



ČRNA GORA – REFERENČNA VREDNOST ZA NARAVO

Montenegro – a reference value for nature

Od skrajnega jugozahodnega roba Skadarskega jezera vodi kozja steza proti Poseljanom in naprej na Vir. Kmalu nad živahnim ribiškim trgom, Rijeko Crnojevića, se steza serpentinasto vzpne in pogled iz trnatega dračja na robu vse bolj strme poti hitro obvisi na ogromni previsni steni, imenovani Obodska greda. Vodnik male karavane se ob pogledu na veličastno skalnato gmoto spomni na dva nagačena orliča planinskega orla *Aquila chrysaëtus-fulva*, ki ju je prejšnje leto v Zagrebški muzej prinesel neki zbiralec, in ob paru velikih ujed, ki krožita za pol „puškomet“ predaleč, da bi se izplačalo nameriti karabinko vanju, pri sebi nekoliko presenečeno pomisli: „Še sta tu ...“ Piše se leto 1895, 21. junij je in na ta peklensko vroči dan se je Ludwig von Führer, mladi avanturist iz prestolnice avstroogrske monarhije, ki je študij veterine leto prej obesil na klin in se raje odpravil vznemirljivemu življenju zbiratelja ptic za potrebe cesarske zbirke Prirodoslovnega muzeja v Sarajevu naproti, napotil od Rijeke do Vira. 123 let kasneje, 28. 5. 2018, iz gnezda v Obodski steni zleti velika samica planinskega orla in v istem trenutku vsaj tri glave hkrati pomislimo: „Še je tu!“. Po več kot stoletju, potem ko je z njegovega latinskega imena odpadla vsa dodatna šara in je le še *Aquila chrysaetos*, potem ko se je svet tako korenito spremenil vsepovsod naokoli, je Rijeka Crnojevića še vedno mali trg in prav mogoče je, da šteje še manj ljudskih duš kot v času, ko se je tod potikal nabriti Avstrijec. A v prav isti steni, kjer sta prapradede in praprababica orlice, ki je ravnokar zaokrožila nad nami, neprosto voljno žrtvovala svoj zarod za potrebe znanosti neke druge vzvišene vrste v nekem drugem času, je še dandanašnji domovanje ene izmed najveličastnejših ptic naših krajev. Prav nič čudno ni, da se Črnogorci, kot tudi mnogi drugi narodi starega kontinenta, identificirajo s to mogočno ujedo. Ne le da je upodobljena na njihovi zastavi, prav istega orla upodablja tudi najbolj znani črnogorski ples, imenovan oro, torej orel. In nikakršna redkost ni še dandanes, da te prijatelj ali znanec naslovi z „De si orle?!“*. Še pogosteje se po drugi strani zgodi, da te naslovi z „De si sokole*?!“.

A prav tu se zgodba zaplete!

Konec leta 2016 se je začel eden najbolj vznemirljivih procesov sodobne črnogorske ornitologije. Z denarjem evropskih davkoplačevalcev se je ekipa mednarodnih in domačih strokovnjakov za ptice namenila narediti prvi korak na poti k opredelitvi omrežja Natura 2000 v Črni gori. Kakšna poslastica! Mala država podobno kot Slovenija leži na prepihu dveh biogeografskih regij, na majceni površini za pozornost kar tekmujejo visoke gore, strmi, marsikje še z obsežnimi pragozdnimi ostanki poraščeni bregovi, globoko vsekane soteske z bistrimi divjimi in popolnoma neukročenimi rekami, prvinsko Skadarsko jezero, največje na Balkanu, delta reke Bojane, Ulcinjске soline, raj za ptice selivke na jadranski selitveni poti, ostanki step ob glavnem mestu Podgorici in skoraj taka mozaična kulturna krajina, kot

*Kje si orel, sokol, golob!?!...

je je bil iz svojega doma na spodnjem Štajerskem pred več kot stoletjem vaju mentor mladega Führerja, kustos deželnega muzeja Bosne in Hercegovine v Sarajevu, Othmar Reiser. In pa zavest, da sta bila dva junaka tistega časa, ki v modernem ornitologu nehote budita nasprotujoča si čustva, na premnogh krajih v Črni gori ne le prva, temveč pred nami tudi zadnja raziskovalca ptic!

