

## METHODS FOR CONSERVING NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES THROUGH HUNTING TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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***Abstract:** Hunting tourism constitutes a significant form of sustainable tourism in Romania, contributing both to the preservation of biodiversity and to the promotion of traditional cultural heritage. When practised responsibly, it supports the balanced management of wildlife populations through the establishment of hunting quotas, habitat restoration, and the implementation of anti-poaching measures. The revenues generated from hunting permits are directed towards conservation programmes, species monitoring, and environmental education initiatives. Beyond its ecological dimension, hunting tourism plays an important role in safeguarding rural traditions, local craftsmanship, and traditional gastronomy, thereby reinforcing the cultural identity of local communities.*

***Key words:** biodiversity conservation; cultural heritage; sustainable tourism; Romania; rural development*

### INTRODUCTION

Hunting tourism represents a complex component of sustainable tourism, combining responsible wildlife management with the economic and cultural valorization of local resources. In Romania, this form of tourism has a long-standing tradition, being closely linked to rural customs, hunting culture, and the biodiversity characteristic of the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic regions [1, 6]. When organized responsibly, hunting tourism contributes not only to the conservation of game species but also to the restoration of natural habitats and the maintenance of ecological balance across forest and aquatic ecosystems.

The importance of hunting tourism manifests on multiple levels. From a biodiversity conservation perspective, hunting funds allow for the monitoring of animal populations through GPS, surveillance cameras, and regular reports, thereby maintaining a balance between wildlife and their natural environment [8, 13]. Moreover, these funds support anti-poaching programs, habitat restoration, and the creation of ecological corridors that enable natural species migration and prevent population isolation. Hunting tourism thus proves to be an effective environmental protection tool, providing financial and logistical resources for conservation activities.

From a socio-economic standpoint, hunting tourism generates direct and indirect benefits for local communities. Revenues from hunting permits, guided tours, and related services (accommodation, restaurants, local crafts) significantly contribute to rural economic development. For instance, in Transylvania, approximately 40% of the revenues from hunting funds are reinvested in communities through job creation and local procurement [9, 12]. Additionally, community involvement in managing hunting funds supports the preservation of cultural traditions and reduces youth migration to urban areas, maintaining the socio-cultural dynamics of rural villages.

Hunting tourism also has a significant educational and cultural component. Through educational and practical activities, tourists are trained to use low-impact equipment, respect protected areas, and participate in trail and habitat maintenance. This fosters a responsible attitude towards the environment [7, 11, 16]. Simultaneously, hunting tourism promotes local cultural heritage. Activities such as participating in traditional

festivals, cooking workshops, or craft demonstrations allow tourists to engage directly with the traditions of rural communities, contributing to the preservation of regional cultural identity [2, 15].

Concrete examples from various regions of Romania illustrate the effectiveness of hunting tourism. In the Southern Carpathians, hunting funds manage extensive forest areas using GPS monitoring and surveillance cameras, reinvesting part of the revenue into reforestation and habitat maintenance [13]. In the Danube Delta, hunting tourism is combined with birdwatching and aquatic ecosystem protection, offering visitors ecological education and direct involvement in environmental conservation [4, 10]. Thus, hunting tourism becomes an integrated model of sustainable tourism, simultaneously valorizing natural and cultural heritage.

In conclusion, hunting tourism represents a complex strategy for sustainable conservation, combining ecological, economic, and cultural aspects. Through responsible management and strategic planning, this type of tourism can significantly contribute to biodiversity protection, the promotion of cultural traditions, and the sustainable development of rural communities. In the current context of sustainable tourism development and environmental protection, hunting tourism provides an effective framework for the balanced and responsible utilization of natural and cultural resources. [3, 5, 14]

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study adopts a qualitative and descriptive-analytical methodology, integrating information from specialized literature, statistical data, and case studies related to hunting tourism and sustainable management of natural resources in Romania. We used as a research methods comparative analysis of how hunting tourism is managed in various Romanian regions, such as the Southern Carpathians, Danube Delta, and Transylvania, indirect observation of the effects of tourism and hunting activities on the environment, review of relevant legislation and documents to assess public policies in the field and case studies of hunting funds administered by Romsilva and local hunting associations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicate that hunting tourism in Romania has played a significant role in supporting biodiversity conservation by ensuring the continuous monitoring and scientific management of wildlife populations. Through investments generated by hunting permits, many hunting funds have been able to implement advanced monitoring technologies, including GPS collars, motion-detection cameras, and drone-based surveys. These tools have allowed managers to collect precise data on population dynamics, migration patterns, and habitat use for species such as red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), and large carnivores like the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and lynx (*Lynx lynx*).

Habitat restoration emerged as a particularly strong outcome. In the Southern Carpathians, for example, the maintenance of feeding areas, the creation of salt points, and meadow restoration have contributed to reducing human–wildlife conflicts by directing animals away from agricultural lands. Local agricultural damage reports from 2019–2023 illustrate a gradual decrease in crop destruction where such measures were implemented.

Anti-poaching efforts represent another notable result. Revenues from hunting activities finance regular ranger patrols and surveillance programs, decreasing illegal hunting. Several hunting funds reported a reduction of up to 25–40% in poaching incidents over the past decade. This demonstrates that responsible hunting tourism, when well

regulated, becomes a financial engine for broader ecological protection rather than a threat to wildlife.

The creation of ecological corridors — essential for wildlife movement — is among the long-term ecological benefits. In fragmented landscapes, especially near industrial or agricultural areas, such corridors have reduced genetic isolation and improved species resilience. These findings align with international principles of sustainable wildlife management promoted by FAO [5].

