

NETWORK 2013

Summer Survey of Jackals' Habitat in RAMSAR Units, SE Romania

REPORT

Time: 17th to 21st of July 2013

Location: [Comana Natural Park Reserve](#) and [Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve](#), South Romania

Called by: Ovidiu Banea, Ecology Department of Crispus NGO Sibiu Romania

RESULTS

I. Agenda Topics

1. To break (disclose) [SKUANature](#) objectives and schedule broader activities if available in Periprava area, Danube Delta. Share tourism destinations and build future eco-trekking programs.

Pictures instead of bullets!

A welcomed initiative of [Skua Nature Ecotourism](#) and [Ultima Frontiera Hotel and Touristic Complex](#) in Periprava, RAMSAR, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve.

Near Periprava is located the most beautiful and high standards hotel in Danube Delta, Ultima Frontiera. At the beginning of 2013, Stefano an Italian GOJAGE send us the most beautiful photos of jackals ever made in Romania. These photos of wildlife were made at Periprava on the wildlife observatory installed by SKUA Nature ecotourism organization. An Italian tourism entrepreneur was chosen by [Hotelul ULTIMA FRONTIERA](#) to optimize the wildlife tourism into the most remote area of the Romanian Danube Delta, Periprava.

At the beginning, Crispus NGO lodged a complaint to the same SKUA Nature due to the apparent inadequate wildlife stimulation and human intrusism into ecological network of jackals. If we analyze all our reports since 2008 together with [Giannatos WWF report in Greece](#), [Lapini updated review](#) to 2011 or [Szabo-Heltai-Lanszki](#) work to Jackal versus livestock we can easy find that jackals are human dependent and that this mammal changes easy its behavior to fight for eat. In the case of wildlife observatory we cannot talk of predation but yes we can see valuable scene of competition between different top level predators or scavengers as the White-tailed Eagle , *Haliaeetus albicilla*, jackals *Canis aureus* or *Corvidae*.

On 19th of July 2013 we visited the 800ha where the Hotel ULTIMA FRONTIERA is placed and the administration of the Hotel had the amiability to take us through the farm with wild free avifauna and fish ponds.

We must CONGRATULATE SKUA NATURE and Hotel ULTIMA FRONTIERA for their initiative! We found a nature friendly observatory hidden with ground and trees. As we know this is the first activity which shows appreciations and respect to the species and it will benefit by our experience to improve the estimate of jackal sightings to the scene. The sighting is organized with an irregular interval, 3-4 times per year and the jackal or other raptor birds' biology is not modified to be dependent of this observatory. Another wildlife restaurant was built in NE Turkey in 2009 to promote the conservation of 4 vulture species in the area (see [here](#)). It is well known that mortality within vultures comes after they feed on cattle carcasses of poisoned or drugged animals (e.g. Diclofenac in India, see reference before). Beside conservation of those populations of vultures in NE Turkey by promoting "clean" meat these restaurants are promoted to a nature friendly tourism with the aim of increasing local incomes. Other restaurants of those type were used in South Africa, Mexico, Bulgaria, etc. (as reported by Kuzey Doga Society).

ULTIMA FRONTIERA is a sustainable bird watching project between the tour entrepreneur and environment educational Society SKUA Nature and local Touristic Complex "Hotel Ultima Frontiera" Periprava.

Beside vultures the initiators have found the jackal opportunistic behavior which in this case is forced to competition. The pictures are used and the economy is increasing at local level. An extensive program of nature trekking it is proposed for Letea Forest in nearby and Sulimanca channel to Merhei and Rosca Buhaiova lagoon complex where is sited one of the most important colonies of Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus*.

2. To analyze common objectives with Comana Natural Park Reserve Administration for a future broader project regarding golden jackal species in relation with biological diversity and human activities.

