



Milvus Grup Bird and Nature Protection Association

*Protecting Nature
Safeguarding Future!*

Biannual Report

2003-2004

Milvus Grup Bird and Nature Protection Association

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Biannual Report

2003-2004

Expenses 2004

Expenses	Total (ROL)
Salaries, taxes	147.049.000
Office rent, utilities	27.061.754
Communication, post, internet	78.142.239
Consumables	37.746.474
Equipments	54.220.530
Luncheon voucher	22.230.000
Protocol	14.916.538
Transport, accommodation, per diem)	137.516.598
External contributors	35.490.000
Publications	126.255.791
Currency depreciation	12.012.899
Special expenses	32.187.153
Bank expenses	13.019.763
Amortization	7.927.284
Taxes	2.808.186
Total expenses	748.584.209

Audit at 31.12.2004

Tangible Assets	213.701.112
Circulating Assets	
Foreign Currency Accounts	185.724.995
ROL Accounts	271.279.205
Cash in ROL	18.591.261
Total Activ	689.816.573
Capitals	--
Tangible Assets	141.850.000
Total income	1.347.109.081

Incomes 2004

Incomes	Total (ROL)
Environmental Partnership Foundation – Miercurea Ciuc	438.005.000
REC – Bucharest	61.873.500
BUWAL (via Ceeweb)	109.033.410
CEEWEB – CITES WG	43.594.620
British Ornithologist Union	60.996.000
Royal Netherlands Embassy - KNIP Fund	112.328.560
Ministry of Education and Research	109.900.000
INCDDD – contract pSPA	310.000.000
Sponsorship	31.143.000
Bank interest, VAT recovery	70.234.991
Total income	1.347.109.081

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Design: Deák Attila



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2. Emphasis on educational programs and members
The number of members is continuously growing; this is due to the fact that we made many slide shows in schools and kindergartens (details in the Environmental Education WG). We edited a leaflet (bilingual: Romanian, English) that presents the organisation's main work groups, which also has enclosed a Membership adhesion statement. The members are kept on record by means of special software. By the end of 2004, the e-mail list of Milvus members was close to 100.

3. Improving the endowment of our head office
In 2000 the association received from the Târgu Mureş town hall a stable in a very bad shape in order to be used as its head office. In the following four years we built a new building, by keeping only a few walls from the old one. The "General Support" financing enabled us to finish the interior of the

building and to endow the premises with central heating, office furniture, 3 computers, and other equipments required for a proper operation of the office.

Thanks to our sustained efforts now we have a central office that ensures a professional work environment for 6 persons, we have a library, and the equipments required for the proper operation of the office. Thus we can also offer different services, e.g. consulting in environment protection issues, as well as Internet access for our members. We have to ascertain with worry and also a certain pride that this building is not enough for the increasing number of employees, thus we shall have to extend the existing work area or to rent another building.

Foreword

Central and Eastern European countries are countries with a transition economy. Thus, in this period governments tend to sustain the idea state quite successfully that they do not have money and there is no time to waste on "luxury" activities like environment protection, and especially to protect nature.

Unfortunately this is a completely wrong mentality, namely that we should first strengthen our economy, and only after that we shall have the money for nature conservation. This idea is quite often taken over by mass media and people in general. In Romania environment protection is treated as a stepchild, and we can state that protection of nature is hardly present at governmental levels. Although Romania is one of the richest countries (if not the richest one) in Europe in terms of biodiversity, conservation of these priceless values is almost completely neglected. There are no funds or human resources assigned, and the political will is only involved to a limited extent. Even if adhesion to the European Union involves several obligations regarding protection of nature, this might seem negligible compared to the economic and social issues.

This official framework places a great burden on non-governmental organisations working in the field of nature



protection, which try to compensate for such drawbacks. Unfortunately we might also add that 2003-2004 were not the most favourable years for nature protection NGO's. It is not about lack of potential activities, but about lack of funds dedicated to such activities, which have been and still are quite limited and difficult to access.

This is (also) a reason that makes me very proud of the evolution of the Association for Bird and Nature Protection "Milvus Group" and the diverse activities that have been carried out and which are gathered for the first time in a (bi-)annual report.

Our organisation was founded in 1991, but it has been operating as an independent association only since 2001. Thus the first 10 years could be considered as the years of our childhood and the 2001-2004 period, out of which the last two years were decisive, the maturation.

The last two years were full of events, and decisive for the organisation. During the last period there were situations when we could complain about the lack of funds, and even failures, but never about the lack of activities.

We finished the repairs of our head office, a building given by the town hall of Târgu-Mureş and thus – within three years – we transformed a stable that was about to collapse into a proper working place for 6 people. After one year from its official inauguration we had to find out that the place that seemed huge in the beginning is not large enough for the stuff any more.

We have built up a strategy and work plan for medium term, we reconsidered our internal structures – most of our activities shall take place in Working Groups, these changes are also reflected in this Annual Report. Our main purpose –conservation of nature - has remained the same and our attitude has not changed either: we continue to believe

that our activities must have a scientific base, coordinated by specialized personnel, involving as many volunteers as possible.

We have changed our member policy following which the number of Milvus members has increased from 50 to 700, and it is still growing. Some of our members participate in activities as volunteers, thus increasing the impact of our organisation on conservation of nature.

We diversified our activities, and yet managed to keep together our resources. Thus we began to pay attention to more species, and set up work groups for mammals and invertebrates. On the other hand we continue to focus strictly on conservation of nature and related issues, and we just occasionally deal with problems of urban ecology, waste management, etc.

We have broadened our area of activity, currently we have branches registered in Oradea and Miercurea Ciuc, and members from most parts of the country.

We entered into new partnerships, we have become active members of the Ceeweb (Central and Eastern European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity), of the "Natura 2000" Romanian NGO network and we also signed a strategic partnership agreement with the largest organisation working with protection of prey birds "Hawk Mountain" from USA.