Overall, the results support the idea that hunting tourism, under strict regulation, contributes directly to species protection and ecosystem stability.

The **socio-economic results** show that hunting tourism represents a valuable source of income for rural communities, particularly in remote mountainous or low-density regions. Economic contributions occur through several channels:

**Direct revenues**

- Hunting permits and trophy fees generate consistent income.
- Revenues support salaries for forest rangers, biologists, local guides, cooks, and maintenance staff.

**Indirect benefits**

- Increased occupancy rates at rural guesthouses during hunting seasons.
- Higher demand for traditional food products (cheese, smoked meat), handicrafts, and local services.

Case studies from Transylvania reveal that reinvested funds account for at least 40% of annual revenues, helping to modernize local infrastructure, develop eco-friendly accommodations, and support cultural festivals. Importantly, hunting tourism reduces rural depopulation by providing stable, year-round employment opportunities. It allows young residents to remain in their communities and participate in family-run tourism enterprises.

In the Danube Delta, combined hunting–fishing tourism allowed households to diversify their income sources, making local economies more resilient to seasonal fluctuations and environmental uncertainties. This multifunctional model of rural development demonstrates how hunting tourism can act as both a conservation tool and a driver of socio-economic regeneration.

Hunting tourism significantly contributes to **maintaining and revitalizing local cultural traditions**. Hunting is deeply embedded in Romanian rural culture, influencing customs, culinary practices, and seasonal rituals. Through hunting tourism, visitors are exposed to:

- traditional dishes (goulash, wild game stews, cheeses from mountain sheepfolds),
- handicraft workshops (sheepskin processing, wooden tool carving),
- folklore events related to seasonal hunting rituals.

These activities not only preserve intangible heritage but also create a form of “experiential tourism” where visitors directly engage with local communities. In areas such as Alba, Covasna, and Harghita, hunting tourism has revitalized small craft industries that were previously declining.

Local identity is strengthened as communities gain pride from showcasing their traditions. Simultaneously, tourists develop a deeper understanding of rural life, contributing to cultural exchange and reinforcing the sustainable tourism model.

One of the most notable results is **increased ecological awareness among both tourists and local residents**. Through guided tours and mandatory safety briefings, tourists learn:

- species identification and ecological behavior,
- sustainable hunting rules,

- the importance of respecting breeding seasons,
- methods for reducing disturbance in fragile ecosystems.

Guides emphasize the differences between responsible and irresponsible hunting, thus shaping ethical behavior. Participatory conservation activities — habitat cleaning, tree planting, trail maintenance — foster a sense of ecological stewardship among visitors.

Furthermore, school-based educational programs, often financed by hunting funds, introduce children to environmental values, wildlife monitoring, and biodiversity protection. This multigenerational educational effect strengthens long-term conservation outcomes.



**Figure 1. Methods for conserving natural and cultural resources through hunting tourism in Romania**

*Source:[own creation]*

**In Southern Carpathians region:**

- Over 30,000 hectares of hunting territory managed sustainably.
- Stable or increasing populations of deer, chamois, and wild boar due to habitat improvement.
- Tourism revenues allocated to reforestation and wildfire prevention.

**In Transylvania region:**

- Mixed tourism model combining hunting, gastronomy, history, and crafts.
- More than 50 micro-enterprises engaged in tourism-related activities.
- Increased visibility of local traditions and revival of seasonal festivals.

**In Danube Delta region:**

- Complex tourism integrating hunting with birdwatching and fishing.
- Conservation activities target aquatic birds, wetlands, and reed ecosystems.
- Tourists frequently participate in ecological monitoring projects.

Although results are generally positive, challenges remain:

**Challenges**

- Risk of habitat degradation if tourist flows are not regulated.
- Noise pollution and wildlife disturbance during peak seasons.
- Conflicts between wildlife and agriculture.
- Lack of consistent coordination among institutions.
- Public perceptions that may associate hunting with environmental harm.

**Solutions**

- Implement stricter visitor quotas and mandatory ecological briefings.
- Strengthen compensatory schemes for farmers affected by wildlife.
- Expand ecological corridors to reduce human–wildlife conflict.
- Promote transparent communication about how hunting revenues support conservation.
- Encourage scientific research and monitoring to guide decision-making.



**Figure 2. Conservation of nature & culture**

*Source:[own creation]*

## CONCLUSIONS

Hunting tourism proves to be an effective instrument for the sustainable conservation of natural and cultural resources in Romania. When managed responsibly, it contributes to maintaining ecological balance, regulating wildlife populations, and supporting the protection of rare or vulnerable species. Through monitoring programs, habitat restoration, and anti-poaching measures financed largely by hunting revenues, this form of tourism strengthens conservation efforts and ensures the long-term stability of ecosystems. At the same time, the involvement of local communities in organizing and managing hunting tourism brings significant socio-economic benefits. Jobs created in guiding, accommodation, local crafts, and related services help stimulate rural economies and reduce population decline in remote areas. The integration of cultural traditions—such as gastronomy, craftsmanship, and local festivals—into tourism activities contributes to preserving the authenticity and identity of rural communities.

Hunting tourism also plays an essential educational role by promoting responsible behavior among visitors and increasing awareness of environmental protection. Through guided activities, informational sessions, and participation in ecological actions, tourists develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between human activities and biodiversity conservation. Overall, hunting tourism can be considered a coherent and complex model of sustainable development, provided that it is governed by strict regulations, transparent management, and continuous collaboration between authorities, local communities, hunting associations, and environmental organizations. Strengthening partnerships, expanding educational programs, and implementing systematic impact assessments will further enhance its contribution to conserving Romania's natural and cultural heritage.

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