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*The wolves and local communities in Vrancea County/Romania*  
15 December 2005 – 30 June 2007

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## **FINAL REPORT**

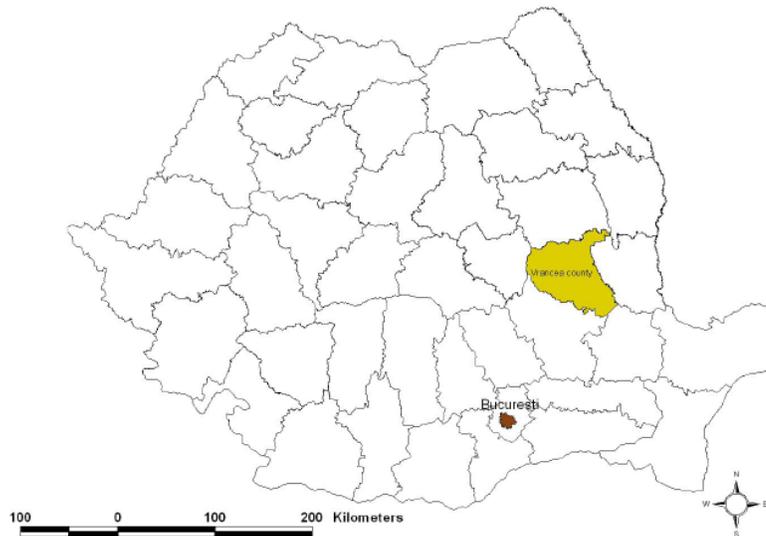
Project leader: Nadia Ivanof



## Project background

In the mountainous part of Vrancea, that occupies only 0,2% of Romania's area, live around 100 wolves, meaning around 4% of the Romanian wolf population, out of which at least 10 are poached yearly. Until a few time ago, it was considered that the wolf caused significant damage to livestock and represented a serious threat for humans. The cases of sheepfold attacks are strongly exaggerated and publicized, although wolves' fault can't be proved. The project carried out previously showed that the keys of wolf protection are sustained educational campaigns targeted to shepherds, demonstrations of the efficiency of modern systems of animal protection (electrical fences), demonstrations of falseness of articles about "bloody" wolf attacks on sheepfolds and elaboration of a wolf management plan.

### Position of Vrancea county in Romania



## Project goal and objectives

**The aim** of the project "*The wolves and local communities in Vrancea County*" is the conservation of wolves packs in Vrancea County by implementing anti-poaching activities, promoting the electrical fences as effective protection system for sheepfold defense and improvement of wolves' negative image.

The project's **objectives** are: initiating anti-poaching activities; establishing a management plan for wolves' protection; involving the local communities in the protection actions.

## Progress in objectives achieving

### Initiating anti-poaching activities

For promoting the electrical fences efficiency and informing the inhabitants about attacks on sheepfolds by wolves, we organised beginning with April 2006 some meetings with shepherds, local inhabitants and represents of local councils from Tulnici, Lepsa, Soveja, Campuri and Vizantea villages. It has been sustained several presentations about:

