

A Bold New Research Path to Controlling Dreissenids throughout Entire Water Bodies

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**January 22, 2020
Columbia River Basin Team Meeting
Portland, Oregon**

Project Funding Acknowledgement



Bold unconventional “outside the box” approach
for controlling dreissenids lake-wide

Dreissena polymorpha
ZEBRA MUSSEL



Flat

Dreissena rostriformis bugensis
QUAGGA MUSSEL



Convex

We envision a control approach that will work not only in small lakes.....



....but also even throughout the Great Lakes !!



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Yes, if our research is successful, its impact could be that huge



Did you ever wonder ...



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“Why aren’t lake associations across North America treating their lakes for Dreissena mussel control ?”

Did you ever wonder ...



“Why aren’t lake associations across North America treating their lakes for Dreissena mussel control ?”

Here’s why.....

Treating an entire large water body is currently:

- Too expensive

and/or

- Too environmentally degrading

Currently available control agents lack target specificity and kill far more than just the zebra or quagga mussels



To be **economically feasible** a control agent ideally must be:

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-- applied only in a small part of the water body



Our control agent will be applied to only a **small** part of a (not the entire) water body, resulting in significant savings

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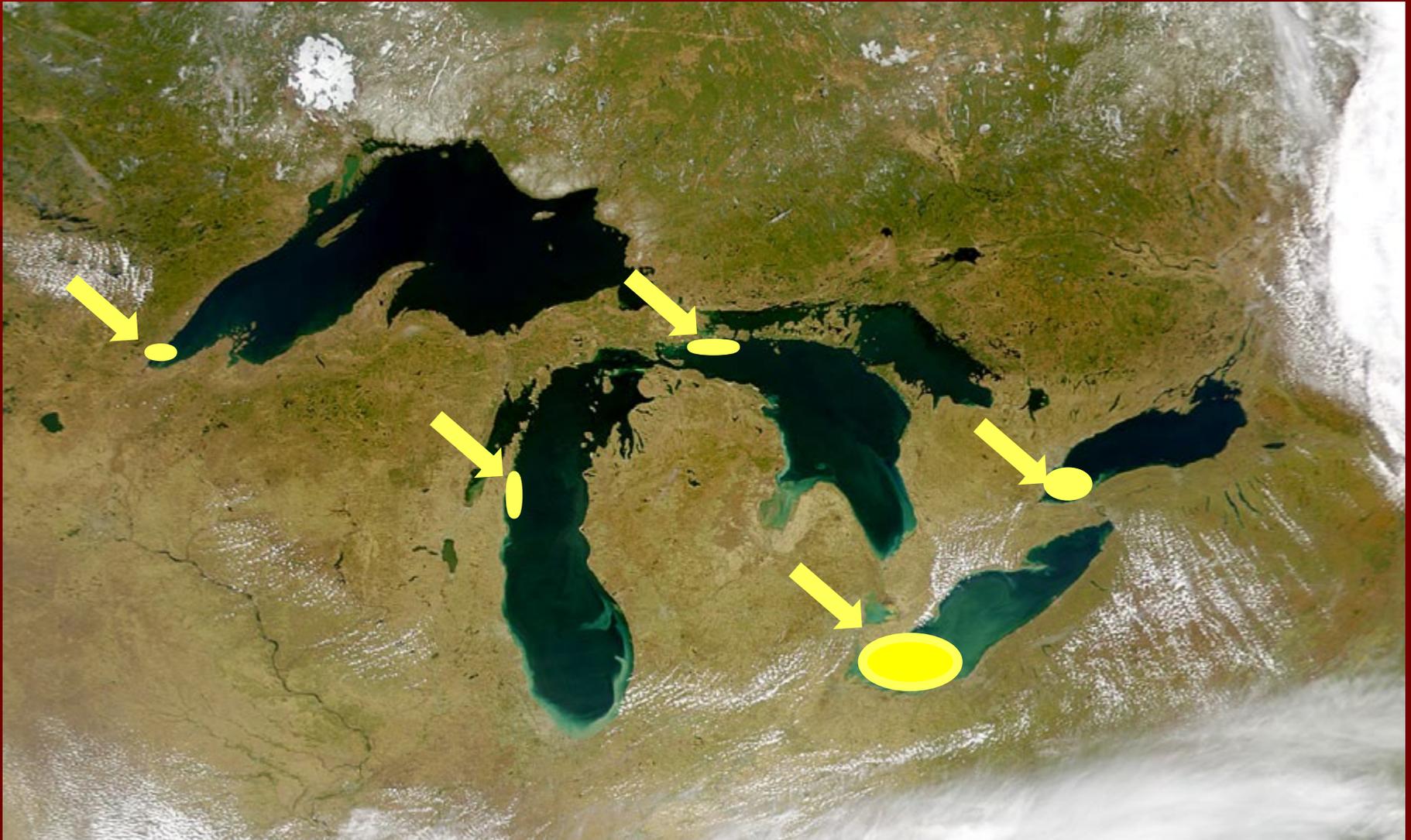
- applied only in a small part of the water body
- **self-perpetuating**