Brez lažne skromnosti lahko rečem, da sta naslednji dve leti minili v pravem viharju novih odkritij – odstirale se niso le majhne lokalne skrivnosti ptičjega sveta, vsi, ki smo imeli to izjemno srečo, da smo se znašli na straneh še nenapisane knjige črnogorskega ptičjega bogastva, smo se skoraj po vsakem terenskem dnevu počutili kot Alice v Čudežni deželi. Le kako naj ornitologu ne zastane dih, ko se v prelestnem jutru znajde sredi rastišča divjih petelinov, na katerem poje 14, pa nato drugega dne na drugem rastišču našteje 18, na tretjem 23 in na koncu 30 ali celo več petelinov?! Povprečno rastišče, ki smo ga obiskali v Črni gori, je imelo med 5 in 10 pojočih petelinov, toliko jih je v Sloveniji le na nekaj izbranih največjih rastiščih, največ 11. Rastišč s prek 20 petelini v Evropi zunaj Rusije skoraj ni, tisto s 30 pa je morda največje na tem delu celine.

Gozdovi Črne gore so marsikje ohranili ogromno elementov pragozda ali starodobnega gozda. Pogosto, predvsem na severu dežele, naletimo na obsežne sestoje starodavnih gozdov, zelo raznolikih po sestavi dreves: bukove, jelove, smrekove, črnega in rdečega bora, molike *Pinus peuce* in munike *P. heldreichii*. Suha stoječa debela in veje ter ogromno odpadle lesne mase, ki je ne vlačijo manično iz gozda, omogočajo obstoj popolne piramide organizmov in prav na vrhu slednje so detli in žolne. Ko smo v Sloveniji pred 15 leti resno razpravljali o referenčnih vrednostih populacij ključnih vrst ptic ter ugodnem ohranitvenem stanju habitatov, h kakršnemu naj bi težili v naši deželi, nismo poznali Črne gore. Če bi jo, bi si premnoge takajšnje gozdove brez dvoma vzeli za standard, za referenčno vrednost gozda z vrednostjo 1, 100%! Gostote tripstih, belohrbtih in srednjih detlov so 5-, 10-, 15-krat večje kot v Sloveniji! Pardon, Slovenija dosega 0,1 narave! Črna gora 1!

A gozdovi niso edini habitatni tip, po katerem bi v Črni gori Evropa morala iskati navdih in k čemur bi morala težiti. Na vseh črnogorskih rekah je le ena večja hidroelektrarna! Preostanek je skoraj poponoma divji, deviški. Smučišči sta na gorskih pašnikih le dve, kotorn je po drugi strani 3500 do 4000 parov, 10-krat toliko kot v primerljivi Sloveniji! Industrije skoraj ni, intenzivnega kmetijstva pa ta dežela z izjemo plantaž vinske trte v okolici prestolnice prav tako skoraj ne pozna. Poleg gozdov in mokrišč je morda prav kulturna krajina tisto najbolj izjemno, kar se je v Črni gori ohranilo skoraj nespremenjeno v primerjavi s prejšnjimi časi. Naturo 2000 bi tu lahko imenovali Natura 1900! In to z vsem vzvišenim in upravičenim ponosom do dejstva, da je narodu uspelo ohraniti nekaj v Evropi najredkejšega – tradicionalno poljedelstvo! V vsej deželi na vasi skoraj ne vidiš traktorja, namesto ostudnih plastičnih bal pa se na vsakem koraku bohotijo seneni stogi. In verjemite, niso jih naredili v čast obujanju starodavnih kmečkih opravil, kot to spodbujajo lokalna društva za ohranjanje podeželja v deželi na sončni strani Alp! Kljub geo-morfološki podobnosti in skupni nedavni zgodovini si Slovenija in Črna gora skoraj ne bi mogli biti manj podobni. Državljeni dežele s titulo svetovnih zmagovalcev po številu traktorjev *per*

capita si namreč težko predstavljamo, da je senena kopica sploh še nekaj funkcionalnega in da obstajajo kraji, kjer še vedno ogromen delež, tudi urbane, mladine znaten del poletja preživi ob „plastenju“, ročnem grabljenju in obračanju sena in izdelavi senenih stogov.