In spite of all misunderstandings we have proven that we can be competent partners of state institutions –thus "Danube Delta"- National Institute of Research and Development bought from us scientific data about the avifauna of several regions proposed by us as "Nature 2000" sites, i.e. future protected regions.

We are running several different conservation projects: protection of the Red-footed Falcon in the Western Plain,

conservation of the White Stork, designation of "Natura 2000" sites, measurement of the impact of large carnivores, etc. The list of successes, and failures, is very long, and you can find out more about actual data in the pages of this publication.

Our vision is to become a strong organisation, to carry out activities, and to be able to influence decisions related to nature in such a manner that Romania might remain a country with the same natural richness for our children and grandchildren. I believe that we have made the first steps in this direction.

We want to thank everyone who supported us, believed in us, worked with us and thus made possible to achieve so many things in favour of nature.

Papp Tamás



stork and the village". The best creations shall be exhibited in the museum and school. Together with the members of the LIG we have established the date of the stork festival and we have identified the persons who will be involved in the organisation of the event.

We have also started to manufacture the boards that shall be mounted below the stork nests, boards presenting data about the date when storks arrived in spring and left the nest in autumn, as well as the number of nestlings each year. Volunteers who live near the nests shall supervise the boards.

"General Support" Project

In 2004 we received a "General Support" financing from the Environmental Partnership Foundation. The purpose of this financing is the general development of our organisation, and we decided to emphasize the following issues:

1. Financial instability

We developed a strategy according to which in the future the association's financial basis shall consist of:

- projects (preferably with long-term financing) – in 2003-2004 we submitted 24 projects to 19 financers;
- sponsorships, donations from companies and physical persons, also using the law on 1% - (we organized an arachnology conference financed entirely from sponsorships;)
- membership dues paid by members in the country and from abroad – the number of members is steadily increasing.

We organized trainings in fundraising, and in personal and organizational management for the members involved in the organisation's management. Within this project we edited several publications that also help us in our fundraising activity: our first (bi)annual report (you are holding it), letterhead papers, as well as the organisation's website.



Dumbrăvioara – the Village of Storks

In fall 2004 the Milvus Group started a new project in Dumbrăvioara financed by the Environmental Partnership Foundation, Carpathian Foundation - Romania and King Baudouin Foundation, under the program Living Heritage.

The main goal of the project is to influence the community from Dumbrăvioara to accept the white stork as a local symbol. Our will is to find together with the local inhabitants the best possible ways of exploiting in the benefit of the community the fact that here one can find the largest number of stork nests in this region. The main partners are

the Local Initiative Group (LIG), the town hall and local council of Ernei, the local Reformat Parish, and the Primary School.

The main objectives mutually agreed with the LIG are (1) arrangement of a Stork Museum in Dumbrăvioara; (2) setting up a Stork rehabilitation centre; (3) organisation of a stork festival. In order to achieve our objectives we organized several meetings with the members of the LIG, local councillors from Dumbrăvioara, and representatives of the town hall in order to mobilize local resources and to involve the local community from the early stage of the project's development. With the approval of the Local Council we obtained a proper location for the construction of the centre. Together with the local councillors we made several visits to different sites in order to choose the proper location.

Then we started to look for local and foreign sponsors, and thus we established contacts worldwide. We have already received many donations consisting in books and publications from different well-known persons and institutions. Such materials shall be used in the rehabilitation centre that is currently in the design phase. We also tried to involve the pupils from the local Primary School by organizing a drawing competition called "The



Who are we?

"**Milvus Group**" was set up in 1991 and it operated in the beginning as branch of the Romanian Ornithological Society. By carrying out national and international projects, and broadening its field of activities, in 2001 it became an independent organisation under the name of Association for Bird and Nature Protection "Milvus Group". Currently it has branches and school groups in different localities from Romania and it carries out regional, national, and international projects. Most of our activities are coordinated in Working Groups. It is important for us that our programs have a scientific background, coordinated by specialized personnel, with involvement of volunteers. The human resources and experience of the organisation allow us to approach nature conservation projects with professionalism.

Our mission: "Milvus Group" is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, dedicated to bird and nature protection, acting in the field of conservation, education, research, and advisory in order to make Romania a better place for birds, wildlife and people.

In the last few years, at the initiative of local members two branches of the Milvus Group were formed in order to ensure an efficient coordination of the regional activities. Although herein the branches are presented only in a few words, they play a

□ activities.



The **Milvus Vest** branch was set up in 2003 and registered officially in September 2004, its head office is in Oradea. The main purpose of this branch is the coordination of activities in the western part of the country: Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiș counties; initiation and coordination of regional activities and cooperation with our Hungarian partners. By the end of 2004 the branch had more than 300 members. The members of the branch coordinated the project "The Red-footed Falcon has to be saved!" and it coordinates the Waterbirds Conservation Working Group. Its members also actively participate in the main activities organized by different working groups (Raptor Conservation WG, Storks Conservation WG, Natura 2000 and Protected Areas WG,





Wildlife Crime WG, etc.).

Info: Attila Nagy – attila.nagy@milvus.ro

The **Milvus Eastern Transylvania** branch was set up on 10th August 2003 and registered officially as an independent legal person on 01.06.2004. The main purpose of this branch is coordination of the organization's regional and local activities in Harghita and Covasna counties. By the end of 2004 the branch had more than 100 members. The members of the branch organize educational and awareness raising activities (e.g. feeding birds in downtown Miercurea Ciuc) and different research programs (monitoring of invertebrate fauna at Mohoş peat bog, census of the nesting little owl population in Miercurea Ciuc). Its members also take part in most of the national and regional activities of the Milvus

Group, and coordinate the activities of the Invertebrates Work Group.

