

# Annual Report 2017

FOUNDATION CONSERVATION CARPATHIA

**What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.**

– Mahatma Gandhi



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# Foreword

by Barbara and Christoph Promberger

Another year has passed and Foundation Conservation Carpathia has done some major steps again in creating a new, world-class wilderness reserve in the Făgăraș Mountains of Romania.

Thinking what the three most important events have been throughout the last year, we believe it was the purchase of a property with over 1,000 ha of partially virgin forests in the South-central Făgăraș Mountains, the signature of a lease-contract of a second hunting concession in the lower Dâmbovița Valley, and the initiation of the wildlife hides in our project area. These three events showcase what our initiative stands for:

- Protection of forests
- Wildlife management, which puts the conservation of wildlife and the resolution of human-wildlife conflicts in the first place
- Development of a new, non-extractive economy for local communities

Yet, we have achieved so much more throughout 2017: replanting of over 400,000 saplings, begin of large-scale monitoring of wolves, bears, and lynx, the decision to start bison reintroduction, the development of a common strategy for protected areas with the federation of conservation NGOs in Romania, or the establishment of a discussion platform of the Romanian timber industry together with all relevant conservation NGOs.

For the development of the Făgăraș National Park, many steps are to be done. But the development of a good National Park needs its time. The great success of our friends and colleagues from Tompkins Conservation in Chile with establishing a series of new National Parks all across their country shows that such initiatives need a long staying power and must be able to raise a lot of funds in a variety of sectors. Doug Tompkins had purchased Pumalin 25 years before the Chilean government accepted it as a National Park.

Our promise is to continue to work hard for our common vision, to create Europe's most important National Park in the Făgăraș Mountains, to restore and protect the entire ecosystem and to help local people to have a better life.





A photograph of a dense forest. The foreground is covered in a thick layer of brown, fallen leaves and several large, horizontal logs. Tall, slender trees with light-colored bark stand vertically, reaching towards a canopy of green leaves. The word "Conservation" is written in white, serif font in the center-right of the image.

# Conservation



# Land purchase

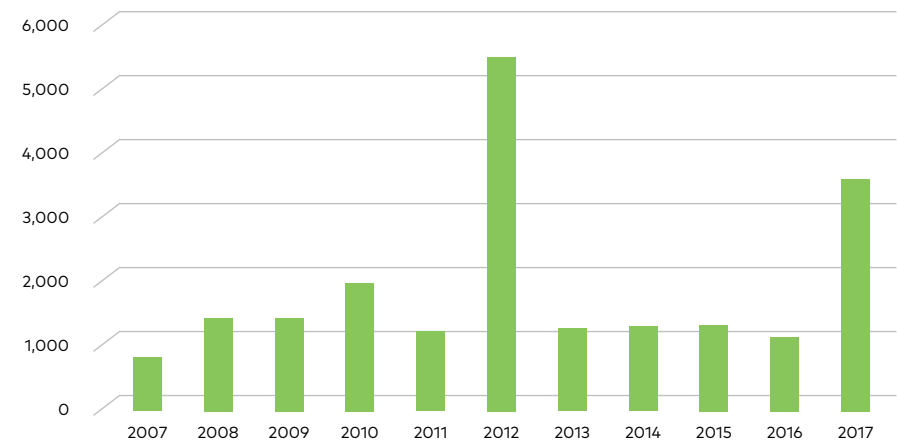
This last year was a good year for forest purchase as we managed to buy large properties both in the Făgăraș Mountains as in Leaota. In total, we managed to secure additionally almost 3,600 ha for full protection and reached a total of over 21,000 ha now.

This area comprises 969 different properties and we had to sign 466 different contracts with the private owners, that wanted to sell their forests for full conservation.

Average parcel size is 21,7 ha, but the actual variation goes from 213 m<sup>2</sup> to 1,957 ha per individual lot.



Forests purchased for full protection (ha)







# Forest watch and firewood crisis

**Conservation doesn't work without a functioning system of guarding the forests, which is provided by our CARPATHIA Forest Service and its rangers.**

In 2017, especially in the winter and autumn seasons, the forest watch activities were intensified because of the fire wood crisis that started in 2016. Around poor communities, especially those with a high percentage of Roma, the pressure on forests increased, as the prices for fire wood increased dramatically.

For this reason, we initiated a programme to provide fire wood for these disadvantaged parts of the local communities, and provide beech timber, which has accidentally fallen in areas close to communities/roads. In 2017, we provided a total of 303 m<sup>3</sup> beech wood directly to these people in the villages of our project area. Additionally, we subsidised fire wood for those members of the Rucăr land owners association, which have income below the subsistence level, with half of the dividends we receive from the economic activities of the association.

We try to help resolving some specific situations, but we cannot resolve the overall problems in the forest sector, which must be better organised towards a balance between the requirements of the local communities, the needs of the timber industry, and the needs of all of us of air, fresh water, stable soils, stable climate and all the other functions humanity depends on and which only forests can assure. Our main commitment is towards conservation.

In 2017, our forest engineers executed 26 thematic verifications on all forests administrated by the CARPATHIA Forest Service. The verifications aimed to identify all illegal removal of trees and any other aspects affecting the integrity of the forests: In total, 148 m<sup>3</sup> of timber were illegally cut in our forests. From this total amount, 22 m<sup>3</sup> of wood was found abandoned on the spot and confiscated, for 56 m<sup>3</sup> the thieves were identified and the wood was confiscated, and for 70 m<sup>3</sup> of wood the tree fellers remained unidentified and the material was not found.

Given a total of over 21,000 ha of forests, we consider the actual problems insignificant.







# Leaota Natura 2000 site

## Custody and Management Plan

**Leaota Natura 2000 site was established in 2011 and has a surface of 1,393 ha. The site is named after Leaota Mountain, which is situated between Bucegi Mountains Natural Park and Piatra Craiului National Park and represents an important corridor for large carnivores (bears, wolves, lynx) and herbivores (red deer, chamois).**

Being the custodian of the site, we have started the enforcement in the field of the activities included in the Management Plan and the Regulation of the protected area. These official documents, prepared with FCC's involvement, were approved by the Ministry of Environment in 2016. Based on the custody contract, we prepared and sent to the Ministry reports focused on our activities and the assessment of the conservation status of the protected area.

The activities we conducted this year include scientific research, biodiversity monitoring, patrolling and public awareness meetings.

Throughout 2017, we have started a monitoring programme in Leaota Natura 2000 site, focusing on identifying biodiversity trends and on assessing whether the management actions are successful. This will be a long-term biodiversity monitoring for the protected area, based mainly on biological indicators, focused on the specific management necessities.

Scientific monitoring of the alpine and subalpine meadows and dwarf shrubs is an important element of this programme. These habitats are still grazed by sheep and cows, but the grazing pressure decreased over the last years, and, according our data, livestock numbers are now according to the grazing capacity.

In 2017, we have assessed the present vegetation structure and species composition on 15 permanent monitoring plots. The data will be used as a state of reference for the conservation status of meadows and shrub habitats.

Through this regular scientific monitoring, we want to obtain a clear picture of the actual status and its trends in relation to biodiversity conservation and evaluate the effectiveness of activities on improving and maintaining the favourable conservation status of the protected habitats and species.

We have continued the dialogue with local communities for the implementation of the management plan and for the preparation or new projects proposals.





