Federation Newsletter March 26

Activist Meeting at the Moara Veche in Hosman

News and updates

Update on Complaints

In collaboration with Agent Green, several complaints regarding forest management and illegal logging have led to important results. For the logging at Mănăstirea Nocrich (OS Dealul Sibiului), the National Environmental Guard issued a substantial fine of 50,000 lei for failing to protect biodiversity trees, soil, and forest infrastructure. In Rodbav, the complaint resulted in fines exceeding 30,000 lei and, notably, a criminal case for wood theft, which carries a prison sentence of 2–7 years. These outcomes demonstrate that persistent monitoring pays off and that it is worth remaining vigilant on violations. The complaint concerning Bruiu received a less satisfying response from the Brașov Forest Guard, with no fines issued. We will continue to engage with the new Director to encourage proper oversight and enforcement. In addition to these complaints, we have also submitted formal statements on the Forest Management Plans for Bruiu and Cincu. While no official feedback has been received yet, we will continue to advocate for full consideration of biodiversity protection.

Activists Meeting

From March 20 to 22, we hosted a weekend gathering of activists in Moara Veche to address the pressing challenges facing Romania's biodiversity. With the current EU Biodiversity Strategy at risk of being weakened, participants came together to discuss how we can strengthen our collective impact and ensure the protection of Romania's most valuable natural areas. The weekend combined focused discussions and strategy sessions with some outdoor activities, led by Joe. Delving into bird pellets, droppings, and tracks offered a welcome distraction from the intensive discussions! A key outcome of the meeting was the decision to launch a joint campaign to achieve at least 10% strict protection of Romania's natural areas. First strategic steps and potential alliances were also defined during the weekend. We are happy that, with the Old Mill, we can provide a safe and cozy space for organizations and activists to meet in person, exchange ideas, and connect in real life—a refreshing contrast to the digital and Zoom-based communication that dominates our work today. We hope to host such in-person meetings regularly in the future.

Exkurs: Romania and the EU Biodiversity Strategy

Romania is one of Europe's last biodiversity strongholds, with five distinct biogeographical regions, extensive primary forests, species-rich grasslands, and many species already lost or highly threatened in much of Europe — making it a key player in safeguarding European biodiversity under the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Under this Strategy, EU Member States are expected to legally protect 30% of their land and sea, with at least 10% under strict, non-intervention protection. Romania was among the first Member States to begin the scientific mapping process for identifying areas eligible for strict protection, supported by European funding through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR).

Tracking activity with Joe

Logging site in Bruiu

Initial scientific assessments identified approximately 2.3 million hectares as eligible, aligning with the 10 % target. However, the process has been strongly challenged by repeated methodological changes and political resistance. Successive filters and revisions reduced the area proposed for strict protection from the initial 2.3 million ha to around 1.4 million ha by late 2025, and there is now a real risk that the final designated area could fall below 700,000 ha (≈ 3-4 %).

This reduction undermines the ecological ambition of the EU Strategy and threatens to turn Romania's commitment into a symbolic exercise rather than meaningful protection. A major cause for concern is the push to require explicit consent from landowners and administrators — including public forest administrations such as Romsilva — before areas can be designated as strictly protected. This effectively creates a de facto veto that could further limit the final protected area and sets a negative precedent: if public administrators refuse support, private landowners are likely to follow suit, risking further erosion of protection commitments. The window for meaningful progress is narrow, with significant results expected by mid-2026 — a historic moment to safeguard Romania's natural heritage and demonstrate leadership within the EU. Failing to meet these commitments would not only endanger Romania's biodiversity but also weaken the credibility of the EU's broader strategy.

Steps taken so far

In parallel to these developments, we have taken several formal steps to contribute to the integrity and transparency of the national process. In March we participated in the public consultation on the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2030 ,where we emphasized the need to integrate ecological corridors identified through the ConnectGreen project, addressed the increasing fragmentation caused by electric fences, and highlighted ongoing forest loss in key connectivity areas. A written submission will follow to ensure that these issues are fully reflected in the revised Strategy. Together with Greenpeace România, Agent Green, Declic and the Platform for Climate Adaptation, we also co-signed a letter to the Prime Minister and relevant ministries (No. 33 / 02.04.2026). The letter calls for the removal of provisions in a draft amendment to OUG 57/2007 that would require landowner and administrator consent before designating strictly protected areas. These provisions would weaken public authority, contradict EU conservation standards, and risk preventing Romania from meeting PNRR Milestone 34, which requires at least 10 % of land under strict protection. In this letter, we advocate for a science-based and legally sound approach that restores

Slide in the online presentation of the public consultation on the National Biodiversity Strategy

public authority in designating protected areas, ensures strict protection targets can be met, and integrates ecological connectivity as a key principle in the national biodiversity strategy.

New Monitoring Equipment

We are pleased to announce that, together with our specialist Giorgiana Crețu, we have been awarded bioacoustic recorders from Wildlife Acoustics. This new equipment will significantly enhance our capacity to monitor bats, birds, amphibians, and insects across the Hârtibaciu Plateau. The recorders allow for long-term, simultaneous deployments in remote forest habitats and ecological corridors, greatly increasing the spatial and temporal resolution of our biodiversity data. With this improved monitoring infrastructure, we can generate stronger scientific evidence to support more effective conservation measures and policy reform for the protected areas of Podișul Hârtibaciului.

Giorgiana lead researcher for Wildlife Acoustics