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Acvila School Group – In November 2003 the “Acvila Club” from Târgu-Mureş adhered to our association, and thus it became our first ornithological school group. It has 53 members and very diverse activities. The activities carried out in 2003-2004 can be divided into two categories, the practical on-site activities and theoretical ones, held in the classroom. Site activities consist in organisation of bird watching trips (Bicaz Gorge – May 2003) and mounting of feeders and nest-boxes in the parks. Theoretical activities consist in drawing contests (“My favourite bird”, “Birds living around us”, “Birds living in the city”, and “Birds of the Danube Delta”), and participation to exhibitions in the country and abroad, organisation of symposiums (Activities of the Acvila Club – 2004), essays in which each pupil presents a bird species, and workshops in order to manufacture cardboard replicas of birds, their identification and colouring.

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Nesting of white storks on low voltage power poles

The Milvus Group drew up a “Guide for making and mounting special platforms for stork nests” that was republished at the end of 2004 in a more attractive, updated, and improved form. The Guide is intended for the Branches of Electrica S.A. (electricity company) in order to encourage them to place new platforms.

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Birds and Powerlines Working Group



Purpose: to research the relationship between birds and power-lines and to contribute to the improvement of electricity networks in Romania, so that these would not represent a threat for the avifauna

Electrocution of birds on medium voltage power lines

At the 7th Conference of the Parties of the Bonn Convention (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species) held in 18-24 September 2002, a resolution was adopted regarding mitigating electrocution of birds on power lines. Romania has signed this Convention, thus this convention became the first legal provision to take measures against electrocution of birds on medium-voltage networks. Based on this, at the end of 2003 we concluded a Collaboration Agreement with S.C. Electrica S.A. Târgu-Mureș, according to which we cooperate in order to find technical solutions to put these provisions into practice.

Our association's task in this collaboration is to gather field data and to study the specialty literature to find different methods of neutralization of the electric networks with special focus on the medium-voltage power-lines.

□ practical solutions for the insulation of these poles, solutions that were presented to S.C. Electrica S.A.

We took several trips to control the medium voltage power lines, the results were introduced into a database. We controlled 482 medium voltage poles, with regular control of some portions. During these trips we identified 33 dead specimens from 13 bird species. Milvus volunteers identified other 23 electrocuted birds, thus the total number of species became 16.



Publications

Leaflets

Milvus Group – Bird and Nature Protection Association
Ro 5000 pcs. En 2000 pcs.
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
Ro 1500 pcs., En 500 pcs.
The Red-footed Falcon has to be saved!
Ro 2000 pcs., Hu 2000 pcs.
Diurnal raptors of the hilly areas
Ro 3000 pcs., Hu 3000 pcs.
The Buzzard and the Kestrel
Ro 3000 pcs., Hu 3000 pcs.
Migration of diurnal raptors
Ro 500 pcs., En 300 pcs., Hu 200 pcs.

Brochures

Guide for making and mounting artificial nesting-platforms for White Storks on buildings
Ro 1000 pcs.
Guide for making and mounting artificial nesting-platforms for White Storks on electric pylons, II edit.
Ro 200 pcs.
Guide for the application of the Washington Convention
Ro 500 pcs.

Posters

The hunter is protecting the raptors, the poacher is killing them
B2 / 1500 pcs.
Don't buy protected animals!
B2 / 1500 pcs.
Awareness raising about CITES at the customs
B2 / 1000 pcs.

Periodicals

Migrans

2003 – four numbers with 4 pages, 500 - 800 ex.
2004 – four numbers with 8-12 pages, 800 – 1000 ex.



Activities in 2003-2004

Our organisation carries out most of its activities within different working groups, and that is why we are presenting them in the same manner. Activities that can't be classified under one work group shall be presented separately.

Raptor Conservation Working Group



Purpose – to safeguard on long term the existence of viable populations of diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey in Romania, to reintroduce species that have disappeared from our avifauna, to implement action plans for endangered species, to monitor priority species.



The project "Practical Protection of Birds of Prey in Central Transylvania (2002-2003)"

Project financed by the Environmental Partnership Foundation – Miercurea Ciuc, its purpose was to establish cooperation with Forestry Institutes from Mures, Harghita, and Covasna counties in order to preserve two target species in the region (Lesser Spotted Eagle and Kestrel). The results of the project consisted in placement of 44 nest boxes for Kestrels; in cooperation with the employees of forestry institutes we made the delimitation of protection zones and restriction in time of forestry activities around the eagle nests. We organized a

mini camp where the participants had the occasion of identify birds of prey and acquired general information about this group. In February 2003 we organized in Târgu-Mureş a 2-day workshop on protection of birds of prey, with the participation of specialists from 15 counties. Within this project we published and distributed popularization and information leaflets about birds of prey living in hilly areas. Beside these we also made the census of some species living in this region and presented our activities in the mass media. We made slide presentations in schools in order to present the goal of the project and the need for conservation of birds of prey.



dispersion, behaviour and ecophysiology of the species. During this action we ringed with a combination of individual coloured rings a number of 761 specimens, and we identified and assessed more than 200 nesting places. Based on the data gathered in this action two persons are currently preparing their PhD thesis, a student finished his MSc degree thesis and the results were presented in different scientific forums as papers or posters.

In spring 2004 we finished the first stage of monitoring the population of rooks in Hunedoara. We identified more than 20 rookeries; the locations were established with GPS.

In cooperation with the Reproductive Biology Department of the "Szent István" University from Hungary a research was started about the biology of tit species and of the dipper. The Romanian and Hungarian Ministry of Education and Science financed the project through a grant for international collaboration.