Our control agent will be **self-perpetuating** -- killing mussels from year to year and not requiring reapplications, resulting in significant savings

To be **economically feasible** a control agent ideally must be:

- applied only in a small part of the water body
- self-perpetuating
- self-spreading



Our control agent will be **self-spreading** -- killing mussels elsewhere throughout the lake on its own, resulting in significant savings

To be economically feasible a control agent ideally must be:

- applied only in a small part of the water body
- self-perpetuating
- self-spreading

Our control agent will be **LIVE** – the only kind of control agent capable of **self-perpetuating** and **self-spreading**

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- applied only in a small part of the water body
- self-perpetuating
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Our control agent will be **LIVE** – the only kind of control agent capable of **self-perpetuating** and **self-spreading**

Since it's **LIVE**, it's a **BIOCONTROL** agent...
.....but what kind of biocontrol agent...???

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.... because among all types of natural enemies,

parasites are the most host-specific killing agents

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.... and HOST-SPECIFICITY is the MOST IMPORTANT
characteristic of any candidate biocontrol agent

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But I am **confident** there is a parasite already existing in nature that could be this future biocontrol agent

But will we be able to **find** it?

That is our **greatest challenge** !

So where have we concentrated on looking to find this parasite.... this potentially extraordinary control agent?



Area in past that we have focused on looking for parasites in the same two *Dreissena* spp. as we have in North America:

- *D. polymorpha* (zebra)
- *D. rostriformis* (quagga)



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... and we have found a variety of **VERY HOST-SPECIFIC** parasites in zebra and quagga populations... but unfortunately none that are lethal (virulent) enough to be considered useful as a biocontrol agent



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- *D. polymorpha* (zebra)
- *D. rostriformis* (quagga)

... but in a way, this is not surprising. For example, the host-specific parasites we observed in *D. polymorpha* are likely to have been infecting them for millions of years, and such co-evolved parasites are typically not very virulent/lethal to their hosts – exactly what we found.

So here's the area we have now switched to... in our search for parasites.....

An area where “cousins” of zebra and quagga mussels (other *Dreissena* species) live...



A map of Europe and the Mediterranean region. A blue outline highlights a specific area in the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea region, encompassing parts of Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, and the Black Sea basin. The map shows major cities, countries, and bodies of water like the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, and Caspian Sea.

So here's the area we have now switched to... in our search for parasites.....

An area where “cousins” of zebra and quagga mussels (other *Dreissena* species) live...

... but why does looking at the parasites of “cousin” *Dreissena* species make sense?

Why might a parasite of a closely-related “cousin”
species.....

... be the ideal parasite we're looking for to control zebra
and quagga mussels?

... because a parasite of a “cousin” species
might be so “NOVEL” ...

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.....and zebra and quagga mussels
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.....and zebra and quagga mussels
might be so “NAÏVE” to it...

... that they can't fight off the parasite and it kills them

“Sorry, but getting killed by a parasite of a “cousin” species sounds hard to believe !!”

“Does this ever happen in nature?”

“Sorry, but getting killed by a parasite of a “cousin” species sounds hard to believe !!”

“Does this ever happen in nature?”

Yes, all the time !!

....and here are some examples of

“NOVEL” parasites killing off

“NAÏVE” species

What happened to American chestnut trees?



What happened to American chestnut trees?



A fungus from an Asian “cousin” chestnut tree eliminated this tree species from North America

What happened to elm trees?



What happened to elm trees?



A fungus from an Asian “cousin” elm tree has devastated North American elm populations

What happened to eastern oysters?



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...and guess what?

Up until the 1950s, eastern oyster populations were abundant and the industry thrived



Until a parasite killed 95% of these oysters
...and guess what?

That killer parasite was from a “cousin” species,
the Pacific oyster !!

So that's a few examples of "novel"
parasites from "cousins" killing off "naïve"
species

...and there are many other such "bad
news" examples as those I've given you !

But what if we took advantage of this novel-naïve phenomenon and used it to our advantage?



But what if we took advantage of this novel-naïve phenomenon and used it to our advantage?



What if we used it to control zebra and quagga mussels !





So here again is the area we have now switched to... in our search for parasites.....