# Leaota Mountain

## Conservation and Restoration Plan

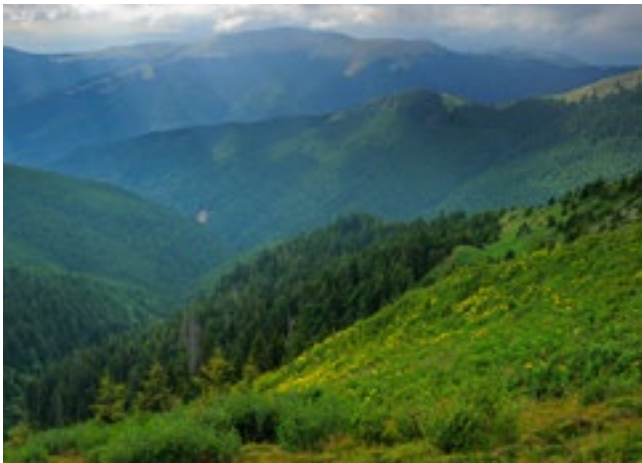
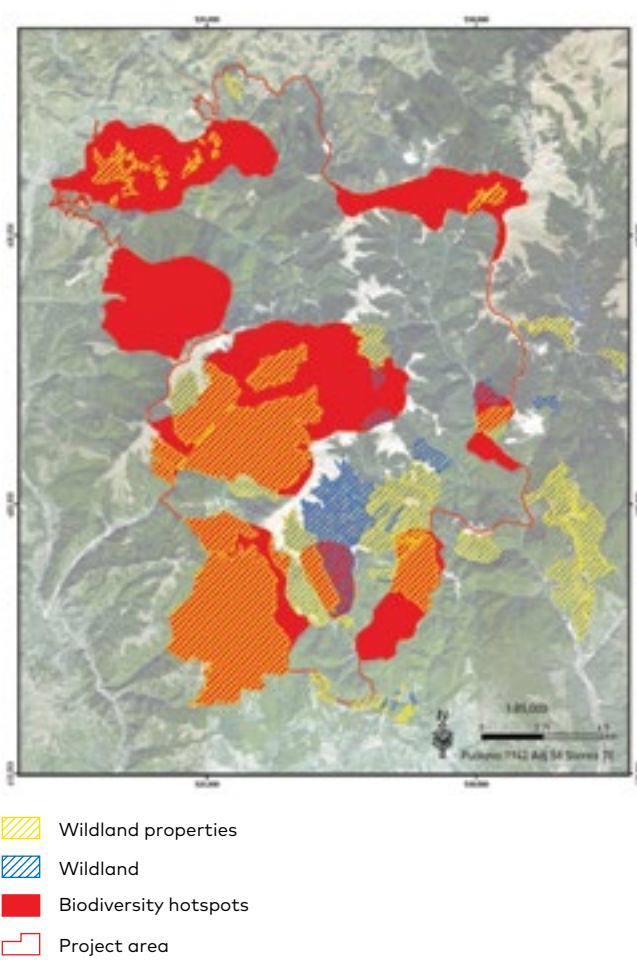
FCC finalised the preparation of the Conservation and Restoration Plan of Leaota area, based on the results of the biodiversity research activities conducted in 2016. The conservation plan was designed according to the CARPATHIA Masterplan, vision/mission and main objectives.

The conservation plan is focused on the properties of our partner organisations Wildland and Romfor and is designed for a 10-year period with regular adaptations according the conservation necessities.

The plan contains a description of the area, identification and quantification of the main threats, a preliminary evaluation of the conservation status of key/protected species and habitats, conservation measures to be enforced in the field and detailed GIS maps and annexes.

We also continued the scientific inventory of night raptors, early flowers, habitats and the assessment of the conservation status of virgin and semi virgin forests.

Biodiversity hotspots and Wildland properties in Leaota area





# Râul Târgului – Argeșel – Râușor Natura 2000 site

**Râul Târgului-Argeșel-Râușor Natura 2000 site is located on the southern part of Iezer-Păpușa Mountains and covers a total of 13,213 ha, stretched over 4 communes. More than 80% is covered with forests with the remaining surfaces being man-made grasslands.**

The area was designated Natura 2000 site due to its important natural value with vast beech forests, ecological corridors for large carnivores and herbivores, and also due to the occurring rare and protected species of fauna and flora .

Since 2014, FCC is custodian of this site. This responsibility involves research to evaluate the conservation status of the habitats, the inventory of species of community/national interest, the threats and opportunities, proposals for conservation measures and a dialogue with all the owners/authorities involved and overview of the current forest management, which is, in our opinion, too intensive. For a sustainable future, there is a need to establish proper conservation measures.

We have successfully submitted a project which was approved and started in July 2017.

During the first months of project implementation, we signed all the contracts to insure the smooth implementation of the project and started the first activities, such as communication about the project and inventory on the aquatic fauna. In spring 2018, we will continue with the scientific research of other species.

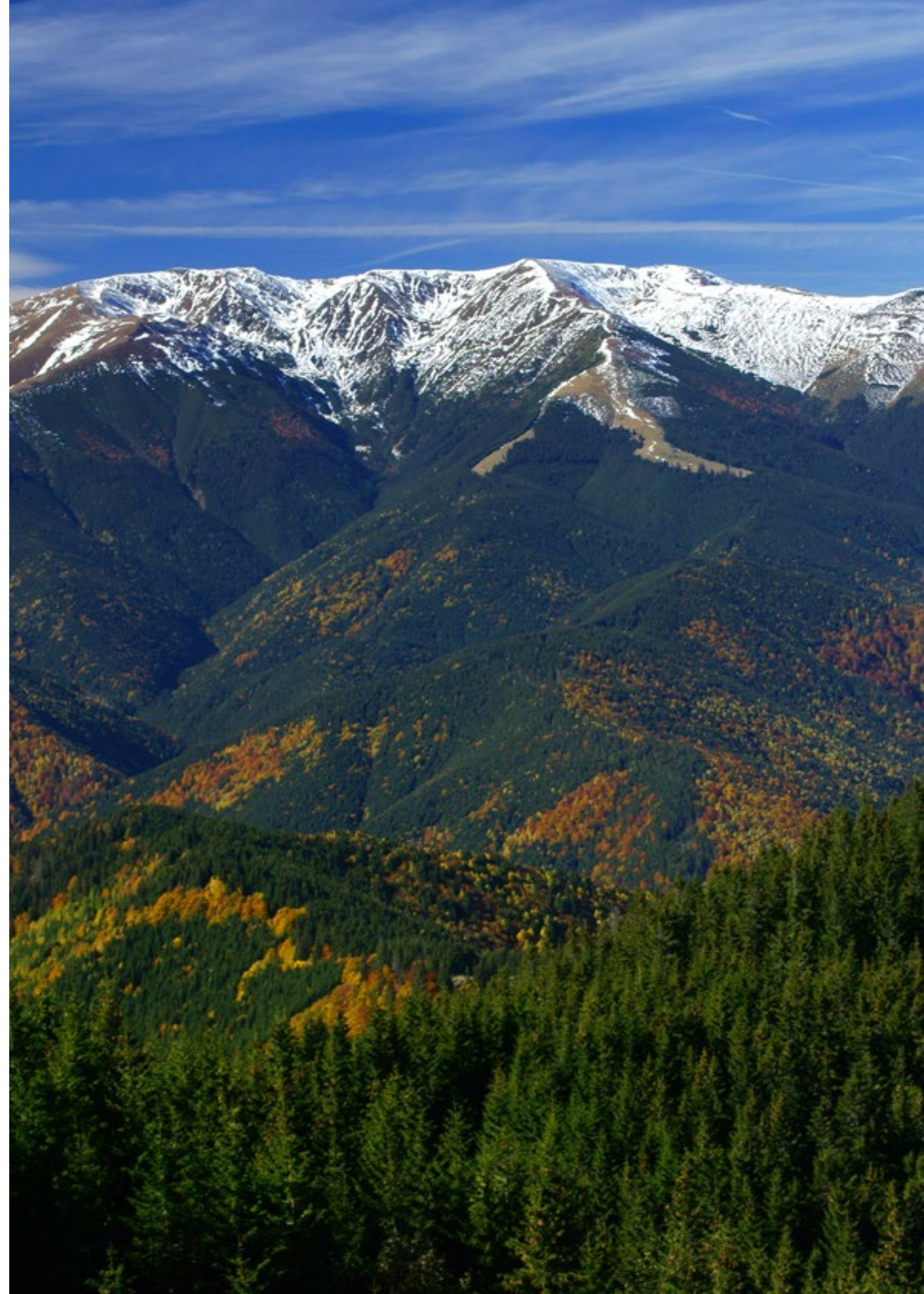
The project will be finalised in 2019 and will have as a main result the Management plan of Râul Târgului – Argeșel – Râușor Natura 2000 site ROSC10381.

## **455.500 €**

Financed by EU and State budget, through Large Infrastructure Operational Programme (POIM)

## **46.183 €**

FCC and project partners







# Făgăraș Mountains

**The unicity and huge biodiversity value of Făgăraș Mountains is undeniable. Important research was conducted in this area over the years, and yet, the Făgăraș Mountains have only the status of a Natura 2000 site. As wilderness and virgin areas are disappearing in Europe, Romania is still a country with lots of natural values and the potential of the Făgăraș Mountains to become the wildest and largest forest National Park in Europe is huge.**

Under the patronage of the Romanian Academy, with representatives of the Institute of Biology from Bucharest, we are preparing an international scientific conference focused on the importance of the Făgăraș Mountains. The conference is planned for December 10th and 11th, 2018 in Bucharest.

If you want to be part of the event, register at: [fagaras@ibiol.ro](mailto:fagaras@ibiol.ro) and [o.pop@carpathia.org](mailto:o.pop@carpathia.org).

In the meantime, we conduct our own studies and we have started a monitoring programme of the alpine and subalpine meadows owned by FCC. The objective of this scientific study is to identify the vegetation structure and species composition and to assess the vegetation changes following grazing abandonment on FCC owned pastures.

In 2107, we focused on the meadows in Cățunu, Tâmaș and Comisu by establishing 15 permanent monitoring sample plots, 5 on each meadow. These areas will be annually monitored to document the rewilding process following the removal of livestock.







