

CENTRE FOR BAT RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

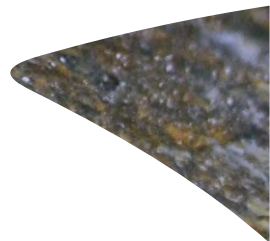
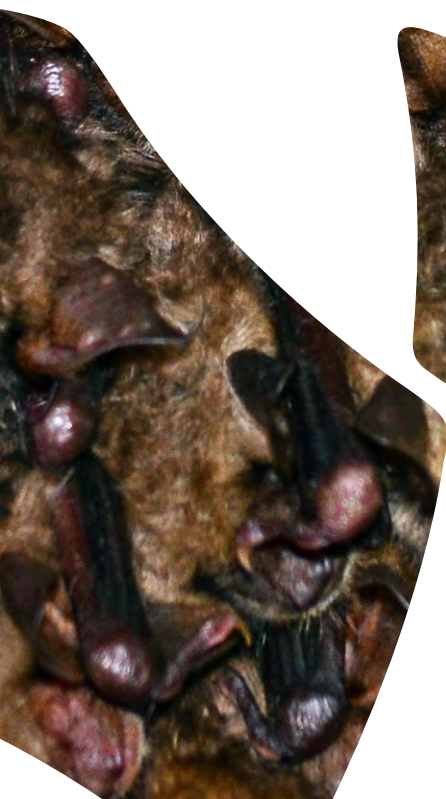
ABOUT, WITH
AND FOR
BATS



Anniversary activity report
2017-2021

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FOREWORD

I met for the first time with the CBRC team four years ago, in a small café in Cluj-Napoca. That evening however, as a young student in Biology, it never occurred to me how many things we would accomplish in the years to come.

These four years have been a steady progress. Although we have obviously faced the classic challenges of biodiversity conservation, we have managed to overcome them, and even grow from year to year. We made progress on all key issues, contributing to the research and conservation of bats, both at national and international settings.

Together with the CBRC, I explored a good part of Romania, seeing locations few people have the opportunity to see. Also with their help, I managed to advance professionally, in my university studies. Along the way, our friendships solidified, starting with long discussions on the way to the caves of the Banat region, or during the filling of bags with guano in church towers.

Like the flight of a bat, these four years have passed quite quickly. I hope that many more years will come and go, with at least as much positive energy and progress!

Flaviu Bodea
CBRC Secretary



A FOUR-YEAR SUMMARY

In 2017-2021 we managed to survey bats at over 330 locations in Romania, out of which 145 were caves. This considerable number was obtained out of our desire of knowledge, as well as through requests from various entities, including national and natural parks. Another equally decisive reason is Romania's incredible potential for suitable bat roosts and habitats. This last aspect is also the main reason for us discovering in this four-year period 22 new roosts with large bat colonies, completely new for science.

Many bat roosts are located in historic buildings, which are of course important to local communities as well. In these four years we cleaned the guano from under bat colonies in 10 historic buildings, all being churches. In this way we contributed both to the acceptance of bat colonies by the respective communities, and to the equally important aspect of preserving the buildings themselves. Furthermore, in order to raise awareness about the importance of bats, we organized 22 public events, with thousands of participants in total.

Sustainable results in nature conservation can be achieved through concrete projects, which also involve those communities that may have a different view about bats. The five CBRC projects implemented or currently running have created new connections with various communities, and strengthened existing relationships. We also took our role as researchers seriously, so we organized three national bat conferences, while the data collected by us in the field was included in 21 presentations at various scientific events.



Moreover, we represent Romania officially,
as scientific focal point, within the
EUROBATS Agreement.

Our passion for bats and their study
does not stop there. Thus, in this
period we supported and guided
university students in the elaboration
of their Bachelor's and Master's theses,
of course having to do with bats. We also
had the pleasure of giving 26 presentations
about bats in schools, high schools
and universities.