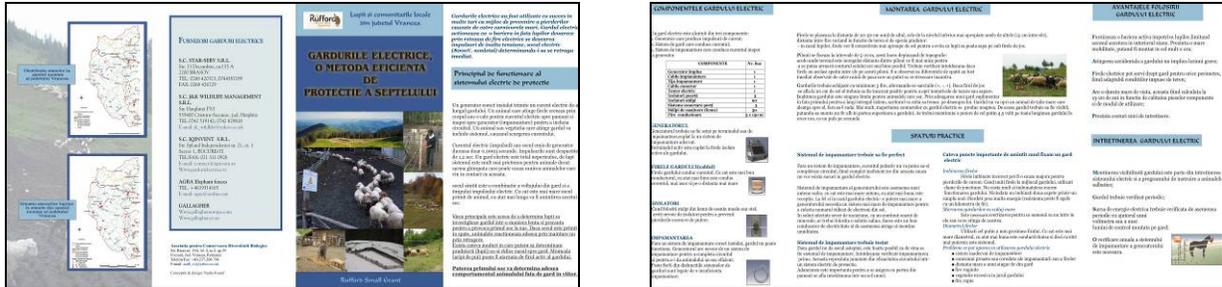
- *Electrical fences – a possible solution for conflict diminution between people and wolf*, the main subjects being the reasons of introducing the protection system for sheepfolds in Vrancea mountain area, electrical fence parts and also the acquisition costs for this kind of system;
- *„People and large carnivore”*, being discussed the following themes: coexistence between people and wolves, pro and counter arguments for wolf conservation necessity, the negative effects connected on wolves disappearance, conflicts causes, possible solution for attacks reduction;
- *Analyse the poaching situation for Canis lupus specie* (poaching cases, poaching reducing modes);
- *Legal provisions – penalties in poaching cases*

At the end of presentation, the participants has been informed about possibility obtaining compensations and subventions, being presented the program looking producers support from hill and mountain regions for acquiring specific new endowments from internal production, this program being financed through „Romanian rural developing”, also being presented the low fragment from Hunting Found and Game Protection Law who grants compensations for damages produced by large carnivores.

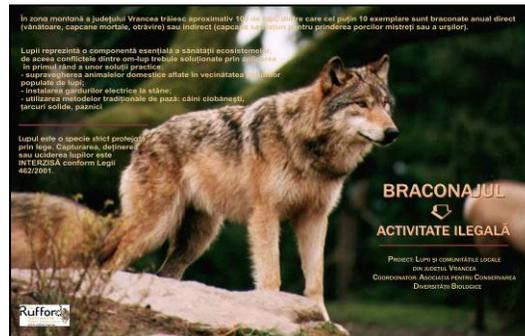
In May 2007, with the occasion of a religious event in Valea Neagra village, it took place an information campaign for poaching prevention. At this event had participated a number of 500 persons from Nereju, Naruja, Nistoresti, Vrancioaia, Paltin communes and Focsani. With this occasion it has been assembled an open tent, being disseminated posters and leaflets, and a group of 30 children from Prahuda village school had discussed with peoples. The action from Valea Neagra hermitage being a religious one, we adapted our message speaking about the biblical command “do not kill”, do not kill people and animals, neither directly nor indirectly through pollution or habitat destruction.



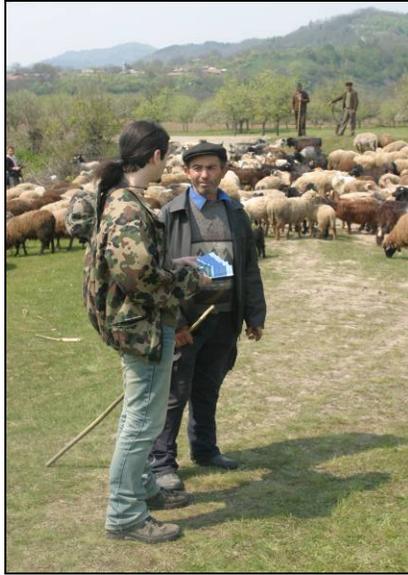
In March 2006 we developed a leaflet named “*Electrical fences – efficient method to defend the livestock*” and of poster “*Poaching – illegal activity*” This leaflet was realised with a clear purpose: to inform the population about the performances and efficiency of the electric fence systems, installation, and how-to-use procedures. This leaflet is structured as following: how to use the electrical system; components; assembling; advices; advantages; maintenance; the sheepfolds distribution throughout Vrancea County (map); a statistical report on the wolves attacks over sheepfolds from Vrancea County mountainous area. Those who want to buy an electrical fence system can study a comprehensive list with national and international electrical fence systems suppliers.