# Ecological restoration





# Ecological restoration

FCC continues its promise made in 2012, when we first started to repair the illegal clear-cuts of the past. After the land and forest restitution in 2005, massive uncontrolled and illegal logging was the result. Until 2012, almost 2,000 ha have been clear-felled in the Dimbovita Valley. As the state doesn't enforce the law on these areas and nature needs a helping hand, we started to buy some of these clear cuts and replanted during these last years over 1.3 million saplings.

As in the years before, ecological restoration continued in two stages with spring and autumn replanting. In Dâmbovița Valley, we replanted 85,1 hectares. In autumn 2017, due to the short window for planting, caused by unstable weather conditions, we succeed to plant only 7,4 hectares.

In Leaota, we replanted a total of 18,5 ha of clear-cuts, previously purchased by Wildland.

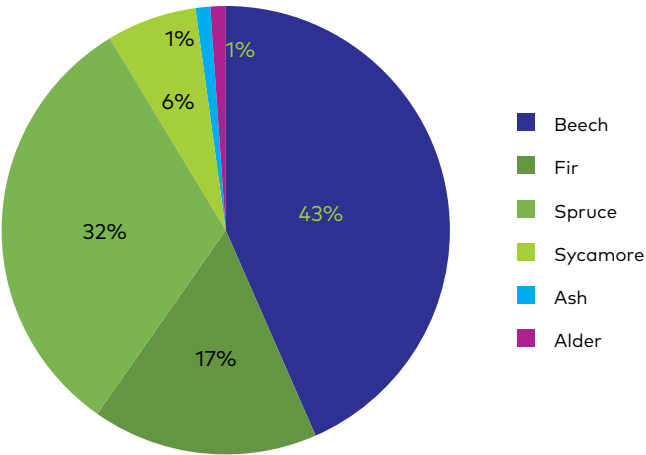
In the conversion areas of spruce monocultures, we planted a total of 11,400 beech and 2,500 fir saplings; 65% of these saplings were planted in Dâmbovița Valley and 35% in spruce monocultures in Lerești Valley.

The forest regeneration inventory continued in 2017 through transect evaluation.



Clear cuts planted in 2017

Species contribution in planting formulas





# Tree nurseries

To assure the success of our replanting in the long-term, we have grown over a third of the saplings in our own tree nurseries. Currently, we have 8 tree nurseries and 1 green house, financed by the EU LIFE+ project and a grant from the Oak Foundation.

In spring 2017, about 87,000 forest saplings of different species were extracted from the nurseries and used in for replanting. Additionally, 44,000 beech saplings and sycamore were extracted directly from the Carpathia forests.

By the end of 2017, we had in the various nurseries the following saplings:

- 122,000 fir saplings in different ages, 69,000 of them will be planted in spring 2018
- 120,000 spruce saplings, ready to be planted in 2018
- 8,000 sycamore saplings, ready to be planted in 2018
- 1,500 elm saplings, ready to be planted in 2018
- 3,400 alder saplings, ready to be planted in 2018

Work in the nurseries is seasonal and we work with teams of 10-12 women from the local communities. It is a process that takes over 2-5 years (depending on species) with seeding, annual maintenance, regular manual weeding (as we do not use chemicals).

Fir is the most sensitive of the species, as it needs shading and not being exposed in direct sun. Currently, fir is on a declining trend and FCC works to reinstall its place in the natural ecosystem, in our project area.

In autumn 2017, we had prepared 2/3 of our nurseries for seeding, but unfortunately there was no fructification at all for beech, sycamore and several other species, so we have to wait another year.





# Life+ Project

## Ecological Restoration of Forest and Aquatic Habitats in the Upper Dâmbovița Valley LIFE11/NAT/RO/823

## Results 2012- 2017



### 608 ha Virgin forests

In the LIFE+ project we have finished the fifth year and with few exceptions, activities are well underway and make good progress. Due to huge delays in obtaining the permissions for the proposed modifications on dams, we have requested this activity to be excluded from the project.

### 294 ha Semi-virgin forests

We have finished the identification and field verification of virgin and semi-virgin forests within the eastern corner of the Natura 2000 site Făgăraș Mountains and found a total of 608 ha of virgin forests and 294 ha of semi-virgin forests. Most of these areas have been introduced into the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests and will be protected as such in perpetuity.

### 21 km Erosion control

We have finalised in 2016 the erosion control works on skidding tracks and managed to excel our target by fully restoring and replanting the forest floor on more than 21 km. In 2017 we continued the verification of the work done in the previous years and it shows that the measures have been very successful: no ditches re-appeared and short vegetation has covered all restored areas.



### 100 people Workforce

### 1,250,000 saplings Replanted

### 400 ha clear-cuts Reforested

One of the biggest and most intense, but also most rewarding conservation activities within this project is the reforestation of the clear-cut areas. With the total work force of over 100 daily labourers, recruited from the neighbouring villages, we have managed to plant by now over 1,2 million saplings on a total of 400 ha of clear-cuts. Besides the more common, originally occurring tree species, such as beech, sycamore, fir, elm, and rowan, we have also managed to reintroduce the European yew.





**In addition, our team restored a total of 23 km of alder galleries, which is a priority habitat of the EU habitats directive.**

In order to avoid overgrowth of grass and consequent problems of being pressed down by the snow we continue annually to cut the dense, high grasses around the saplings to protect them until they are taller than the grass.





# Results 2012- 2017

## 346 ha Spruce conversion

FCC has also started to intervene in the artificial spruce monocultures purchased within this project, predominantly in the Lerești Valley. By cutting spruce we have created space and light for broadleaves and fir trees.

For all our conservation activities we have a sound monitoring system in place, including yearly surveys of indicator species such as woodpeckers, hazel grouse, or European otter, vegetation surveys and regeneration monitoring.

In order to keep the public informed about FCC's restoration work and to increase exchange of experiences, we have organised several meetings of a Consultative Committee, field excursions, workshops with different interest groups, including representatives of Romanian National and Natural Parks, journalists, conservationists, visits with delegations of the Ministry of Environment and environmental education programmes with children from local communities.

As well, we have celebrated with our colleagues all over Europe 25 years of LIFE projects:

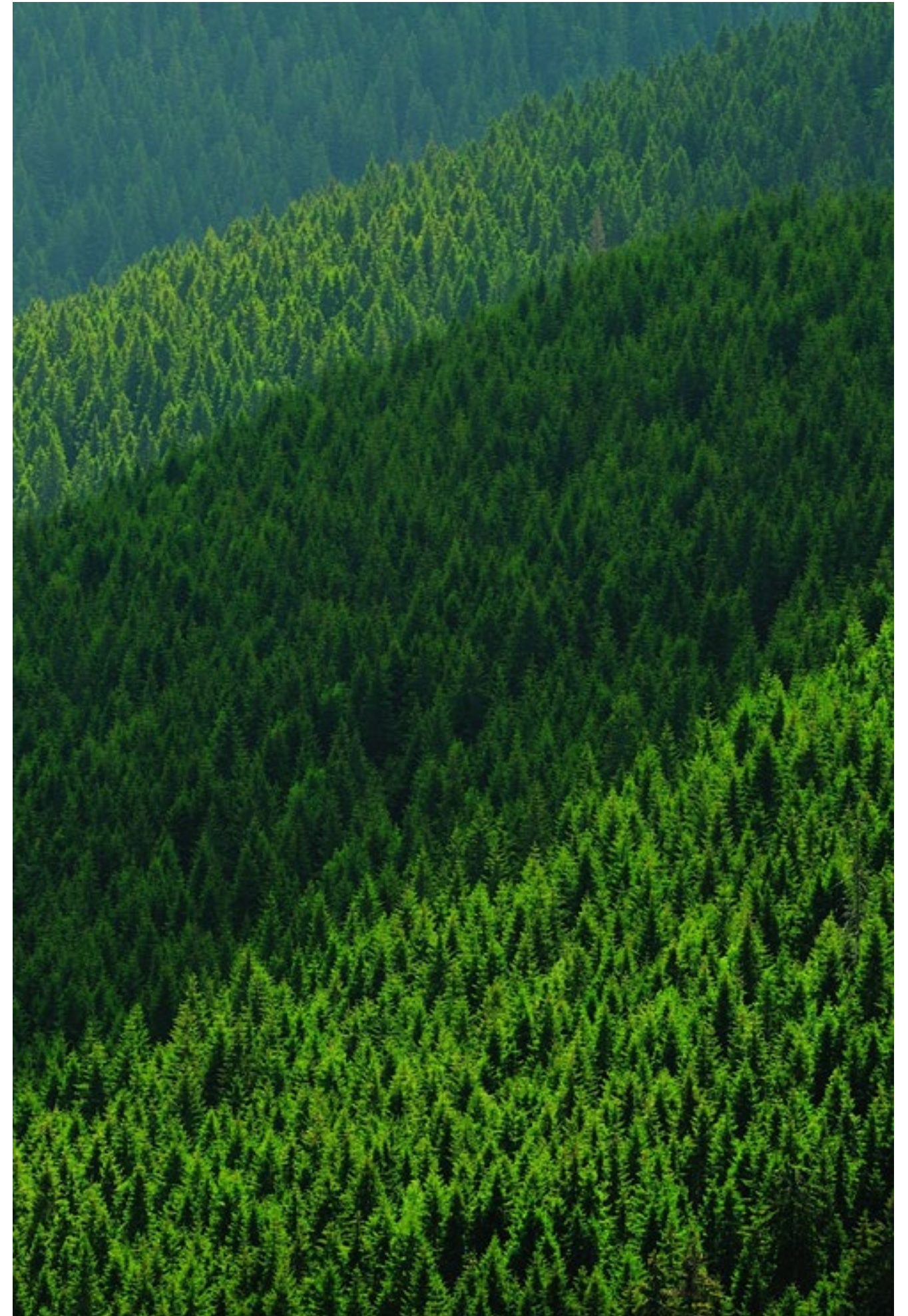
- Networking, sharing good practices and good results of Life projects conducted all over Romania,
- Photo exhibition with images from our project,
- A flash mob, nature themed games with 80 children at the National Library in Bucharest,
- Field visits
- A regional meeting in Braşov