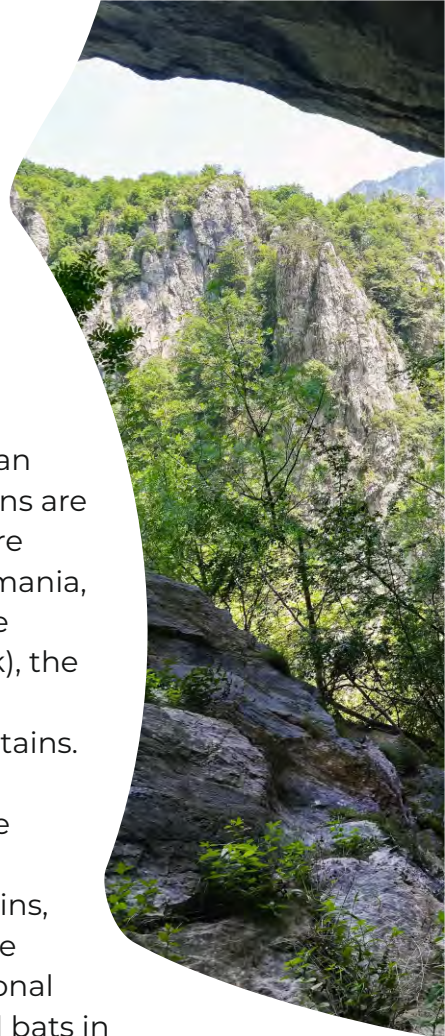
All these achievements would not have
possible without close collaboration with
other entities of nature conservation.
Here we refer specifically to Romanian
national and natural parks, Natura
2000 custodians, research
institutions, NGOs and caver clubs,
with which we have formed official
partnerships for the conservation of
Romanian bats. We would like to thank
them for their trust and for the
opportunities they offered.



MONITORING AND DISCOVERIES

In this four-year period we have surveyed over 330 locations for bats, including 145 caves, dozens of buildings, several forests, glacial lakes, but also urban and peri-urban areas. Most of the evaluated locations are inside Natura 2000 protected areas. Our efforts were focused mainly in Western and South-Western Romania, respectively in the national and natural parks of the Banat region (especially the Iron Gates Nature Park), the Grădiştea Muncelului – Cioclovina Nature Park, the Pădurea Craiului Mountains and the Trascău Mountains.

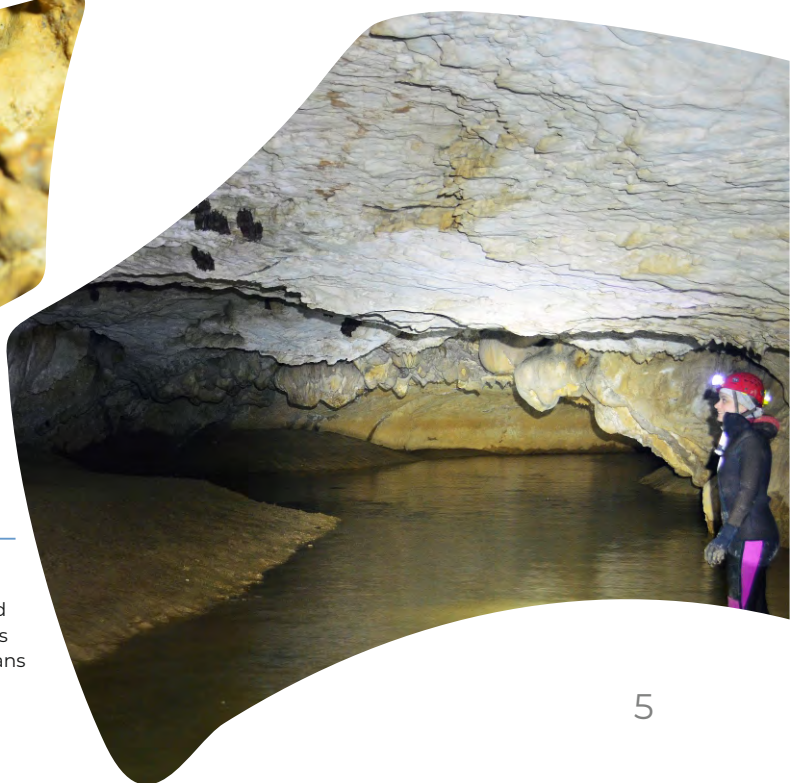
CBRC members were also active in Dobrogea, close to the Black Sea, as well as in central Romania, for example in the Făgăraş and Piatra Craiului Mountains, the Buila-Vânturariţa National Park, the Jiului Gorge National Park, or in the North, in the Călimani National Park. Based on specific requests, we also evaluated bats in urban areas, for example in the East Park of Cluj-Napoca, thus contributing to the knowledge about the biodiversity of these areas, and the possible creation of urban protected areas.





