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CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE'S PROTECTED AREAS

OVERCOMING MAJOR WARTIME CHALLENGES
WINTER 2022/2023 – SUMMER 2024



**FRANKFURT
ZOOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

SUPPORTED BY

Nationale
Naturlandschaften



augmentum
supporting gamechangers



IKI INTERNATIONAL
CLIMATE
INITIATIVE



based on a decision of
the German Bundestag

SUPPORT TO
NATURE
PROTECTED AREAS



Міністерство
захисту довкілля
та природних ресурсів
України



Funded by
the European Union

AS WELL AS LISBET RAUSING AND PETER BALDWIN AND MANY OTHER PRIVATE DONORS

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE CONTINUES

The brutal full-scale war that Russia is waging against Ukraine has continued for more than two years. The impacts of the conflict have had devastating consequences for Ukraine's society, economy, and nature. Parts of the country not directly affected by active warfare have also been substantially impacted, including the Carpathians, one of the Frankfurt Zoological Society's (FZS) main project areas.

Thousands of people have sought refuge in the Carpathians having fled from occupied villages and cities or from other places within Ukraine – such as the northern and eastern part of the country, which faces daily shelling. Communities and nature parks in the Carpathians have welcomed people displaced by the war, however the great hope is that one day soon they can return home safely.

Communities in cities and villages across Ukraine continue to have their day-to-day lives impacted by the effects of active warfare and the constant threat of air raids. The ongoing destruction of the energy network leads to regular power cuts, again this spring and summer. Moreover, the ongoing mobilization of men to the war effort across Ukraine could continue to affect the FZS Ukraine team and those of partner organizations as male team members may end up being drafted into the army. In early 2023, FZS Ukraine's Biodiversity Monitoring Coordinator was drafted and finding a replacement has proven very difficult. It is not possible to prevent team members from being drafted to the war effort and therefore measures have been developed to try to ensure that the team works as efficiently as possible, and is able to react and compensate sufficiently in the case of sudden and sustained capacity gaps.

The Ukrainian Carpathians, which are located in the far west of the country, are important not only as a refuge: the region's pristine nature and breathtaking mountain forests can also play a role in supporting recovery. Therefore, support to staff of national parks, nature reserves, and communities in the Carpathians is more important than ever and FZS is determined that this will continue long into the future.

EMERGENCY SUPPORT 2022–2023

- 35 protected areas** across Ukraine received emergency support
- 6 protected areas** in Polesia received running cost support from May 2022 to March 2023
- 13 protected areas** in the Carpathians receive running cost support since May 2022
- >3000 people** accommodated by setting up 1000 lodging spaces at protected area sites
- >100 t emergency goods** delivered to 26 protected areas across Ukraine to support internally displaced people

The rapid and tremendous response from many donors and partners allowed FZS to provide direct and timely emergency support in 2022 and 2023

FZS supported internally displaced people across Ukraine. The map shows the protected areas FZS supports as well as the area currently under Russian control. Four supported sites lie in the current war zone.

- protected areas that received emergency support in 2022*
 - protected areas that receive ongoing support
 - area under Russian control
- (Status: May 15th 2024)

* None of these areas received support after occupation, only before.