**Financed by the  
LIFE+ programme**

**2,917,624 € (50%)**  
European Commission

**2,917,624 € (50%)**  
FCC and project partners







Wildlife



# Wildlife programme

**In general, discussions about future wildlife management in Romania, hunters often stress the argument that costs related to wildlife protection can only be covered by trophy hunting. We acknowledge that trophy hunting has been the major source of income for hunting associations in Romania and that there are examples, especially in Africa, where trophy hunting has had a positive effect on wildlife conservation.**

However, given an environment where large carnivores are present in higher numbers than in most other parts of Europe and at the same time rural communities at the edge of the mountains still make a significant part of their living with livestock production, we believe that a sustainable wildlife management must have a focus on decreasing and controlling conflicts between wildlife and local communities, and not on making money through trophy hunting and paying game wardens to prevent poaching.





## Wildlife conservation

For this reason, FCC has developed a wildlife programme in order to showcase, how in our point of view, future wildlife management must look like.

Since the end of 2011, FCC has leased through a subsidiary entity the 13,500 ha hunting concession 21 Izvoarele Dâmboviței. Since wildlife numbers were very low, our initial focus has been exclusively to establish a non-hunting and a strong anti-poaching policy in order to increase numbers of red deer, wild boar, chamois, and bears. We also tried to lease hunting concession 22 Rucăr (10,700 ha) back in 2011, but had to pull out as the leasing costs exceeded our financial possibilities.

The hunters' association, who won the auction, had obviously similar problems and stopped paying the fees after two years. In 2015, the Ministry cancelled the contract and decided to organise a new auction. Due to bureaucratic hurdles, this didn't happen until autumn 2017, when the Ministry of Waters and Forests organised an auction and FCC purchased this additional concession. This new hunting concession is extremely important for wildlife protection of hunting concession 21, as wildlife migrates during winters down the valley into concession 22 Rucăr.

Now, FCC can control both the summer and the winter wildlife habitats and, together with the neighbouring Piatra Craiului National Park, we secure now protection of wildlife from sports or trophy hunting on a total of 36,000 ha.



## Wildlife management

In respect to conflict mitigation, we have provided sheep camps, which suffered losses to large carnivores throughout the summer, electric fences to protect their sheep at night. After this, there were no more problems with carnivore attacks at night. Overall, hunting concession 21 is a fairly remote area with no human inhabitation and only a handful of sheep camps, consequently there is only a small amount of conflicts.

In hunting concession 22, however, there are way more conflicts, as it includes several rural villages with lots of small farms, which are prone to attacks of bears or wolves.

In autumn 2017, prior to FCC taking over the hunting concession, a brown bear had specialised on attacking farms, getting into the stables, and killing livestock. This will now be a major challenge for FCC to deal with these problems and to establish proper livestock protection and aversive conditioning measures.

For this reason, we have started discussions with the regional office of the Gendarmerie to establish a joint rapid response team with adequate equipment, and training.

## Wildlife monitoring

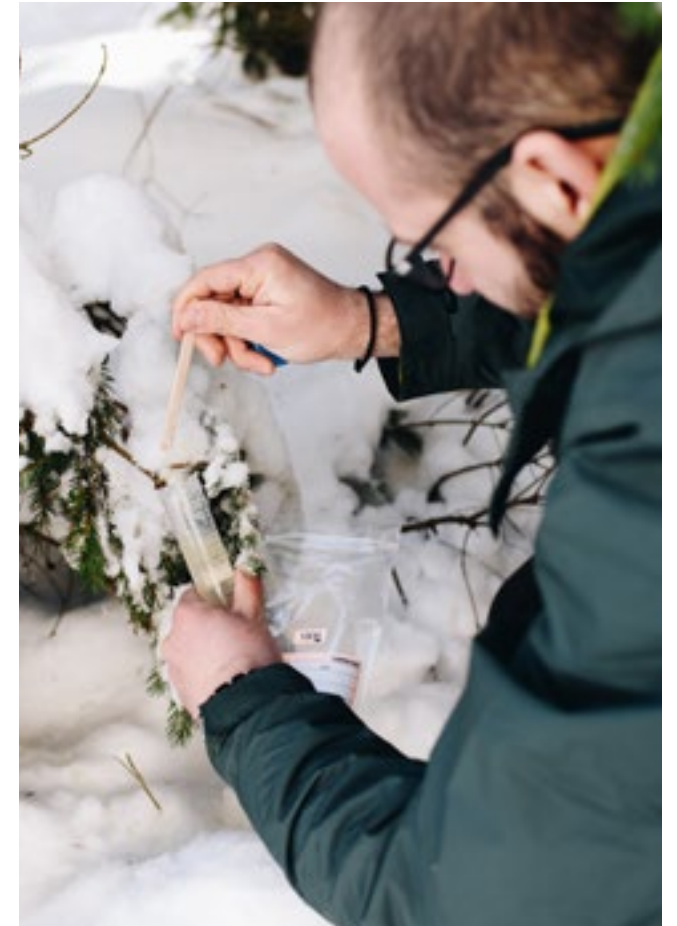
We have successfully started our wildlife monitoring programme based on non-invasive methods such as genetic analysis of scat and hair samples, use of camera traps, and traditional sign surveys to get a good and reliable estimate on the current population sizes of bears, wolves, and lynx.

After establishing the project team, and designing the field work, we also discussed our planned activities with neighbouring hunting units and managed to extend the monitoring into five additional hunting areas, covering a total of 100,600 ha - a significant surface for monitoring large carnivore populations.

Together with a Braşov based company we developed an application for our mobile phones, that allows direct introduction of all sample data including GPS position and attributes directly on a server-based data base. This app emerged to be a very useful tool as it allows participation of a larger group, including game wardens from neighbouring hunting areas, or volunteers in the future, and at the same time makes the whole process of data collection very transparent as the data collected can instantly be seen on an online platform.

Starting from August, the focus of the field work was put on sampling scats and hairs of brown bears and with 844 samples (71% scat, 29% hair), the team managed to exceed the envisaged number significantly. The first snow fall, crucial for obtaining useful information on wolves and lynx, came late, but our rangers managed to collect a total of 50 faeces, urine and hair samples of wolves and 2 of lynx, with the main tracking season still ahead. Most of the samples have been sent to the genetic lab at the University of Ljubljana/SLO for further analysis and we are anxiously waiting for the results.

In June 2017, our wildlife biologist joined the genetic lab team in Slovenia for a two-week training period and by the end of the year we started to make the acquisitions of the necessary equipment for a new lab room at the HQ of Piatra Craiului National Park for pre-processing the non-invasive samples and DNA extraction.