Bat surveys often included locations visited in premiere. Romania's high potential for bats is demonstrated also by the fact that in just four years of activity, we discovered 22 locations with new colonies for science. But Romania's caves, buildings and forests still contain dozens of undiscovered colonies of continental importance.

One of the most significant discoveries was a nursery colony of over 2.700 bats of two strictly protected species, in a small cave in the Trascău Mountains. Locations with such new colonies include several caves, historic buildings, and also abandoned tunnels. Eleven of the 22 locations with newly discovered colonies are in the Banat region, especially in the Iron Gates Nature Park, a sub-Mediterranean area with an exceptional biodiversity.



The monitoring and research activities of CBRC are done according to permits issued by the competent authorities in the field, as well as by the administrations and custodians of protected areas.

PUBLIC EVENTS

We are aware of the importance of the public's opinion towards bats, especially in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. For this reason, since the founding of CBRC, we have been making considerable efforts to let the public know about the importance of bats.

In this sense, like similar organizations in Romania, we organize the International Bat Night every year in several locations across the country. The CBRC events in this series attracted a record number of visitors, for example at the 2017 and 2018 editions in Cluj-Napoca, with over 800 visitors each. Such evenings, which include photo exhibitions, presentations, games for children and ultrasound themed walks, were organized by the CBRC also in Făgăraș, Constanța or Lisa. A special event took place during the Protected Areas Week 2018, with an ecological education activity for the students of the High School for the Visually Impaired from Cluj-Napoca.





In 2021, also for the public, we created a thematic route in Făget Forest (near Cluj-Napoca). Done in partnership with the Natura Transilvaniei Association, and through a sponsorship offered by Betfair Romania Development, the "Squirrel Route" is 4 km long, includes all kinds of information about the fauna and flora of Făget Forest, as well as bat, bird and small mammal artificial boxes, which can be checked by anyone.

We constantly respond to every request about a presentation on bats, coming from schools and high schools, but also from universities. In the four years of activity we have given 26 such presentations. The circumstances created by the pandemic did not stop this, continuing with presentations in the online environment, many done by our wonderful CBRC volunteers. Through all our events with and for the public, we believe that we have conveyed the idea of bat conservation to thousands of people.

CARING FOR HISTORY

Bat conservation without the support coming from local communities is almost impossible. An important part of the identity of these communities is often linked to a historic building, a monument representing their continuity in that place. These buildings can also shelter bat colonies that, similarly, have been present in that location for decades, maybe even for over a century.

For this reason, the CBRC offers support for the conservation of buildings that house big colonies, by cleaning them of the accumulated guano.

During our four years of activity, we cleaned the guano at 10 locations in Romania free of charge, respectively at:

- ✧ the Unitarian Church from Moldovenești, Cluj County
- ✧ the Unitarian Church from Vălenii de Arieș, Cluj County
- ✧ the Fortified Saxon Church of Moșna, Sibiu County
- ✧ the Orthodox Church from Someșul Rece, Cluj County
- ✧ the Roman Catholic Church from Leghia, Cluj County
- ✧ the Zeicani Orthodox Church, Hunedoara County
- ✧ the Serbian Orthodox Church in Divici, Caraș-Severin County
- ✧ the Greek Catholic Church in Roșia Montana, Alba County
- ✧ the Oravița Orthodox Church, Caraș-Severin County
- ✧ the Roman Catholic Church in Vlaha, Cluj County



Many of these cleaning activities took place together with colleagues from the Romanian Permaculture Association, the guano collected being used to increase soil fertility and growing vegetables in an ecological way, within the Cultivate the City initiative.

We continue to be available to local communities in cases where guano cleaning is required in buildings used by colonies. It is important also to note that, in most cases, the renovation of these historic buildings can be done in such a way that the resident bat colony also has a chance to remain there. We are available with concrete expertise to decision makers in such situations.



CBRC PROJECTS

Sustainable results in nature conservation are achieved through concrete projects, with clear objectives and realistic targets, but more importantly, through projects that also involve those communities that may have a different view on bat conservation. Since its founding, the CBRC has successfully implemented, and is currently implementing five concrete projects.