Tako ne preseneča, da je tudi populacija pisanih penic, črnočelih srakoperjev, vrtnih strnadov in smrdokaver nekajkrat do nekaj desetkrat večja kot v Sloveniji. Da, Črnogorci se imajo za ohranjeno kulturno krajino zahvaliti predvsem pomanjkanju in gospodarski nerazvitosti. A kaj bi sam – Ljubljčan in Barjanec – dal za malo manj „razvitosti“ po zahodno-evropsko! Za dan brez traktorja, gnojnice, umetnih gnojil, monsantove koruzne grdobije in koktejla pesticidov, balirane silaže ter „razvitih“ komasacij namesto mozaične kulturne krajine v srcu krajinskega parka (!) bi z veseljem odštel manjše bogastvo. Ali pa naredil to, kar pogosto naredim – stopil v najbolj povprečno črnogorsko vas sredi najbolj nezaščitenega dela države ter s polnimi pljuči in dušo vpiljak nekaj, kar se pri nas zdi tako daljna preteklost.

Seveda Črna gora ni Indija Koromandija! Kljub temu, da bomo za ptice na popolnoma neodvisnih znanstvenih osnovah opredelili 33 območij, ki naj bi pokrivala več kot 50 % ozemlja, ji grozi prav vse, kar temu svetu grozi v teh ponorelih časih – neštete hidroelektrarne, najbolj prvinski gozdovi predelani v pelete, ki jih kupujemo na naših bencinskih črpalkah, do konca pozidana obala, luksuzna letovišča na Skadarskem jezeru in Ulcinjskih solinah, nesmiselne prometnice in „razvoj“ podeželja, kot obljuba zahodne blaginje. A ta dežela je še vedno merska enota za naravo! Ornis balcanica – ornitološka biblija o raziskavah Reiserja in Führerja izpred več kot stoletja je še vedno skoraj moderni pregled, večina vsega omenjenega je še na svojem mestu, ne le orli, pač pa tudi prlivke, komatne tekice, vrtni strnadi, kotorne, kratkoprsti in laški škrjanci, kratkoprsti skobci, kodrasti pelikani, vse evropske čaplje in mnogo drugega. Praktično vse razen jastrebov in sokolov. Jastrebe – vse evropske vrste – so uničili pastirji, saj so se iznenada ustrašili, da jim bodo te velike ptice pojedle živino, sokole so malo kasneje iztrebili golobarji. V strahu, da jim ne bi polovili vseh plemenskih golobov visokoletačev, poškodujejo kakega slabšega letalca in mu na hrbet namažejo karbofuran, izjemno toksičen živčni strup in v vsej Evropi prepovedani pesticid. Sokol (selec in južni sokol) pa tudi kragulj ali skobec goloba v letu zgrabijo za zastrupljeni hrbet in skoraj v trenutku v mukah paralizirani poginejo. Natura 2000 v Črni gori tako ne bo imela niti enega samega območja opredeljenega za sokola selca ali južnega sokola, čeprav jih je bilo še pred desetletjem na desetine parov. A sokoli se bodo vrnili, morajo se! Ne bi imelo namreč smisla, da bi se Črnogorci od zdaj naprej pozdravljali z „De si golube?! ...*“.

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From the extreme south-western edge of Lake Skadar, a goat track leads towards Poseljani and further on to Vir. Soon after the lively fishing village of Rijeka Crnojevića, the winding track rises rapidly, and the view from the thorny brushwood on the edge of the increasingly steep track abruptly stops on a huge overhanging rock known as Obodska greda (Obod Rockwall) by the locals. Gazing at the majestic rock, the guide of our small caravan brings to mind two young stuffed Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaëtus-fulva*,

