



FINAL REPORT

Title of Application

Support for reintroduced beaver population in Romania.

Name of Applicant and/or Organisation

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Project Background

The project aims is to create a support for the reintroduced beaver population in Romania by evaluating the peoples attitude regarding new beavers population, carrying out an information campaign based on this survey and provide recommendations for beaver damages management for local and national authorities.

We must remember that *beaver is protected specie* at international level by Bern Convention/1996 and Habitat Directive 92/43/EEC, Annex II, and therefore, it is our duty to involve in its protection and conservation.

At the end of XIX century the beaver was exterminated from Romania. Based on field survey, a group of Romanian and German organizations (ICAS, Bavarian Ministry of Environment, Carpati Foundation, Bund Naturschutz Foundation) had started a reintroduction campaign in the most suitable habitats from Romania. Thus, between 1998 and 2001, were reintroduced 91 beavers, including adults and juveniles, on Mureș, Olt, and Ialomița Rivers. At present the beaver population is in numerical and surface increase and, after 7 years from the first reintroduction action, there is a need of an evaluation of public attitude towards beavers and to identify the modalities to ensure the long term conservation of this population. Also, it is very important to acquire more data regarding this new species in the Romanian ecosystems (possible damages and prevention measures).

The project team was involved from the beginning in the reintroduction and monitoring of this species in Romania and they want to continue their 7 years efforts regarding beaver's reintroduction in Romania, as a part on enriching the country biodiversity.

The 7 years efforts involved about 25 organizations from Romania and Germany, supported by the European Beaver Experts Group. This initiative is based on the support received from Romanian Nature Conservation Authorities, which understood that the reintroduction of beavers will significantly contribute to renaturation and restoration of biodiversity of areas located along medium size rivers. During these years of monitoring we have observed the otter colonization of beaver habitats, which is a sign for improvement of these habitats.

The proper future management actions will determine the success of beaver reintroduction in Romania and will allow the connection with the population from neighbouring countries (the Mures River population will be connected tot the Hungarian population and the Ialomita River population will be connected to the Bulgarian population).

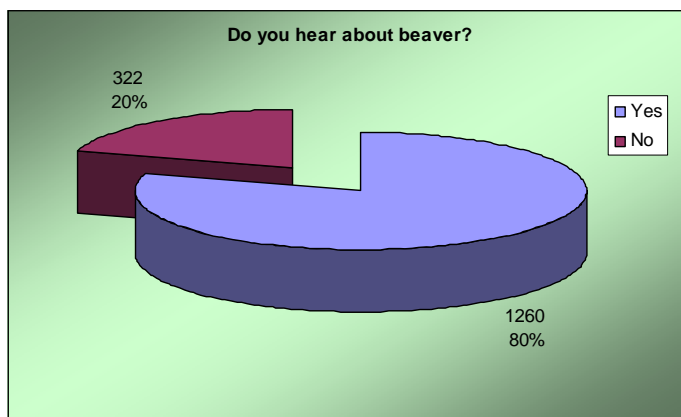
Results

The main activities were related to:

- **A.** survey regarding locals attitude related to reintroduced beaver population,
- **B.** public awareness campaign for long term conservation of reintroduced population
- **C.** study regarding beaver damages.

A. During one year the project team tested locals' people opinion and attitude regarding beaver reintroduction. That's very important for reintroduction success guarantee.

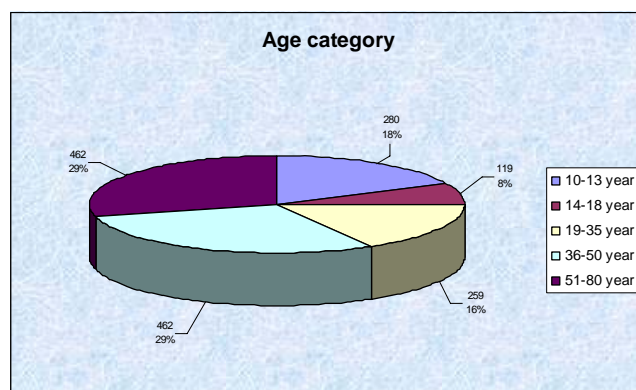
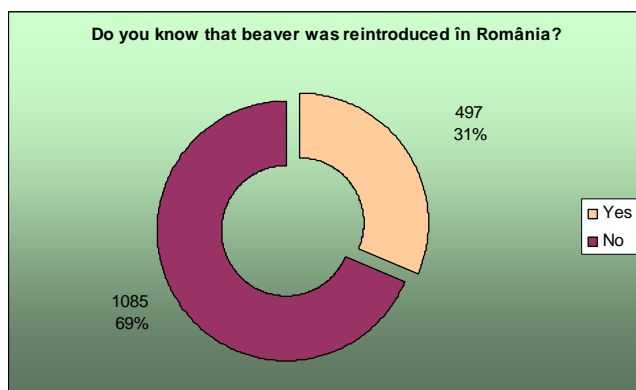
Therefore we have elaborated and apply a beginning questionnaire, which was as scope to see some of aspects related to beaver. In that mode we have evaluated population information and knowledge level linked to beaver biology, ecology, ethology and status of beaver in Romania.



