



# NewStories from the Făgăraș Mountains

November - December 2024

FOR COMMUNITIES  
FOR NATURE

[carpathia.org](https://carpathia.org)

# Main activities summary

1. Forest conservation and management
2. Ecological restoration
3. Wildlife conservation
4. Conservation Enterprise Programme
5. Communication and community outreach

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# Forest conservation and management

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The trees wore autumn colours until the second half of November. In the Dragoslavele area, the tree meadow looked like a mosaic as each species boasted a different colour. In the picture you can see beech, spruce, birch, oak, willow and aspen - a combination of species as beautiful as it is beneficial for biodiversity.

The end of November brought the first snowfalls and lent the landscape a new kind of magic, that lasts all through December and more.



© Claudiu Toanță  
Winter at Râuşor Dam, in the south of the Făgăraş Mountains





Even our rangers, who spend so much time in nature, are sometimes impressed by the colours of the forest. While on patrol to make sure all is well, they capture shots like this one from Cheile Dâmboviței, in the Rucăr commune in the southern Făgăraș Mountains.

# Valea Vâlsanului

Unregulated logging troubles the waters... literally. Colleagues in the field noticed at the end of November that the Vâlsan river was dirty and full of silt, the result of logging in rainy weather.

This is all the more worrying when you consider that the area is home to the *Romanichthys valsanicola* (asprete), a living fossil fish considered the rarest freshwater fish in Europe.



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# Ecological restoration



# Checking last years' plantings

We checked how seedlings planted in previous years are faring. We analyse some representative areas, which help us get an idea of what's happening over dozens of other hectares.

Our rangers regularly mark the stakes that mark these areas so they can easily find them in future seasons.



© Claudiu Toantă

# We've finished our autumn planting

The best period for autumn planting lasts about a month and varies greatly from year to year, depending on weather conditions. The first snows of the year forced us to put a stop to planting in November. We drew the line and counted:

- We planted a total of 21.6 ha.
- We used 86,500 seedlings, comprising 79,000 spruce, 7,000 mountain ash and 500 Swiss pine.
- We involved 48 seasonal workers from the communities in the area, as well as a specialized local firm.
- The planting took place in three sites: Zârna and Groapele (near Nucșoara commune - Argeș county) and Mesteacă (Vâlcea county).



# White nurseries



In the Dragosloveni tree nursery, beech saplings, covered by the first snow, are ready for wintering.



Snow is also good for silver fir seedlings, the slowest-growing of the species found in our tree nurseries.



Snow has fallen on the spruce saplings in the Valea lui Ivan tree nursery.



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# Wildlife conservation

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© Dan Dinu

# Wolf

We are preparing a new study on wolves.

For the first time, we're using an innovative type of sampling: we're collecting the cells that remain in the snow in wolf tracks.

We are now in the training phase with the rangers who will be involved, so they can collect relevant samples.



# Bison

As the temperature drops, the food that the bison can find dwindles. We spotted a group of bison near a garden in the Tămaș area and chased them away to make sure they didn't do any damage.

We know that reintroduced bison are still vulnerable to extreme conditions. That's why we've prepared food for them: if it's a harsh winter, we'll fill the feeders to help them get through the difficult season.





The beaver reintroduction programme continues! We are preparing to relocate six young beavers in the southern Făgăraş Mountains.

© Liviu Ungureanu



# Conflict management

We do our best to prevent conflicts with wild animals, but sometimes the inevitable happens. In these cases we compensate farmers for their losses. In November we donated eight cows for damage caused in the Rucăr municipality.





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# Conservation Enterprise Programme

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# Support for local businesses

The Carpathia Fund is a funding mechanism through which we aim to contribute to the development of local communities around the Făgăraș Mountains.

The 2024-2025 Small Grants Component aims to motivate entrepreneurs in the area to develop with respect for nature and to use local resources first and foremost.

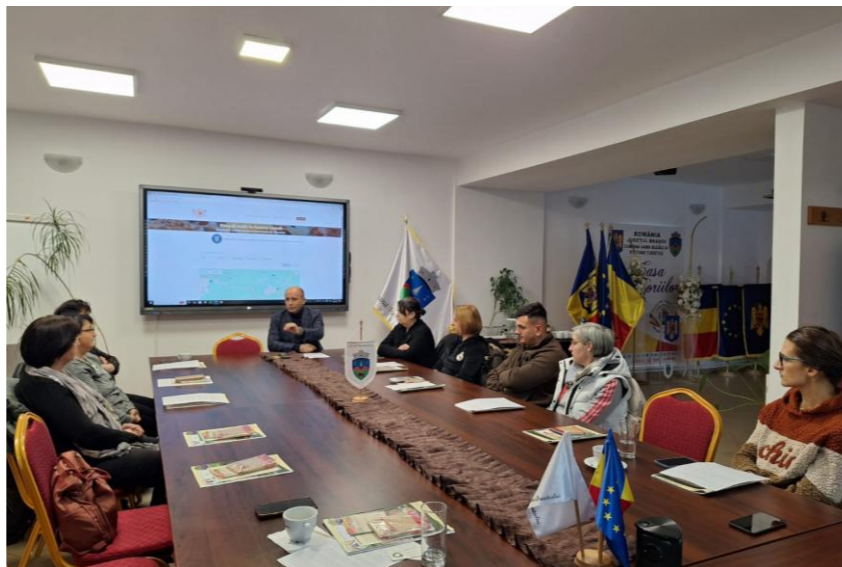
In November, we selected the projects of six local businesses and awarded them 5000 Euro each. We will monitor them closely for a year to assess their impact.