brought to the Zagreb Museum a year earlier by an unknown collector, and by looking at a pair of large raptors circling in the air a little too far to be worth aiming the musket at them ponders somewhat surprised: „They are still here ...” It is the year 1895, 21 June to be precise, when Ludwig von Führer, a young adventurer from the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy who a year earlier probably gave up studying veterinary studies for the sake of exciting life of bird collecting for the needs of the Natural History Museum in Sarajevo, set out on that hellish hot day from Rijeka Crnojevića to Vir. One hundred and twenty-three years later, on 29 May 2018, a large Golden Eagle female rises in the air from her nest in Obodska greda, and in the very same moment at least three human heads are struck by the thought: „She's still here!” After more than a century, when all that additional junk was discarded from the bird's Latin name, making it merely *Aquila chrysaetos*, and when the world changed so very radically around us, Rijeka Crnojevića is still a little village. And it is quite possible that it numbers even less human souls than in the days the cunning Austrian was roaming this part of the world. But the very same wall, where the great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother of the female Golden Eagle, which has just made a circle above us, unwillingly sacrificed their progeny for the needs of science of some other haughty species in some other time, is even in these days home to one of the most magnificent birds of this land. It is not strange at all that the Montenegrins identify themselves, the same as many other peoples on the old continent, with this mighty bird of prey. Not only that it is depicted on their national flag, the very same eagle is also portrayed by the best known Montenegrin dance called *oro*, meaning eagle in their language. And it is no rarity even today if a friend or acquaintance greets you with „Đe si, orle!*" or, even more often, „Đe si, sokole*!"

But it is right here where the story gets dizzyingly complicated!

The end of 2016 marked one of the most exciting processes of the modern Montenegrin ornithology. With the money of European tax-payers, a team of international and domestic bird experts set out to make the first step on the way to designate the Natura 2000 Network in Montenegro. What a treat! This little country lies, similarly as Slovenia, at the crossroad of two biogeographic regions. In this small area compete for attention the country's high mountains, steep banks that are in many places still overgrown with vast virgin forest remains, deeply cut canyons with clear, wild and utterly untamed rivers, pristine Lake Skadar, which is the largest lake in the Balkans, the Bojana River delta, Ulcinj salt pans (a true paradise for the birds migrating along their Adriatic Flyway), remains of steppes along Podgorica (the capital of Montenegro), and almost as mosaic cultural landscape as was experienced by Othmar Reiser, custodian in the Provincial Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina and mentor of the young Ludwig von Führer, from his home in Lower Styria more than a century ago. And the awareness that the two heroes of that time, who inadvertently wake up contradictory emotions in a modern ornithologist, were in numerous places in Montenegro not only the first but the last bird researchers before us as well!

*Nice to see you, eagle/falcon/pigeon!

Without false modesty I can say that the ensuing two years passed in maelstrom of new discoveries, unveiling not only little secrets of the world of birds but also the fact that all of us who had such incredible luck to find ourselves on the pages of still unwritten book of Montenegrin bird wealth felt like Alice in Wonderland after almost every field day. How could an ornithologist be not totally overwhelmed on a gorgeous morning when suddenly faced, in a lek, by 14 singing Capercaillies, when counting 18 on the second day in another lek, 23 on the third, and 30 or even more of them in the end?! An average lek found by us in Montenegro boasted between 5 and 10 singing males, the number that can be reached in Slovenia only in few selected leks, i.e. 10 at the most. There are virtually no leks with over 20 Capercaillies in Europe outside Russia, with the one hosting 30 males being perhaps the largest in this part of the continent.

In many places of Montenegro, forests retained numerous elements of virgin or ancient forests. Quite often, particularly in the northern part of the country, we come across vast stands of ancient forests that are very diverse in terms of their tree structure: beech, fir, spruce, Austrian and Scotch pine, Macedonian pine *Pinus peuce* and Bosnian pine *P. heldreichii*. The drystanding trees and branches as well as huge amounts of waste wood mass, which is not manically dragged out of the forests, allow for the existence of a perfect pyramid of organisms, with woodpeckers at its very top. Fifteen years ago, when we had a serious debate in Slovenia on reference values of populations of key bird species and on favourable conservation status of habitats, i.e. of the kind striven for in our country, we did not know Montenegro at all. If we did, we would no doubt have taken numerous forests of Montenegro as a standard, as a reference value of the forest with the value 1, 100%. The densities of the Three-toed, White-backed and Spotted Woodpeckers are 5, 10 and 15 times higher than in Slovenia! Sorry, but Slovenia is reaching 0.1 of nature, Montenegro no less than 1.0!

