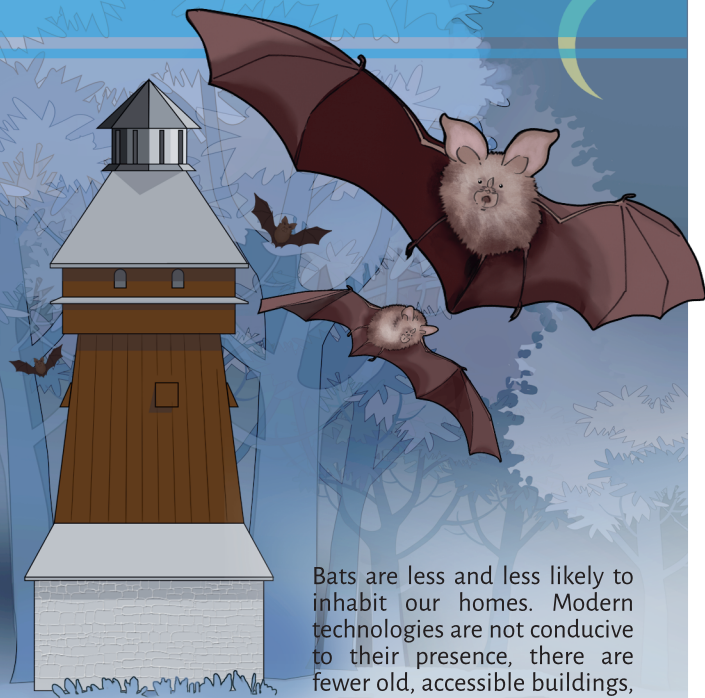


PROJECT ACTIONS IN POLAND



Bats are less and less likely to inhabit our homes. Modern technologies are not conducive to their presence, there are fewer old, accessible buildings, and those that remain – are surrounded by tight barriers

preventing safe passage to feeding grounds. For species such as lesser horseshoe bat, greater mouse-eared bat or Geoffroy's bat, in our climatic zone and in a strongly changed environment, this means the imminent loss of most breeding sites, and thus – the spectre of extinction of entire populations. Unless... appreciating the role of bats in our environment and wishing to save them – we start building houses especially for them. Homes exactly as they need and located exactly where it will be best for them.

Ten specially designed bat towers are being built in forested areas in southern Poland, providing excellent conditions not only for Lesser Horseshoe Bats and the two other aforementioned species, but also for other bats occurring in our country. The towers will be accompanied by infrastructure, enriching the surrounding habitats with nocturnal hiding roosts, transitional quarters and wintering grounds. Local communities are also involved in the activities carried out by PTPP "pro Natura" and the State Forests, for which a number of educational activities are being carried out and a programme has been launched to obtain (through competitions) funds for the implementation of their planned conservation activities.

The bat species targeted by the project's activities are endangered and their conservation is an important task facing the countries of the European Union. These are: lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, Mehely's horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus mehelyi*, Mediterranean horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus euryale*, Barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus*, Schreibers's bat *Miniopterus schreibersii*, long-fingered bat *Myotis capaccinii*, Geoffroy's bat *Myotis emarginatus*, Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, greater mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis*. The project's flagship species is the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, which all partners are protecting.



The project partnership comprises five entities from Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia:

Polskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Przyrody „pro Natura”, Poland
www.lifepodkowiectowers.pl, www.facebook.com/KrainaPodkowka

Dyrekcja Generalna Lasów Państwowych, Poland
www.lasy.gov.pl

ČESON Česká společnost pro ochranu netopýřů, Czech Republic
www.ceson.org

CCCL Asociația Centrul pentru Cercetarea și Conservarea Liliecilor, Romania; www.lilieci.ro

SON Spoločnosť pre ochranu netopierov na Slovensku, Slovakia
www.netopiere.sk



The Life+ Podkowiec Towers project (LIFE20 NAT/PL/001427) is financed by the LIFE Programme managed by the European Commission. Activities in Poland are co-financed by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management.