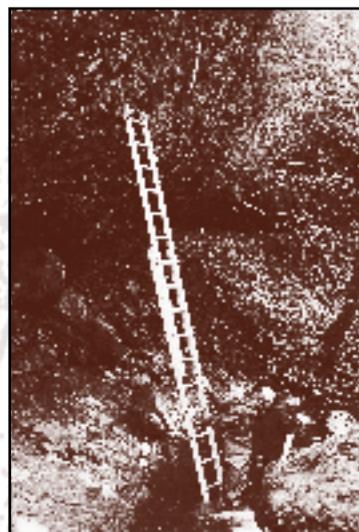
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Monitoring and Research Working Group

Purpose: - to improve the existing knowledge about the size and distribution of bird populations in Romania, research of nesting biology aspects of some species, organization of ringing camps and conduction of specific studies in order to contribute to a better knowledge of the migration route and dynamics of bird species.

The traditional summer ringing camp for monitoring of the avifauna – in 2003 and 2004 the camp was organized in a valley near the locality of Sic (Cluj County). The location has a large reed bank with puddles and an old orchard with clusters of bushes. Most of the nets were placed in the reed bank (about 180 m) and the rest of them in the orchard (about 90 m). The camp lasted two months each year (August and September in 2003, July –and August in 2004) with more than 75 participants. During the two years we captured and ringed 6591 birds of 71 species. In 2004 the zoological and botanical field-work of students enrolled in the second year of studies at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Biology-Geology were organized in this camp.



In 2003 we began to study the avifauna of an old orchard near the village of Stana (Cluj County). This site is extremely favourable for the hole nesting species. The main goal of the action was to study the breeding biology and the life cycle of the Great Tit. At first we mounted a nestbox colony consisting of 140 artificial nests. Here we organized regular ringing actions and based on these activities we have gathered important data regarding the biometry of the studied great tit population. Eight students participated in this study, and one of them finished her diploma of degree based on the data gathered during the field work activities.

In order to study another tit species, the Coal Tit we placed a colony of artificial nestboxes in the valley of Izăreţ brook (Sălard, Mureş county). The 130 artificial nestboxes were placed in a mountain habitat, along an altitudinal gradient. This colony offered data for the Mammals Protection Work Group as well, because many boxes were taken over by small mammals.

2003 was the last year of a complex research program of the population of dipper in the upper strait of Mureş river. In three years we gathered data regarding breeding biology,

The project “The Red-footed Falcon has to be saved! – protection of the species in the Western Plain (2003-2004)”

The project was financed by the Environmental Partnership Foundation – Miercurea Ciuc, its purpose was to make an ample census in the Western Plain and selection of the most important colonies of the species in order to obtain the protected status.

The most important activities were: mounting of 120 artificial nests in order to improve nesting conditions, placement of 3 information boards near to the most important colonies, identification of endangering factors.

The results of the project were: (1) data base regarding the distribution and population size of the species in this part of the country (counties Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiş); (2) a popularization campaign with more than 30 slide shows and presentations in different schools, publication of a coloured leaflet in two languages (Romanian and Hungarian) and of a sticker. As part of the project the specialists of the group attended a conference in Hungary regarding ways of conservation of the species.



Four colonies of Red-footed Falcon received the status of local protection, and after Romania’s adhesion to the EU three of these colonies shall be declared as Special Protected Areas (SPA), and thus becoming part of the Natura 2000 network. As an important issue we also mention the consultations held with hunting associations regarding the means of conservation of this species.

The project “Study of migration of diurnal birds of prey in Măcin Mountains (2003-2004)” – financed by the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary – USA, Explorers Fund – USA, and British Ornithologists’ Union – Great Britain.

This camp has been organized on an annual basis since 2002 in Northern Dobrudja, with the purpose of studying autumn migration of birds of prey and other soaring bird species (storks, pelicans). Through this study we gathered data regarding the number of different species migrating in this area, and the effect of different meteorological factors influencing the migration.

In 2003 the camp was held between 15th August and 25th October. There were 38 volunteers participating in the camps from the whole country. In 2004 the camp took place between 16th August and 17th October, with 32 participants. The number of counted birds of prey in 2003 was 9,757, and in 2004 it was 14,157. During the camps there were identified 29 species of diurnal birds of prey,



including four endangered species.

The main purpose of the research is to include this important passage area into an international network of migration sites. The documentation gathered by us was used in the elaboration of a database regarding the National Park of Măcin Mountains as well as in the development of a GEF Medium Size Project.

Other activities of the Work Group during 2003-2004

The program “Census of the Golden Eagle in the Western Carpathians” is intended to make an inventory of the breeding population of the species, its habitat preferences, study of the reproduction success as well as identification of the factors that influence it. The activities, involving a large number of students, resulted in finding 11 territories and 25 nests, from 17 suitable rocky areas. Some of these areas were proposed to be designated as protected areas.

Ringling of kestrels by individual marking with coloured rings is intended to make a biological study of the species, highlighting interspecific dominance, dispersion from the birth place to the reproduction place, survival rate and territorial fidelity. During ringling biometrical data were registered, based on which we obtained information regarding the percentage of chicks of different sexes within a clutch. The study was carried out in Arad County, in three important colonies with a total number of more than 45 pairs. 107 nestlings were ringed with coloured rings and data interpretation is currently undergoing.

Evaluation of the population size of Lesser Spotted Eagle in Romania. This program is intended to make a national census in which 191 randomly selected UTM sample areas shall be analyzed. The expected result is an assessment of the national population in terms of size, gathering information regarding the habitat preferences of the species, drawing up the National Species Action Plan in order to ensure survival of the Romanian population, which represents about 20% of the global population. Until now we have procured the necessary maps and analyzed more than 20 sample areas.

