



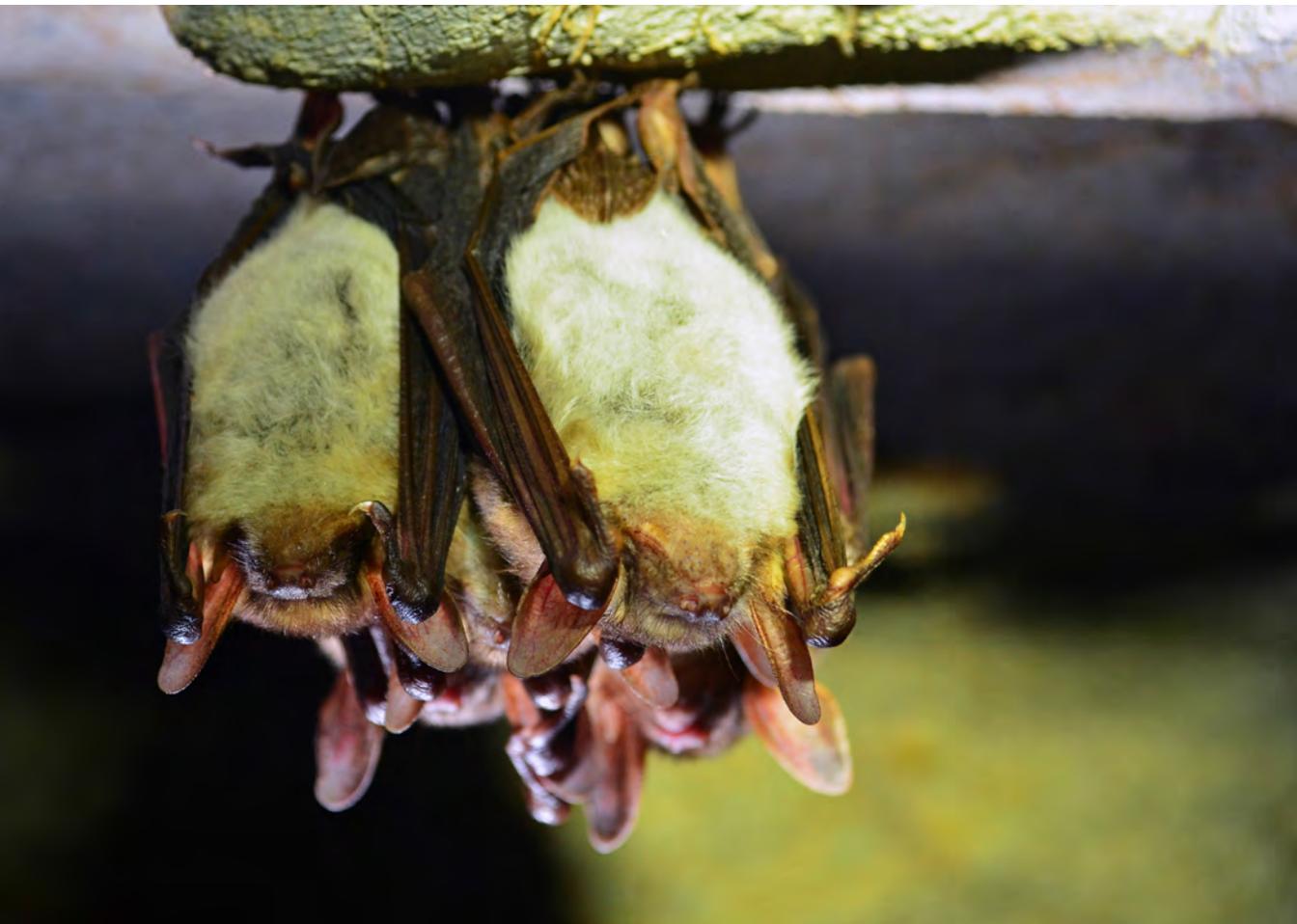
THE CENTRE FOR BAT RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

ABOUT, WITH
& FOR BATS

Activity report **2019**

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FOREWORD

Always in movement

I would characterize 2019 as a dynamic year, always on the move, with a lot of changes and important events. We, humans, resemble bats in this regard, who are also in a constant movement. They fly around, search for food and shelter, and sometimes even hibernation colonies wake up collectively, when one of the „inhabitants” stirs in its sleep.

