Federation Newsletter
April 26

Logging site in Șomartin / Marinsberg

News and updates

Logging site in Șomartin / Marinsberg

We also carried out a site visit to Șomartin/ Marinsberg following reports from concerned local residents regarding a recent forest clearance. Our inspection confirmed what appears to be another large-scale clear-cut, reportedly carried out by the Silva Group, similar to the operations previously documented in Rodbav and Vecerd. The scene on the ground was deeply troubling: numerous logging roads cut several meters deep into the soil, and felled trees dragged out with their crowns intact, leaving extensive damage across the site. It is frustrating to see that, despite multiple fines issued in the past, the company's practices do not seem to have improved; if anything, the scale of impact appears to be increasing. We will formally file a complaint regarding this case, continue to document the situation, and contact the press to raise broader awareness of these destructive practices in the hope that more decisive action will be taken against such operators.

Logging roads in Șomartin / Marinsberg

Advocating for the 10% Conservation Goal

April kept our coalition — made up of Greenpeace, Agent Green, and Declic — busy as we continued preparing the next phase of our campaign to increase pressure on the Romanian government to meet the EU target of strictly protecting 10% of the country's land. Our core demand remains clear: the 10% must be designated based on scientific criteria and ecological value, not influenced by private or commercial interests. Dan Perjovschi has kindly contributed a visual identity to the campaign by designing a logo for our slogan, which will be used in our upcoming outreach activities. We are also reaching out to influencers, journalists, and other public voices, for whom we have developed a dedicated pitch to help amplify our message and broaden support. In parallel, we have reported our concerns to the European Commission and continue to engage with the Ministry by submitting statements on the numerous documents published under tight deadlines. Although recent developments remain challenging, our coordinated efforts aim to keep biodiversity protection firmly in the public spotlight and to ensure that Romania moves toward genuine, science-based conservation.

Slogan and Logo drawn by Dan Perjovschi

Mapping the Forests of the Hartibaciu Highlands

The mapping of forests in the Hârtibaciu Highlands has also begun this season, and we are pleased that this project focused on identifying and protecting forest habitats is now fully underway. Our team, led in particular by Ion Holban, has already identified forests of high ecological value, including old-growth stands as well as areas

Wildlife recorded during the forest survey: a grazing bear (left) and a black stork (right)

that serve as important ecological corridors. We are now beginning to systematically survey these forest stands one by one in order to document the species present and assess their ecological characteristics. Joe has already started recording birds and mammals, while Giorgian is expected to soon expand the survey to bats and other nocturnal species using acoustic recorders. In these forest areas, the picture is again mixed. On the one hand, we still find typical and, in some cases, rare forest birds and mammals, along with relatively intact old-growth stands. On the other hand, we are increasingly encountering extensive and at times striking clear-cuts, as well as other concerning impacts such as invasive species and ecological corridors fragmented by fencing, which significantly reduce landscape connectivity. We hope that our surveys will help contribute to the long-term protection of these remarkable forest ecosystems.

First Field Surveys in Movile/ Hundertbücheln

The mapping project in Movile/ Hundertbücheln officially started this year, with the first field surveys carried out over three days in the landscape together with our specialists Kristina (botany), Casaba (butterflies), and Joe (birds and mammals). Despite challenging weather conditions with cold winds and rain, the fieldwork marked an important and promising beginning for the project. We were especially pleased to encounter a rich diversity of spring geophytes in full bloom. These early-flowering plants, which rely on underground storage organs to complete their seasonal development, included Adonis vernalis, Iris aphylla, Muscari botryoides, Fritillaria montana, and Pulsatilla montana. Their presence highlights the exceptional botanical value of the grassland habitats in the area. In addition, we recorded large and important populations of key caterpillar host plants, including Salvia nutans as well as Astragalus monspessulanus. Besides these Besides these encouraging discoveries the surveys also revealed considerable pressures on the landscape. Evidence of motocross and ATV activity was widespread, with significant damage to vegetation cover. Several hills, as well as most wetland areas, showed signs of burning. These disturbances are contributing to the spread of invasive species such as goldenrod (Solidago spp.), which is already expanding in multiple locations. Further concerns include ongoing land-use changes driven by large agricultural enterprises, resulting in increasing ploughing of grasslands and landscape levelling. These activities include the ploughing over of paths, the infilling of wetland areas, the excavation and reduction of hills, as well as the removal of field groves and linear landscape elements such as hedgerows and field margins.

These first field days clearly underline both the high ecological value and the vulnerability of this landscape, and reinforce the importance of the “Save the Hundred Hills of Movile”.

Link to the Project: www.protect100hills.org

First survey session in Movile / Hundertbücheln

Adonis vernalis (left) and Iris aphylla (right)

Ploughed grassland and burned wetland