

Project update: July 2024

The period since the last project update has been used to expand the network of protected area managers (PAMs) with whom we will carry out the survey, established in the previous phase of the project. The main purpose of this is to collect more information about the history of wildfires in protected areas (PAs) through surveys and conversations with PAMs and nature guards responsible for preserving the natural values of PAs. To establish cooperation with a greater number of PAs and to collect a greater set of concrete answers to the problems faced by PAs on a daily basis, we reached an agreement with the representatives of the umbrella Institution of nature conservation in Serbia - the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia. They were more than happy to provide us with their professional support in communication with PAMs, during the creation of the manual "Protected areas - Dealing with fires", as well as in the publication of the manual as the final product of the project.

Furthermore, we finished the implementation of the project item "Literature review" and we expect it to be available in the form of an online repository after the completion of the field work related activities.

As far as the "*Lycaena helle* research" item is concerned, 2024 was very successful. Weather conditions were far better compared to 2023 and we were able to almost fully complete the First phase: Mapping of individuals/populations of this project item. To be more precise, based on the knowledge of the ecology and habitat preferences of the species *Lycaena helle* by using the Google Earth programme we selected all potentially new localities for the species i.e. wetlands along mountain streams and conducted detailed research. During that phase, we found a new population for this species, with a stable number of individuals, and directly started implementing the second phase: Assessment of the relative species abundance. During the second phase of the project item "*Lycaena helle* research", we carried out marking study by using the Lincoln-Petersen Mark-Recapture method on all previously known populations that were not completed due to rough weather conditions in 2023, as well as on to the newly established population through research in 2024. And the results are promising!

Although the weather conditions were much better compared to the previous season, due to the scope of the field work and expected local rainfall, two more localities remained unexplored. Based on the map obtained from the Google Earth programme, these represent potential new population for the species. This work is necessary to be done during the next season to successfully complete the project item "*Lycaena helle* research".

Until next project update, following activities and timeline in project proposal, the plan is to complete an online repository, to finish the project item "Surveys and meetings with protected area managers" and to start creation of the manual "Protected areas - Dealing with fires" by the end of the October 2024.



Picture 3. Marked individual of the species Lycaena helle with the corresponding number during the implementation of project item "Lycaena helle research". Photo by: Milan Ilić



*Picture 4. Search for potentially new populations of the species *Lycaena helle* during the implementation of first phase of the project item "Lycaena helle research". Photo by: Marko Nikolić*