Conservation of the Scops Owl in Mures County is a program through which we would like to support the breeding of the species by placing artificial nest boxes in old orchards – the



controls regarding hunting of waterfowl. Here we have to mention multiple controls that took place late summer 2004 at the Cefa Fishery. The hunting was not prohibited here even if there were more than 300 specimens of Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) on the ponds –a globally endangered species. Before such controls we distributed information materials, and made awareness raising presentations for the hunters.

In cooperation with the Hunting and Fishing Associations we made regular controls of the fishers, especially in the areas that were of greater importance in terms of waterfowl populations, as in such locations fishing is a very disturbing factor.

In some strategic areas we built artificial nesting islands, thus we could ensure proper nesting places for several tens of pairs of waterbirds (especially Common Tern - *Sterna hirundo* and Common Black-headed Gull - *Larus ridibundus*).

In some places, where we had proper conditions we made artificial flooding, this was the case of several ponds no longer in use.

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Waterbird Conservation Working Group

Purpose: census, monitoring and protection of waterbirds by protecting their habitats, with priority for the areas where endangered species are more common and/or agglomeration of birds occurs.

The members of the work group continued in this period to monitor nesting, migrating and wintering populations of waterbirds, especially in wetlands of great importance.

Beside visual observation methods, we also organized ringing activities of waterbirds.

Here we have to mention the ringing of 120 Whiskered Terns (*Chlidonias hybridus*) in fisheries from the western part of the country.

Based on the regular observations we obtained up-to-date information about the distribution of breeding species, the size of migrating populations, and now we have the chance to make an evaluation of the populations that reflects the real situation in case of several species. We have also gathered some other valuable information as well, such as:

- we proved after 100 years the nesting of Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) in Romania, some of our colleagues were lucky enough to observe a family with its chicks in the upper strait of Mureş river,
- we proved the first nesting in Transylvania of the Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) and of the Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), both events took place at the Ponds from Cipău (Mureş county) due to the favourable conditions existing in that period,



- we notified the breeding of two pairs of Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*) at the Cefa fishery (Bihar county), species that has never been seen in this part of the country as a nesting species until now.

We put into practice a database about waterbirds, database that has been loaded with up-to-date information, but we have also begun to introduce data from the literature.

In the framework of the Practical Conservation Program of Waterbirds we had the following actions:
In cooperation with the Wildlife Crime Work Group and of Hunting Associations from several counties we continued to make regular



species' preferred habitat. In the first year of the program (2004) we placed 12 boxes, with a 30% rate of occupation success. Altogether the adults and chicks were ringed. During the following years we would like to increase the number of nest boxes as well as our area of activity.

Rehabilitation of sick or injured birds of prey represents an important activity of the Work Group. During 2003-2004 more than 20 diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey (9 species) were brought to our organisation and after treatment most of them could be reintroduced into the wild. Our association took important steps in order to set up a rehabilitation centre, which would be one of the future solutions to solve the problem.

Participation in national and international scientific forums. In order to present the results achieved in research and conservation activities, the specialists of the working group participated in 8 national conferences and seminars with 12 papers and 4 international and world conferences with 8 papers, respectively.

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Stork Conservation Working Group

Purpose: Monitoring and study of the stork populations in Romania, elaboration of the measures required for the conservation of the species and propagation of the method of placement of special platform to support White Stork nests on electric pylons.

The census of the breeding pairs of White Stork is a traditional activity of the organisation. In 2003 the work group organized a regional census on a total area of 8,479 sq. km, with areas from four counties (Harghita and Covasna – entirely, the eastern part of Mures county and a small part of Braşov County). After checking 274 localities we found 481 nests in 200 localities. The census was financed by the Sapientia Foundation.



During 2004-2005 the sixth international census of the White Stork is organized. In Romania this action is organized and coordinated by the Association for Bird and Nature Protection "Milvus Group" and the Romanian Ornithological Society. The two organisations contributed to the same extent to the census (50-50%). In the first year of the international census, the members and volunteers of the two organisations identified 4,414 White Stork nests in 39 counties. This action also had the moral support of the Ministry of Environment and the Commission for Monuments of Nature of the Romanian Academy, this support resulted in plenty of data delivered by different county or local institutions (Environment Protection Agencies, forestry departments, town halls).

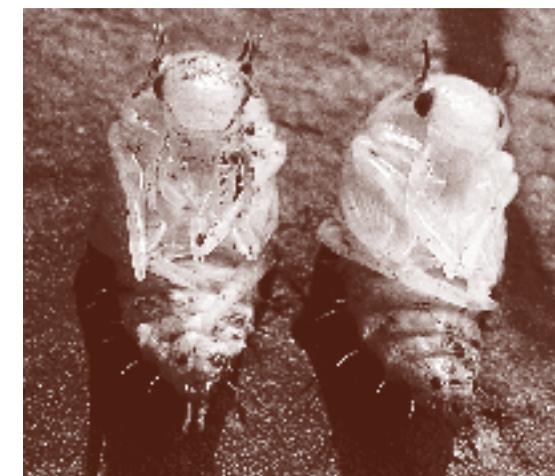
The members of the working group continued in 2003-2004 the ringing of White Storks with coloured ELSA rings. In 2003 a number of 197 chicks were ringed in 62 nests from 10 localities. In 2004 we ringed 105 chicks in 35 nests from 6 localities. Thus by 2004 the total number of White Storks ringed by the members of the Milvus Group between 1996-2004 exceeded 600 specimens.



papers are the result of the sustained efforts undertaken by the members of the working group to determine young people to join the activities of the association.

The event called "The Nights of European Butterflies I" was organized between 13-15 August 2004, based on the common initiative of the Szalkay József Lepidopterology Society (Hungary), and of the Entomology Society from Luzern (Switzerland). Vizauer Tibor-Csaba from the Invertebrates Work Group coordinated and centralized the data in Romania. The action was a real success, with the participation of 194 researchers from 23 countries. 832 species of nocturnal macrolepidopters (representing about 30% of the European fauna) were registered. From Romania participated 10 researchers, they collected data in 9 location about 258 species of night butterflies.