This is how 2019 was for the members of the organization. We „flew” all over the country, we searched for and found new colonies, we visited colleagues from other countries and we represented Romania at the international level.

We answered many (phone) calls of the public, changed some of their opinion regarding bats, and „transformed” several callers into bat lovers and bat protectors. We evaluated locations where no bat expert ever twisted their neck by looking towards the ceiling. During our travels, we strengthened our partnerships with organizations both in Romania and abroad. Especially since bats do not respect traditional borders.

To be short, 2019 was a very active and dynamic year. Despite the small number of members, we continued to go forward... focused, just like the bats hunting insects. And I can hardly wait to see what comes next!

Ildikó Gönczi Vass
CBRC Vice-president

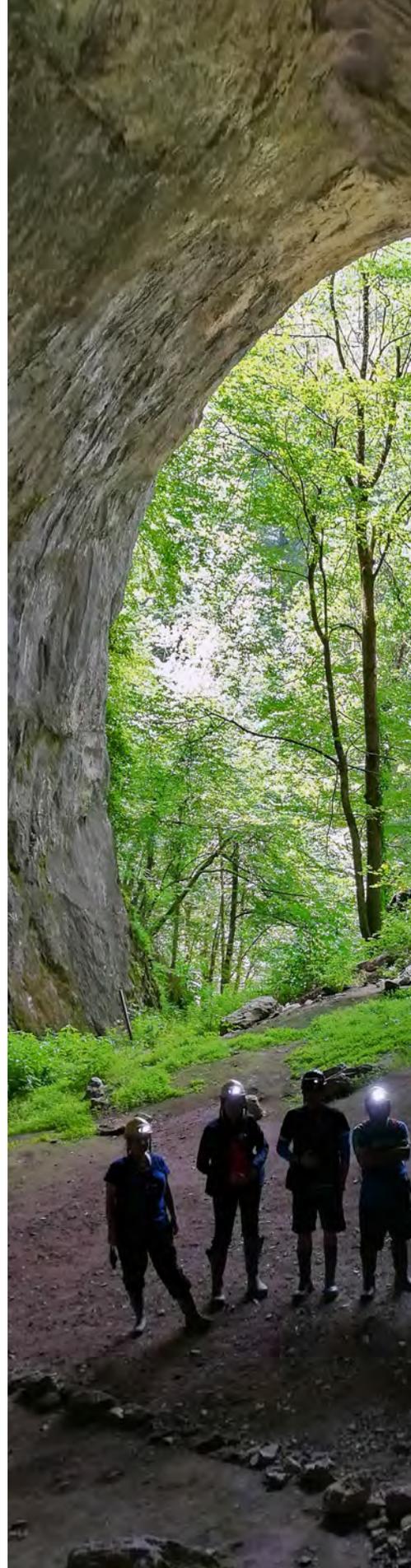
2019 SUMMARY

During the year, the CBRC evaluated and monitored over 180 locations in Romania and discovered 11 new colonies for science. Our fieldwork predominantly took place in protected areas, national and natural parks and in buildings of historical importance.

Regarding buildings, in 2019 we cleaned the guano from three churches, in order to increase colony acceptance by local communities. The guano is used by our partner, the Romanian Permaculture Association, to grow vegetables in an eco-friendly way.

Just like every year, in 2019 we organized the „International Bat Night”, and we held a series of educational presentations across the country. Those who took part represented all generations, from 2 to 78 years old. Our portal at www.lilieci.ro continued to offer relevant and new information to a growing number of visitors.