In order to reduce the wolves poaching phenomena, it has been conceived a poster entitled “*Poaching – illegal activity*”, A3 size, being achieved at the end of April 2006. The poster is referring to the actual state of wolf poaching, subtitled the fact that the wolf species is strictly protected by Romanian law, a special attention being according to practical solution in solving wolf – local inhabitants conflicts.



Through informative campaign about electrical fences function, there were disseminated these materials at the meetings with shepherds, local inhabitants and represents of local councils. Members of the project actions implementation team have disseminated the poster in the city halls from mountain area where it has been registered poaching cases and also at the meetings with inhabitants and shepherds. The leaflet was also distributed in the villages with a long tradition on livestock growing, with especially emphasis on precincts with frequent attacks of large carnivores on sheepfolds (Vintileasca, Nereju, Bârseşti, Tulnici and Soveja).



**Field investigation of poaching cases** - Extension of protected areas local network and especially founding the Putna-Vrancea Natural Park in northwest area of Vrancea Mountains, also changing the local inhabitants attitude about wolves and generally about large carnivores, were elements which gradually lead to a diminution of poaching cases number for wolves.

Monitoring the poaching cases we achieved following two directions:

- Investigating on field the poaching cases then when information were obtained in time;
- Obtaining information from different unofficial sources (animal breeders, foresters, local inhabitants etc).

Thus, we investigated on field, together with Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea a number of 4 poaching cases and for other 3 cases we obtained information from unofficial sources.

Location	Poaching data	Nr. killed wolves	Poaching modes	Determinative causes	Favoring elements
<b>Cases investigated on field</b>					
Valea Zabalei (Nereju)	12 Febr 2006	1 ♀	Shooting in absence of legal approvals	Merging with a dog by hunters	Attracting the wolves into the area because additional feeding of bears with horse meat
Muntele Giurgiu	28 May 2006	1 ♂	Physical aggression of the shepherd and the guard dogs from the sheepfold	Wolf repeatedly attacks on sheepfold and killing of 4 sheep	Placing the sheepfold at only 10 meters of forest boundary
Bahneanu	20 June 2006	1 ♂	Shooting in absence of legal approvals	Shooting by a hunter from observatory	Attracting the wolves into the area because additional feeding of bears with horse meat
Lepsa	29 Nov 2006	1 ♀	Shouted wolf female on the national road, being surprised on the headlight	Lake of passing areas (over or below) for wild fauna	Auto traffic intensifying on roads which are crossing the wolf packs territories
<b>Cases investigated based on unofficial sources</b>					
Vintileasca	January 2006	1	Wolf captured and killed by a local inhabitant with a trap assembled in the sheep shelter fence	Wolf repeatedly attacks on sheepfold	The inhabitant farmstead was placed next to the forest
Vizantea-Soveja	April 2006	1	A dead body of a shouted wolf was found on the outskirts	-	-
Neculele	February 2007	1	Wolf killed by an inhabitant with an axe	Wolf attack on farmstead animals	The inhabitant farmstead was placed next to the forest

From analyzing these cases we inferred the following conclusions:

- Overlapping the areas with anthropic activities over wolf's territory is the main favoring element for producing poaching cases;
- Unbalances produced in the trophic chains through diminishing the number of individuals from prey species contribute to increase the wolf attacks on domestic animals and, indirectly, to rise the number of poaching cases;
- Supplementary feeding of bears with domestic animal carcasses is concentrating wolves on reduced surfaces, making possible illegal shooting;
- Natural habitats fragmentation and increasing lines of access into the areas frequented by wolf packs and a lake of underground passing for these animals favoring the poachers access and facilitating illegal shooting.