Year 2022 marked the 30th anniversary of the LIFE Fund. The funds earmarked for, among other things, the preservation of declining species and habitats exceeded EUR 3 billion, making it possible to implement more than 1,800 projects. You can read about LIFE projects here:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/search>



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LIFE+ PODKOWIEC TOWERS



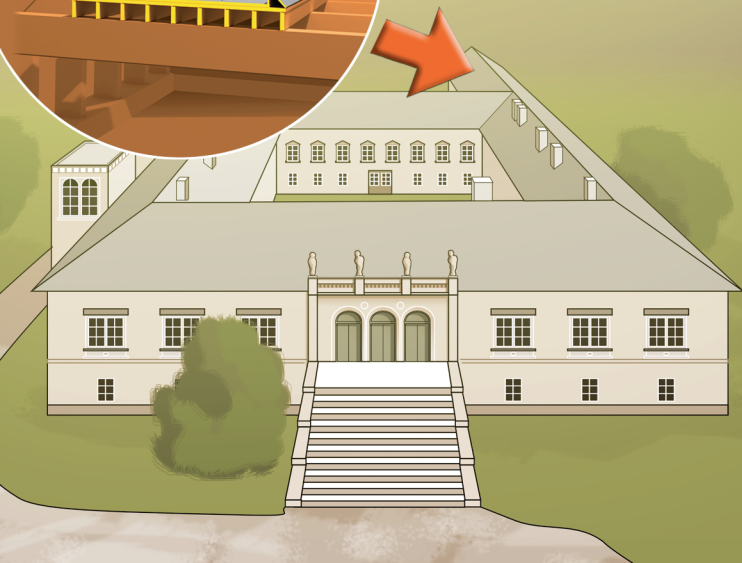
Bats are unique mammals that combine the ability to fly, night activity, echolocation and hibernation. Despite these adaptations, in the modern world they are among the animals most at risk of extinction. Hence the international activities undertaken by the Life+ Horseshoe Bat Towers project, which respond to specific threats to bats. The project's mission is to maintain and improve the conservation status of bats in the CEE region and to promote proactive measures for their conservation.



LIFE PODKOWIEC PLUS: back to the forest – holistic conservation of bat breeding habitats (LIFE20 NAT/PL/001427)

PROJECT ACTIONS IN CZECH REPUBLIC

For some bat species in central and eastern Europe, attics are the only maternity roosts. Buildings built with old technology, full of nooks and crannies and spaces not used by humans, are of particular importance. However, the presence of animals in buildings, especially in the case of the largest and therefore most valuable colonies, is not indifferent to the buildings and their hosts, which often leads to the conflicts. One of their causes is the guano left behind by the animals. In exemplary cooperation with the owners of historic buildings, ČESON protects bat breeding colonies in the chateaux: Cechy pod Kosířem and Ruda nad Moravou. In both of these buildings, guano accumulating in the attics was a significant problem, so wooden platforms and covers for the structural beams are being built. These will make it possible to clean the attics, while the guano itself will not affect the historic fabric of the buildings. These practical measures also have an educational component: workshops run by specialists for representatives of conservation authorities, building owners, local authorities and architects.