Our first project, implemented in partnership with the Myotis Bat Conservation Group, was aimed at Romanian cavers. Funded by Columbus Zoo & Aquarium, the project directly involved 20 cavers from seven clubs. Together we evaluated 70 underground locations in Romania, many for the first time, we discovered several colonies, and we also organized a training workshop for cavers about bat identification. The project also provided a useful tool for cavers: an indestructible ID key (ideal for the underground environment) about the bats of Romanian caves.

Launched in 2019 and still going in 2022, in partnership with the Myotis Bat Conservation Group and Serbian bat





researchers of the Museum of Natural History in Belgrade, we are implementing a cross-border project in the Iron Gates area.

Funded by the Conservation Leadership Program, the project aims to conserve horseshoe bats, and is based on observations that bats ringed in Serbia arrive to hibernate in caves in South-Western Romania.

Thus, the conservation of these bat populations requires cross-border and synchronized efforts. At the same time, from funds obtained through EUROBATS, we are working with colleagues from Romania and the Republic of Moldova to create the first online bat database in the two countries.

At the end of 2021, we also received a much-expected news: the CBRC, together with bat conservation organizations from Poland (main coordinator), Slovakia and the Czech Republic, is the winner of a significant European funding, within a 5-year project!

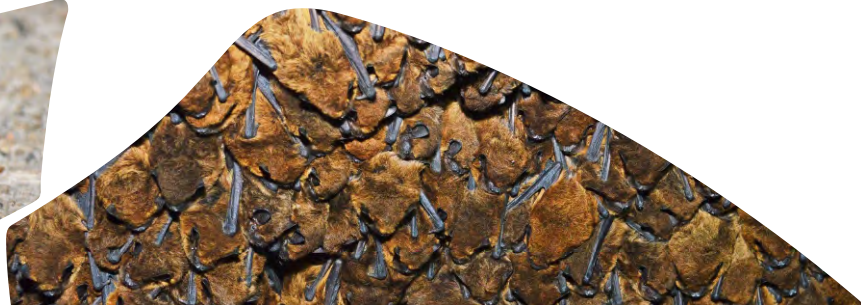


SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

Even before founding the CBRC, in 2016, future members of the organization resurrected the series of national bat conferences, inviting local experts to present their results in a scientific setting. In 2020 we already organized the 4th edition of the conference (online, due to the pandemic), in partnership with the Wilderness Research and Conservation Association from Bucharest.



In just four years, CBRC members have given 21 presentations at various scientific conferences, including both national and international events. We are well-known participants at the national bat conferences of Hungary, and at the European Bat Research Symposium. We also attended the National Bat Research Conference in the United Kingdom, a country with a long tradition of bat conservation. In 2021 we participated at international conferences for cave conservation, as well as that of anthropogenic shelters (buildings, mine galleries, etc.) of bats.





Recently we learned about the successful publication of two scientific articles in ISI listed journals (cumulative impact factor 4,622), where CBRC members contributed data and are co-authors. Several manuscripts are currently being developed, including about the results of a study conducted in partnership with the Sapiientia University of Cluj-Napoca, on the perception of Romanian stakeholders on bat conservation.



BAT OF THE YEAR 2020-2021

The Barbastelle

With a nose for old-growth forests

In 2020, the public voted the Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) to be the bat of the year in Romania. Subsequently, due to the challenges of the pandemic, we extended this designation till the end of 2021. Thus, we aligned ourselves with the vote at European level, where the species was designated the Bat of the year 2020-2021.





We say about the Barbastelle that it has a nose for old-growth forests, because it is a typical species for ancient forests, it uses hollows and loose barks of old trees as roost, but it also looks for food in these types of forests. Thus, it can be severely affected by inadequate forestry practices, ex. by cutting hollow trees, or by removing dead wooden material from the area.



In most European countries, the species is considered rare and endangered, and in all countries, including Romania, it is strictly protected. For the protection of the species it is recommended to keep a number of 7-10 hollow trees per hectare (representing 25-30 natural holes), and keeping dead wooden material in the habitat. In case of underground roosts, it is recommended to avoid tourist and speleological activities during the hibernation period (December - March).