To ensure the continuity of bat research, the CBRC supported in 2019 (and will continue to support) a number of university students who chose to research bats. Two students, who are also CBRC members, defended their BSc licenses in 2019, with a new BSc license coming up in 2020.





We continue to promote Romanian bats at the international level, and we gather good practice examples from countries with similar conservation challenges. The CBRC president continues to represent Romania in frame of the EUROBATS Agreement, and to transmit the opinion of the national bat research community towards this international forum.

None of this would have been possible without the help of our partners, and the support offered by several companies and private persons. In this way, we would like to thank all of those who were involved in our activities and those who supported us in any way possible.

To read in detail about the 2019 CBRC activities (including from 2016-2018), visit the [CBRC Timeline](#) section of the [www.lilieci.ro](#) portal:

<https://lilieci.ro/en/home/cbrc-timeline/>

MONITORING & RESEARCH

In 2019 we continued to monitor the most important bat colonies of Romania. We monitored dozens of locations, especially in the Pădurea Craiului Mts., Iron Gates Nature Park, Dobrogea, Trascău Mts., Grădiștea Muncelului - Cioclovina Nature Park, Buila - Vânturarița National Park, Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park and Semenic - Carașului Gorge National Park.

Also in 2019, with help of the Myotis Group for Bat Conservation, we successfully finished the project dedicated at Romanian cavers. Funded by Columbus Zoo & Aquarium, the project aimed to consolidate bat conservation efforts in South-Western Romania, by training cavers in identifying common cave-dwelling bat species.

We directly involved 20 cavers from seven caver clubs, evaluated 70 subterranean locations in key seasons, organized a workshop for cavers, where we trained them to identify common bat species, and created a durable field guide to identify bats, ideal in the subterranean environment.

All in all, during 2019 we surveyed and monitored a total of 181 locations in Romania, of which 150 were subterranean locations and 19 were buildings with colonies. Among these, 71 locations were surveyed for the first time for bats. Romania's potential regarding bats is shown also by the fact that during these surveys we discovered 11 colonies new to science. The largest one is located in the Trascău Mountains, and is home to over 2.700 bats of two strictly protected species.

The results collected in 2019 and the periods before were presented in frame of several scientific events both in Romania and abroad. One example is the National Caver Congress (Șuncuiuș, August 2019), where we presented the results obtained jointly with cavers in the 2016 - 2019 period.

The research and monitoring activities of the CBRC are authorized by the competent authorities of this field, as well as by the administrations and custodians of the protected areas within our area of activity. The project aimed at cavers was funded by the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium.





CONSULTANCY & CONSERVATION

In case of buildings with historical importance, the conservation of bat colonies can go against the protection of buildings themselves. The CBRC offered consultancy on multiple occasions during 2019 in such cases, but unfortunately, we also had to submit official complaints to authorities, in case of intentional colony destructions. Currently we are waiting for the outcome of these complaints.

Meanwhile, and in order to increase the acceptance of resident bat colonies by local communities, our organization continued to provide pro-bono cleaning services for several churches across Romania, where under the colony a critical amount of guano accumulated. In 2019, together with our partners from Romanian Permaculture Association, we cleaned three such locations: the Reformed Church from Leghia, the Orthodox Church from Zeicani and the Greek-Catholic Church from Roşia Montana.

The CBRC received dozens of calls during 2019 about bat related disturbances. Many of these cases were solved by simple conversations and advice on the phone, while some of them needed actual field visits. In cases in which we did not have a CBRC member in that particular city, we relayed the details to bat researcher colleagues from other organizations of the area.





EVENTS FOR THE PUBLIC

Without an informed and engaged public, the legal protection of bats will never suffice. Hence, there must always be a direct connection with the real, everyday world, an exchange of information for the benefit of bats and the public.