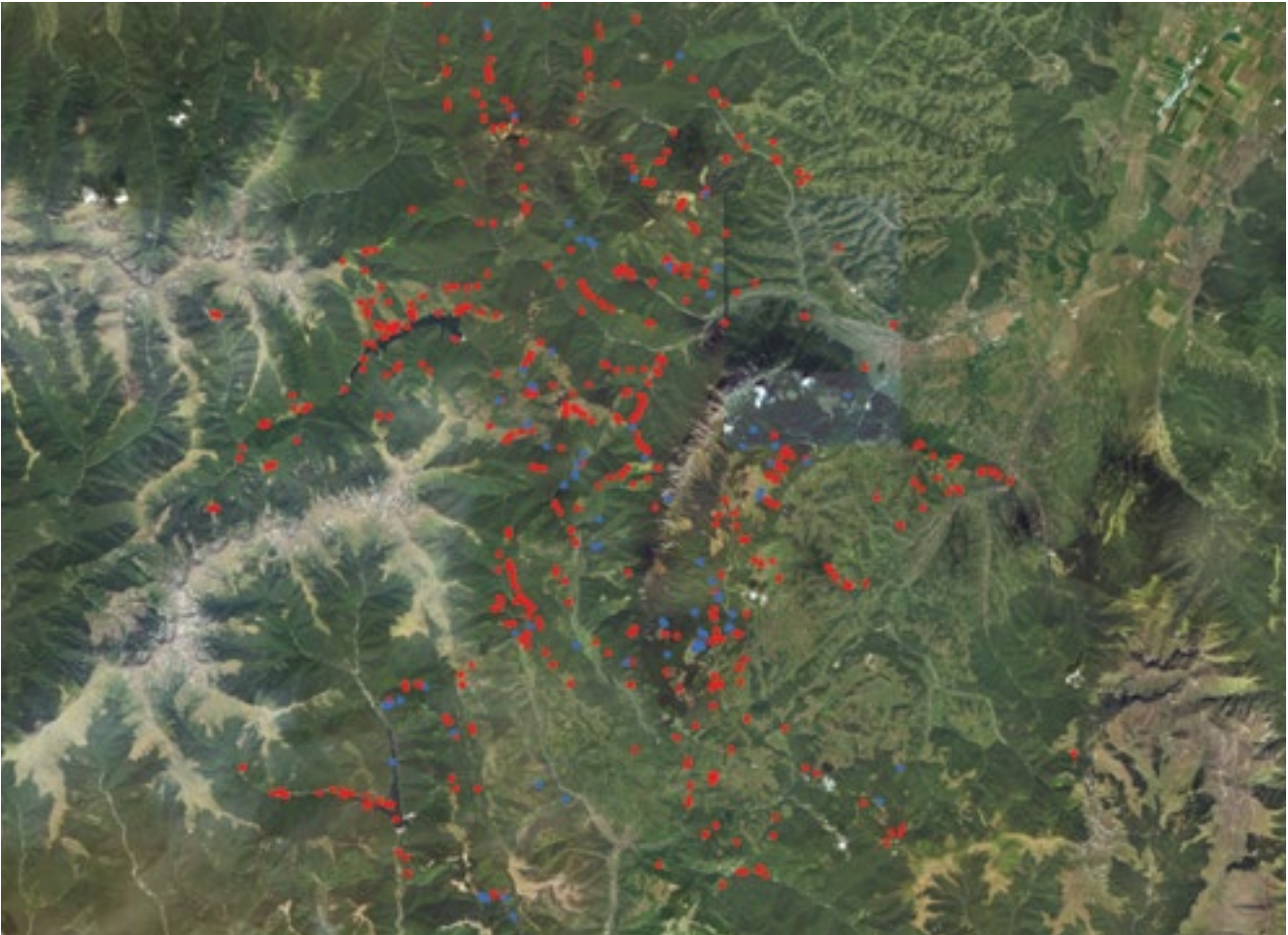


Map of hunting concessions 21 Izvoarele Dâmboviței and 22 Rucăr



- Hunting concession 21
- Hunting concession 22

Distribution of bear and wolf samples



- Wolf
- Bear



Direct data entry on our mobile app





# Outreach and Communication



# Protected Area Strategy

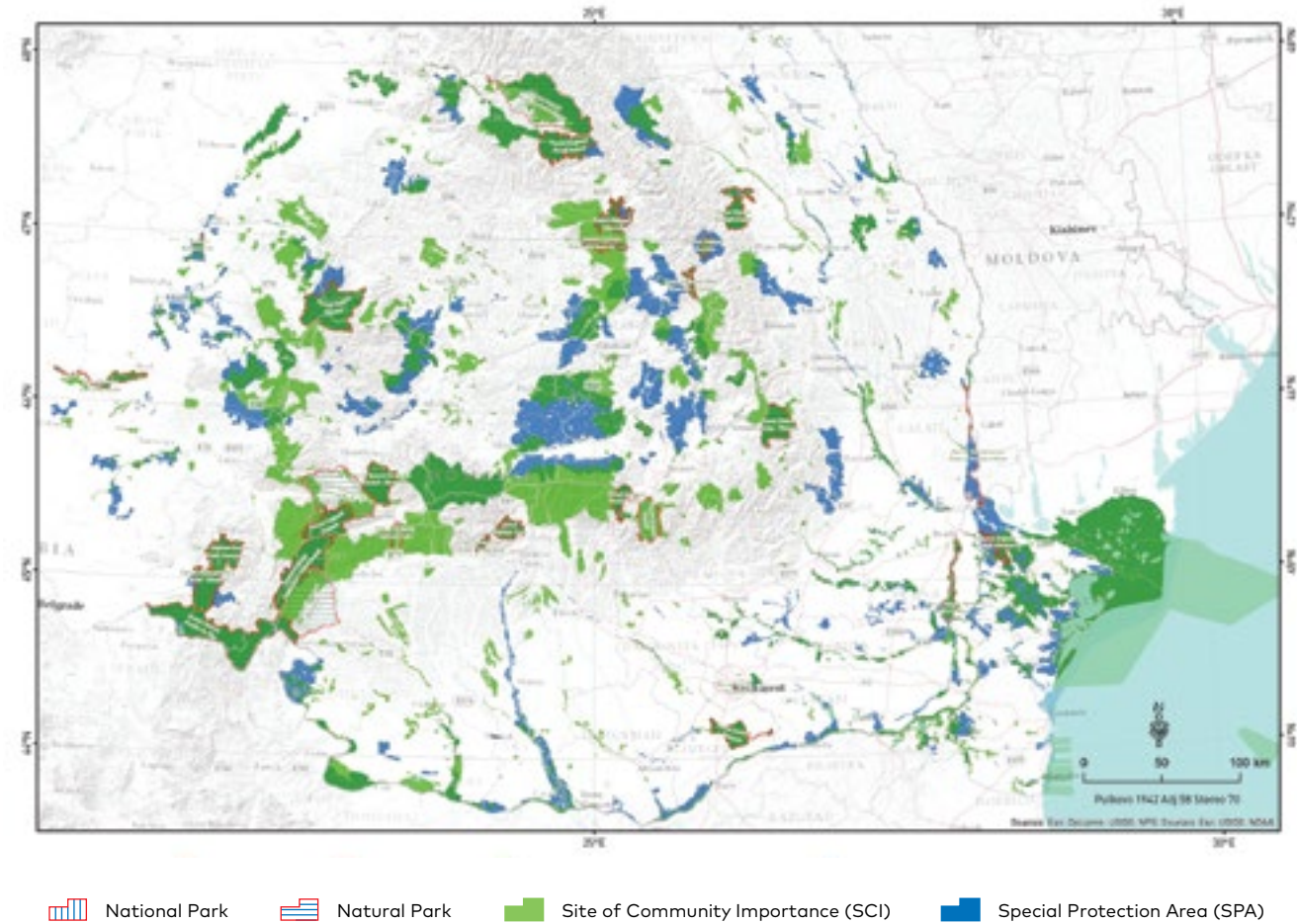
Through discussions with our colleagues and friends from the Romanian conservation NGOs, we realised that there were a number of valid views upon the future of the Romanian protected area system. All agreed that the system has severe problems and needs dramatic improvement, but we saw different solutions on the way forward.

For this reason, our colleagues from ProPark Foundation and FCC invited all conservation NGOs for a first meeting on March 31st in Sibiu to discuss, where we actually want to go. The participants agreed that we actually need a common NGO strategy for protected areas in order to move things forward.

A second workshop on May 15th in Braşov, again very well attended, brought a lot of very constructive proposals and ideas about how the Romanian protected area network could be improved and identified the key issues.

In December, the Protected Area Gala was held in Poiana Braşov and over 150 participants from NGOs, Park administrations and government agencies participated in this two-day event. A common vision for protected areas was adopted, which reads:

“Protected Areas are recognized by the general public and state authorities to be of critical importance for Romania, contributing to development and to maintaining our identity in the European community.”



Thematic workshops deepened the discussions for the protected area strategy on the following issues:

**Do we need new protected areas in Romania?**

Debates related to the necessity of expanding or modifying the protected area network, the necessity of extending the strictly protected areas within national parks, designating ecological corridors, the need for recognizing wilderness areas etc.

**Efficient management in Protected Areas.**

Discussions about priority actions to improve management over the next 10 years.

**Funding of Protected Area administration.**

Debates about financing issues, future European grant system, compensatory payments for private land owners in protected areas, engaging companies in Corporate Nature Responsibility and the concept of conservation enterprises.

**Local communities and economic benefits.**

Debates were organized around the concept of Ecotourism Destinations in Romania, followed by defining priority actions in protected areas that prove the tight connection between conservation and local community development

**Responsible partnership for nature conservation.**

Discussions regarding principles and criteria for collaboration with companies for nature conservation.

The protected area strategy will be finalised throughout the first months of 2018 and presented to the public in mid-2018.