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Invertebrates Working Group



Purpose: to undertake faunistical and ecological research of invertebrate populations, to obtain protected status for endangered species of invertebrates, to create a specific database.

The working group organized assessment actions of the arthropod fauna in several regions of the country. Main locations of evaluation were: Baraolt Mountains, Hășmașu Mare Mountains, the birch grove from Reci, Beneș, Borșaroș, Mohoș, and Luci swamps. (The research from Mohoș peat bog was financed through a Rufford Small Grant). The data were collected by using Barber traps (checked on a monthly basis), whereas other collection methods were also used (sieve, blower, mowing net, and directly with pincers or by hand). After selection, conservation and identification of specimens, based on the species list and relative abundance of different taxons we made ecological assessment of the areas under research by means of the bio-indicator feature of identified taxons. As a direct result of the assessments we notified some new species in the areas under study and in some cases some new species in Romania's fauna.

Between 7-12 September 2004, at Ozunca Spa (Covasna County) we organized the "Fifth International Conference of Hungarian Arachnologists". There were 24 participants from 3 countries at the conference. It was the first time when this conference took place outside Hungary. 15 papers and 2 scientific posters were presented. Several trading companies, the town hall of Baraolt, and the County Council of Covasna sponsored the organization of the conference.

Based on the results of the activities, the members and volunteers of the work group prepared 2 degree papers and 3 scientific presentations about the arthropod fauna of the Mohoș peat bog. Other 3 papers presented at the scientific contest for pupils "TUDEK 2004" were based on those results, and won two third places and one mention. These 3



In 2003 we received the first international recoveries off storks ringed with ELSA rings. Two storks ringed in the same nest on 10th June 2003 in Ciumești (Satu Mare County) were found after 57 days in Hungary, in a locality called Tivadar, 49 km far from the place of ringing. After a 20 years pause, these were the first international findings of White Storks ringed in Romania.

In the camp from Măcin Mountains for the study of migration of prey birds, the migration of the Storks is also monitored. Thus in 2003 were observed 25,496 White Storks and 432 Black Storks, and in 2004 were counted 18,818 migrating White Storks and 410 Black Storks.

The Project "Involving stakeholders in White Stork Protection"

Financed by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Romania, the main goal of the project was to protect the White Stork in Romania. We had two main objectives: (1) halting/decreasing the phenomenon of disappearance of traditional nesting places through the involvement of the local people in the protection of storks; and (2) motivation and encouragement of Electricity Companies (county branches of S.C. Electrica S.A.) to place new platforms for the stork nests that are on the low-voltage electric pylons within the localities. We tried to involve the local population in the protection of the species only in localities where more than 5 pairs of storks are nesting. In these localities we distributed publications about the 2004 stork census. In three model localities we discussed with the local authorities and with their support we manufactured information boards that were placed (or shall be placed) in the vicinity of the stork nests. The three localities are Dumbrăvioara (Mureș), Cristian (Sibiu), and Ciumești (Satu Mare).

We published a Guide intended for the general public on how to make and mount special platforms for stork nests on buildings in order to encourage inhabitants to make new nesting places for the storks. In the same time we republished an updated and improved edition of the Guide intended for Electricity Companies for making and mounting of special platforms for stork nests on low-voltage electric pylons.

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Natura 2000 and Protected Areas Working Group

Purpose: to contribute to the effective and proper implementation of the EU's Habitats and Birds Directive, to propose new areas to be protected and to manage protected areas.

The Natura 2000 concept has been only recently introduced in Romania, our members participated from the beginning to events related to this issue. We participated to the creation of the Ngo coalition "Natura 2000 Romania" initiated by WWF DCP and the Environmental Partnership Foundation. Currently the Milvus Group is represented in the

Representative Council of the Coalition and in the same time we are active members of 6 out of 8 work groups (Birds, Mammals, Fish, Flora, Insects, Communication/Awareness raising). On international level we are active members of the Natura 2000 Work Group of the CEEWEB.

Two specialists from our organisation attended the course "Train the Trainers" held in 12-14 January 2004, and organized by WWF DCP, CEEWEB, and the Environmental Partnership Foundation. After graduation these specialists organized training courses for the rest of specialists interested in this topic.

On 19th April 2004 we organized the meeting of the Birds Work Group – within the "Natura 2000 Romania" Coalition, where together with our coalition partners and Hungarian specialists we established the priorities for 2004. As a consequence we gathered avifaunistic data and we prepared the digital outline of 50 areas which are in our opinion important from the Birds Directive point of view.

The most important result of the work group was the acceptance of the proposals of the organisation about proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPA) by the National Research and Development Institute of the Danube Delta (INCDDD) – the institution authorized to elaborate the list of N2000 sites. Our proposal contained the partial documentation of 50 pSPA's,



related to protection of wildlife, birds, and habitats. More than 1,600 pupils and student attended such presentations.

Within the regular didactic circles of environmental education held in different towns all over the country, with our guidance, members of the didactic staff have learnt: practices related to placement and maintenance of winter feeders as well as methods of building and placing artificial nest-boxes. These feeders and boxes were mounted and controlled by the pupils who built them.

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Environmental Education Working Group

Purpose: to organize awareness raising programs about the importance of environment protection, involving as many people as possible, with special emphasize on young people, as well as other target groups: hunters, foresters, customs officers, etc.

The education camp for youth at the Bezdin Swamp (Arad County) was held in July 2004 in the village of Munar, within the Nature Park "Lunca Mureşului". Among other educational activities, a special importance was given to identifying different birds and plants living in this protected area. The camp lasted 12 days, with the participation of 50 pupils from different schools from Arad. The sponsor of this event held in cooperation with the SZAMO Association was the Communitas Foundation.