In 2019 the CBRC organized three events in Romania in frame of the “International Bat Night” series, in Cluj-Napoca, Făgăraș and Constanța. We thank our local partners for their help, and the ProPark Foundation for including these events in the “Protected Area Week”. Furthermore, the CBRC aided in the organization of two other such events, in Petrița and Suseni. We were also present at the Sinaia Forever 2019 Festival.

During the year, we were invited all over the country to talk about bats, in total holding over 15 presentations on different occasions. For example, we have been to the “Expedition - Call of the Unknown” outdoor event in Oradea, at the “Flying Things Research Camp” (Făgăraș Land), and at the “Live the City” guided tour in Cluj-Napoca.

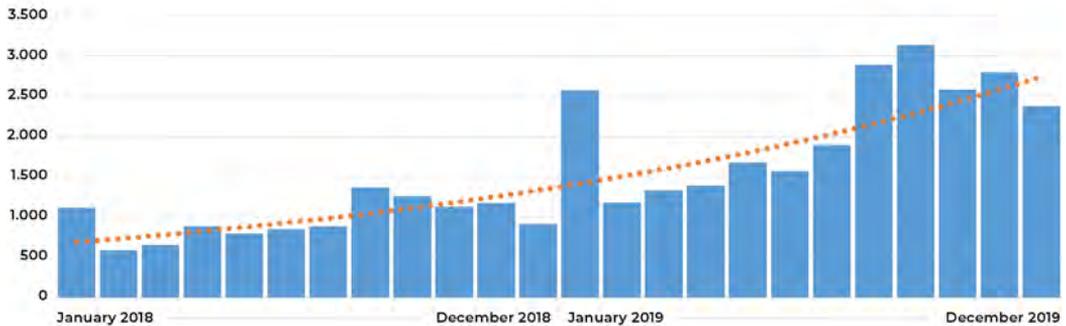




THE LILIECI.RO PORTAL

The Romanian bat portal at www.lilieci.ro, published in three languages (Romanian, Hungarian and English) is still the most complex online resource regarding Romanian bats. It is also in constant update and improvement.

The portal was activated in December 2016 and since then, the number of visitors increased steadily. Thus, while in 2018 we had 37 visitors / day (in total 11.199), in 2019 we increased this to 67 visitors / day (in total 24.568), essentially doubling our reader base.



Parts of our communication channels are also the well-known Facebook and Instagram, but alongside these, we are also responsible for maintaining the communication channels of the whole Romanian bat research community. In addition, we created a Facebook group dedicated to cavers (SpeoBat), where we offer advice in species identification and conservation aspects.





THE NEXT GENERATION

Despite the fact that Romania has one of the largest and most diverse bat faunas in Europe, the number of local bat experts is extremely small. While the national bat conference in the United Kingdom gathers hundreds of attendees, here in Romania our conference has about 25-30 participants.

Hence, the involvement of the young generation in bat research is very important, helping to meet head on and with a renewed determination the remaining bat conservation challenges.

In 2019, with the help of the CBRC, Claudia (Ovidius University, Constanța) and Flaviu (Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca) defended their BSc licenses, both in the bat research domain. Claudia's study updated the knowledge about the bat fauna of the Dobrogea region, while Flaviu has compared the bat fauna of the ROSCI0074 Făgetul Clujului – Valea Morii Natura 2000 site, with that of its surroundings.

Presently Henrietta (Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca) is working on her BSc license, studying such caves from the Pădurea Craiului Mountains, in which no bat survey took place yet. During this study, already two new, continentally important bat colonies were discovered.



BAT OF THE YEAR 2019

Bechstein's bat

the one who really appreciates ancient forests

Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*) uses hollow trees as roost, and hunts for insects in old growth forests. Its presence indicates the exceptional quality of the habitats and forests in question. A medium sized *Myotis* bat, it has proportionally the largest ears in this genus.

