

LIFE CARPATHIA

2019 – 2025



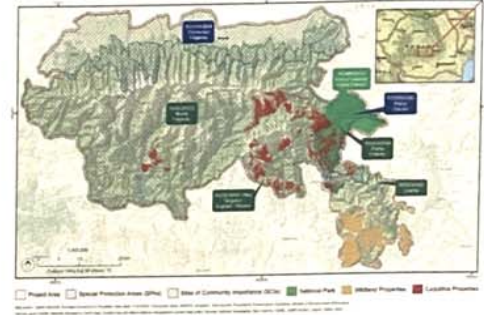
Who we are

Foundation Conservation Carpathia was established in 2009 with a focus on biodiversity conservation in the Făgăraș Mountains. Since then, it has evolved into a multidimensional organization dedicated to habitat conservation and restoration, wildlife management and the reintroduction of key species, as well as the development of a nature-based economy, community engagement, and strategic partnerships. The organisation currently has over 140 dedicated employees, many of whom are from local communities.

Our vision

We aim to create a world-class wilderness reserve in the Southern Romanian Carpathians, large enough to support significant numbers of large carnivores and to allow evolutionary processes to happen. The project consists of the wider Făgăraș Mountains Natura 2000 site, Piatra Craiului National Park and Leaota Mountain and forms a total of over 250,000 ha. Once this new National Park should be a world-class wilderness, an icon for conservation in Europe and an emblematic National Park on our continent.

Project map



Project objectives

- 1 To save at least 2,000 ha of natural forests in the Făgăraș Mountains (habitats 9410 and 9110) by purchasing them and to stipulate their complete protection in the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests or the Management Plan of the Natura 2000 sites. This will also enhance habitat conditions for species strongly depending on natural forests such as *Tetrao urogallus*, *Ficedula parva*, or *Rosalia alpina*.
- 2 To accelerate re-wilding processes by purchasing and restoring 500 ha clear-felled areas through replanting the original tree species, by purchasing and initiating the conversion of 500 ha spruce monocultures into natural forests, by purchasing and restoring 300 ha alpine habitats, and by reintroducing missing mammal key species (*Bison bonasus*, *Castor fiber*). Habitat conditions for a variety of bird species (*Strix uralensis*, *Dendrocopos leucotos*, or *Bonasa bonasia*), will consequently improve.
- 3 To create a model of human-wildlife coexistence on ca. 80,000 ha by replacing trophy hunting with a system of damage prevention, rapid intervention for direct conflict mitigation, and innovative compensation measures. This model should restore and secure healthy populations of *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx*, and their prey species.
- 4 To foster the ecological integrity of the Făgăraș Mts by removing at least 50% of all riparian invasive species from two mountain valleys, and by executing active conservation measures for listed species such as *Aquila chrysaetos* and their prey species *Marmota marmota* and *Tetrao urogallus*.
- 5 To develop a new economy based on conservation, which combines local economic development and creation of jobs with the long-term conservation goals of the Făgăraș Mts. F. To raise public awareness for conservation and to build positive relationships with local communities to achieve conservation through the existing Natura 2000 sites and a future national park, by promoting natural and cultural values of the area through events, on social media, through print and video material, and by developing participatory management mechanisms and education programmes.



Project results



Habitat protection and restoration

- 5,000 ha of forests and alpine pastures - either in natural condition or affected by human intervention - have been acquired for complete protection and ecological restoration work.
- 1,100 ha of natural forest have been listed in the National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi-Virgin Forests.
- 845 ha of deforested land have been replanted with 2.5 million saplings produced in the organisation's own nurseries.
- Five nurseries and one greenhouse have been established for growing forest saplings.
- 18 km of eroded tractor roads have been levelled and replanted to halt soil restoration and prevent erosion.
- 290 ha of artificial spruce monocultures have been improved by introducing native tree species.
- Along 152 km of riverbanks, invasive alien plant species have been removed, allowing local species to reclaim their habitat.
- 33 ha of alpine pastures have been planted with shrub species to support soil protection.



Wildlife management and human-wildlife conflict prevention

- 80,000 ha have been designated as a quiet zone for wildlife, establishing a model for human-wildlife coexistence based on prevention, intervention, and compensation.
- 64 tonnes of animal waste from households have been collected and incinerated.
- 48 farmers received compensation for wildlife-related damage in the form of 138 sheep and 44 cattle.
- Two rapid response teams were created to intervene in incidents involving wildlife presence or attacks.
- Over 40 electric fences and 63 Carpathian shepherd dogs were donated to farmers to protect farms and livestock.



Key species reintroduction and scientific monitoring and research

- 81 European bison have been released into the wild in three areas of the Făgăraș Mountains, with at least 25 calves born in the wild.
- 62 beavers were reintroduced to southern Făgăraș, helping regulate water reserves and prevent flooding.
- The golden eagle population was assessed, and a conservation plan was developed for it, along with protection efforts for alpine marmots and capercaillie.
- The population size and dynamics of bears, wolves, lynx, and red deer have been monitored using genetic techniques to support better decisions for both wildlife protection and human safety.



Sustainable development and community engagement

- Over 1,800 pupils and 69 teachers from Argeș, Brașov, Sibiu, and Vâlcea counties participated in the "Discover the Treasure of the Făgăraș Mountains" education programme under the LIFE project.
- Two visitor centres were built in Rucăr and Lerești, along with a thematic tourist trail in Nucșoara, to support tourism and environmental education.
- The Roadele Munților Făgăraș brand was launched as a platform for promoting natural products and services from local producers—over 25 local producers now have access to broader markets.
- More than 30 local entrepreneurs received free specialised technical assistance to grow their businesses.
- EUR 30,000 in funding was awarded to local entrepreneurs through the Carpathia Green Business Fund developed within the project.
- Five editions of the Făgăraș Fest were organised in Lerești, Nucșoara, Avrig, Porumbacu de Jos, and Racoviță. The festival, which promotes the nature and culture of the Făgăraș Mountains, as well as local businesses, attracted over 16,000 participants.
- 30 public figures became Făgăraș Mountains ambassadors, helping promote the region and the vision for a future Făgăraș Mountains National Park.
- Over 160 volunteers were involved in project activities.
- Approximately EUR 20 million have been channelled into the project area through salaries paid to community members for their work in planting, nurseries, guarding, and interventions, as well as through contracts with local businesses.
- Over 100 employees were directly employed through the LIFE project.
- More than 50 local companies were involved in various project activities (including local producers, construction firms, carpentry workshops, traditional craftsmen, service providers, guesthouses, etc.).

Project consortium

Foundation Conservation Carpathia, Association Carpathia Forest Department, Wildlife Management Association Piatra Craiului – Făgăraș Conservation, Carpathia Agro and Finance Ltd, Conservation Capital Consulting Ltd, Propark – Foundation for Protected Areas, Argeș County Gendarmierie Unit

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