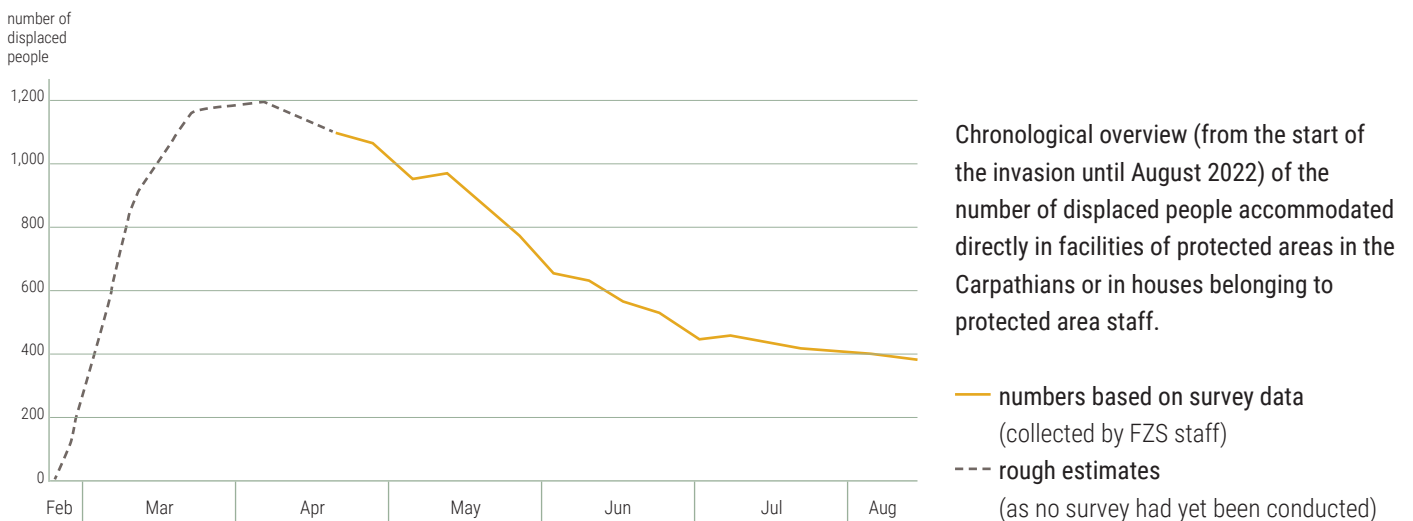


Source: FZS, deepstatemap.live

PROTECTED AREA FACILITIES AS SAFE HAVENS

In the first months of 2022, FZS responded quickly and decisively to the tremendous challenges faced by communities and protected areas in the Ukrainian Carpathians. Tens of thousands of people affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine sought shelter in the relative safety of the Carpathian Mountains. This presented tremendous challenges for local towns, communities, and supply systems to provide accommodation and subsistence for so many in need. Parks in the region did everything they could to offer beds and living spaces, with guesthouses, visitor centers and offices across the Ukrainian Carpathians turned into temporary homes. Within the first month after the start of the invasion, FZS, in cooperation with partners in Romania, Slovakia, Poland, and Germany, imported more than 40 tonnes of goods into Ukraine, including beds, blankets, mattresses, food, electricity generators, and medical goods to parks to help them support the people displaced. Until mid-2022, we delivered additional 37 tonnes of food and hygiene products (purchased from within Ukraine) to dedicated facilities in local Carpathian communities which hosted large numbers of displaced people.

DISPLACED PEOPLE ACCOMMODATED IN PROTECTED AREA INFRASTRUCTURE OR IN HOUSES OF PROTECTED AREA STAFF



The wider region across the protected areas in the Carpathians showed a similar development of numbers of internally displaced people throughout 2022 as shown in the graph above. According to our estimates at the time, roughly 66,000 displaced people were located in the Carpathian region at the peak (March–April 2022).

As the war continued beyond summer 2022, the numbers of additional displaced people arriving in the Ukrainian Carpathians had reduced substantially. Many people who had sought refuge decided to leave the region, either moving onward to other countries or returning home as Russian attacks became more confined to the areas near the frontline in Eastern Ukraine. After confirming with local partners and authorities that the situation was under control, FZS conducted its last major food and hygiene product deliveries in January 2023, amounting to a total of approximately 10 tonnes of supplies.

In total, the support FZS provided to displaced people within the Carpathian region amounted to more than 93 tonnes of critically needed goods. Protected areas in other parts of Ukraine also provided important shelter for displaced people in their buildings, some of which are located close to Russian-occupied territory. FZS provided additional 10 tonnes of desperately needed emergency support to these areas. In summary, FZS delivered the emergency goods to 35 protected areas across Ukraine.