In Romania current research highlighted the species in almost all regions of the country. Bechstein's bat is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, including the loss of hollow trees. We must enhance the protection of secular deciduous forests, and the preservation of hollow trees.



The species crosses open spaces at a low height, being threatened by road traffic. Hence, “duck-under” type green passages are of high importance. Similarly, keeping linear elements (ex. tree lines, hedgerows) maintains connectivity in its habitat.

From a total of 642 of votes, Bechstein’s bat collected 290 (45.2%), and in this way is nominated the winner among the three finalists.



CBRC HONORARY MEMBERS

„We first became aware of the impressive bat conservation work in Romania in an article in Fauna and Flora International in 2016. We congratulated Dr. Szilárd-Lehel Bücs, the future President of the Centre for Bat Research & Conservation (CBRC), and this led to an invite to visit in June 2017 to shadow the summer colony counts within the caves of Transylvania.

We are an experienced pair of bat conservationists in the UK with years of voluntary work and professional consultancy, but the importance of the roosts in Romania and the commitment of the Romanian bat researchers took our breath away. At this point we felt we really wanted to try to help wherever we could, and it was difficult for us to develop options as the level of expertise in Romania was so high.

Our solution was to support the CBRC by promoting the fabulous work they do. We have done this by presenting the work of the CBRC to groups across England. Further still we encourage small groups of bat conservationists to join us shadowing the Romanian winter hibernation surveys and summer colony counts, we have now been visiting twice a year since our first trip in June 2017. We will continue to help our friends with their efforts in documenting and conserving the many remarkable bat roosts in Romania.”

Matthew Cook MSc MCIEEM and Barry Collins MSc MCIEEM



INTERNATIONAL

In October 2018, the CBRC president was nominated by the Ministry of Environment as the official representative of Romania in the Advisory Committee of the EUROBATS Agreement. Therefore, in 2019 we officially represented Romania for the first time during the EUROBATS meeting, held in Skopje, Macedonia.

Following the invitation coming from our Polish colleagues, we had the chance to visit the bat reserves of Szachownitza and Nietoperek during the hibernation period. It was very interesting to see protected areas created specifically for bats.

To attract international attention to the importance of Romanian bat colonies, we participated at several international conferences. Examples include the Hungarian National Bat Conference (Alsódobsza, October 2019) or the Karst Conservation Symposium in Serbia (Belgrade, November 2019).



PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

In 2019, our organization has initiated a series of partnerships and collaborations with several organizations, administrations and custodians of protected areas, as well as educational centres or other entities. These partnerships refer, among others, to the monitoring of bats from important areas (ex. caves from national and natural parks), conservation projects for protected areas (ex. the bats of Făgetul Clujului), or education activities (ex. the International Bat Night).

The results obtained together highlight the necessity and benefit of working together. We thank our partners and collaborators for their confidence in us!



SPONSORS & CONTRIBUTORS

During the reporting period, the CBRC received support from several companies and organizations. Without these, our activities would have been much more difficult to implement. Thank you!



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We are grateful to many of our colleagues for their financial and / or professional support, especially but not exclusively to the bat research community of Romania, as well as to:

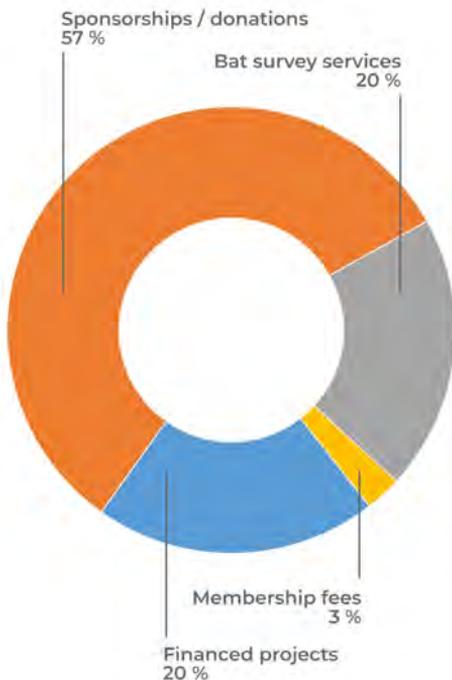
Adrian Ghercea, Ágnes Balázsi,
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Cove, Cecilia Montauban, Claudiu
Rogojan, Cosmina Bal, Cristian
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People who decided to support us with 2% of their income tax contributed significantly to our activities. The CBRC's printed materials would be visually much poorer without the photographic contribution of Dénes Dobrosi, Ioan Pan, Viorel Pocora, Dragoș Măntoiu, Suren Gazaryan și Levente Barti. Thank you!