# Round table discussions with timber industry

**Following the scandals of large-scale illegal logging and the alleged implication of parts of the timber industry, Austrian sawmills operating in Romania have been severely attacked by activists, politicians, and Romanian and international media. During the recent years, direct discussions between the timber industry and the NGO sector have completely come to a stop and have been replaced by social media and press releases.**

As important it was to analyse the situation and to identify responsibilities, it seemed the right time to get over this and initiate a constructive dialogue in order to create a better, more sustainable future of forestry and protected areas in Romania.

On invitation of FCC, the timber industry and the Romanian conservation NGOs met for a first meeting in Poiana Braşov in October. The group was quite diverse, but worked together for the whole day and agreed that there was a need for a structured, long-term dialogue. We discussed the principles of additional meetings and decided to have a second workshop in November in Braşov.

On this second workshop, the group met to explore whether common ground exists between conservation NGOs and the industry, worked on and agreed to key values of a common vision for forest management and protected areas in Romania and identified the obstacles, which need to be addressed in order to reach this vision.

The group agreed to continue this dialogue in 2018 in order to tackle identified questions and to better understand the nature of this common vision.





# The Forest History project

**What a beautiful and impactful school project we had during April – September 2017, as custodian of Natura 2000 site, Raul Targului – Argesel – Rausor.**

“The history of the forest” project had 5 complex activities and approximately 800 students and teachers were involved:

## **Caravan**

A caravan with environmental workshops in all of the schools from the area: Podu Dâmboviței, Dragoslavele, Valea Mare Pravăț, Nămaiești, Voinești, Lerești, Albeștii de Muscel, Bughea de Sus și Nucșoara.

## **Contest**

A contest “My gift for the forest” – students can offer a handmade, eco-friendly crafted gift to the forest.

## **Training**

The training of a young, high school team of 20 Junior Rangers.

## **Thematic path**

Set up a thematic path for children and tourists in Dambovita Valley.

## **Digital brochure**

Write an electronic brochure about the history of the local forests, together with the students from Rucăr Technological high school, Environment protection classes.

## **Financed by:**

### **17.000 lei**

MOL Romania through Environmental Partnership Foundation

### **9.000 lei**

FCC



# Volunteering

## **Bikeathon Făgăraș 2017**

Bikeathon is an important charity event dedicated to bikers, who can participate if they volunteer to represent a cause. Over 20 bikers participated on behalf of FCC for a new forest in the Făgăraș Mountains. Funds raised by the participants covered the costs of planting 450 saplings.

## **Weeding in tree nurseries**

FCC has organised two volunteering activities in our tree nurseries: a public one and a corporate one, with employees from Siemens Technology Brașov. In total, we had 70 volunteers from 4 different counties, weeding the saplings, so they can grow healthy and strong for the 2018 replanting. What was different this year? We stayed overnight and slept in the tents. A beautiful evening, an amazing sky full of stars and a tasty experience, with traditional food cooked over the open fire. Surprisingly natural alarm clock in the morning: cows muuuu-ing to be milked...

FCC intends to increase the CARPATHIA volunteer programme throughout the next years, not just with physical work, but also for IT, web design, farming (help during hay season, bio-gardening or for village events), photography and small videos production, blogging, guiding, campaigning, networking and other skills.

If you love the forest and you want to offer your support, contact us at [a.pop@carpathia.org](mailto:a.pop@carpathia.org) and we will find together a rewarding volunteering activity for you.







# Conservation Enterprise Programme





# Wildlife hides

Wildlife watching and photography is becoming an increasingly important part of the tourism industry and Romania, which has by far the biggest populations of large carnivores, doesn't really use this opportunity. There are a few initiatives in this direction, and they all work very well.

As part of our larger eco-tourism programme, we have developed a series of wildlife hides in the upper Dâmbovița Valley. Construction of all hides was finalised throughout 2017 and we started to use them throughout the summer in order to gain experience. One hide in Richita has been built to cooperate with local guesthouses in Sătic and to allow these guesthouses to attract more clients with such an offer. In the medium term, the Richita hide will also be used as part of our environmental field education centre.

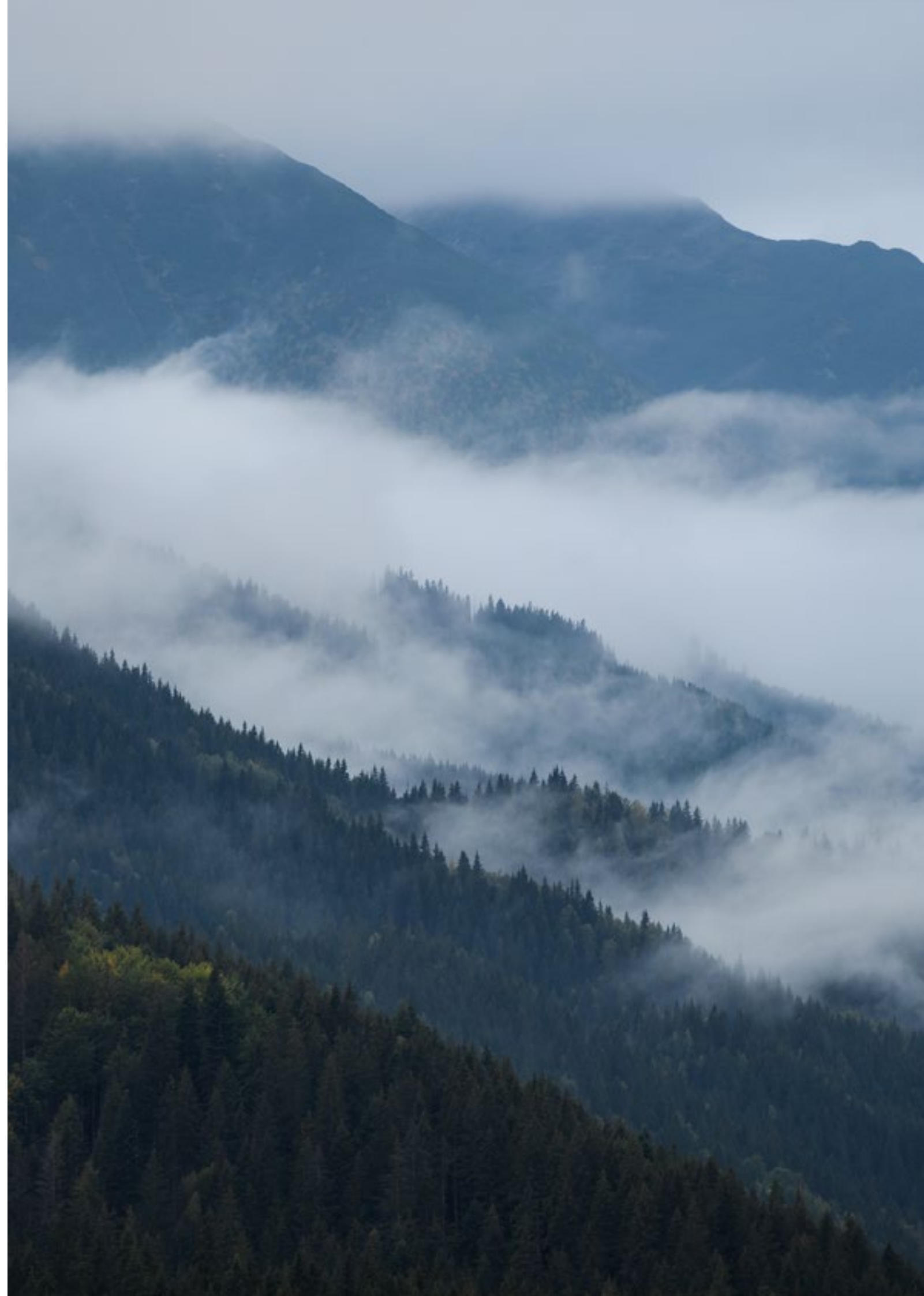
We have built two small hides on a meadow up in the mountains close to timber line, which is not being used for sheep grazing anymore. Bears, red deer, and wild boar have started to use this meadow and the scenery is spectacular. The hides are only accessible by hiking and quite simple with no running water and only basic facilities. It is, however, a true wilderness experience and the hides will be marketed for the more adventurous people.

Bunea hide is the jewel in our current collection of hides with full accommodation of up to 6 people, a bathroom with hot shower (given the sun is shining), and gourmet candlelight dinners in the evening. Throughout the summer 2017, we already used the hide on a number of occasions and all groups except one saw wildlife. Contrary to the other established wildlife hides in Romania, Bunea offers sightings not just of bears, but also of wild boar, roe and red deer, foxes, and a number of forest birds.

Independently from these hides, we also built a hide for bird observation at the farm in Cobor (more information in the chapter Cobor Biodiversity Farm).









