Project LIFE FOR BEAR – LIFE 13 NAT/RO/001154

The conservation of Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*) population in Romania

PROIECTUL LIFE 13 NAT/RO/001154 Conservarea populației de urs brun (Ursus arctos) din România

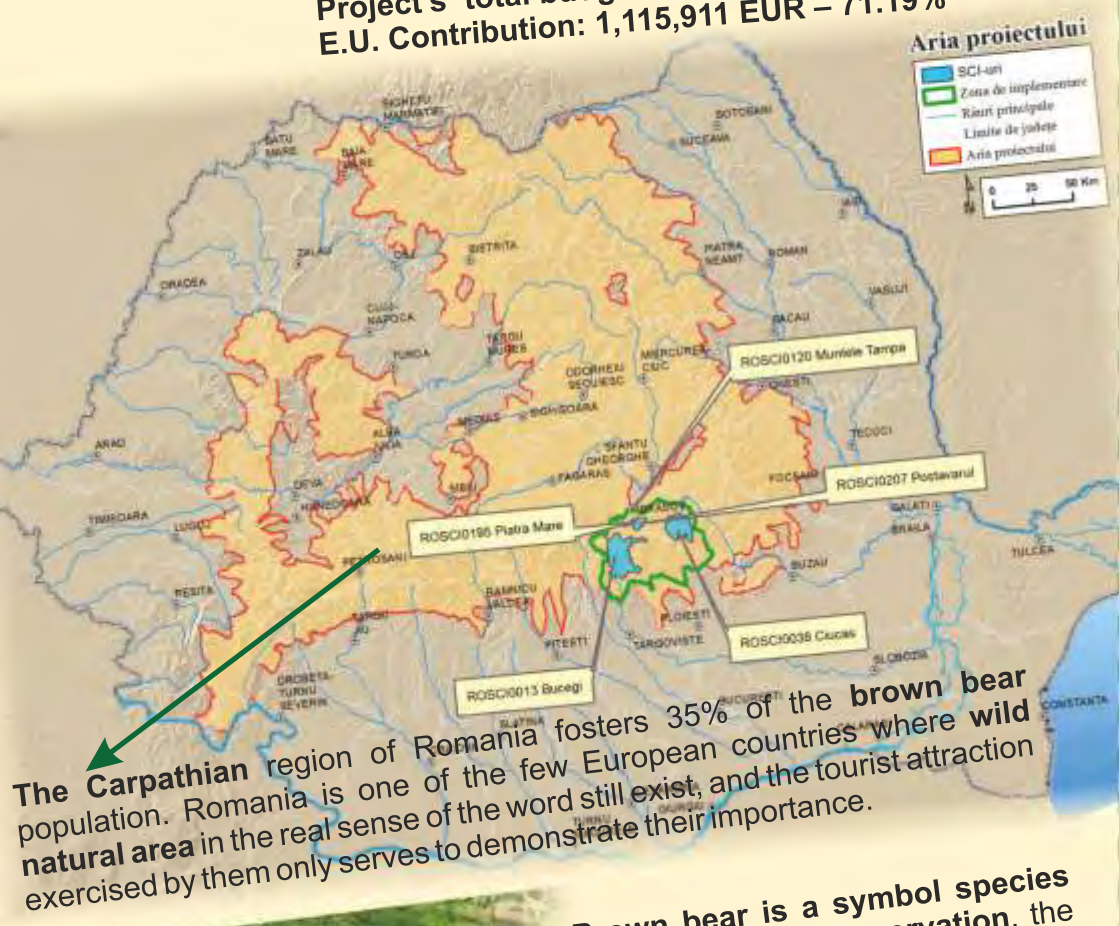
LIFE FOR BEAR

Life

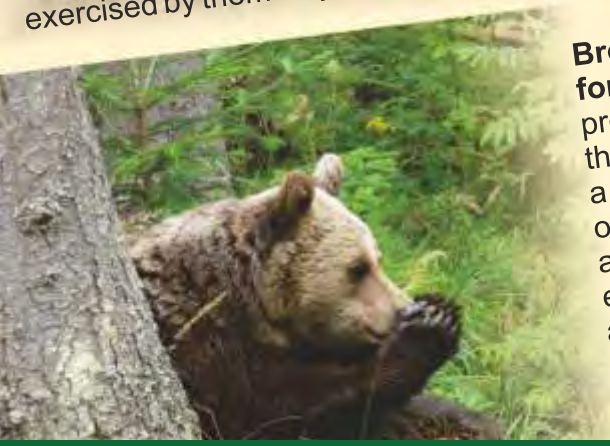
NATURA 2000

About LIFE FOR BEAR:

Programme period: 01.10.2014 – 01.10.2019
Project's total budget: 1,567,512 EUR
E.U. Contribution: 1,115,911 EUR – 71.19%



The Carpathian region of Romania fosters 35% of the **brown bear** population. Romania is one of the few European countries where **wild natural area** in the real sense of the word still exist, and the tourist attraction exercised by them only serves to demonstrate their importance.



Brown bear is a symbol species for biodiversity conservation, the presence of this species indicating the presence of natural habitats with a high ecological value, namely operational ecosystems which might act as fundamental landmarks for the ecological reconstruction of other areas / regions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT

Because serious changes in bears' behavior have been noticed,the project Life for Bear aims to adopt a complex management on the human bear conflict, through testing new methods, improving the previously applied ones, namely the optimization of solutions, in order to reduce the conflicts resulted from previous projects.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- Updating the management plan for bear population in Romania in the context of social and economic development
- Optimizing the domestic waste management in order to reduce the human-bear conflict in Brasov – Prahova Valley area
- Improving attitudes of interest groups on the local and national level of brown bear population preservation and promotion of Natura 2000 sites
- Transferring some good practice techniques towards stakeholders regarding brown bear conservation and management
- Improving the status of conservation for the brown bear population within Brasov – Prahova Valley conflict area

Which are the problems threatening the brown bear's conservation?

INEFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC WASTE FROM THE EDGE OF THE FOREST

Feeding bears with garbage involves in many instances, consuming leftovers, including package (very dangerous for animals!), resulting from waste bins, located at the edge of the forest, in residential areas or in areas inside the forest, frequented by tourists.

The existence of domestic waste determined the formation of an abnormal behavior of bears ("habituated bears"), finding that: in these critical areas, the winter sleep ("hibernation") reduced, thus existing bears frequenting the areas of garbage collection also in wintertime; the number of offspring increased (often cases of 3-4 offspring); the bears have no fear for human (they accept human presence at short distances).