THE NEXT GENERATION

The diversity and importance of the Romanian bat fauna is not reflected in the size of the local bat research community, this consisting of only 20-25 people. Thus, the formation of a new generation becomes very important, especially to face the challenges of the modern era. During these four years, we have had the opportunity to support and guide several university students, with the aim of developing their Bachelor's and Master's thesis on bats.



Flaviu

(Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca) was one of the first students to be guided by the CBRC in completing his degree. Flaviu chose the study of bats from the Natura 2000 site ROSCI0074 Făgetul Clujului - Valea Morii (near Cluj-Napoca) for his license, and his Master's dissertation advanced to the study of the bat fauna in the whole Cluj-Napoca metropolitan area.



Claudia

(Ovidius University, Constanța)
monitored the bat colonies in the caves of Dobrogea for her Bachelor's thesis. Bats in Dobrogea are exposed to many human-induced threat factors, and so Claudia's thesis is an important element for the proper conservation of these colonies.

Henrietta

(Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca)
studied those caves in the Pădurea Craiului Mountains, which were still unexplored in terms of bats. The result was the discovery of three underground locations, with colonies of national importance. At the moment Henrietta is working on the topic chosen for her master's dissertation, the study of bats in hollow trees.



CBRC HONORARY MEMBERS

"We have been working with the Centre for Bat Research & Conservation (CBRC) since 2017. We are an experienced pair of bat conservationists from the UK with years of voluntary and professional consultancy experience, however the size and importance of the roosts and hibernacula in Romania meant we really wanted to try to help conserve Romanian bats and support the CBRC wherever we could.

We have done this by presenting the work of the CBRC to groups across England, and by undertaking collaborative fieldwork; we encourage small groups of UK bat conservationists to join us shadowing the Romanian winter hibernation surveys and summer colony counts, and members of the CBRC have also visited England.





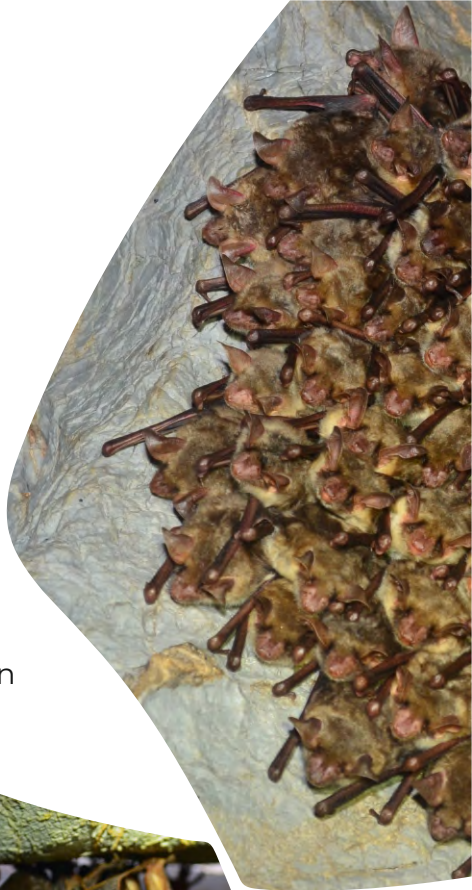
As it has for many people Covid-19 has presented us with significant challenges recently, however we look forward to continuing to help our friends in the CBRC with their expert efforts in documenting and conserving the remarkable bat habitats of Romania."

