



# EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE'S PROTECTED AREAS

May – October 2022

## Ongoing commitment

FZS's on-the-ground presence and the dedication of our national staff and partners allowed for a quick reaction during the first weeks after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In those first months, protected areas became safe places for people seeking shelter. Building on long-term partnerships, the FZS Ukraine subsidiary was established this year and greatly enhanced our ability to operate and upscale support to protected areas during this time of need. Our team has grown since then and their dedication to conserving the natural gems of the Carpathians is unwavering despite the challenges faced.

Working with 19 protected areas we were able to set up over a thousand lodging spaces for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in the Carpathians and Polesia since February. From May to October, we provided support – non-perishable food and hygiene products – for approximately 4,300 people, of which roughly 800 were staying at protected area facilities and 3,500 were spread across 30 individual centers in the adjacent communities. Over 40 metric tons of goods – including warm clothing, generators, heaters, and bedding – were sent to Ukraine's protected areas through a joint effort with our partners in Romania, Slovakia, and Germany. Another 37 metric tons of provisions and supplies were provided from within Ukraine.

Please note: The situation in Ukraine remains unpredictable. Should you be contacted by the press regarding coverage of support to protected areas in Ukraine please contact [crisiscommunication@fzs.org](mailto:crisiscommunication@fzs.org) for further guidance. For all other questions please visit: [www.fzs.org/en/service/contact](http://www.fzs.org/en/service/contact).



metric tons of supplies sent to Ukraine in 14 batches from Romania, Slovakia, Poland and Germany



metric tons of supplies – wooden beds, mattresses, stoves for heating – were provided from within Ukraine



lodging spaces provided for IDPs at protected area and staff infrastructure



people have sought refuge in and around protected areas in Polesia and the Carpathians

## Review and adapt

In all FZS project areas, we strive to adapt to the reality on the ground, selecting and implementing the type of support that adds the most value at a given time. Following a quick reaction in spring and summer to increase our support to the Ukrainian protected areas we have worked with for more than a decade, we needed to consolidate, assess, and adapt.

Since the start of 2022, FZS has grown substantially in-country and now acts under the newly established FZS Ukraine subsidiary. The Carpathians and Polesia are FZS Europe's flagship project areas and this expansion of our work in Ukraine and the regional office in Lviv was always planned. The recruitment of additional administrative staff in Ukraine is, however, timely and has greatly increased our capacity to face the demands of coordinating the ongoing support to protected areas.

## FZS Ukraine adapts, what's changed in the past 6 months





## Parks step in to support communities

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the attacks across many regions in the country resulted in a high number of Internally Displaced People relocating to the Carpathians due to their relative safety at the time. During these early weeks, accommodation and supplies for the tens of thousands of people that arrived in the region were limited. In March, FZS together with partners started to supply emergency goods for people located in facilities and houses belonging to protected areas and protected area staff.

While the focus was initially only on people staying in protected area infrastructure, the establishment of increased logistical capacity allowed for the support to be expanded to also include people staying at so-called IDP centers (schools, gyms, kindergartens, sanitariums, etc.) in the villages and towns located in and around protected areas. Four storage and distribution hubs were set up to support these wider communities. Goods that included non-perishable food products as well as hygiene products and detergents, were purchased within Ukraine to support the national economy.

From May to October, we provided support for approximately 4,300 people, of which roughly 800 were staying at protected area facilities and 3,500 were spread across 30 individual centers in the adjacent communities.

Over the summer months, the IDP numbers continuously decreased in the Carpathians. At the same time, numerous other NGOs started to deliver goods to communities for IDP support. As a result, the number of additional supplies flowing into the region was sufficient to cover IDP needs and we, therefore, decided to pause our procurements at the end of July.

However, a detailed reassessment of the situation at the beginning of September revealed that the involvement of other NGOs had ceased and that IDP facilities were starting to once again experience difficulties in obtaining enough supplies. This was further exacerbated by the fact that the number of people arriving in the region has started to increase since the beginning of October as Russian attacks across Ukraine increased again.

Now as winter fast approaches and with the war in Ukraine slipping out of news headlines, we expect that our support will again need to be scaled up in the coming months as funds run low and new challenges like power outages arise. The protected areas and FZS are committed to continuing to house those in need at the park infrastructure. We are also preparing to resume the support to IDP centers near protected areas again.



The director of Skolivski Beskydy National Park receives goods from Germany.

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One of the diesel generators in use at the Skolivski Beskydy National Park IDP center.

© Yurii Pavlishinets



The IDP center set up at Skolivski Beskydy National Park.