In early August 2004 the Forestry Commission from Arad organized a camp intended to get acquainted with the wildlife of the Nature Park "Lunca Mureşului". The specialists of Milvus Group and the Western University of Timișoara made presentations for the 20 participant pupils.



The association organized numerous outdoor ornithological activities for the pupils. During these two years more than 50 trips were organized with the participation of more than 400 pupils. The events took place in 7 counties (Mures, Arad, Bihor, Harghita, Covasna, Cluj, and Hunedoara).

On 1st April 2004, in cooperation with the Administration of the Retezat National Park, our association organized the Birds Day. Before this action there was a drawing contest for children, and on 1st April the best drawings were awarded. This action had widespread media coverage, both at local and national level. The awards were given with the support of the APNR.

In these two years we organized in the schools from 10 counties all over the country more than 120 slide shows



their total area representing about 10% of the country's total area, out of which 31 were bought by the INCDDD at a symbolic price. The Birds Working Group of the Romanian Natura 2000 Coalition proposed a total number of 107 pSPA's –representing about 15% of the country's total area, out of which 56 were bought by the INCDDD.

We drew up the documentation required to propose two bird species – the sombre tit (*Parus lugubris*) and the pied wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*) to be included in the Appendix I of the Birds Directive.

The Project "Natura 2000 in Niraj Valley"

It was initiated in 2004 with the financial support of the Environmental Partnership Foundation. The aim of the project is to protect valuable species and habitats from the Niraj Valley (Mureş County) by proposing the area to be part of the Natura 2000 network, based on the Birds Directive. In the first part of the project we reviewed the data gathered in previous years related to distribution and size of the target species population in the area (White Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Honey Buzzard and Corncrake). We procured and consulted agricultural land registries, the maps with ownership of the lots, and the plans of forestry arrangements. In the same time we consulted General Urban Plans of the villages located in the area in order to find out the current status and proposed use of the lands. In the next step we compared the situation on-site and the data gathered from different registries. The distribution of important species and habitats was marked on the maps and following that we drew up the first version of the digital outline. The local newspapers and radio presented our activities.

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Mammal Conservation Working Group



Purpose: Long term conservation of different populations of mammal species and their habitats in Romania.

In 2003 we continued the systematic monitoring of the damages caused by wolves in a 50 sq. km hilly area from the Bechișu, Lapoșu Highland and Dumbravioara Basin, activities that began in October 2002.



As part of the educational activities we organized 15 short trips for children between 10 and 16 years of age. We also made possible for a few persons aged over 20 to observe in natural conditions the behaviour of a wolf raised in captivity (6 occasions of 1-2 days).

On 28th August 2004, in cooperation with the Romanian Bat Protection Association and the Zoological Garden from Târgu Mureș, we organized the European Bat Night. The activities consisted in the installation of an information stand within the Targu-Mures Zoo (pictures and different printed publications), a presentation about bats, and observation of bats with ultrasound detectors along the banks of the Mures river.

We participated in the Carpathian Large Carnivore Workshop, held in June 2003 in Brasov, where we presented the poster “A case study with wolf livestock depredation in hilly country, Transylvania”. In October 2004 we participated in Gresu (Vrancea county) in a workshop on “Conservation of large carnivores in Romania –current and future aspects”. Here we presented the preliminary results of the project “Carnivores and humans: can they peacefully coexist in Romania?”

Within the Mammals Work Group of the Natura 2000 coalition, we participated in the designation of the Sites of Community Importance proposed for the protection of mammals from Romania.

We made observations upon the behaviour of a wolf raised in captivity with people, dogs, and wild animals, and their behaviour with the wolf.

Between August-September 2004 we prepared a preliminary study regarding the assessment of populations of small

about 40 reports/interviews on different television channels were given.

In June 2003, the volunteers of the Milvus Group, together with the employees of the local Environment Protection Agency and Police Department seized an Imperial Eagle in Codlea, Brașov County. The bird was officially placed in the custody of Milvus Group, with the aim of reintroducing it into the wild. Unfortunately it came out that the bird was “100% imprinted”, thus it was impossible to release the bird into the wild. Currently the bird is still in our custody, and we are trying to find a possible destination to place this specimen into a reproduction program in captivity.

In 2003 we affiliated with the Euro-group against Bird Crime – EABC, a European network of environmental organisations. In September 2003, at the biannual conference of the organisation from Budapest, we presented the results of the project “Green Border in the Balkans”. In 2005 the Milvus Group shall organize the next biannual conference in Romania, and it is our hope that an international conference would draw attention on the serious problems Romania encounters in this respect.

The organisation’s members also participate in the control of hunting activities in several counties. An example of control of hunting activities is the case of the Water Treatment Station of Oradea, which is an important area for water-birds especially during winter and their passage. The area was severely affected by hunters as they used to go there because the area is in the close neighbourhood of the city. Due to our lobby actions we succeeded in having the area declared by the Bihor County Hunting Association as a Hunting Reservation (hunting is prohibited in such reservations), and then we started regular controls. During such controls we caught on scene more than 20 poachers, some of them were fined, others were taken away their guns, and in some cases even legal action was commenced.