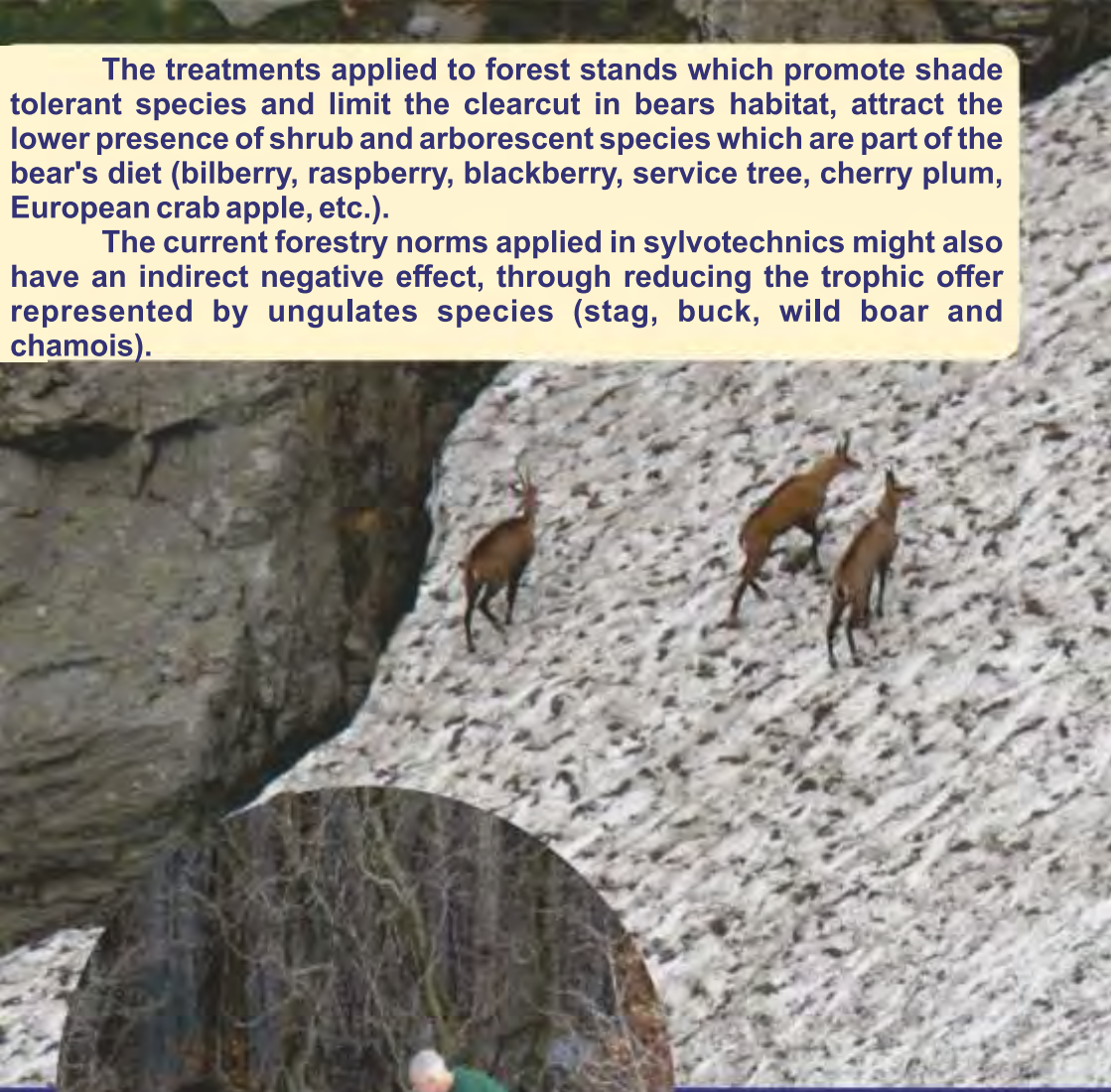
UNORGANISED TOURISM

The legislation in the fields of forestry, wildlife and environmental protection states penalties for any deviation of unauthorized person from the pathway and tourist routes in forest areas. Also, it is forbidden to feed wild animals and to get near them, as well as camping in non-organized sites found in the limits of bear habitat (inside the forest and alpine plain).

However, bear feeding, proximity to bears, trekking and camping in non-organized sites and the use of SUVs (off-road, ATV, enduro) are ways of leisure more sought after (especially in Brasov – Prahova Valley area), without complying with legal provisions.

The treatments applied to forest stands which promote shade tolerant species and limit the clearcut in bears habitat, attract the lower presence of shrub and arborescent species which are part of the bear's diet (bilberry, raspberry, blackberry, service tree, cherry plum, European crab apple, etc.).

The current forestry norms applied in sylvotechnics might also have an indirect negative effect, through reducing the trophic offer represented by ungulates species (stag, buck, wild boar and chamois).



The inefficient managemnt
wildlife, leads to an increase of the
move near anthropogenic areas in
for domestic waste, animal farms,
Therefore, due to lack of ma
important sources of trophic supply
felt in terms of diversity.

DECREASE OF THE TROPHIC SUPPLY

of areas intended to ensure the food supply for human – bear conflicts by encouraging bears to their search for food (collection and storage areas orchards and agricultural crops).

intenance works in areas for food supply of wildlife, get lost both quantitatively and qualitatively, effect

THE NEGATIVE ATTITUDE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND FARMERS

WHY?

