

Conservation of the European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) and Hermann's Tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in Montenegro

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Although the European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis* Linnaeus, 1758) and Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni* Gmelin, 1789) are both formally protected in Montenegro and hold international protection status, they face a range of threats. Correspondingly, the project aims to delineate the distribution range of *Emys orbicularis*, and to augment a DNA database of the species in Montenegro via the collection of DNA tissue samples. This database will be used to assist in matching confiscated, illegally-collected turtles with their populations of origin, prior to subsequent re-release, and also to identify the degree of threat to the wild population. The project also set out to map *Trachemys scripta* populations and to relocate individuals away from native habitats in order to protect autochthonous turtle species in Montenegro. During the project we collected information on distribution and threats at Virpazar (Bar municipality) and Nikšić. An additional 16 conservation activities were carried out, ranging from school presentations to university lectures, in order to enhance understanding and empathy towards turtles and tortoises. Despite extensive time spent surveying potential *Emys orbicularis* habitat in Nikšić, no sightings were registered. We also recorded zero presence of *Trachemys scripta* in either region. Fieldwork within the Bar municipality revealed six *E. orbicularis* localities near the village of Virpazar, indicating that the region is favourable to this species.

Key words: *Emys orbicularis*, *Testudo hermanni*, distribution, threats, Montenegro.