## Establishing a management plan for wolves protection

After outlining the action plan within the framework of the previous project, the team formed by members of ACDB and Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea has succeeded as, beginning with February 2006 to detailed, defining clear actions, responsible institutions and deadlines. A very important thing was the fact that at the achieving this management plan there were active implicated also the local institutes and authorities with responsibilities in wildlife administrating and settlement, but also stakeholders from project area. As a result of repeatedly meetings with stakeholders from areas which are overlapped on habitats populated with wolves it was outlined a first version of management plan for wolf in Vrancea County. This first version was discussed at a meting organized in period 12-13 December 2006 with Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea, Focsani Forestry Department represents and a local NGO involved in large carnivores conservation actions. Observations of the participants at these discussions were integrated into the final version of this management plan.

The general objective of the management plan is maintaining the wolf viable population in coexistence with local inhabitants as integrant part of ecosystems from vest part of Vrancea County. (The main aim is represented by the conservation and restoration of viable wolves populations in coexistence with the local populations, as an integrant part of the Vrancea County ecosystems). The Wolf Management Plan is a comprehensive document, which systematically offers fundamental guidelines for wolf management in Vrancea County. This plan is based on scientific knowledge, and will create a connection within the legislative, administrative, cultural, economic and social frameworks. It is also based on the accepted and ratified international conventions, plans and recommendations related to wolf conservation and protection worldwide.



The management plan for wolf from Vrancea County was structured as follow:

*I. Introduction.* Short presentation of the existing situation regarding the wolves population, their time evolution, the conservation and protection measures adopted from the past to present.

*II. General information:* Species description; Population size and distribution; Way of living; Wolves and people; Threats, limitative factors and obstacles for the conservation actions; Conservation status and recent conservation measures.

*III. The main aim and objectives of the management plan.*

*IV. Actions for fulfilling the management plan aims and objectives.* Detailing the actions have been achieved as a result of discussions with all involved institutions, in such manner that to allow establishing clear responsibilities and deadlines. As well there have been enunciated also the possible financing sources which to assure actions implementation.

There have been defined 5 actions sets:

*1. ACTIONS FOR PROPER WORKING OF THE PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK*

In this actions set, there have been established responsibilities and deadlines for proposing as ecological corridors and areas of impact diminution for anthropic activities, some important areas in assuring connectivity between protected areas, important for wolf population conservation.

In this case the most part of responsibility return to Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea which is following to achieve the studies for scientific substantiation and send to Environmental Ministry these proposals. Also it has been defined as a priority identifying of all stakeholders from protected areas with importance for wolf conservation and establishing of an Administration Council of these areas.

*2. ACTIONS FOR ESTIMATING, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT WOLF POPULATION IN VRANCEA COUNTY*

Enounced action in this set projecting a coherent system for annual evaluation of dynamics and viability of wolf local population through applying some monitoring methods like:

- estimating wolf number based on: quantification tracks on transects method, radio-telemetry method, DNA identifying of individuals and based on individual identifying at attracting places and watching with remote photo cameras;
- estimating wolf diet
- monitoring and management of catching disease which can affect wolf viable population.

There have been established deadlines where responsible institutions will present an annual report and will inform national and international scientific communities about the obtained results. As for poach diminishing is has been specified which are the next steps and institutions involved in action for identifying areas with high rata of poaching and which are the coercive measures necessary to be applied for discouraging persons involved in such practices. It has been projected and establishing of a rescue and monitoring centre for wolves in Vrancea County, following that Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea to finance establishing this centre as independent department.

*3. ACTIONS FOR DIMINISHING CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND WOLF*

Actions identified and planed in this set follow practical measures, necessary for diminishing the damages registered by animal breeders and assure functioning of a compensation system for damages produced by wolves. Thus, it have been established responsibilities for promoting efficient protection systems of sheepfolds, establishing of some

dog farm specialized in sheep guard and there were been planed periodically trainings of animal breeders so these to have actualized information about compensation scheme. The local environmental NGO's have been made responsible for monitoring wolf false attacks and emit some press release through mass media.