Forests, however, are not the only habitat type where Europe should look for aspiration in Montenegro and to which it should tend to. On all Montenegrin rivers, only one larger hydroelectric plant can be found! The rest is almost entirely wild and virgin. There are only two ski slopes on mountain pastures which, on the other hand, are home to 3,500-4,000 pairs of Rock Partridges, 10 times as many as in comparable Slovenia! Industry is almost non-existent and, additionally, the country is almost void of intensive agriculture with the exception of vineyard plantations in the vicinity of its capital city. Apart from forests and wetlands, it is perhaps the very cultural landscape that is most exceptional and has been preserved in Montenegro as almost unchanged in comparison with earlier times. Here, Natura 2000 could in fact be named Natura 1900! And this with all sublime and justified pride that this nation succeeded in preserving something that is the rarest in Europe – traditional farming. You see almost no tractors in any village, while instead of repulsive plastic wrapped bales hayracks stand proudly at every step. And, believe me, they were not made in honour of reviving the ancient farm work, as encouraged by the local societies for the preservation of countryside in Slovenia, popularly known as „the land on the sunny side of the Alps“! In spite of the geo-morphological similarity and common recent history, Slovenia and Montenegro could not differ less from each other than they do. Specifically,

the citizens of the country with the title of world champions in the number of tractors *per capita* can hardly imagine that a stack of hay is still something functional and that there are still places in the world where the great majority of youth, including urban youngsters, spend the major part of summer by manually raking and turning hay and making hay racks.

It is thus not surprising that the populations of Barred Warbler, Lesser Grey Shrike, Ortolan Bunting and Hoopoe are a few tens greater than in Slovenia. Indeed, the people of Montenegro should be thankful for their preserved cultural landscape largely to their paucity and economic underdevelopment. But what I myself – a citizen of Ljubljana and Ljubljansko barje – would give for a little less „development” Western European style! For a day without tractor, slurry, artificial fertilizers, Monsanto corn monstrosity and cocktails of pesticides, baled silage and „developed” commasations instead of mosaic cultural landscape in the heart of nature park (!) I would gladly give a small fortune. Or would do what I often do – visit a most average Montenegrin village in the middle of the most unprotected part of the country and absorb with full lungs and soul something that seems such a distant past in Slovenia.

Still, Montenegro is no Arcadia, of course! Even though we shall designate, on completely independent scientific grounds, 33 areas for birds that are to cover more than 50% of the Montenegrin territory, the country is threatened by everything that can be harmful to it in these deranged times – the countless hydroelectric plants, most pristine forests processed into pellets that can be bought even at petrol stations, totally built up coastline, luxury holiday resorts at Lake Skadar and Ulcinj salt pans, nonsensical roadways and „countryside development”, all this as a promise of western welfare. But this country is still a measurement unit for nature! *Ornis balcanica* – the ornithological bible for the research carried out by Reiser and Führer more than a century ago – is still almost a modern ornithological overview, for most of everything mentioned in it is still in place, not just eagles but Stone Curlews, Collared Pratincoles, Ortolan Buntings, Rock Partridges, Short-toad and Calandra Larks, Levant Sparrowhawks, Dalmatian Pelicans, all European herons and egrets and many other species as well. Practically all, except vultures and falcons. Vultures (all European species) were killed by shepherds who suddenly began to fear that these big birds could shortly start attacking their livestock, whereas falcons were just a little later exterminated by pigeon-keepers. In fear of pigeons hunting down all their high flying pigeons, they inflict damage on a weak flying pigeon and smear carbofuran (an exceptionally toxic nerve gas and in the whole of Europe prohibited pesticide) on its back. Falcon (Peregrine or Lanner) as well as Goshawk or Sparrowhawk grab the injured pigeon in flight by its poisoned back and paralyzed die almost instantly in severe pain. In Montenegro, Natura 2000 will thus have not a single area designated for the Peregrine Falcon, although there were tens of pairs of them still there no more than a decade ago. But the falcons will return, they'll simply have to! For there would be no point any longer for the Montenegrins greeting each other with the words: „De si, golube!*

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