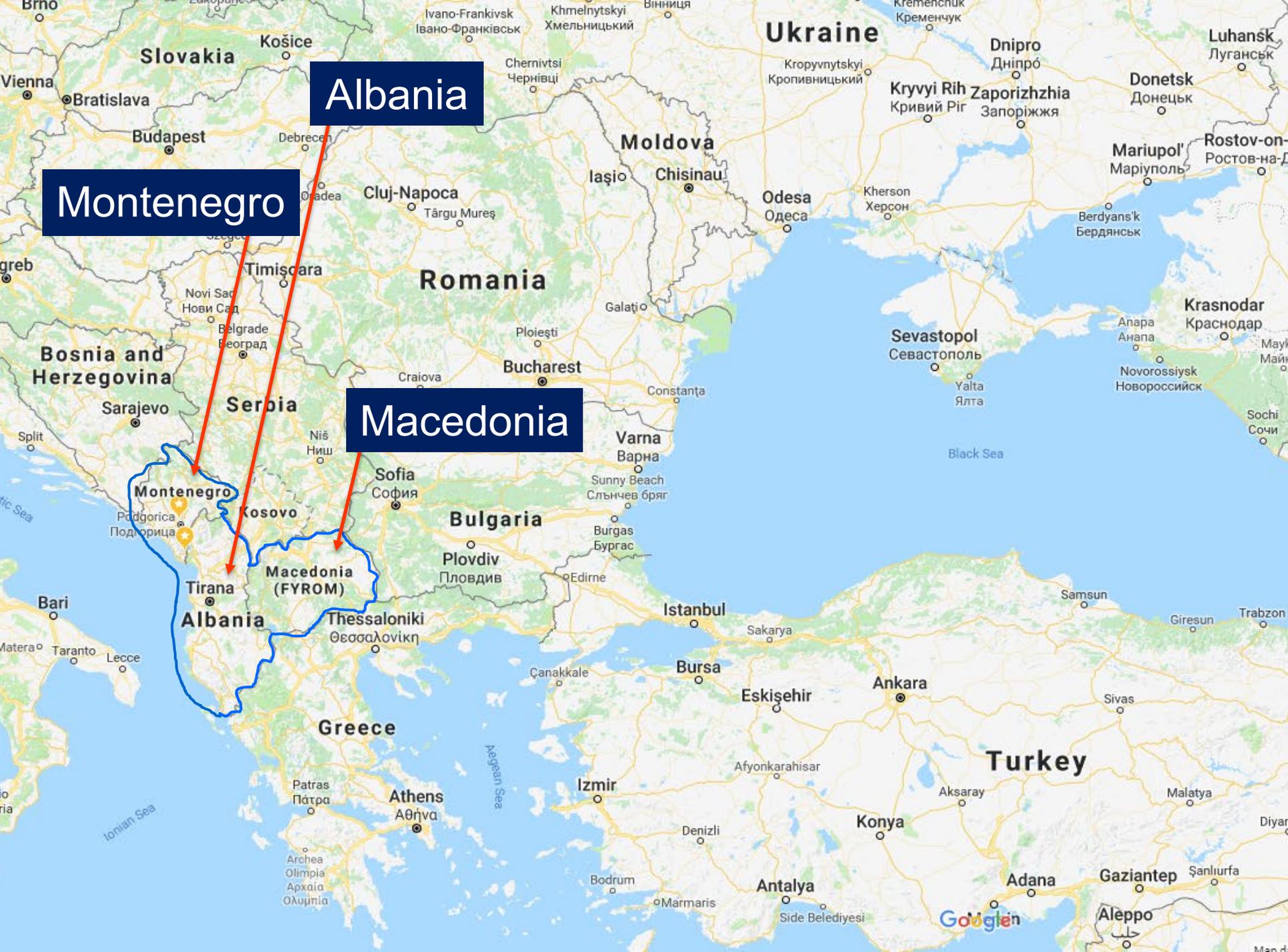
An area where “cousin” *Dreissena* species live...



So here again is the area we have now switched to... in our search for parasites.....

An area where “cousin” *Dreissena* species live...