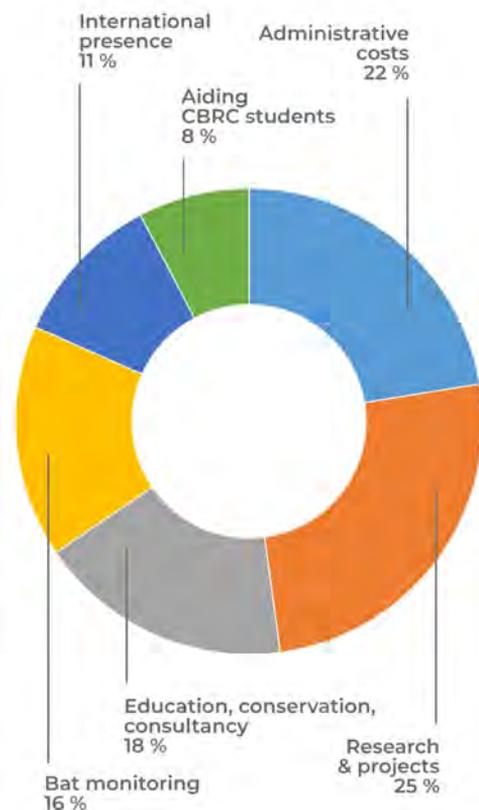
FINANCIAL

The organization's income originates from several sources, respectively: membership fees, 2% type donations, online donations on our official page, sponsorships and funds received for projects, as well as other types of incomes (ex. bat survey fees):



Of the available budget, we spent especially for the implementation of projects as well as for scientific research, monitoring and conservation. Another part was used to support CBRC students that were defending their BSc licenses.

A significant percentage was invested in educational materials (for our events) and international representation (ex. representing Romania at the EUROBATs meeting). We had spending in the following categories:



Our accounting is done by:



ABOUT US

The Centre for Bat Research and Conservation (CBRC) is a Romanian NGO established in 2017, by several bat enthusiasts across Romania. The CBRC's purpose is to research and conserve Romanian bats (Chiroptera), as well as their habitats and roosts, in order to protect nature in general, and to strive towards a healthier environment for us all.

The CBRC is headed by a board of directors consisting of the president, vice-president and secretary, but decisions are usually made after consultation with all members. At present, we have 14 members spread across several corners of the country, such as Cluj-Napoca, Reșița, Zărnești or Constanța., as well as two honorary members. Headquartered in Cluj-Napoca, the organization operates nationwide.

The CBRC has 15 objectives, the most important referring to the research and monitoring of the Romanian bat fauna, implementing concrete bat conservation projects, facilitating the participation of several interest groups in bat conservation, and bat conservation through the involvement of the public.



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Instagram: [lilieci_ro](https://www.instagram.com/lilieci_ro)



DONATIONS

In case you would like to support our activities (financially, with equipment or human resources) and thus to contribute to Romanian bat conservation, you can do it either by visiting our official donations page (link below) or by contacting us directly. Thank you!

The CBRC's donation page on GoGetFunding:
<https://gogetfunding.com/for-bats-and-their-future/>

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