

## ProPark – activity report for 2008 - 2009

### 1. Establishment of ProPark

Protected area management is a relatively new field of operation in Romania. The first administration, established in 1996 is serving the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. The first three national and nature park administrations were established in 1999/2000 with GEF World Bank support, followed by new administrations established in 2004 and 2005. There are more than 20 administration teams at present and more than 100 custodians – individuals or NGOs – managing smaller protected areas.

Information and training possibilities are very limited in Romania, mainly developed and organized within the lifetime of various projects developed and implemented by NGOs. That's why the idea of establishing an organization that would focus on supporting protected area managers with capacity building activities is supported by WWF Danube Carpathian Programme and Fauna and Flora International.

A study to determine the most suitable structure for the development and running of a long term capacity building programme in Romania was performed in 2007, consisting of a questionnaire addressed to different institutions and organisations and the review of the national legislation on the educational system. The conclusions revealed that the best option would be to have a non-profit organisation having as primary objective “Capacity building for protected area management”.

As a result, “ProPark – Foundation for Protected Areas” was established in April 2008 to address the need to support and improve the capacity for protected area management in Romania by developing long-term capacity building and training programmes for key protected area staff, custodians, environmental NGO's, but also for key stakeholders that are or could be involved in protected area management related activities / programmes.

All the legal steps and procedures for establishing and registering the foundation were carried out in the period between December 2007 and April 2008 and the foundation registered as a Romanian legal entity in May 2008.

International and Romanian protected area experts were invited in May 2008 for a two-days planning workshop to Poiana Brasov with the aim to contribute to, and agree on a method/process for developing the capacity building programme (*see* table Annex 1 for the list of participants).

A SWOT analysis was carried out and for some potential training packages, i.e. visitor management, biodiversity monitoring, information management, basic skills, fundraising and marketing, a draft structure of the packages was discussed and potential trainers have been listed during this workshop. Key target groups were also identified.

## 2. Developing and organising training seminars

Five training seminars were organised so far as a response to urgent needs in Retezat National Park (9-10 September 2008), in Vanatori Neamt Nature Park (1-2 October 2008), in Horezu (6-7 November 2008), in Sighisoara (7-8 March 2009) and in Cluj-Napoca (28-29 March 2009).

The topic of the first two modules was *“Visitor Management Supporting Local Development in and around Protected Areas - Basic elements for Visitor Management and related project development for Protected Areas”*.



21 persons participated in the Retezat National Park training module (including the trainers). They were mainly representatives of environmental NGO's and park administrations. One person participated from the University of Brasov.

In the Vanatori Neamt training module, there were 35 participants from various NGO's, park administrations, from the National Environmental Protection Agency, Romanian Forest Authority (Romsilva), University of Iasi, and Lafarge

Company.

The third training session organized by ProPark in 2008, was on basic communication skills was on request from a park administration and took place in Horezu. The topic was: *“Internal communication, communication, basic principles and communicating with visitors and the press”*. All of the participants (10) were members of the Buila Vanturarita National Park Administration.

Another training session on communication was organized in 7-8 of March 2009 in Sighisoara together with the Mihai Eminescu Trust, on request from the custodians of the Breite Reserve. There were 10 participants, most of them coming from the Breite Oak Reserve Administration. The topic was: *“Communication – basic principles, communicating with visitors, conflict resolution”*.



The last training seminar organised by ProPark was on “*Basic Knowledge about Protected Area Management*” and it took place in Cluj-Napoca at the end of March 2009. There were 22 participants from different environmental NGO’s, custodians of protected areas, especially of nature reserves, but also from the National Environmental Guard.

An evaluation form was designed and developed to assess the quality of the courses. The form comprises a set of twelve items and gives an assessment on the degree to which the content responded to the needs of the participants and on the quality of each training session, as well as on the performance of the trainers.. The answers of the trainees are introduced in an excel sheet where graphs can be obtained for each individual question in the end (*see* as model the results of the course evaluation in Retezat – Annex 2).



It is important to mention that all of the training courses organised so far were evaluated as being very good. The participants were very happy that such courses started to be offered in Romania.

For the rest of the topics identified as of high importance for the people involved in nature conservation activities in Romania, training modules will be organised in 2009, depending on the willingness and availability of the identified trainers, to provide lectures and on the availability of resources to prepare the modules

The high priority topics for the near future are:

- Management planning (especially for Natura 2000 sites) and assessment of management effectiveness;
- Effective communication techniques and interpretation, including nature animation;
- Environmental impact assessment (EIA), Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment and adequate assessments in Natura 2000 sites;
- Sustainable tourism and visitor management;
- EU funding opportunities for Protected Areas and project development and management;
- Basic knowledge on Natura 2000, Protected Areas and forest management in protected areas;
- Administrative issues in protected areas.

It is important to mention that a train the trainers session is planned for the year 2009 at least for 2 of the priority topics and, if resources allow, one for trainers on various topics to develop training skills.