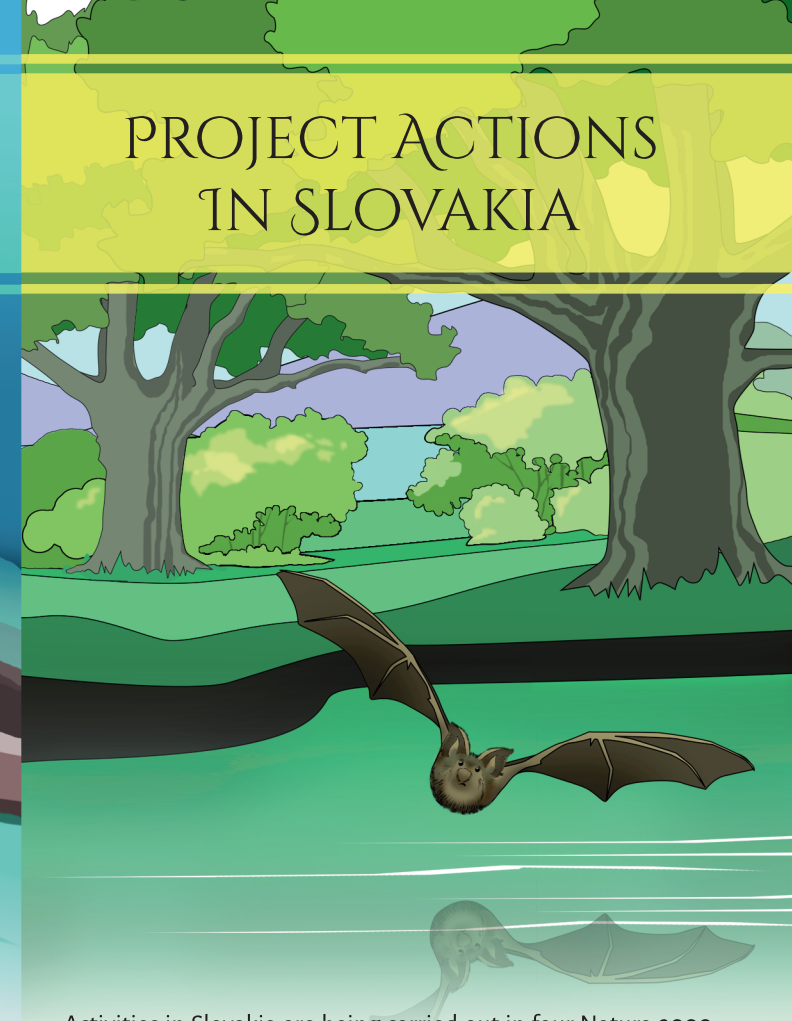


PROJECT ACTIONS IN ROMANIA



Large part of Romania is the mountainous and warm south of Europe, where bats find excellent year-round roosts in natural caves. In some of them, even thousands of individuals are observed, forming multi-species assemblages. The problem is the attractiveness of these places, which is appreciated not only by the flying mammals – the number of tourists visiting the underground is increasing every year. This does not go unnoticed by the bats, which are frightened away by people both during their winter hibernation and during breeding. The aim of the project is to secure some of the most valuable and at the same time most vulnerable sites, as well as to promote appropriate behaviour among tourists. Three sites located in the Natura 2000 areas of Domogled – Valea Cernei and Porțile de Fier will be secured, e.g. with fences to prevent unauthorised entry and allow the bats to fly freely. Attractive information boards will be erected at the seven sites. Visitors will also receive brochures about bats, the Natura 2000 network and the principles of appropriate bat-safe behaviour. Training for protected area staff and cave managers is also an important part of the project's activities.

PROJECT ACTIONS IN SLOVAKIA



Activities in Slovakia are being carried out in four Natura 2000 sites important for bat conservation: Muránska planina, Kamenná Baba, Bradlo and Gavrurky. The work includes comprehensive habitat improvement, both in terms of roosts and foraging sites. In addition to securing wintering grounds and deploying arboreal boxes, mid-forest shelters and abandoned summer cottages are being adapted for bats. Special signs are also used to mark natural bat roosts in tree hollows. This will help to avoid populated trees being removed by landowners. Restoring of overgrown water bodies are also an important project activity. These sites provide valuable feeding and watering grounds for numerous bat species. One of the water bodies to be restored is a ditch at the Gavrurky Natura 2000 site. Its cleaning, deepening and fencing against livestock will ensure a quality source of water for bats and other animals. Another water reservoir is an outflow from the Dielik tunnel. Here, presence of water will prevent unauthorised entry to one of the most important winter sites in the region.