... and in 2019 we concentrated on examining “cousin” species in the Balkans and Turkey



Albania

Montenegro

Macedonia

Balkans

Montenegro, Albania & Macedonia



Lake Ohrid
Macedonia/Albania

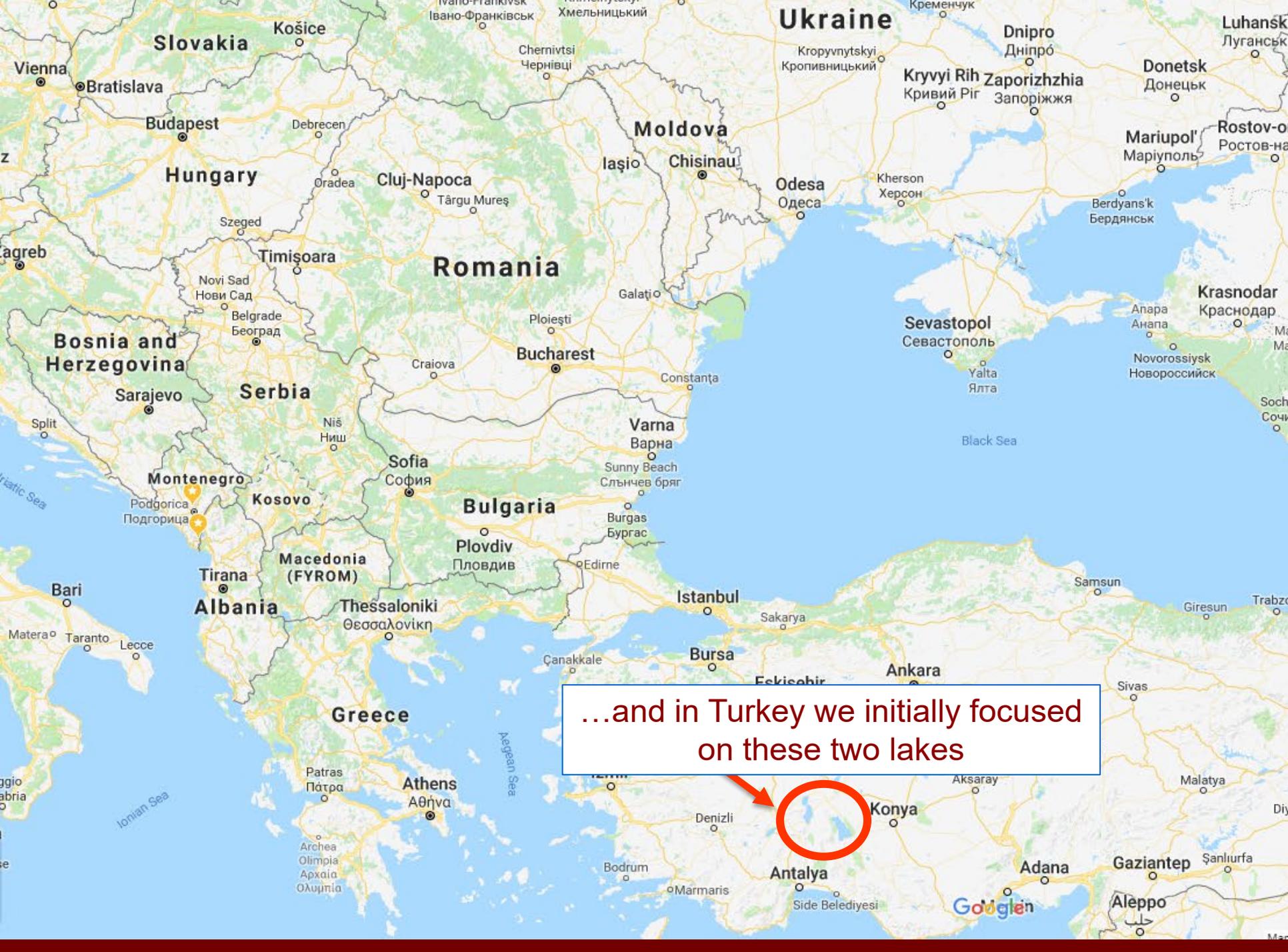


Skadar Lake
Montenegro/Albania

...and we have focused on examining the parasites of the only *Dreissena* species that is in these two lakes:

“Cousin” *Dreissena carinata*





...and in Turkey we initially focused on these two lakes





**Eğirdir Lake
&
Beyşehir Lake**

Turkey

Google

Turkey

Eğirdir Lake

“Cousin” *Dreissena anatolica*



Beyşehir Lake

“Cousin” *Dreissena anatolica*



Dr. Mehmet Zeki Yildirim –
The Turkish scientist
collaborating on this
project





Black Sea

Istanbul

Bursa

Sakarya

Eskişehir

Ankara

Samsun

Giresun

Trabzon

Rize

Batumi
ბათუმი

Sivas

Erzurum

Turkey

Afyonkarahisar

Denizli

Konya

Al

Malatya

Diyarbakır

Sii

Batman

Mardin

Antalya

Adana

Gaziantep

Şanlıurfa

Marmaris

Side Belediyesi

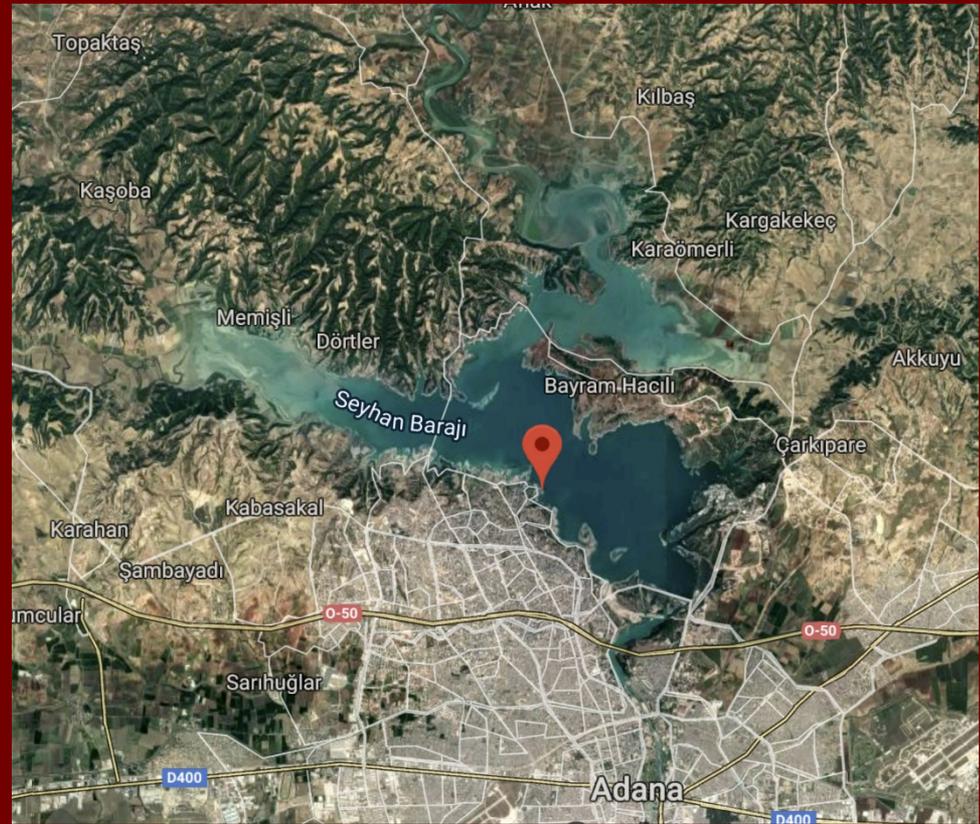
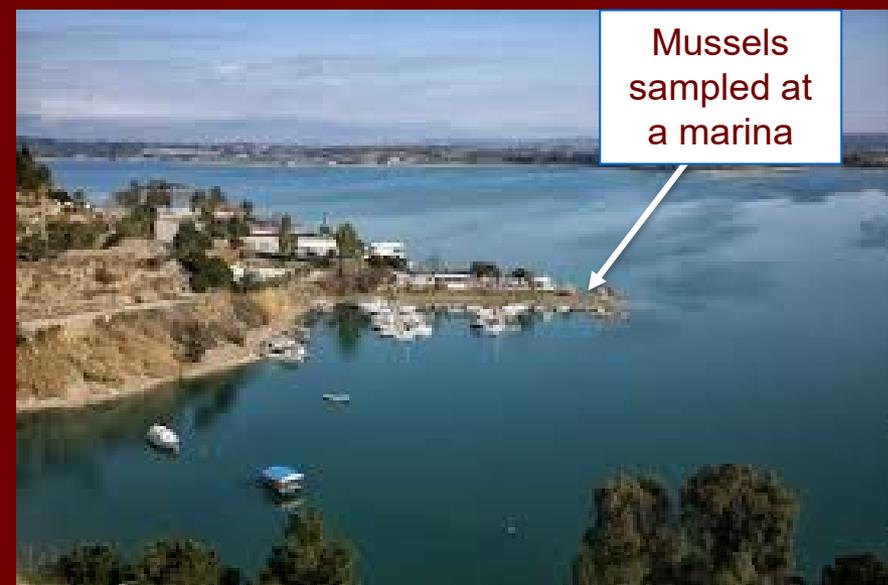
Google