### 3. Identifying and co-opting trainers

Terms of references were developed for lecturers/trainers contributing to the capacity building programme in April 2008. These serve as a tool for selecting trainers, as they include specific criteria that have to be met for being accepted as trainer. Technical competence requirements will be added for each topic for which training modules will be developed.

The ToR includes also standards and criteria for courses.

Trainers were identified for the following topics: management planning, communication, impact assessment, forest management in protected areas, ranger activities, basic knowledge on protected areas.

### 4. Accreditation of Training Programmes

In order to accredit the capacity building programme, it is needed that the occupations related to the management of protected areas are officially registered on the List of Professional Activities from Romania. At present there are only two occupations recognised in this respect: ranger and custodian of protected area.

The registration of these occupations is a necessary condition for releasing certificates (otherwise there is no legal support to do that).

A first contact has been established with the National Council of Professional Development of Adults. They are willing to help and guide ProPark in the accreditation process.

### 5. Projects

Three project proposals were submitted so far: for Local Funds / MATRA - KAP Grant, for SEE Funds (ProPark entered as partner in a larger project proposal) and for the Small Grants Programme offered by the Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation.



The last project proposal submitted was approved and is now implemented. The implementation period of the project is 01 April 2009 – 30 October 2009 and it aims at developing guidelines for organising junior ranger camp and activities as part of the educational programmes in protected areas, organizing a training event for protected area professionals and organising a Junior Ranger Camp – as part of the training programme - in the Cozia National Park.

The other project proposals were not funded.

## 6. Communication

A basic website is developed at the moment: [www.propark.ro](http://www.propark.ro). Information about the foundation and its programmes will be offered through the website, as well as news related to the new tendencies in the management of protected areas, publications, manuals, etc. Future training sessions will be presented as well, offering details and requirements for the potential participants.

## 7. Administration

The administrative tasks are covered by a part time staff, as the limited resources of the foundation is not allowing for full time employees. Unfortunately there are very few possibilities to secure funds for staff and administrative costs. The lack of an executive director and other staff is affecting significantly progress with the development of training programmes. Administrative costs were mostly covered so far by a project implemented by WWF DCP.

### Annex 1

#### List of Participants to the Poiana Brasov Workshop, May 2008:

No.	Name	Institution	Phone	Mobile	E-mail
1	Alina Alexa	WWF – DCP		+40 729555776	alina.natura2000@gmail.com
2	Angela Banaduc	Ecotur		+40 731013045	banaduc@yahoo.com
3	Doru Banaduc	Ecotur			
4	Andreas Beckmann	WWF – DCP, PROPARK board	+43 1 5245 470 70	+43 676 84 27 28 216	abeckmann@wwfdcp.org
5	Andrei Blumer	AER		+40 723186016	blumera@zappmobile.ro
6	Wilf Fenten	EUROPARC Consulting	+44 1729 860 003	+44 781 302 1577	wilf.fenten@europarc-consulting.org
7	Laurian Gheorghe	RO Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	+40 21 3160287	+40 743166876	Laurian.gheorghe@mmediu.ro
8	Mihai Gligan	RO Rangers Association	+40 – 364 – 800.834	+40 – 744 – 782.924	mgligan@yahoo.com
9	Cristof Hugentobler	PROPARK board	+41 44 932 21 10 – 0040 269 22 95 45	+41 77 432 27 59 – 0040 721 623 476	ch@forestconsult.ch



10	Marton Kelemen	Milvus Group		+40 740 833 741	marton.kelemen@milvus.ro
11	Andrea Krempels	Project manager, Sibiu Evangelical Church		+40-748-981063	ajkrepels@yahoo.de
12	James MacGregor	Ecoplan.net sarl	212 (0)37 749 444		jmacgregor@ecoplan.net.com
13	Cristian-Remus Papp	ECO	+40 264 425193	+40 745891929	Papp_cr@yahoo.co.uk
14	Tamas Papp	Milvus Group		+40 720 530 117	papp.tamas@milvus.ro
15	Laszlo Potozky	Environmental Partnership Romania, PROPARK board	+40 0266310678	+40 0744396813	laszlop@repf.ro
16	Erika Stanciu	WWF – DCP, PROPARK president	+40 268 477054	+40 722278452	erikas@zappmobile.ro
17	Alina Eva Szabo	WWF – DCP		+40 726839773	Alina_eva@yahoo.co.uk
18	Suzanne Tom	FFI	+44 1223 579 466	+ 44 (0) 7795440917	Suzanne.tom@fauna-flora.org
19	Peter Townsend	Environmental Education and Training Consultant	+44 1433 650839	+44 7879426782	peter@townsend60.wanadoo.co.uk
20	Daniel Zolner	Klagenfurt University	+43/483/604144-18	+43/850/5602352	zolner@e-c-o.at

Annex 2

Results of evaluation for the “*Visitor Management Supporting Local Development in and around Protected Areas - Basic elements for Visitor Management and related project development for Protected Areas*” training seminar.

Excelent – excellent, foarte bun - very good, bun - good, suficient – adequate, nereusit – not adequate

Figure no. 1. The result of the course evaluation in Retezat