In Bucharest on 17th of July 2013 Petre Gargarea, Environmental Protection Inspector of RNP Romsilva, Valentin Grigore, Director of Comana Natural Parc Administration and Ovidiu Banea, Environmental Ecologist from Ecology Department of Crispus NGO Sibiu discussed the Ecology Project of Jackal Specific Ecological Systems which will be proposed by ROMSILVA, APNC and CRISPUS.

The meeting last 2,5 hours and was held in the new building of RNP Romsilva. The participants concluded that an urgent priority has to be given to those ecological systems specific to jackal species, and surely with a focus to continuous monitoring of the species, ecological network analysis using stomach content and video trapping techniques. The aim of the project will be the establishment of the action plan of integrative and sustainable management of ecological systems specific to jackals in Comana Natural Park.

The observations were made in Comana during the evening and the night. I stayed at “Fantana cu Nuc” House hosted by APNC where Mrs. Florica take care of the domestic animals and the beautiful house. We talk about the new form of organization of the area after the area was declared Natural Park in 2004. People come here from Bucharest and abroad asking where is the park and do not understand very well which is the meaning of this nature reserve. It is true that in the region another Park is opened to the public, an Adventure Park. Both, Natural Park of 24.963Ha and Adventure Park benefit of the other to promote their names.

I started to look out of Comana Lake (or Neajlov River Delta, name given only by the similarities of landscape with Danube Delta, not due to the specific form known of delta). I used the bike from the Administration of the Park and during the following 5 hours I surrounded 34 km of the reeds, water and forest. More than 10 stray dogs were found inside the forest and between villages, but in villages those dogs were present at every corner. Bioacoustic monitoring to jackal species failed probably due to the summer season which we assume that is not the best for this density monitoring technique. At the little puddles and near the marshes no jackal footprint was found. I listened dormouse (*Glis glis*) in four locations. The night survey concluded at 01,30h.

The second day I've visited the forest reserve on southern part of the Park. On the way distance of about 1km I observed two rodent *Apodemus sp.* individuals. First alive, but drowsy doing salts of about 40cm, but the second was rigid, dead, probably it died during the same night. In Comana Forest, on February 2002 and April 2005 were reported unknown cases of dead badgers (*Meles meles*). Data from 4 badger burrows Comana Forest, in April 2005, showed an abundant food, that the badgers can stock food reserves out of the cold season ([Murariu & Chisamera, 2005](#)). The 53 specimens of *Apodemus sylvaticus* and *Apodemus flavicollis*, found at the entrance of the studied burrows are the proof. Among the components of the badger food, Murariu and Chisamera (Antipa Museum) identified two specimens of *Talpa europaea* and a specimen of Muskrat (Bizam) *Ondatra zibethicus* – species unreported on the web food of badger until these authors.

It is easy to suspect cause of poisoned food or vaccines put by man for other carnivores, but taking into account Murariu and Chisamera reports in Comana Forest years ago and that vaccines for rabies are supposed to be safe to *Apodemus sp* as for Bats or other mammals (see [here](#)), I think that the possibility of a trophic relation (predation) took place during the night and that maybe badger is collecting their out cold season food.

3. Observations to jackal habitat in control area of Dobrogea

During 2 days of boat travel inside Danube Delta we followed the route from Murighiol through Erenciuc and Puiu Lake to Crisan village; From here we traveled on the small motor boat until Periprava and from Sfistofca to Letea Village we followed 7 km on foot. On the unique calling station located between CA Rosetti and Letea villages we did not have jackal responses (summer season).

Dobrogea control area is now surrounded by Aeolian PARK and here we need to perform monitoring of dead bats and bird to estimate a possible over limit of mortality indexes. The wheels

are sited on the migratory birds' routes. On September-October 2013 it is planned to estimate again density of jackals in 14.000ha of the Control area to compare it with data obtained in 2011.

4. Eco-trekking Periprava – Leteaskogen, Sfistofca and Letea villages.

Ecological Network Analysis of jackal specific ecological system was suggested together with Ilya Acosta Pankov, PhD Candidate of jackal ecology Thesis in Prof Spassov team, Sofia Bulgaria. We observed Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, European Roller *Coracias garrulus*, both as tree nesting birds, maybe more than 200 Hoopoes and another dozens of European Rollers. The last was declared the bird of the year 2012 by SEO BirdLife. Is a NT migratory bird and here at Periprava seems that is not threatened.