Some of the results are concluded in following diagrams:

It is strange that after ~ 10 years of reintroduction 20% of people don't hear anything about beaver and just 31 % of them know about beaver reintroduction in Romania.

That's a result of fact that mainly majority of rural peoples are up to 40 years old (29% up to 51 year).



B. Public awareness and information

Moreover we'll have important information and education actions through brochure, posters and meetings with local peoples. The third aspect is related to possible damages produced by beaver on private lands and needs an extensive field study.

We meet on the field with the farmers, which live close to the Olt River or have crops in the populated zones by beaver.

The target of these meetings was to collect information related with the damages produced by beavers in the agricultural crops, forest vegetation and to inform them regarding the some beaver general information and the methods that can be used to recover the damages.

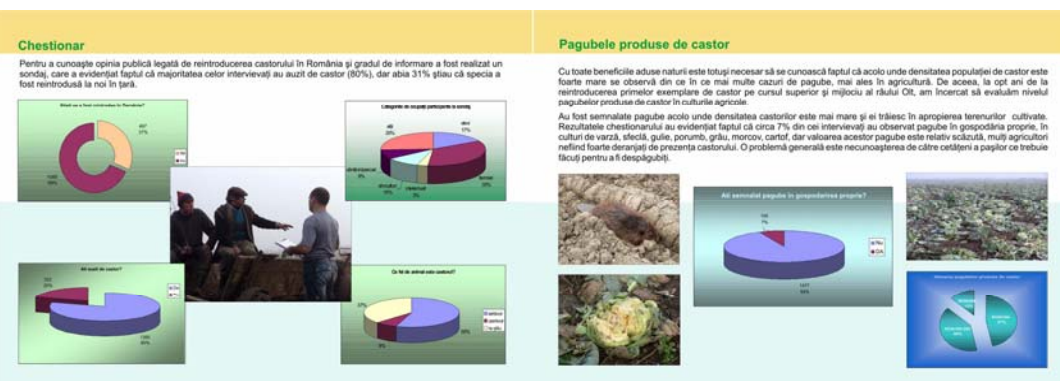
Also, they have been informed about the authorities that are in charge with this species and about the fact that beaver is a protected species by national and European legislation.

From our experience, we observed that a good method of aware the adults are indirect; through their children who are more receptive and after receive the information transmits it to their parents.



Workshop with authorities

Informative materials (brochures and posters) are distributed to the authorities, farmers, hunters, schools and local people.



Another method of public awareness and information implemented was by media help. The information was transmitted on local TV channels in Braşov area.



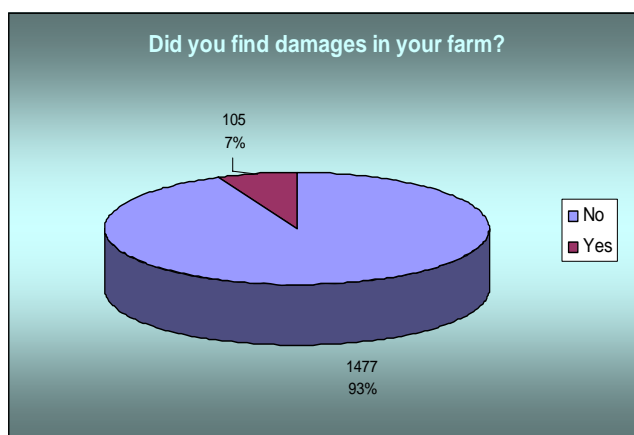
C. Study regarding beaver damages

The field work regarding beaver damages was reveal that on Olt river the damage level is continually increasing, but hasn't achieve a critical level.

The damages level evaluation was made on Olt River between Bixad – Harghita County and Turnu Rosu – Sibiu County. The lands are farmer's propriety in a proportion of 70%. The rest of fields belong to town halls.