In the second half of 2023, fewer people were sheltering in the premises of protected areas. The pressure on local supply systems in the Carpathians eased and the situation started to stabilize. Given this positive development, FZS began a process for phasing out the organization's emergency support, with the goal of reverting attention back to nature conservation and protected area support. Since then, FZS' efforts focus on more direct support of 13 national parks and nature reserves in the Carpathians. One objective is to allow parks and reserves to continue their important conservation work in difficult times. Another is to provide space for recovery and recreation for people through nature tourism, as well as platforms for environmental education.

DIRECT SUPPORT TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

ENGAGING SMALL LOCAL PRODUCERS

The Carpathians have a rich heritage of small local producers who produce traditional foods and beverages. They represent an important part of the local Carpathian culture. Traditional businesses, however, were hit hard when tourism revenues collapsed after the start of the war. Consequently, FZS established initiatives to engage local producers in providing food for displaced people. From this, a small project developed, where the producer landscape across the Carpathians was assessed and several small businesses identified that produce traditional high-quality food in eco-friendly ways. FZS then purchased a total of almost six tonnes of products from these businesses and had them delivered directly to centers housing displaced people.

This project has helped support 15 entrepreneurs based in the Carpathians and provided Internally Displaced People with home-made products. It also helped environmental institutions providing support for displaced people who lost their homes due to the war.



Ivan,
who produces
handmade sauces for
displaced people
with his brother.



Mykhailo, who used to travel to earn a living, has now become an entrepreneur and produces milk products.

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Diana from Chernivtsi, whose homemade dumplings were enjoyed by displaced people.

© Viktor Pavlysh

ENSURING WARMTH IN A DIFFICULT WINTER

As winter approached in 2022, a new challenge began to materialize as Russian attacks started to focus on Ukraine's national energy infrastructure. This resulted in frequent and long-lasting blackouts across the country, including the Carpathians. Electricity outages had a severe negative impact on people's daily lives, disrupting critical energy and heating systems during the cold winter months. Generators that FZS had previously supplied to the protected areas proved invaluable, enabling heating to continue during the blackouts and maintaining adequate living conditions for displaced people. At the same time, however, we identified a need to provide large heavy-duty generators for two protected areas that were still housing more than 100 displaced people across two facilities. FZS purchased these generators and delivered them to the Skolivski Beskydy and Verkhovynskiy National Parks in early 2023. Fortunately, electricity outages became less frequent from this point onwards and the power supply is currently stable. Nevertheless, these generators will remain key emergency infrastructure for the parks, as power outages could still occur at any time.



To overcome severe power outages due to Russian attacks on electricity infrastructure, heavy-duty generators were delivered to three protected areas; one of them was the Verkhovynskiy National Park to provide electricity for the administration building and accommodation of displaced people.

All in all, we are glad and proud that we, as a nature conservation organization, were able to contribute meaningfully to the support of displaced people and all those dedicated to alleviating the difficult circumstances of those fleeing from the attacks and seeking shelter near our partner protected areas. We are relieved to see that the situation in the Carpathians has stabilized to the point where our help is no longer needed in terms of supporting those who have been forced to leave their homes. Nevertheless, we continue to keep an eye on the ongoing developments and remain prepared to jump back into action immediately. Our logistical systems are now ready at a much higher level than before, which would allow us to react even faster in the future.

Michael Brombacher

Head of the Europe Department at FZS



DIRECT SUPPORT TO NATIONAL PARKS

Ukraine's protected areas are massively underfunded, even before Russia's invasion in 2022. However, the economic costs of the war have made the situation critical. The protected areas FZS works with have no meaningful funding sources apart from government funding and budgets for all but the most essential operations have in most cases been completely cut. For the most part, only salaries and utility bills continue to be covered by government budgets, whilst all operational needs go largely unfunded.

In order to maintain essential conservation work in Ukraine's protected areas, FZS began directly covering their most important operational costs, from printing paper, to fuel for vehicles, to office internet connections. Without this support, the parks would be unable to patrol their territories, provide environmental education, monitor and study wildlife, or even run basic office operations. In the first year, generous donations of countless individuals formed the financial backbone for this support, while starting from spring 2023, the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) is providing significant support for this work.