Advice and learning opportunities: these are just two of the benefits we offer through the Roadele Munților community to entrepreneurs who ask for our help.

In December, we organised an exchange of experience for entrepreneurs from Racovița and Sebeș who want to authorise and open Local Gastronomic Points. We went with them on a visit to Vama Buzăului, where we were welcomed by the local mayor and learned about the GastroLocal project.

Much as we enjoyed the whole day, we have to admit that the best moment was the tasty and educational lunch at one of the Local Gastronomic Points in the area!



# Cobor Biodiversity Farm

The cold has made its presence felt on the farm. With the right clothing you can still enjoy hiking outside, just enough to greater appreciate what you'll find inside.



The fire burns merrily in the stove, and fresh dishes are waiting to be tasted. We use local ingredients and our chefs are ready to please even the most refined palates.

Come to the farm to catch your breath and enjoy the tranquility.

Call 0770 963 238 for reservations.



© Jozsef Laszlo



50 hectares of freedom, companionship and health! This is what we offer to those horse owners (from Romania and abroad) who choose the horse sanctuary and horse livery at Cobor Biodiversity Farm.

Call 0770 963 238 to find out more about costs and conditions.





© Oana Marta

Casa Tanti Maria was present, together with Roadele Munților, at the Christmas MakerFair, an event organised by Orange at the Telephones Company Building in Bucharest – an iconic place and a landmark of the capital.

The unmistakable taste of the Făgăraș Mountains contributed to the festive atmosphere of the event.



# Grădinile Hodor / Hodor Gardens

**Hodor Gardens** is Romania's oldest and longest-running organic blueberry plantation, established in 1967. You can order their jam and other local products at

<https://roadelemuntilor.ro/>



© Andrei Popa

The story of Hodor's blueberry plantation is closely linked to the story of Marina Negoescu's family, who have owned it since after the Second World War. Nine varieties of blueberries are grown here, picked by hard-working hands and turned into jam.

The products are certified organic and their taste and flavour are unmistakable.





# Poiana Tămaș

Since we renovated it with respect for tradition and authentic materials, the old sheepfold in Poiana Tămaș/Tămaș Meadow has been functioning as a meeting and dining place for tourists staying at the camp. Although it's cold there now, nothing stops us from dreaming of the season when we will welcome guests to the area again.



© Alex Popa



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Communication  
and community  
outreach



We started November with a workshop on ecological reconstruction at the Faculty of Biology in Bucharest.

Mihai Zotta, our conservation director, shared his experience in restoring mountain nature, from forests and juniper groves to alder corridors. The discussion highlighted the importance of local communities and their relationship with wildlife.

The workshop was organized within the framework of the European SUPERB project.



Our colleagues recently participated in an exchange organized by the Rewilding Argentina Foundation, together with other organizations from Europe, Asia and the United States.

They visited Iberá National Park, Argentina, where nature conservation has transformed the area from a region considered devoid of potential into an example of ecological and economic renaissance.

They explored the endless subtropical rainforests of El Impenetrable and the spectacular landscapes of Patagonia Argentina National Park, with its mountain lions, guanacos and UNESCO sites. And they were impressed by Patagonia Azul, a project dedicated to marine biodiversity.

They came back convinced that our conservation model has a future. Nature can be reborn and local communities can thrive alongside it.





We were present in Košice, Slovakia, on the occasion of the international festival dedicated to environmental education.

We enjoyed presenting our work and our education programmes in the Făgăraş Mountains to a receptive audience, who welcomed us warmly.

Together with other delegates from academia, NGOs and nature-loving people we talked, learned and brainstormed ideas for the future.

In November we added a new chapter in the story of the Făgăraș Mountains - we launched the album 'Memorable encounters in the Făgăraș Mountains' at the Avrig City Library.

The local people have been living with nature for hundreds of years, and the excitement we aroused confirmed that we are on the same page when it comes to traditions and conservation.

The exhibition of photographs from the book will remain at the library until 12th January 2025, as an invitation to a dialogue between past and present, between man and nature. If you are travelling through Avrig, don't miss it!