Matthew Cook MSc MCIEEM and
Barry Collins MSc MCIEEM



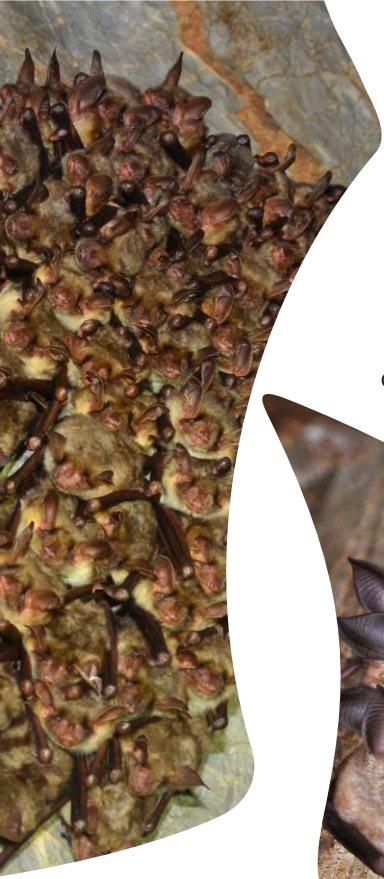
INTERNATIONAL

The bat fauna of Romania is one of the most diverse on the continent, and includes many "supercolonies", with hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of bats of strictly protected species. Similarly, the bat fauna of Romania is closely tied to the habitats of neighboring countries, with bats migrating from Hungary to the caves of the Pădurea Craiului Mountains to hibernate, or from Serbia to the caves of the Banat region. The conservation of bats in Romania must have international components and cross-border aspects.



In October 2018, the president of CBRC was appointed by the Ministry of Environment as the scientific focal point of Romania within the EUROBATS Agreement.

Thus, in 2019 we officially represented Romania for the first time at the meeting of the EUROBATS Advisory Committee, organized in Skopje, Macedonia.



At the invitation of colleagues from Poland, in 2019 we had the chance to visit the Szachownica and Nietoperek bat reserves during the hibernation period. It was very interesting to see protected areas, which were created specifically for the conservation of bats. Similarly, an experience exchange in the United Kingdom allowed us to visit Woodchester Mansion, a building of historic importance, where continuous monitoring (and conservation) of resident bat colonies has been taking place since 1959!



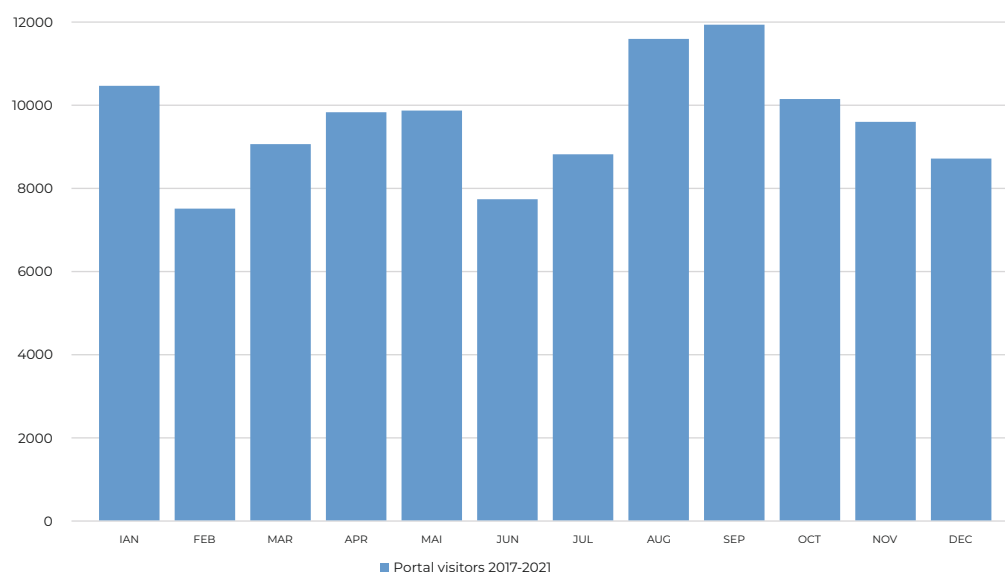
Involving the work of several colleagues from other bat NGOs in Romania, and through funds provided by the European Mammal Foundation and EUROBATS, the CBRC coordinates the data collection on Romanian bats, in order to update the Atlas of European Mammals.



THE LILIECI.RO PORTAL

The Romanian lilieci.ro bat portal, published in three languages (Romanian, Hungarian and English) still remains in 2022 the most complex online source of information about local bats.

Activated in December 2016, the portal's audience is constantly growing. In the period 2016-2021 it had 111473 of visitors in total, from 158 countries, respectively 1872 monthly visitors on average. In 2021 we also had a premiere, publishing an article in four languages (Romanian, Serbian, English and Hungarian), in the context of implementing the cross-border project with our colleagues from Serbia.



The NGO's communication channels are complemented by the well-known Facebook and Instagram, but we are also responsible for maintaining the communication channels of the entire Romanian bat research community. In addition, we have created a Facebook group for speleologists (SpeoBat), where we offer support in identifying bats observed in caves, as well as conservation recommendations.

