

# **Rufford Small Grant**

(for Nature Conservation)

## **Narrative and financial report**

### **1. Title of Application**

Ecosystem research and sustainable conservation of Varghis Gorge nature reserve, Harghita County, Romania (156/07/04)

### **2. Name of Applicant and Organisation**

PÉTER PÁL / AGORA WORKING GROUP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### **3. Contact Details**

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### **4. Requested budget**

The requested budget was £ 4690.

### **5. Activities**

Through the implementation of the project we work closely together with the administrator of the protected area, local communities from Meresti and Varghis communes and specialists (person, institutions). The activities timeframe was from the approved project, some small changes occurred in summer period (research programme). The project team was formed by: Pal Peter, Laszlo Ambrus, Istvan Denes, Anna-Maria Csergo and Csaba Jere.

#### *5.1. Elaboration of the database of Varghis Gorge*

In field research and trips we analysed the flora and fauna (mainly birds and bats) and focused on possible environmental problems (pollution sources, agricultural systems and methods, forest management, tourism). Our specialists also executed geological and geomorphologic survey.

We finished the elaboration of the plant species and plant communities lists and with the help of the Romanian Bat Protection Association the list of bat species from the caves and the main bat-habitats.

We started the data digitalization and GIS processing, which will be a real help for the administrator of the reserve. A problem was the identification of land owners, but we finally find the majority of them. Some proprietors didn't get the official property of the lands (owners warrant). The skeleton of the GIS database was created, some of the research activities are already included in geodatabases, others will be to the end of the year.

The draft version of the management plan is finished, in spring we will finalize with the involvement of local authorities of the two communes, environmental agency and major land owners. The management plan was sent to the Romanian Academy of Science (Nature Conservation Committee), we wait their response.

The study of the land use and agri-environment was presented on a scientific conference in Cluj Napoca, and will be published this year.

### *5.2. Control of tourism*

The control of tourism was done by Istvan Denes, the administrator of the protected area. Every weekend, when the tourist flow increased he was present in the nature reserve, he did the guiding activities, too. A great result is that we restrain the camping activities at the southern part of the reserve, on a specially assigned glade.

### *5.3. Marking and elaborating the functional zones*

The marking of boundaries in the nature reserve of Varghis Gorge is realized, the partition to functional zones is under elaboration, we need the result from the GIS application, related to different layers.

### *5.4. Ecological education*

The education and information of local communities and tourists we realized in several ways:

- we were invited several times to local radio programmes (Odorheiu Secuiesc has two local radios);
- local cable television programme on Varghis Gorge;
- several articles in local and regional newspapers written by the members of the working group;

- double sided poster (calendar for the year 2006 on one side and a short description of the protected area on the other);
- film about the Varghis Gorge. This film was also presented in Duna TV, a national television from Hungary. We presented several time in schools, community meetings.
- community meetings with the participation of Lost World association, AGORA, Environmental Agency, Bat Protection association, local authorities, land owners.

## 6. Future plans

The Varghis Gorge nature reserve needs further work, hopefully we will be implicated in the management of the reserve. The legal administrator Istvan Denes died in the summer of 2005, so the Lost World association needs much more help from other NGOs and persons to administrate the reserve.

AGORA association would like to help and facilitate the cooperation between different actors interested in the conservation of the Gorge (local authorities, environmental agency, land owners and Lost World association).

In continuation the research must be continued with the finalization of the management plan, the database and the GIS applications (elaboration of different thematic layers, like flora, land use, hydrology, soils, and agricultural parcels, owners).

## 7. Activities



Meeting of the project team



Protected species (*Iris aphylla*)



A working day in the Gorge



Mammal observations (Pal Peter)



Botanical research (Anna-Maria Csergo)



Protected species (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)



View of the Gorge from North



Bat watching in Orbán Balázs Cave  
(Csaba Jere)



View of Gorge from South



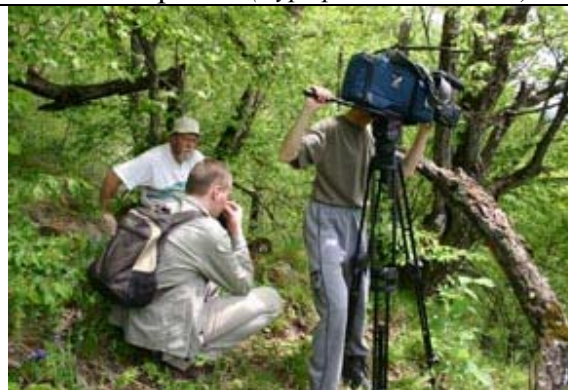
Protected species (*Vipera berus*)



Protected species (*Cypripedium calceolus*)



Making the film



Making the film

## Financial report

In the table below we show the categories of the budget expenses. There are small differences, which were approved by Josh Cole (e-mail).

The total budget of the project was £ 5260, the total expenditures are £ 5413

Budget category	Approved budget			Spent budget		
	RSG	Other funds	Total	RSG	Other funds	Total
<b>Honorarium</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>Field research</b>	<b>1400</b>		<b>1520</b>	<b>1247</b>		<b>1397</b>
Transport	950		950	905		905
Meal	450	120	570	342	150	492
Equipment (camera, lenses, binoculars, notebook)	840		840	1621	73	1694
<b>Meeting with stakeholders</b>	480	100	580			
<b>Publications</b>	<b>900</b>		<b>900</b>	<b>922</b>		<b>922</b>
Film	700		700	640		640
Brochure	100		100	132		132
Web page	100		100	150		150
<b>Communications</b>		<b>250</b>	<b>250</b>		<b>400</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Other costs</b>	<b>270</b>		<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4690</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>5260</b>	<b>4690</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>5413</b>

For the scientific research activities, we had signed agreement with: Ambrus Laszlo, Csaba Jere, Anna-Maria Csergo, Istvan Denes and Pal Peter. The copy of these agreements is attached in scanned format.