#### *4. ACTIONS FOR REDUCING OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND TOURISTIC ACTIVITIES IMPACT ON LARGE CARNIVORES HABITATS*

Having in view the fact that in the last time a big part of localities overlapped on habitats populated by wolves, tend to became small mountain stations profiled on week-end agro-tourism, it has been elaborated an action set which to diminish tourism impact on wolf population. In this context it has been emphasized actions about forbidden opening of new touristy routes in areas which are important to wolf population and it was established measures for promoting of an adequate behavior of tourists. As for diminishing impact of infrastructure developing, it was established that roads to be marked with guide posts for signaling wild fauna presence. Opening of new roads have to be made only based on impact studies.



#### *5. AWARENES EDUCATIVE ACTIONS ON WOLF POPULATION VULNERABILITY*

This set of actions was given mostly to local environmental NGO's but also to communication department of Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea. Identifying and obtaining some financing sources for editing toolkits of awareness on wolf population vulnerability represent a decisive step enounced in this management plan. It is important that local inhabitants to be awareness on the importance of maintaining a viable wolf population as part of ecosystems from mountain area of Vrancea County. In this context there have been charged all institutions involved in wildlife administration or in settling antropic activities with potential negative impact.

The management plan for wolf from Vrancea was assumed by all signatory institutions and it has been officially sent to Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea in January 2007. Further, it was multiplied in 30 exemplars, being sent to interested persons and/or institution. Monitoring the implementation manner and respecting of actions proposed through this management plan will by achieved also by ACDB, annually being elaborated a report.

## Involving the local communities in the protection actions

In order to achieve the web page referring to the wolf protection in Vrancea, beginning with March 2006 it has been conceived its structure. The web page “*Wolves and local communities in Vrancea County/Romania*” is hosted in the project web domain [www.biodiversitate.ro/lup](http://www.biodiversitate.ro/lup) and it has the following structure:

- ◆ *Wolves in Vrancea* (wolves morphology, feeding, behavior);
- ◆ *Threats* (habitat fragmentation, poaching, hunting, reducing and simplifying food sources);
- ◆ *Protection statute*
- ◆ *Conflict reducing* (local inhabitants education; electrical fences, damage compensation);
- ◆ *Educative materials*;
- ◆ *Contact*.

**The meetings in schools** were developed in 2006 and 2007 and they included information sessions for children from mountain area.

The meetings developed in period **1-2 June 2006** in Coza, Paulesti and Tulnici schools, there were presented different themes about wolf ecology also about necessity of local inhabitant coexistence with those animals. There were presented the following subjects:

- Wolf – informations about biology and social behaviour;
- Pro and against protecting wolf species;
- Negative effects because wolf disappearance.

The children become involved in a series of educative games, in order to emphasize some specific particularities of the target species and to create them a positive image. Subsequently, the pupil will perceive them as charismatic species, photos being used to support this goal.



Between **22 April – 17 June 2007**, it has developed a contest of essays for pupils on: „*My forest – wolf's home*” in 9 schools from rural area. There were took place presentations about wolf species, pupils being also informed about the contest. With this occasion there were presented the rules of this contest, participation conditions, the central theme of the contest and also the prizes offered.



Children interested by this contest sent their essays at the Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea headquarter. This contest was achieved in collaboration with Environmental Protection Agency Vrancea and had the support of the Vrancea County School Inspectorate. There were attended 37 essays of the pupils from 7 schools. The awarding of prizes took place in the precincts of House of Culture Naruja. All participants received promotional materials consist in posters and leaflets. The prizes were consisted in camping equipment. Also a number of 40 pupils from the wining school will benefited by a thematic excursion in areas where the wolf problems have been resolved.

Tabel 1. Schools in which it was achieved contest promotion

Data	School	Localitaty	No. participant pupils
08.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Valea Sarii	60
08.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Valea Sarii	40
09.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Paltin	70
10.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Naruja	50
11.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Nistoresti	50
11.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Nistoresti	50
15.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Vrancioaia	50
16.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Paltin	30
16.05.2007	Elementary school I-VIII classes	Nereju	50

## **Changes in the project**

No major changes were carried out compared with the initial project.