CBRC PARTNERS

Since its founding, our organization has formed official partnerships with several organizations, administrations and custodians of protected areas, as well as with educational institutions or other entities. These partnerships are aimed at monitoring bats in important areas, conservation projects for protected areas, or educational activities. The results obtained together emphasize the need and benefits of working together. Thanks to our partners and collaborators for their trust!



SPONSORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

In the period 2017-2021, CBRC received support from several companies and associations. Without these contributions, our activities would have been much more difficult to implement. Thank you!



We would also like to thank many colleagues for their financial and / or professional support, especially, but not exclusively, to the Romanian bat research community, as well as to:

Adrian Orrell, Alexandr Iscenco, Alexandru Cornel, Alison Fure, Ana Stamatescu, Ani Binet, Barry Collins, Bill Cove, Brumbats Committee, Cecilia Montauban, Charlotte Packman, Cosmina Bal, Cristian Pilșoiu, Daniela Stan, David Nixon, Dénes Dobrosi, Florin Pascale, Frank Lucas, Gabriel Solomon, Grăd. "Trenulețul Veseliei", Greg Slack, Hayley Dean, Iain Hysom, Jennifer Wrayton, Jessica Eades, Jo Robinson, Jon Russ, Julia Waller, Kasandra-Zorica Ivanić, Katie Higham, Keith Cohen, Kim Perryman, Kitty Harvill, KTF Vilm Team, Levente Bücs, Lynn Whitfield, Marian Mackinnon,

Marie Fleming, Marielle James, Marion Schön, Marinel Stan, Matt Cook, Mihai Filipaș, Nathalie Cossa, Nathan Redman, Nicolae Tomovici, Nils Bouillard, North Bucks Bat Group, Orest Bych, Patrick Collins, Renee Palmer, Robert Bell, Rodica Plăiașu, SC M&S Ecoproiect SRL, Sébastien Puechmaille, Shirley Cross, Silvia și Adrian Gabia, Sinead McCarthy, Sofia Tvaradze, Sonja Kaulbarsch, Sorina Lăcrămioare, Suren Gazaryan, Tanith Cook, Tereza Kušnířová, The CryptKicker, Tricia Scott, Vera Iscenco, Veronika Bokor, Vesna Maksimović, Victor Ursu și Victoria Worrall.

The people who decided to support us with 2-3.5% of their income tax contributed significantly to our activities. The informative materials published by the CBRC would be much poorer visually without the photographic contribution of Dénes Dobrosi, Ioan Pan, Viorel Pocora, Dragoș Măntoiu, Suren Gazaryan and Levente Barti. Thank you!

FINANCIAL

The organization's revenues come from several sources: membership fees, 2-3.5% type donations, online donations on our official website, sponsorships and especially funding for concrete projects, as well as other revenues (ex. bat survey services). In 2017-2021 the CBRC had revenues (including all categories) amounting to RON 323,500 (~65.000 EUR). The larger part of this budget came as funding for concrete conservation projects from our funders:



From the available budget we mainly spent for the implementation of these concrete projects and research, but also for the monitoring and conservation of bats, as well as to provide support to CBRC students in developing their Bachelor's and Master's theses. Significant amounts have been allocated to public education activities, as well as to the international representation of the CBRC (ex. Romania's representation at the EUROBATS meetings).

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 governed by a board of directors consisting of the president, a vice-president and a secretary, but decisions are usually made after consulting all members. In 2017-2021 we had 16 members spread in several corners of the country, such as Cluj-Napoca, Reșița or Constanța, as well as 2 honorary members. Based in Cluj-Napoca, the organization operates nationwide.

The CBRC has a number of 15 objectives, the most important being related to the research and monitoring of Romanian bat fauna, the implementation of concrete projects for bat conservation, facilitating the participation of several interest groups in bat conservation, and promoting bat conservation through public involvement.





CONTACT

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



DONATIONS

If you want to support our activities (financially, with equipment or human resources), and thus contribute to the conservation of bats in Romania, you can do so either by accessing our official online donation page (link below), or by initiating direct contact with us for details. Thank you!

CBRC page on GoGetFunding:

<https://gogetfunding.com/for-bats-and-their-future/>







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