Because of the human-bear conflict located near sheep farms and the lack of information on the conservation status of the bear and in general, the benefits from nature conservation.

CONFLICTS AT SHEEP FARMS, ORCHARDS, APIARIES

In summer, near the sheep farms located in mountain and submontane areas, numerous human-bear conflicts take place, resulted from domestic animals depredation. These conflicts end many times with bears being killed, by means of various poaching methods (catching bears with toils, poisoning, etc.)

The magnitude of conflicts occurred in orchards and apiaries is more reduced than the one regarding conflicts occurred in domestic waste areas, but their frequency is higher during summer – autumn, especially when there are no fruits in the forest.

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE BROWN BEAR IS NOT UPDATED!

In recent years, Romania has met a continuous development of transport and leisure infrastructure (holiday homes, boarding houses, tourist complex), especially in Brasov – Valea Prahovei area, as well as residential compounds inside and at the edge of the forest (mountain area).

Also in this period, agricultural works have intensified, namely the number of domestic animals grew, directly affecting the poor management of grazing (the domestic animals often graze in the forest).

These factors have a negative effect on the bear's range, and updating the management plan is mandatory in this context, acting in order to provide measures to reduce the impact of anthropogenic development on bear population.

WHAT should we do?

The Life for Bear project is proposing the harmonization of public interests – developing various sectors within national strategies in order to ensure bear coexistence with anthropogenic factor.

HOW?
By minimizing the negative effects of the social and economic development and implementing the ecological conservation methods.

ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT

- The social and economic analysis of stakeholders.
- Analyzing the human – bear conflict nationally and locally in Brasov – Valea Prahovei conflict area.
- Analyzing the bonitation (quality) of brown bear's habitat nationally in view of social and economic development over the past decade.
- Revising action plan on brown bear population conservation in Romania and the development of a GIS database, which will provide the basis for the management plan of the bear population in Romania.
- Compiling of an operational team comprising certified specialists (BEAR CONFLICT) to solve the conflict situations between the man and the bear.
- Catching, relocating and monitoring problematic bears on the entire project area.
- Improving the trophic supply for natural feeding the bear near conflict areas.
- Developing a set of measures applicable for forest planning in order to provide special management measures for stands favorable for bears in critical areas.
- Best practice transfer regarding demonstration sheep farms, orchards, agricultural crops and apiaries protection systems in order to reduce human – bear conflicts.
- Monitoring the project's impact on bear population and anthropogenic factor.
- Exchanging experience with other LIFE projects.
- Informing, raising awareness and disseminating the results.

FORESEEN RESULTS

- Determination of the necessities and expectations of the stakeholders as resulted from a survey.
- Classification and prioritization of human – bear conflicts and the causes which generated the conflicts.
- Practical guidance to analyze the bonitation of bear habitats in conflict areas.
- Revised action plan for the conservation of the brown bear population in Romania.
- Team BEAR CONFLICT compiled of specialists certified by the Ministry of the Environment, operational and adequately equipped.
- 20 relocated bear individuals outside the conflict areas and 20 monitored bear individuals by means of GPS/GSM/RADIO systems.
- Practical guidance to catch, relocate and monitor problematic bear individuals.
- 2 operational BEAR TEAM intervention teams within the limits of this project.
- Improved trophic supply near the conflict areas, by creating special wildlife crops and increasing the number of ant hills.
- Practical guidance to apply the solutions regarding the improvement of trophic supply, natural habitats for bears.
- A set of measures with application in forestry and wildlife.
- Best practice guide to improve the protection systems of the sheep farms and apiaries, orchards and agricultural crops in order to reduce the conflicts.
- A thematic map on bear distribution and other relevant locations from the project's area.
- A best practice guide on domestic waste management in the areas with habituated bears.
- Assessment of initial status of brown bear conservation within the limits of the project.
- Information events and advertising and information materials: informative panels, brochures, project banner, stickers, posters, pens, tailor-made T-shirts, hats.
- Web-site and discussion forum.

Coordinator beneficiary:

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN FORESTRY MARIN DRACEA

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