## **Continuation**

The project continuation will be realized by fundraising activities. After RSG grant will be focused on building a small-scale wolves conservation centre. Thus, the team will write projects for National Environmental Found. After construction of the centre in Lepsa village, in a old forestry building, the team will be focused on self-sustaining by ecological and educational eco-tourism. Part of the necessary founds after RSG grant will be provided by donations (in Romania for a person is possible to donate 1% by taxes).

Until now have been prepared and submitted a proposal for a project in order to initiate a debate with national large carnivore specialist about the future management plan. The grant was submitted to MATRA KAP – social transformation component, and the evaluation was in November 2005. The amount of request is about 3450 £.

We intend to make a proposal for buying electrical fences for a demonstration project in Zabala and Naruja Valley. The proposal was done in December 2005 for National Environmental Found. The possible amount of request for carrying this kind of activities is about 10000 £ for one year operations.

## **Team work**

The project was carried out by Association for Biodiversity Conservation with the following team work:

1. Nadia Ivanof (environmental expert, Association for Biodiversity Conservation)
2. Silviu Chiriac (head of biodiversity department in EPA Focsani),
3. Radu Sandu Mihai (expert in biodiversity department in EPA Focsani)
4. Stanga Cosmin (environmental expert, Association for Biodiversity Conservation)
5. Marius Matache (designer)
6. Florin Vulpoiu (vet doctor)
7. Sorin Oprea (PhD student, Bucharest University)
8. Liviu Balbarau (wildlife administrator)
9. Cristian Tanase (wildlife administrator)
10. Gelu Radu (guide)

The project was fully sustained by Environmental Protection Agency Focsani, Focsani Forestry Department and Vrancea School Inspectorate.

## Budget

The initial project budget was 4930 £. The amount was transferred into our account in 15 December 2005. The expenditure was in ROL (Romanian currency). For budget calculation, according with national accounting rules, the exchange rate was calculate at the rate of first day of month when was made the expenditure.

Items	Budget (£)	Expenditure (£)
<i>Salary for project management</i>	600	600
<i>Transportation for field trips, meetings and project implementation</i> - Fuel for field trips - Train tickets - Bus tickets	770	1040
<i>Accommodation and subsistence</i> - Accommodation for field trips and meetings = 625 £ - Subsistence costs = 455 £ * The daily allowance was calculated using the national rate for per diem	1080	930
<i>Consumable</i> - General office supplies (paper, folders, envelopes, rain field notes, color cartridge for reports) - Battery for equipments and lights - Photo films - Sterile gloves and sterilization substances for handling the poached wolves	415	325
<i>Equipments</i> - 1 digital photo camera - 1 photo camera card - field equipment for team members (tent, sleeping bag, hiking shoes and rain equipment)	900	1 digital photo camera - 465 1 photo camera card - 20 field equipment for team members – 500 <b>Total equipment - 985</b>
<i>Publishing costs</i> - Printing the leaflet <i>Electrical fences – efficient method to defend the livestock</i> , color, A4 double sides, 3000 exemplars - Printing the poster <i>“Poaching – illegal activity”</i> , 1000 exemplars, A3 - <i>Printing the management plan for wolf – 30 exemplars</i>	815	Printing 3000 exemplars of leaflet – 320 Printing 1000 exemplars of poster – 260 Printing 30 exemplars of management plan for wolf – 180 <b>Total – 760</b>
<i>Communication</i> - phone, e-mail & Internet, mail	350	290
<b>Total</b>	<b>4930</b>	<b>4930</b>

In budget execution was no major changes. The bookkeeping was done by Association for Biodiversity conservation. For further detail we can provide copies of receipts and invoices.