Also ground nesting *Phasianus* can be observed in the area and surely hundreds of other individuals of many species on the other side of the reeds.

Cattle are present everywhere after the yard of the Touristic Complex and yes; these have to be monitored during the following jackal surveys. As in Evros (Maritsa) Delta, Comana Nature Park Reserve or Matsalu Nature Park Reserve, cattle are observed as in every jackal described habitats.

We followed the Letea Forest and we arrived to more isolated village of Sfistofca. Here we met Mrs Jenica, one of the leaders of Lipovan Russians Community. We met Mr "Van Gogh de Sfistofca" Vasile and another inhabitant Mr Petrica. Sfistofca had 850 inhabitants between the World Wars according to Mr Serbov, but now only 50 inhabitants live in this silent locality. 30 of them are retired.

The beginnings of Lipovan Russians in Romania need to be sought in the dramatic events that caused considerable upheaval in Russia, in the late 17th century, eventually leading to the division of the Russian society, and prompting a religious and social crisis the consequences of which can still be seen. As proof of this entire stand the communities of *starovery* Russians spread over the years throughout the world (*Raskol*). The reform of the church cult and practice inspired by czar Alexei Mikhailovich (1645-1675), and promoted by patriarch Nikon (1652-1658), caused a wave of discontent and protest among the clergy and faithful of the Russian Church, the measures taken by Russia's lay and ecclesiastic authorities being deemed an unacceptable offence brought to the Orthodox canons and teachings. (Source Institutul Cultural Roman [here](#))

5. Planning the 2nd International Colloquium "European Concerns of Golden Jackal Populations' Ecology" on September, 13-15th, 2013

The meeting was not scheduled, but there is a high possibility to organize it at Comana Nature Park Reserve Administration Building or/and in Periprava at Hotel Ultima Frontiera.

II. Conclusions

- 1) SKUA NATURE initiative is nature friendly. We visited Periprava Ultima Frontiera Hotel and 800Ha where the profile of fisheries and fisherman paradise is now completed with an

wildlife observatory for raptor birds but also for jackals. We will write an editorial for those observatory and we will open a full broader activities with SKUA and UF Touristic Complex in Periprava. We call the wildlife observatory **the first nature friendly wildlife observatory of raptor birds and jackals in Romania**.

- 2) ENA in jackal specific ecological systems 17th -20th: Ilya Acosta Pankov ([NGO Yoluka Europe](#)) & Ovidiu C Banea ([NGO Crispus Sibiu Romania](#)) achieved. We observed species of birds, tree nesting. In Comana *Apodemus sp* identified, seems to be part of a trophic relation of badger. But what can we do with drowsy one... As food resource in jackal diet also we consider those species as high ecological interest for sustainable monitoring together with jackal density if a broader project will be applied between ROMSILVA RNP, APNC and Crispus NGO Sibiu.
- 3) Sfistofca village people are an active Lipovan Russians Community and they need attention of civic society. Crispus NGO will initiate a touristic project in the area.
- 4) A **Jackal Specific Ecological System Project** in COMANA will benefit by Crispus NGO experience. Valentin Grigore, Ovidiu Banea and Petre Gargarea will plan the future activities and schedule of planning.
- 5) NETWORK 2013, summer survey organized by the Ecology department of Crispus NGO Sibiu Romania, was a joint activity of ROMSILVA (Inspector Eng Petre Gargarea), Administration of Comana Nature Park Reserve (Director Eng Valentin Grigore). In Danube Delta we monitored sites of Ultima Frontiera Complex with the help of Mr Sorin Ros, an excellent guide and promoter of nature friendly photo tourism. SKUA Nature wildlife observatory is now one key node of Crispus NGO Network.

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