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## A new partnership for eastern parks

While the situation in the Carpathians has somewhat stabilized, parks in the east and south of Ukraine continue to face severe challenges as a result of the war. These protected areas are not within FZS project areas, yet their need for support is currently the greatest and continues to increase. During May, we provided the first deliveries of supplies (including food, generators, pot-belly stoves for heating, and fire-fighting equipment) for several protected areas. However, due to logistical and security challenges assessing needs and arranging logistics became more and more difficult, especially given that FZS has not previously worked in these regions and with these protected areas. Therefore, we took the decision to transfer support for these parks to the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG), a Ukraine-based conservation organization that has previously worked closely with the affected areas and therefore has a good network for identifying the parks with the highest needs and finding low-risk ways of delivering support goods to them. This co-operation started in August and led to the first assessment of needs and a selection of areas to be supported. The first procurement and deliveries of supplies are now being prepared, which will primarily also include food staples and hygiene products, as well as blankets.

## Parks still operate

FZS has worked with national partners to protect Ukraine's natural heritage for over 20 years in the Carpathians and Polesia. This work is ongoing today despite the challenging new reality faced. In May, we shifted our focus from emergency support for Internally Displaced People to helping to keep the protected areas running while they remain largely cut off from other funding sources. Building on our long-term partnerships we stepped in to cover the most urgent operational needs (excluding salaries) – such as fuel, vehicle spares, and some utility costs – for 19 parks and reserves in Polesia and the Carpathians.

## Fire-fighting ready

The war has increased the risk of wildfires in the protected areas in Ukraine. The risk was particularly high for the Polesia region as missiles coming from Belarus regularly pass over the protected areas. Dry and hot summer weather further increased the likelihood of large, fast-spreading fires.

Parks in Polesia received equipment to strengthen their fire-fighting capabilities including eight high-quality firefighting modules (specialized water pumps with hoses), 106 water rucksacks, 188 fire swatters, as well as additional water tanks, hoses, protective clothes, gloves, and boots.



Fire-fighting equipment – including high-quality water pumps – is tested by protected area staff in the Polesia landscape.

© Pripjat-Stokhid National Park



Donated fire-fighting equipment is used to fight a fire in Drevlianskiy Strict Nature Reserve.

© Drevlianskiy Strict Nature Reserve



Waterpumps donated to Poliskyi Strict Nature Reserve in Polesia are deployed to the field.

© Poliskyi Strict Nature Reserve



## Conservation continues

Our overall goal remains the same as before the escalation of the war in Ukraine: to help ensure that the ecological systems of the Carpathian Mountains and Polesia – and the services they provide – are protected effectively and sustainably. FZS staff are now able to return to some of their core conservation work, including:

- camera trap surveys and the further roll-out of SMART for ecological monitoring and patrol data
- forestry inventories in support of a carbon credit plan
- improved branding of protected areas (overhaul of signage, online presence)
- environmental education activities
- support of conservation enterprises (artisanal suppliers will provide goods for IDP centers promoting nature-friendly local businesses)
- habitat mapping and the joint development of park management plans
- improved coordination and engagement between parks and local communities

Significant new threats to Ukraine's natural landscapes are expected. The severe economic impact of the war will very likely see increased pressure on Ukraine's timber resources to be logged and sold to gain quick, short-term benefits. This would jeopardize the immense potential these intact forests hold: to avoid floods and wildfires, act as massive carbon sinks mitigating climate change, and offer a space for healing after the war. Biodiversity will likely also come under increased pressure; although still poorly understood, poaching and unsustainable hunting are already a notable threat to wildlife in the Carpathians. These scenic landscapes also offer great opportunities for large-scale income generation through tourism. Therefore, the work of FZS within the Carpathians in particular, is becoming increasingly important.



Training on the use of camera traps for biodiversity monitoring organized by FZS Ukraine in Verkhovynskiy National Park in the Carpathians.

© Verkhovynskiy National Park



A site visit by the FZS Ukraine Deputy Project Leader to an area identified for a potential protected area expansion on the edge of Zacharovanyi Krai National Park.

© FZS



## Infrastructure repairs before winter

Our next priority is the urgently needed renovations of protected area infrastructure including several park administration buildings, tourism infrastructure, and ranger outposts and housing which are rundown and deteriorating. As winter approaches this work is especially urgent for the parks that continue to host people. Repair work is also time-sensitive to fix leaking roofs and avoid further damage to building interiors and improve insulation and heating systems to allow the use of buildings during the fast-approaching winter. FZS is already working on several renovations – contracting reliable and high-quality construction companies in Ukraine. For now, these companies still have the capacity to take on new projects and building materials are still available on the market in Ukraine.



The roof of the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve's museum before and after reconstruction. The roof was repaired in 2022 with some changes and improvements to its design.

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