# Cobor Biodiversity Farm

The Transylvanian hills offer some of the most important high nature value grasslands left in Europe. Flowers depend on a specific type of land management, insects depend on many of these flowers and birds depend on these insects and on century old woodland pastures. An important cycle of life that needs continuity.

## General farm description and concept

Cobor is a small village of 250 inhabitants, mainly of Hungarian ethnic, in the South-central part of the hills. Although only 12 km straight line from the city of Făgăraș, the area is very remote and doesn't even have asphalt road access.

In 2007, FCC trustee Markus Jebesen started to purchase abandoned agricultural land in Cobor, which was used (and overgrazed) by wandering shepherds from communities far away. Over time, Markus' company also purchased three badly decayed and abandoned buildings and started to renovate them with natural materials and in traditional architecture.

In 2015, Markus donated the company to FCC and we managed to find additional grants to turn the land and the houses into a functioning organic farm.

We started to develop a farm concept and decided that we would try to go for something completely new - a biodiversity farm. This principally means that biodiversity conservation on this century old cultivated land with its rich communities of flowers, insects, and birds would be put on the first place and all economic activities would be planned around it. In a first step, we asked a team of specialists on habitats, flora, and butterflies to map the occurrence of various aspects of biodiversity. Based on this, we developed a farm management plan, which includes pastures for horse livery, hay meadows, and areas for cattle grazing. Eco-tourism would provide additional income for the farm and promote the concept.

## Infrastructure and facilities

Throughout 2017, we finished most of the constructions in the village and our infrastructure now consists of three guesthouses with a total of 24 beds, a seminar building, a summer office, the farm manager's house, and an additional house for employees.

We are now in the process of getting all the required approvals to officially open the guesthouses in 2018.

In respect to horse livery, we have currently space for 30 livery horses on the pastures. The overall pasture is almost 20 hectares but has a series of shelters and feeders and can be separated to keep different groups separated. We have additionally two pastures of each one hectare, with large shelters down on the valley bottom.

Throughout 2017 we had a total of 18 horses grazing on the farm pastures.

About 50 hectares of farmland are currently used to produce hay and 10 hectares are with cultivations of alfalfa. The farm produced a total of 111 tons of hay and 38 tons of alfalfa throughout the last summer. About 120 hectares have been used as grazing land for the cattle herd.

In 2016, we purchased a herd of Angus cattle and had 24 calves born throughout spring 2017. However, we decided to replace the Angus herd with Hungarian Grey Cattle, as this is actually one of the autochthonous breeds of Transylvania. Preparations have started for the change and we will bring the Grey Cattle in spring 2018.













# Cobor Biodiversity Farm

## Management plan

The purpose of the farm management plan is to guide the transformation of the Cobor Farm into a model for a successful conservation enterprise that aims to develop the local community in balance with the environment.

In 2017, we initiated a scientific study to assess the state of the biodiversity and the foraging value of the grasslands of the farm area and to identify the best management measures for sustainable farming, taking into account biodiversity conservation and traditional management of the meadows.

A preliminary botanical inventory revealed the presence of 250 plant species and 3 main meadow types. The farm's area is characterised by a fine-grained mosaic of different types of grasslands.

Botanical and chemical analysis of the fresh hay samples proved the good quality of the meadows.

For instance, fresh biomass production in late May on hay fields with high biodiversity conservation values had an average value of 16 t/ha. The recorded fresh biomass production was lower on pasture land with an average value of 7.9 t/ha.

## Cobor Farm and nature cosmetics

Throughout 2017, we have developed a cooperation with Natura Siberica, the only fully certified producer of nature cosmetics. The unspoilt meadows of the Cobor Biodiversity Farm attracted Natura Siberica and consequently, we created a partnership and will collect wild herbs to be processed for their products.

We now conducted all the necessary surveys, went through the certification process and got the permissions from the Romanian Academy of Science for wild herb collection.

In 2018, we will start collecting and hopefully can soon proudly announce the first cosmetic products made out of plants from the Cobor Biodiversity Farm.











# Events

## Reanimating a XIIth Century Transylvanian Village

From spring to autumn 2017, we organised a series of workshops and gastronomical events, sports and cultural events in Cobor, which also involved the local community. The common theme of these gatherings was the local culture and the appreciation for the natural richness of the surroundings.

The bread-baking and egg painting workshops reminded us how our ancestors used to cook and work.

With a Transylvanian Brunch, we brought the local gastronomy to the forefront by involving local women, who prepared local recipes that are still in use in the village's households.

We burned off calories on our bikes, at Bike and Brunch, while exploring the hills, forests and meadows, the beaver dam and we also learned about the birds that have their nests around the village.

For June 1st, we organised the Children's Day at the farm. The kids were able to see and get closer to horses, cattle, chicken, cats and dogs, played in the yard, in the hay barn and on the pasture.

A modern touch was brought by the raw-vegan ice cream work-shop that combined local flavours and the techniques to prepare healthy ice cream.

Autumn came with the first concert organised by us in Cobor. The Klezmer concert gathered people from the neighbouring towns and villagers keen on discovering Jewish music.

Our efforts were rewarded at the Țara Făgărașului Gala, when we received the award for Promoter of the Arts, Culture and Tradition of Țara Făgărașului.





## Filming crews

In autumn we welcomed two film crews to Cobor. The first one from France, composed of the TV crew including two wolves and a bear, came to Romania to film a true story about a wolf, born in the mountains above Braşov, whose journey from Romania all the way to France had been traced by DNA analysis of faeces in different research projects.

The second crew from Germany, did a special report about our work and its impact on the local community.

Both projects will have the premiere in 2018. Keep an eye on our Facebook page, as we will invite you to view the films with us! I am sure they will remember Cobor dearly, as we have organised some authentic dishes for them...



## Wilderness camps

In Cobor and our project area, on Dambovită Valley, we have organised wilderness schools together with trainers from Germany and the UK. In Cobor we walked alongside traditional horse carts on the hills surrounding the village, spent the night in tents in the forest and cooked together over the open fire. In the project area we camped in Poiana Tămaş and participants spent 24 h alone in the woods in an isolated place, chosen by them. This type of activities are becoming increasingly popular in Western Europe, where city life is more and more disconnected from nature. Our locations are the ideal place for hosting these kinds of camps.













A large, old tree with a thick, textured trunk and a dense green canopy stands in a grassy field. The background features rolling green hills and distant mountains under a cloudy sky. The text "Financial report" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

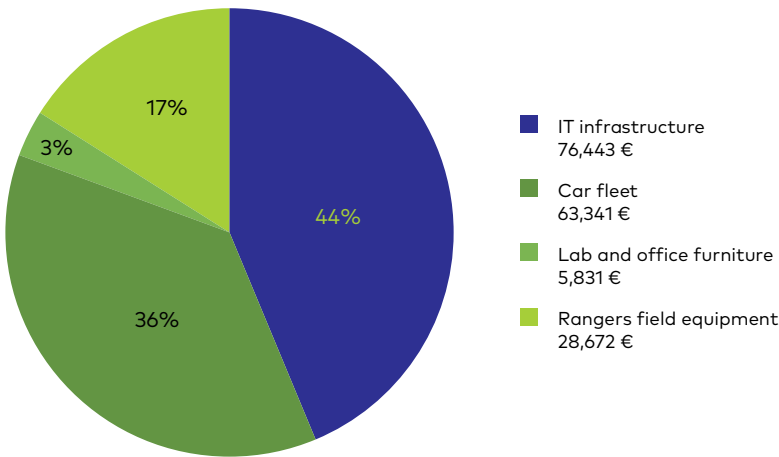
# Financial report



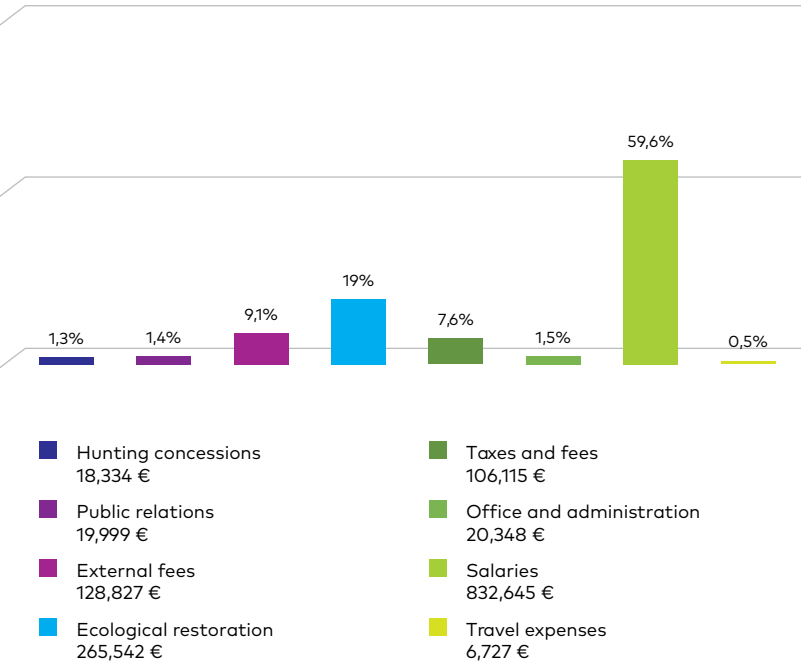
# Financial report 2017

## General economic situation

The operating model of FCC, consisting in land acquisition and lease of hunting rights with the aim of full protection of all natural elements, restoration of damaged ecosystems, communication with the outside world, and economic uplifting of local communities involves continuous economic efforts to have the necessary funds for purchasing the land and for supporting all costs of administration and conservation measures. In the following overview, we focus only on operational costs and on conservation activities. Funds for forest purchase are not included.



