five necklaces (TFX.345C), one receiver (RX-TLNX) and one Yagi antenna. Necklaces have sensors for activity, inactivity or mortality. Unfortunately, it was impossible to include a position sensor.

The total territory which we are able to survey is approximately 350 to 400 km<sup>2</sup>. Theoretically, there could be 2 packs, „šumski“ i „brdski“ (“forestry” and “hilly”) on that territory. It is possible that there is a third pack called „poljski“ (“field pack”).

We chose that territory (TB forest-TB hills-TB Popovo field) for research, because of the ideal conditions for wolf's existence and survival (food, water and shelter). All three packs occasionally move from the monitored area to nearby areas with poor living conditions because there are no territorial wolf packs.

At the beginning of October 2008, we started visual monitoring of the pack's movement which we symbolically called “šumski” (“forestry pack”). Since there was no equipment for telemetric tracking, we didn't activate traps for catching animals, but we've tracked their movement through trails that they left behind (faeces, footprints, slaughtered animals, yowling, etc.). On several occasions we have had an opportunity to see them in numbers ranging from one to seven. Based on yowling there may be up to 10 animals.

Early in December 2008, we got the equipment for telemetric tracking of wolves.. We've instantly activated catching traps, one on the left side of Trebisnjica (river) which is the territory of the pack “šumski” (“forestry pack”), and the other on the right side of the river on the territory of the pack called “brdski” (“hilly”). The third trap is in the process of preparation. River Trebisnjica is recognized as border line between two packs.

By the end of December 2008 we caught a young female from “brdski” (“hilly”) pack, approximately 1 year old, in good health and heavy at around 21 kg. After we finished marking and processing, the female was returned to the wild and she soon rejoined the pack. Wolf scats found on the “brdski” (“hilly”) pack’s territory, which is near the feeding place for Griffon vulture under our care, are mostly white, which implies that they are regularly feeding on bones and skin from Griffon vulture’s feeding place.

In the middle of January 2009, there was an extremely close contact with wolves from “sumski” (“forestry”) pack. We probably came close to their gathering place and a den because adult animals started to attract attention. We then withdrew from that area, so that we didn't disturb animals during mating season and, off course, because of personal safety.

Unfortunately, at the end of February 2009, hunters organized a big wolf hunt and on that occasion 6 wolves from the “šumski” (“forestry”) pack were killed, including an alpha-male.

Since then, we have difficulties in tracking the pack “šumski” (or its possible remains). We are finding trails (scats, scrapings, etc.) but have had no visual contact. Probably, these are trails of wolvens from nearby packs who are taking advantage of “šumski” pack’s extermination so that they can wander through unprotected area.

The signal of the marked female (CLF01=Tara) from pack “brdski” is disappearing from time to time for unknown reasons. It’s possible that she leaves the pack occasionally seeking a new unexplored territory. Gladly, she is still alive.

The main purpose of this project is to improve the relations between men and wild animals, particularly wolves. The misuse of poison in dealing with wolves is a great problem in Herzegovina. It’s even more serious, because poisoning is excepted as the only way of dealing with wolves, while no one considers the consequences of the poisoning. We are aware that our work not easy, if we consider the history of animosity towards wolves for many decades.

We’ve done promotional material, organized conferences on issue of necessity of preserving wild animals etc, and we’ve started telemetric tracking of wolves, their habits and needs.

Conferences and public education are generally trying to make some order and regulate the area of governing and management of natural areas. Our contribution at present consists of maintaining and supplying the feeding places for all kinds of wild animals and reviving the disturbed natural balance. In the future we are planning to insist on signing and implementation of Conventions and Directives concerning biodiversity preservation, protecting habits and individual animal species. We expect, and are already working on a plan that the region of Bijela Gora in Orijen massif will, during the next year, get the status of protected area (National Park).

National Park status will make the work of organizations for nature protection and research a lot easier. Until recently, the only law which regulated this area was The Hunting Law, written and elected by hunters themselves, and the domain of protection and studying of

wild animals was absolutely ignored, even in theory. With reference to mentioned law, local hunting association have threatened us with penalty notification, because our studies and efforts on wolf protection are without their approval. They consider that our activities directly endanger their rights to kill. Luckily for us, our monthly efforts on awaking the public and conscience generally in the matter of necessary wild nature preservation, were blessed by entering into force of The Law of Animal Protection and Welfare. It brought relief to us only from a legal point of view. Still, hunter's hostility remains as our biggest problem.



Left: Wolf. Middle: Food for herbivores. Right: Trap.



Transport.



Left: Wild boar paw. Middle: Wolf paw. Right: Wolf scats.