Our actions were focused on two damage aspects: damages in agricultural lands and damages on tree covered lands.

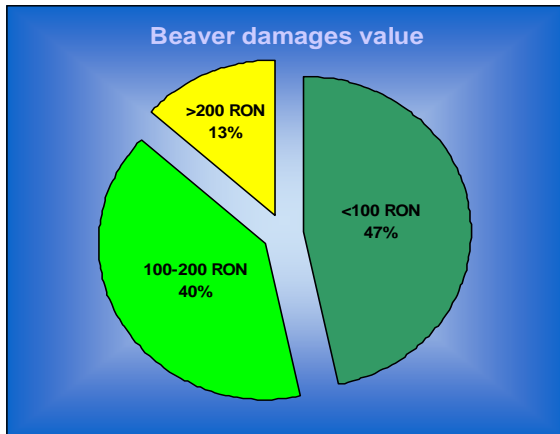
The big number of owners produces a high fragmentation of agricultural lands and determines a great variety of crops.



The local peoples have been asked if they have find damages in their farm. 105 cases of damages were find,

The damages monitoring was done on a large section of the river course. The damages were reported on the following cultures: corn, wheat, potatoes, sugar beet, cabbage, carrot, turnip. Beaver prefers corn, sugar beet and

wheat cultures, this fact being correlated with the beaver density on a specific area and the distance between the cultures and the bank of the river. The studies demonstrate that the cultivated land was more protected where a forest curtain of shrubs exist between water and cultures.



The value of damages is easy to see in the diagram. Most of them are under 100 Romanian LEI, but we have found few cases of huge damages produced in the crops (~1000m² cabbages, beet crop destroyed or cankered willow cluster)

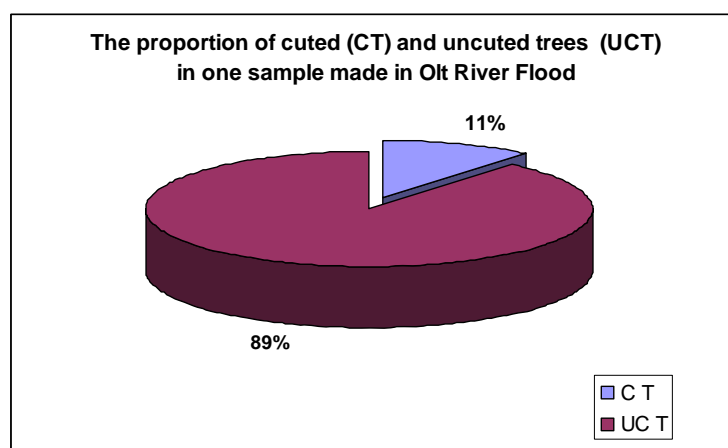
Regarding the damages over trees and shrubs these were the conclusions: the main species affected were: *Salix* (over 90% from cases), *Alnus incana*,

Cornus sanguinea, *Corylus avellana*.





Beaver produce damages in crops and forestry sector



In the area with high beaver concentration Ghidfalau – Ilieni we have determined 11% of cut trees.

Conclusions:

- The local people are relatively poor informed in beaver biology, ecology, ethology and protection status of this specie in Romania;
- The level of damages produced by beaver on the Olt River is still low. Many of the local people know and tolerate the beaver presence. Very few of the reported damages are important as value.

The damages in the forester sector are increasing constantly proportional with beaver density. The most affected are the willow and alder species.

- The interactions between humans and beavers are increasing, in the context that both, human population and beaver population, are continuously grow.

- As a result of beaver density increase, also the beaver area extends. Thus, after 10 years after the reintroduction on many Olt River affluents (Homorod, Râul Negru, Tărlung etc.) some beaver families are constantly seen on that areas.

- The local people that live close to Olt River was informed and they receive brochures and posters.

- The hunting associations are interested of increasing beaver density and to protect the species.

- The regional EPA's are preoccupied and upholds the beaver conservation

- The local authorities are less implicated in the management and protection of the species.

Recommendations:

- On the agricultural fields situated close to the rivers populated with beavers it must be avoid the cultures of kohlrabi, cabbage, clover, which are very wanted by beavers. These cultures will be replaced as much as possible with wheat, corn, potatoes.

- It is useful to plant a forest curtain at 10-20 m beside the river side, where it is possible.

- In order to reduce the beaver density on some high populated areas, some of the individuals can be relocated on places unpopulated.

- It is important to continue the public awareness and information champain.