Requests for funding from parks and reserves are invited on a quarterly basis and must be centered on activities with clear conservation benefits. FZS approves or rejects requests accordingly and assigns a reporting requirement and means of verification for each request. This support enables parks to perform essential field-based activities and to carry out infrastructure maintenance, which prevents further deterioration of protected area assets.

SETTING UP A CAR REPAIR SHOP

The Ukrainian Carpathians are amongst Europe's wildest regions, and the vast size of the landscapes that need to be monitored, patrolled and maintained, means that appropriate vehicles are one of the most critical assets for protected areas. Years of under-investment in protected areas and their maintenance meant that most parks and reserves lacked functional, safe and reliable vehicles with which to perform duties. Moreover, there are few vehicle maintenance garages within the project areas, with repairs typically carried out using generic replacement parts and to a poor standard, inflaming the situation further.

With the financial support of private donors, FZS built a new vehicle repair workshop in the central village of Mykulychyn in the Carpathians. Two skilled FZS-employed mechanics provide top-quality maintenance of vehicles at no cost to the parks. The garage itself has been renovated by FZS and while still under construction a mobile workshop was also purchased and equipped. This enabled the mechanics to repair more than 20 vehicles across nine protected areas in 2023.



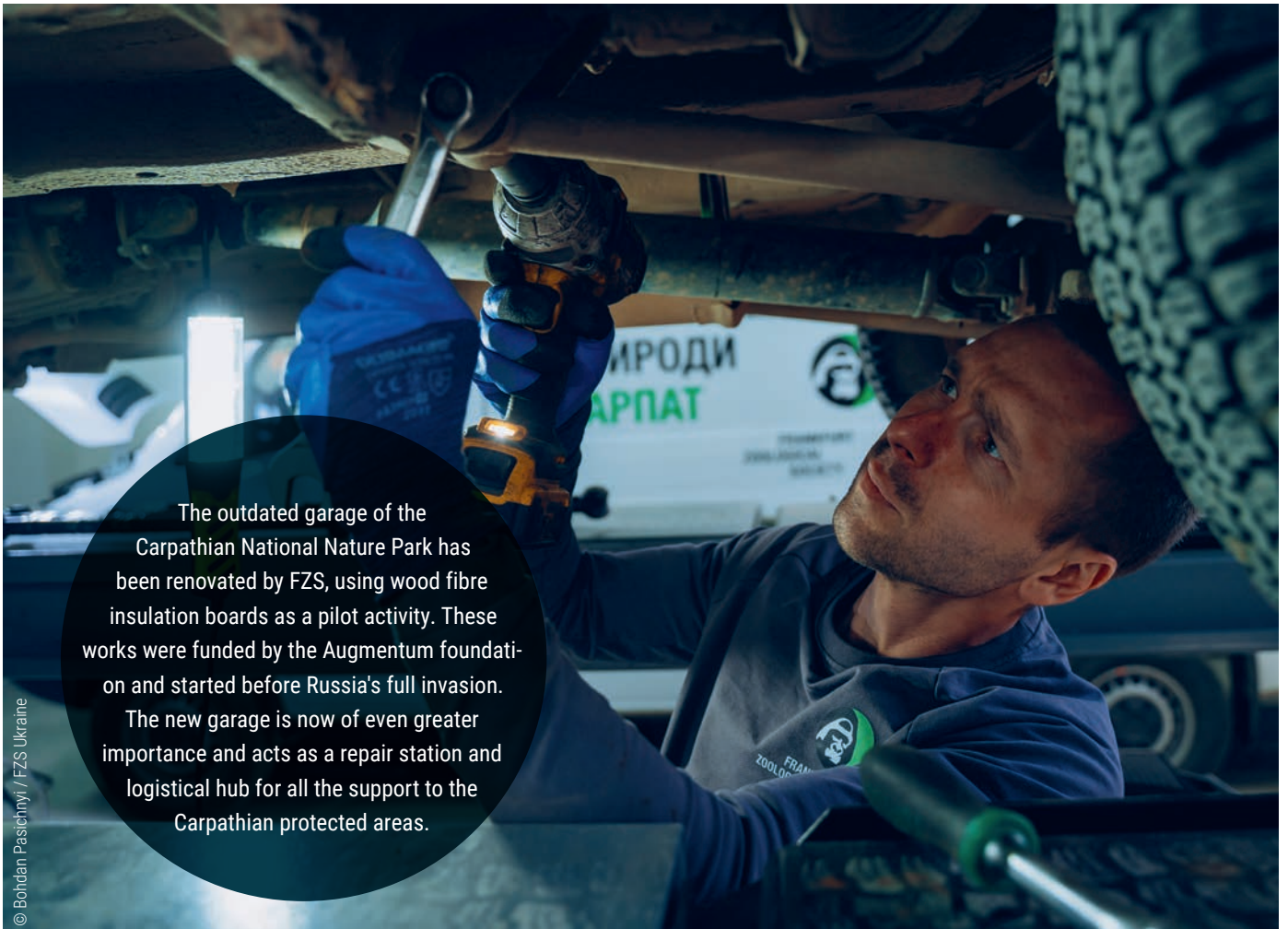
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“ The war became a real challenge for our national park. We primarily tried our best to help internally displaced persons, but we must additionally continue our main nature conservation work in the face of reduced funding. Here, the help of FZS was a significant support. ”