The album was realised through the LIFE programme of the European Commission, co-financed by Foundation Conservation Carpathia.





Our book, "Memorable encounters in the Făgăraș Mountains", made a stop in Nucșoara in December.

Here we met some of the people whose stories you can find in the book: Constantin Berevoianu, the history teacher from Nucșoara, who guides his students along the mountain paths; Ion Cojocaru, the mayor of the commune, who has found his healing in the nature he loves; and Silvia Dan (Aunt Silvia, as those who know her call her), who at 80 years old sings with the same old-time vocals she inherited from her mother and grandmother.





# Carpathia Scholarships



**We have 20 scholars for nature  
and for communities.**

This year's Carpathia Scholarships are dedicated to young people passionate about nature and environmental sciences in the northern Făgăraș Mountains.

We selected 20 winners, who stood out for their good grades, dedication and a strong desire to support their community. In addition to financial support, they have access to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, an international personal development programme and a great opportunity to develop their perseverance and discover their passions and resources.



We met in November with representatives of NGOs that have implemented environmental projects in communities in the Făgăraș Mountains area, supported by the Carpathia Fund.

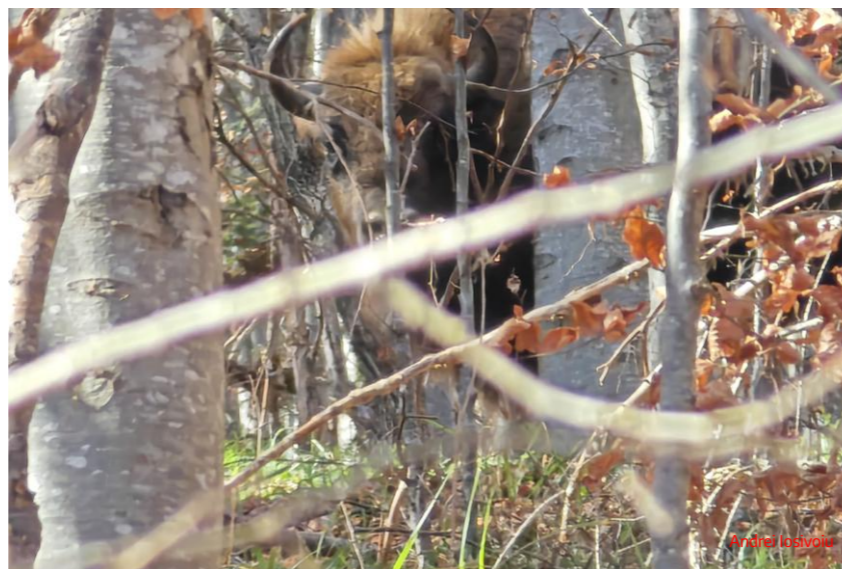
We had a lively discussion about the challenges they have encountered in implementing the projects and the lessons learned from this.

Their educational actions are reflected in the changing attitude of local people towards nature conservation, and this can only give us hope.



Photographer Joan Alvado visited Nucșoara for three weeks to capture the human-nature-spirituality relationship.

During the field visit we introduced him to the community, the Immortal Stories Forest project, the Dobroneagu area and the bison acclimatisation pen. We were lucky enough to even see free-ranging bison together!





60 children from 10 schools in Argeș County participated in the last table tennis competition of this year, the Winter Cup! It took place at the Voința Sports Club in Câmpulung Muscel, under the coordination of teacher Gabriel Poștoacă.

The enthusiasm of the young players and the teachers' appreciation give us hope that the future national champions might be among them!



Foundation Conservation Carpathia has implemented the table tennis programme in 10 schools in Argeș county for children in the community.

You can support the costs of this programme by donating here <https://www.carpathia.org/donations/>

© Andrei Iosivoiu



As the year comes to an end, we took some time to celebrate and remember at our Christmas dinner.

It was one of the rare opportunities we have to be all together in one place, and we used it to express our gratitude for all the successes and support we felt throughout the year.



© Daniela Grapă



From the peaks of the Făgăraș Mountains, where the wind carries tales of the wild, we wish you a year as wild and inspiring as the mountains themselves.

Happy New Year!



Happy new deer!

Best wishes from the Făgăraș Mountains!

# Results

**4,228,754 trees  
planted in clear-cuts,  
riverbanks and  
restoration areas of  
spruce monocultures**

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# Results

**27,642 ha**

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of forest under permanent protection and safeguarded for future generations

**78,000 ha**

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protected for wildlife, with no sport or trophy hunting

**353 locals**

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are involved in CARPATHIA project's activities, receiving a fair pay

**2,200**

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students and teachers involved in environmental education projects

**>30**

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local producers are part of the Roadele Munților Food Hub







FOUNDATION  
CONSERVATION CARPATHIA

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## How can you help?

Get in touch and let's discuss ways that you can get involved, as an individual and/or as a company.

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