### Operational costs



## Donations and grants

Throughout the last year, FCC has continued its cooperation with our existing partners and has found several new funding partners for its CARPATHIA project.

According to our fundraising strategy we focus our efforts on large foundations, private donations, and public grants. In 2017, FCC has been awarded grants from the following organisations and sources:

Grantee	Activity	Amount (€)
Foundations		
Oak Foundation	Wildlife monitoring, Clear-cut restoration & communication	519,710
Wyss Foundation	General support & Wildlife conservation	307,652
Temperatio Foundation	Development of Cobor Biodiversity Farm	241,900
Frankfurt Zoological Society	General support	75,000
The European Nature Trust	Bison reintroduction study & general support	55,000
Stichting Polar Lights	General support	22,500
Peterffy Foundation	General support	17,007
Rainforest Concern	Forest protection	10,000
Other grants	Various	11,058
Total foundation grants		1,259,827

Private donations		
Montaigne Long Now Funding S.A.	Wildlife conservation & General support	130,000
Marion Wuerth	General support	60,000
Other private donations	General support	52,604
Total private donations		242,604

Public grants		
State budget	Compensation payment system for forests under protection	191,886
EEA Grants	Socio-economic study Făgăraş Mountains	20,980
POIM	Management Plan Natura 2000 site Râul Târgului - Argeşel - Râuşor	20,600
Total public grants		233,466



## Corporate partnerships

The business environment in Romania has joined our unique forest conservation project and the vision of protecting Făgăraş Mountains as an emblematic national park for Europe.

Whether it is forest conservation, ecological restoration, wildlife protection or education and community outreach, the companies support FCC and become more green.

Grantee	Activity	Amount (€)
Corporate partners		
Ursus Breweries – CIUCAŞ division	Wildlife conservation & General support	60,000
MedLife	Ecological restoration	10,000
Temad, Servelect, Adalco Group	General support	4,200
Total private donations		74,200





A hiker with a large green backpack is standing on a grassy mountain slope, looking through binoculars. The hiker is wearing a black jacket, dark pants, and a headband. The background features rolling hills, some evergreen trees, and a clear blue sky with wispy clouds. The text "Plans for 2018" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Plans for 2018





# Future plans

2017 has been a very successful year for FCC and many new accomplishments had been achieved. For 2018, we intend to deepen the existing activities and to plan the next phase of the project with a major enlargement of activities and partners. Here are our plans in detail:

## Conservation

Forest purchase for full protection will continue, we hope we can purchase at least 2,000 ha of forests and alpine grasslands. Since the Romanian government has established over the last two years a system of compensation payments for fully protected forests, we are also evaluating of whether such a scheme would also work with a privately based funding mechanism.

## Habitat restoration

We have received lots of support for our restoration programme and have now three donors who pay for it. Due to our limited capacity to replant with own staff, we will hire local companies to assist during the intensive period of replanting. Altogether, we aim to plant 120 ha of clear-cuts, but a lot will depend on the weather. Once it gets warm, the saplings will start growing the leaves and replanting them becomes a high risk. We have observed a trend that the period between the last snow and the beginning of the vegetation period is getting shorter and, consequently, we have to plant more trees/day if we have less time available.

Next to the clear-cut restoration, we will be working also on alder gallery restoration along the mountain streams and the conversion of spruce monocultures: We plan to plant 10 ha of new alder forests and transform 50 ha of spruce monocultures into mixed mountain forests.





## Wildlife conservation, monitoring and management

With our second hunting concession and together with the non-hunting area of Piatra Craiului National Park we have now an area of 36,000 ha under protection.

Our wildlife conservation strategy is to allow natural processes and to stop all sport or trophy hunting, whilst putting a strong emphasis on the prevention of conflicts with wildlife. If there would be an opportunity to acquire additional hunting concessions, we would be trying to do so.

Foremost, we will continue our wildlife monitoring on 100,000 ha and will set-up in late winter 2017/18 about 50 camera trap sites (2 cameras at each location, set face to face) on wildlife trails, where lynx are likely to show up. Since lynx bear individually recognizable marks, camera traps yield the necessary repeated individual detection/non-detection data to apply capture-recapture models and such estimate population sizes.

For early winter 2018/19 we will try to enlarge the area of the camera trap monitoring to the entire study area and will also work much more with scent poles to collect hair samples of lynx. Our rangers will also go out and search intensively for wolf and lynx scats as well as urine for DNA extraction. Starting from August, we will do another sampling session for bears, with a special focus on installing hair traps and will try for the first time to estimate the population size of red deer based on the same non-invasive sampling techniques.

In respect to prevention of wildlife – human conflicts, we will initiate a partnership with the regional office of the Romanian gendarmerie, equip and train an intervention team of our game wardens together with the gendarmerie, and take measures to control conflicts before or immediately when they appear. This will include the provision of electric fences to local farms and sheep camps, a breeding programme for pure bred livestock guarding dogs (Carpătini), and the aversive conditioning of bears around villages.

We might also consider to organise a few hunts on wild boar with local hunters at the vicinity of the villages, if there would be considerable damage on meadows in private ownership and other attempts to scare them away have been unsuccessful.

We would restrict killing of bears to cases where a bear repeatedly would cause severe problems in a radius of 500 m around the villages and where all attempts to scare the bear away have failed.

We will also start with direct preparations for bison and beaver reintroduction, e.g. getting necessary permits, decision about release sites, planning the release enclosures, or identifying sources of release animals.







## Communication

### Media

In the next years, we hope to get a lot more national and international media coverage for our initiative. Last year, we have initiated a human dimension study towards local opinions about conservation, protected areas, and wildlife through the Memorial University, Newfoundland/Canada, to better understand attitudes and key issues for local communities. The results of this study will be finalised in the second half of 2018 and we will re-formulate our messages based on these results.

On the one side, we must have a strong focus on local/regional media (print media and regional TV) as they are the key channels for getting the word out to the local communities, but on the other side, we will of course also distribute our messages through the national and international media in order to make the Făgăraș Mountains National Park an issue for Romanians in the cities and the international public.

We are also planning to start a social media campaign; even in the rural communities of Romania, Facebook and other social media platforms are widespread.

### Events

In 2018, FCC plans a series of local and national events. We will start in February with a Forest Carnival in Rucăr, to celebrate biodiversity with the local community and to get us in better contact with the people. Throughout the year, other events in Rucăr and other local communities as well as a series of events at the Biodiversity Farm in Cobor such as Bike&Brunch will follow.

On national level, we are planning a large event in Bucharest, together with our fellow conservation NGOs to present the National Protected Area Strategy of the NGO federation “Coalition Natura 2000”.

In December 2018, we will organise together with the Institute of Biology of the Romanian Academy of Science a scientific conference about the Făgăraș Mountains, which will be enlarged with a local food market, a small Făgăraș eco-tourism fair, and podium discussions about the future National Park.

### Education

In respect to environmental education, FCC has taken a strategic decision that we will not develop school education programmes or programmes for ranger education ourselves, but partner up with specialised organisations and just provide the infrastructure, logistics, and conservation areas.

A few years ago, FCC purchased the Richita cabin and the Valea Vladului cabin in the upper Dâmbovița Valley with the scope to turn them into an environmental field education centre and a biological station for such activities.

By the end of 2017, FCC received a grant commitment of the Pancivis Foundation to fully restore both cabins and to initiate an education programme. Throughout winter, we will try to get the necessary permissions and in spring 2018, we will start with renovation of the buildings with the scope to start the first school programmes in late autumn.

### Conservation Enterprise Development

After several years of preparation, the conservation enterprise programme is now fully planned and we have started to search for funds in order to implement the programme.

With the Cobor Biodiversity Farm and the wildlife hides we already develop the first two conservation enterprises, but we now want to properly develop the overall programme.

Our plans for 2018 are to set up the structure, raise sufficient funds for the first couple of conservation enterprises, and start to register the first businesses until the end of 2018.





**A big thank you to all of you, who have supported us, and we send an open invitation to join our cause to all who believe in forest conservation.**

**We wish you all the best!**

– Team Carpathia



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