Halyna Marchuk
Director of the Vyzhnytsia National Park



Interior of the FZS mobile workshop – before being kitted with tools – which is used to perform onsite repairs and maintenance for protected area vehicles.



The outdated garage of the Carpathian National Nature Park has been renovated by FZS, using wood fibre insulation boards as a pilot activity. These works were funded by the Augmentum foundation and started before Russia's full invasion. The new garage is now of even greater importance and acts as a repair station and logistical hub for all the support to the Carpathian protected areas.

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PROVIDING FUEL TO ENABLE ESSENTIAL FIELD-BASED ACTIVITIES

Provision of fuel constitutes one of the main recurrent expenses covered by FZS for protected areas in the Ukrainian Carpathians. During 2023, parks and reserves received operational support of nearly 38,000 liters of fuel, enabling staff to carry out essential field-based activities, including routine patrols, environmental monitoring, eco-education activities, and the maintenance of infrastructure. This support is critical in enabling specialists in protected areas to carry out daily conservation work and specific on-site activities.



Patrolling and monitoring works conducted by the team within the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve.



Rangers in Verkhovynskyi National Park consult with FZS Ecological Monitoring Technician Maksym Vysochyn (centre) before heading out to the field.

REPLACING AN OLD HEATING SYSTEM

Operational costs encompass not only the predictable and routine needs of protected areas. Therefore, FZS also provides financial support for urgent and critical requirements. One example in winter 2023 was the unexpected failure of a heating system in the administrative building of the Hutsulshchyna National Nature Park. The wood boiler and associated heating system components were replaced just before the onset of cold weather, enabling 54 staff members to continue their essential day-to-day work.



The new boiler installed in Hutsulshchyna National Park after the old one suffered catastrophic failure at the onset of winter.

GIVING PROTECTED AREA FACILITIES A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Ranger houses, administrative buildings, and museums and information centers of protected areas in the Ukrainian Carpathians are mostly housed in aging buildings that lack insulation, have poor energy efficiency, and may have other major issues such as leaking roofs, which endanger the buildings and the people working and living in them. FZS undertook a massive overhaul of key buildings in the Carpathians, including the construction of new ranger houses that adhere to local ecological and traditional styles, as well as new guest-houses that offer places to stay for people seeking a rest from the war as tourists. By this, parks can also generate income.



New high quality and ecological ranger houses constructed in accordance with traditional architectural practices were built in Ukraine's Verkhovynskiy National Nature Park, near the Romanian border. A second building functions as a guesthouse for tourists.