Aleppo
حلب

Turkey

Seyhan Dam Reservoir at Adana

“Cousins” *Dreissena anatolica* and *Dreissena caputlacus*

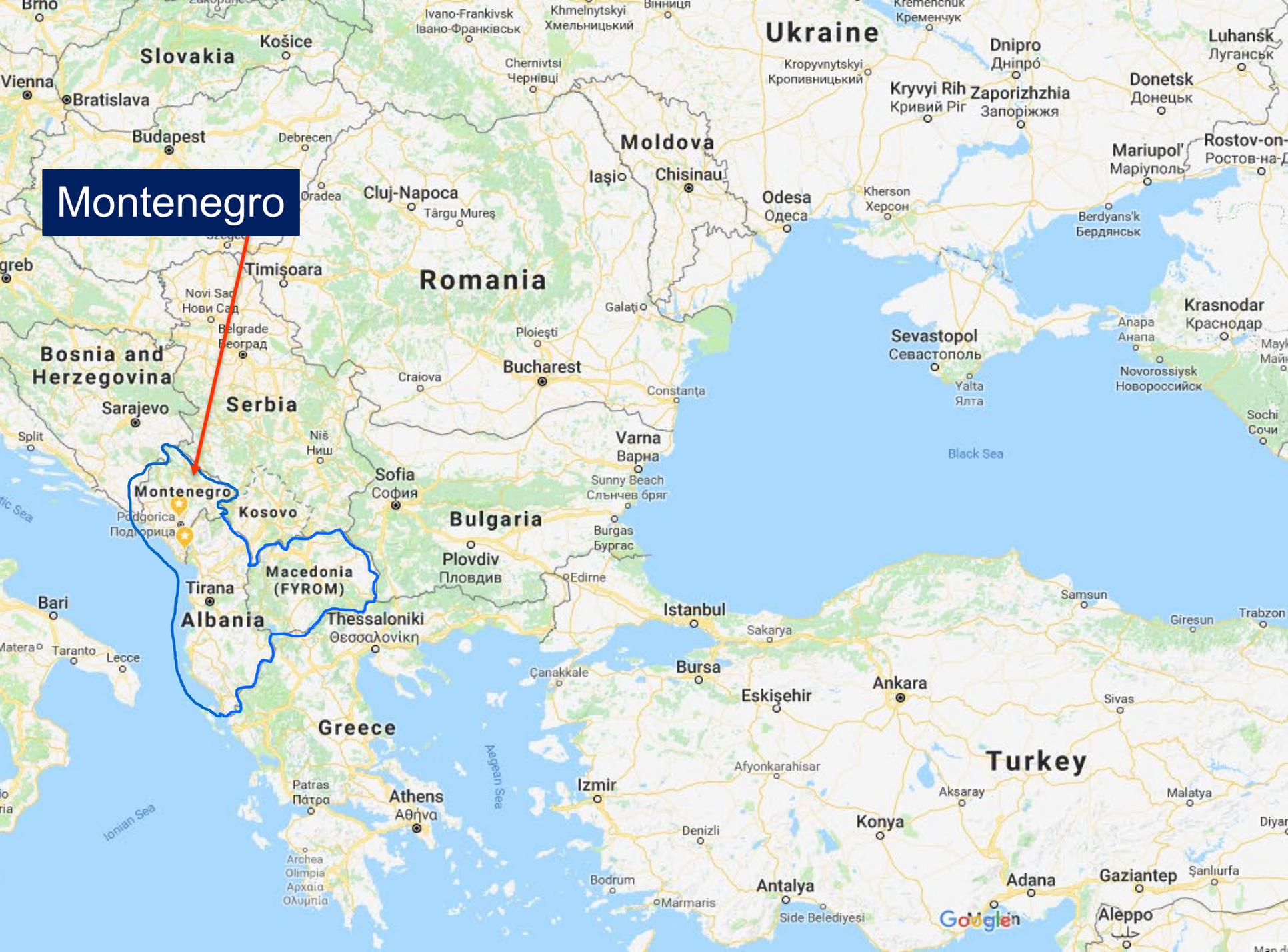


OK, we collected these Balkan and Turkish mussels...

But what did we do next with them?

We brought them back to our field lab in Montenegro....

Montenegro



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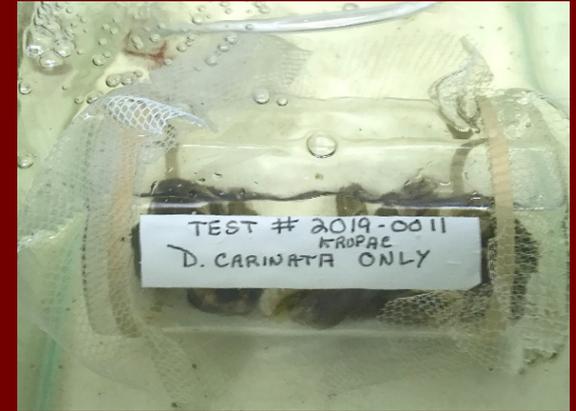


...and although it's a just a relatively small trailer,...

... it's packed with aquaria and other scientific equipment for rearing mussels & doing experiments...