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Wildlife Crime Working Group

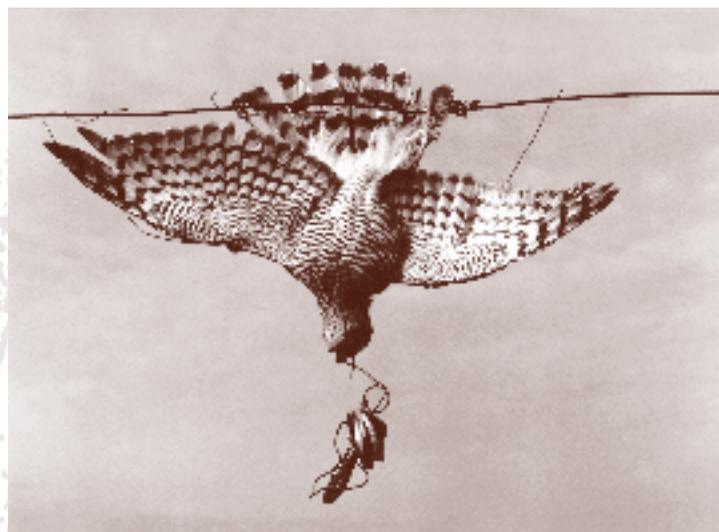
Purpose: reducing the number of crimes committed against wildlife through a strict enforcement of the relevant legislation (based on a close cooperation with different competent bodies), as well as through awareness raising and education activities.

The Project “Green Borders in the Balkans” (2003-2004)

The international project, coordinated by the Milvus Group, was implemented in co-operation with the organisation Green Balkans – Bulgaria and financed by REC-Szentendre. The main goal of the project was to fight against wildlife crimes, especially crimes against birds. During the project we focused on two distinct issues: trade with certain protected species, and poaching of protected birds. In February 2003 we organized a conference with this theme and a volunteer network was set up to fight against wildlife crime. Currently this network has volunteers from 17 towns around the country. One of the main activities of the network is to control the markets and Pet Shops in order to identify cases of illegal trade with wild species. There were hundreds of control actions (in cooperation with local authorities), more than 500 protected birds were seized, tens of persons were fined, and in some cases even legal action was commenced.

We edited three special posters, each addressing a specific problem: poaching of diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey, illegal trade with song birds and smuggling of protected species. Within this project we have also published a leaflet about the Washington Convention (CITES) and a booklet about enforcement of the said convention, booklet intended especially for customs officers.

During 2003-2004 we maintained a powerful media campaign on the issues related to crimes against wildlife. As part of this campaign more than 100 newspaper articles were published (in general and specialty newspapers), about 20 radio interviews and



mammals in the National Park from Macin Mountains – in three types of habitats. Here we identified 5 species of rodents and supplied data about the permanent or periodical presence of other 6 species of small mammals.

The Project: “Carnivores and humans: can they peacefully coexist in Romania?” (2004-2005)

The project is financed by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Romania, within the Matra-Knip program.

The main purpose of this project is to inform people about wolves, bears and otters, about the damages caused by them, and methods on how to prevent damages. The project represents the first steps in the two long-term programs, one for protection of large carnivores – wolf, bear, and lynx-, and the other one for protection of otters. The envisaged localities were those where there were complaints regarding damages caused by wolves, bears and otters and bear attacks on humans in the last 3 years in Transylvania. As part of this activity we analyzed 39 cases related to damages caused to livestock -31 caused by wolves, 8 caused by bears – 4 cases of bear attacks against humans, we gathered information about damages caused by otters in 6 piscicultural and 5 trout farms. Based on verbal communication with the town halls we assessed the damages caused by bears in crops. In parallel with the investigation of the aforesaid cases we also conducted opinion polls among 43 persons who suffered losses because of the damages caused to livestock, with 50 persons in Covasna county who live in an area where the inhabitants had suffered because of bears, with 50 persons from Satu Mare county who live in an area where the children, according to the local media, are exposed to potential dangers because of wolves, and 60 beekeepers potentially affected by bears.



At the end of the project we shall edit and print a publication for the general public, in which the results of the project shall be presented, as well as the methods of preventing damages and proposals of an adequate behaviour in order to avoid bear attacks.

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Nature Policy Working Group

Purpose: monitoring and improvement of environmental legislation, implementation of the environmental legal framework including ratified international conventions, development of proposals to improve the legislation, integration of nature protection concepts in other sectors.

Activities:

The Milvus Group has initiated the CITES Work Group within the CEEWEB network. The setting up meeting was organized in August 2003 in Târgu Mureş with the participation of 7 organisations from 5 countries. The representative of the Milvus Group was appointed as the coordinator of the work group for two years. The work group developed a regional project for the evaluation of implementation of the Washington Convention. Two members of the work group (one from the Milvus Group and one from Salamandra – Poland) participated in the XIIIth conference of the parties (2-14 Oct. 2004, Thailand, Bangkok).

Two representatives of the association participated in a work conference organized by the General Customs Department on 9th June 2004. On this occasion we distributed the publications prepared to enhance the implementation of the Washington Convention and we had the opportunity to find out the needs of customs officers for a better implementation of these legal provisions.



Implementation of a national report included in the publication “Safeguarding biodiversity in National Development Plans” for the Ministerial Conference in Kiev (May 2003), published by CEEWEB with the financial support of the UNDP.

Implementation of a national report included in the publication “Implementation of PEBLDS in Central and Eastern European Countries” for the Ministerial Conference in Kiev (May 2003), published by CEEWEB with the financial support of BUWAL (The Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests, and Landscape).



Implementation of a national report included in the publication “Implementation of International Commitments in Central and Eastern European Countries” for the Ministerial Conference in Kiev (May 2003), published by CEEWEB with the financial support of the REC.

The Project “Towards halting loss of biodiversity by 2010”

The Milvus Group was the Romanian partner of the international project “Towards halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010” coordinated by CEEWEB with the financial support of BUWAL. The aim of the project was an evaluation of the activities carried out by Central and Eastern European Governments to achieve the 2010 target. As part of the project we drew up a national report about the measures undertaken by Romania in order to halt loss of biodiversity by 2010. On 16.09.2004 we organized in Bucharest a mini-conference called “Towards halting loss of biodiversity by 2010”. The mini-conference was held at the UN House with the participation of the governmental and non-governmental sector.

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