The main administrative building in the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve is currently being renovated. It had a leaking roof which was repaired and replaced.



The administrative building of the Carpathian National Nature Park in the city of Yaremche has been renovated. New energy saving and wooden windows have been installed and the outer walls have been insulated. The renovation has significantly reduced the national nature park's energy costs. Currently the heating pipes and the radiators are being modernised and the office rooms renovated.



RENOVATING THE LARGEST SHELTER FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE IN A PROTECTED AREA

The administrative building of the Skolivski Beskydy National Nature Park near the Polish border hosted more than 60 internally displaced people when the war started. The roof of the building was leaking massively and threatened to destroy the building. People had to move out. Private donations allowed for the repair of the roof, and it is planned that displaced people who need to use the building will be able to return. The building will mainly function as an environmental education center and park office after the renovation and the end of the war.



The administrative building of the Skolivski Beskydy National Nature Park served as an important shelter for internally displaced people, but they had to leave due to the urgent renovation work that needed to be carried out. Once the work has been completed, displaced people will be able to return.



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TAKING A BREAK IN NATURE

In Summer 2023, staff of the Hutsulshchyna National Nature Park hosted a three-day nature camp called “Friends of Nature”. This was the second year in a row that FZS has supported the event, which allows children to visit different parts of the national park, and to study and explore the environment through challenges, creative tasks, and sports activities. Young visitors also got acquainted with the park’s nature trail and learned about local flora and fauna, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of nature conservation and nature-friendly behaviour. The camp also provided an opportunity for children to take a break from the daily challenges and traumas of living in war time in Ukraine. FZS’s operational cost support to the park covered the transport, food and materials needed to make the event possible.



Children hiking in the Hutsulshchyna National Nature Park as part of the summer camp “Friends of Nature”.

OUTLOOK

The war and all its direct and indirect consequences will continue to exert high pressure on Ukraine's protected areas. Military efforts continue to remain the priority for public expenditure, undermining funding for conservation-related issues.

To date, the impacts of the war on the landscapes of protected areas in the Carpathians have been minimized, in part thanks to the tremendous efforts of FZS's project team and partners on the ground. This work has been made possible by the extraordinary financial support received from external partners and donors. With ongoing dedicated effort, close cooperation, and external financial backing, nature conservation efforts in the Carpathians can be maintained and even become more impactful over the coming years.

As well as bringing desperately needed immediate support to protected areas and displaced people during these challenging times, we noticed a positive side effect emerging from our efforts – our relationships with staff working in protected areas as well as local communities grew stronger. Seeing that we will not shy away from providing real, physical support, beyond verbal or written encouragement, even when circumstances become very difficult, was highly appreciated by our partners. This mutual trust and support will remain of high value as we continue with our joint cooperation.



Iryna Burbylo

Project Coordinator for renovation and construction projects at FZS Ukraine



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The FZS Ukraine project team has also become closer, strengthening our overall team spirit by working together through the multitude of challenges. Work to support protected areas in the Ukrainian Carpathians in these difficult circumstances has required team members to cooperate effectively and tackle many tough challenges, providing deep insights that will help the project team deliver on its objectives going forward. While the situation remains challenging, FZS continues to maintain its ambitious goals of expanding existing protected areas and placing more of the highly valuable Carpathian forests under official legal protection in the coming years. With environmental, economic, and social pressures continuing to rise, this may be the last opportunity to accomplish these important goals.

Preserving the Carpathians is especially important for the people of Ukraine. The pristine forest landscapes across the Carpathian Mountains, with their beautiful valleys and rivers and incredible wilderness tranquility can serve as a source of hope and symbol of recovery for a nation that has been traumatized by an unwanted invasion for more than two years. Maintaining this beauty, for nature and people, in difficult times remains our motivation.

Help us to provide ongoing support to protected areas:

Donation account

DE63 5005 0201 0000 0800 02

BIC

HELADEF1822

Reference

Protected Areas Ukraine

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