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...with mussels held inside clear acrylic pipes in the aquaria

... and my research in the trailer is assisted by the following two key Montenegrin scientists...



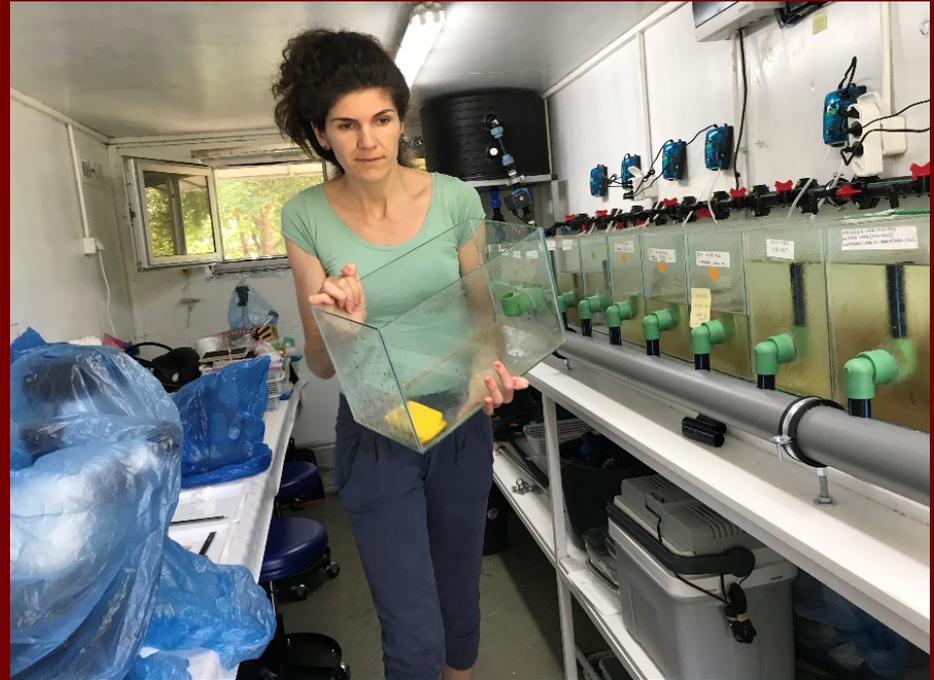
Fieldwork

Mihailo Jovićević

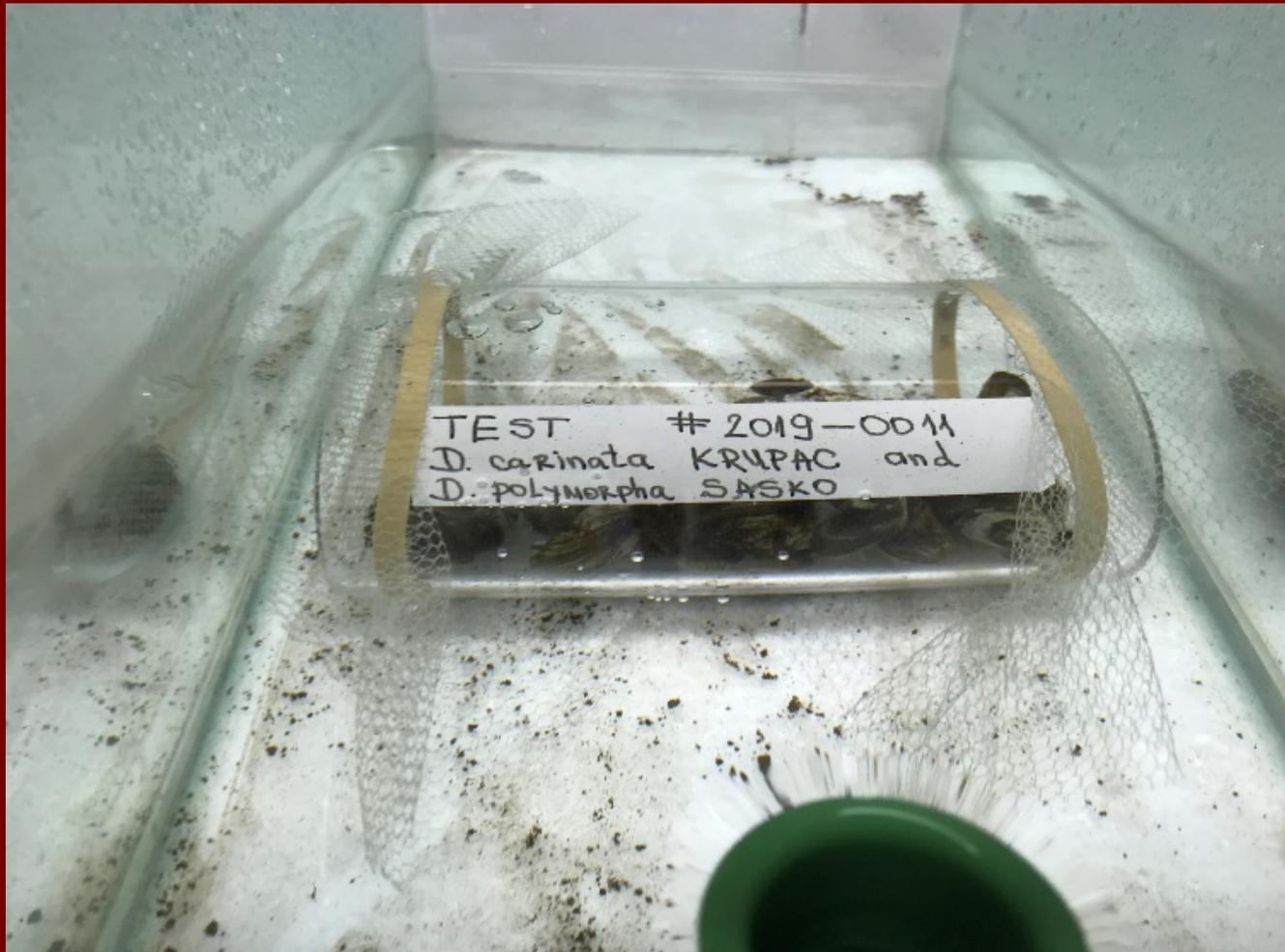


Labwork

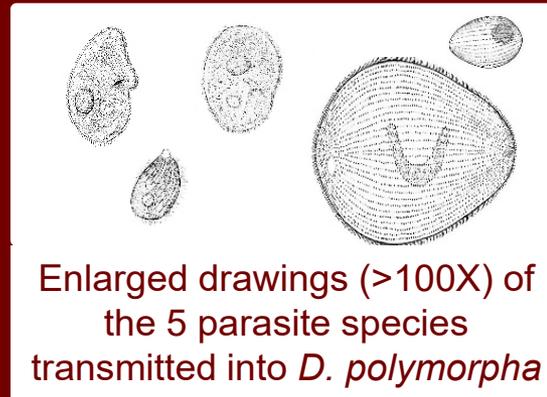
Milena Iković



....and in 2019 we started doing experiments in the research trailer trying to transmit parasites from “cousin” *D. carinata* into *D. polymorpha* -- to our knowledge, something never before ever attempted in science ...



...and these experiments succeeded in transmitting all 5 species of ciliate parasites present in “cousin” *D. carinata* into *D. polymorpha* -- a **major milestone achievement** for the project !!

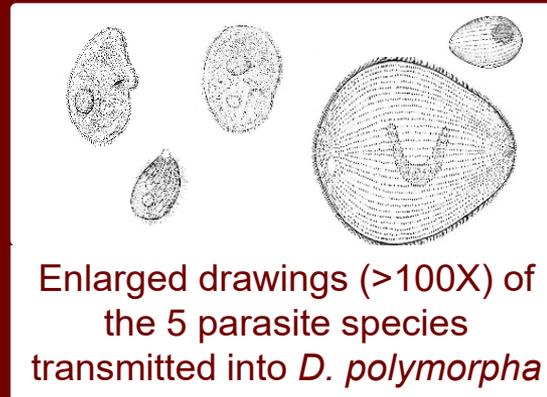


“Cousin” *D. carinata*



D. polymorpha

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“Cousin” *D. carinata*  *D. polymorpha*

But now **longer-term** experiments are critically needed to indicate if any of these 5 parasites are “novel” enough to actually kill *D. polymorpha*. To accomplish this, the research trailer needs to be kept operating **year round** (in 2019 we could afford to keep it open only May through September).

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 - Year-round collection-dissection of “cousin” *Dreissena* species in search for their most “novel” (i.e., lethal) parasites
 - Year-round conduct of long-term infection trials (against both zebra and quagga mussels) using “novel” parasites from “cousin” *Dreissena* species

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...and finallydon't be surprised if...

.... some "novel", inexpensive, environmentally-safe, **parasite discovered by this project** proves to be that above-mentioned **LIVE** control agent used throughout North America !!

International Team of Collaborating Scientists



NORTH
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Spase Shumka



ITALY
Sergei Fokin



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Jacque Keele



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Passamaneck



USA
Sherri Pucherelli



FINLAND
Jouni Taskinen



BULGARIA
Teodora Trichkova



TURKEY
Zeki Yildirim



FRANCE
Laure Giamberini

Special
thanks !!

Thank you very much for your attention!