

**Carpathian Biosphere Reserve:  
challenges and solutions for protected area management in  
Ukrainian Transcarpathia**

**Природоохоронний менеджмент Карпатського  
біосферного заповідника і розв'язання сучасних викликів  
на Закарпатті (Україна)**

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### **Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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Funded by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU)

Original project: AZ 27189-33/2 Fundamentals for a modern management concept for the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve (Transcarpathia, Ukraine – including the Ukrainian parts of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians”)

За фінансової підтримки Німецького державного екологічного фонду (DBU)  
Проект: AZ 27189-33/2 Основи сучасної концепції менеджменту для Карпатського біосферного заповідника (Закарпаття, Україна; включно українську частину об'єкту Всесвітньої спадщини ЮНЕСКО «Букові праліси Карпат»)

### **Suggested citation • Цитати:**

Ibisch, P.L., J. Geyer, L. Schmidt, V. Pokynchereda & V. Gubko (2011). Carpathian Biosphere Reserve: challenges and solutions for protected area management in Ukrainian Transcarpathia. Shaker: Aachen. 242 p.

Ібіш, П.Л., Ю. Геєрб, Л. Шмідт, В. Покинйчереда & В. Губко (2011). Природоохоронний менеджмент Карпатського біосферного заповідника і розв'язання сучасних викликів на Закарпатті (Україна). Шейкер: Аахен. 242 с.

**Ukrainian translation:** Victoria Gubko • **Переклад на українську:** Вікторія Губко

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Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-8440-0178-5 ISSN 0946-7173

Shaker Verlag GmbH • P.O. BOX 101818 • D-52018 Aachen Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 •  
Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9 Internet: [www.shaker.de](http://www.shaker.de) • e-mail: [info@shaker.de](mailto:info@shaker.de)

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## PREFACE

Geographical location can be relative. Transcarpathia, in the Ukrainian Carpathians, in times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was considered to comprise the very geographical centre of Europe. And later on, as it is well-known, this region belonged to several different states, representing their northern, western or eastern ‘edge’. To express it in a positive way: Whilst developing and maintaining a specific local identity, especially related to the Hutsul culture, Eastern Transcarpathia has attracted and connected manifold people and peoples. In spite of political turbulences and changes, and under incredibly complicated circumstances, it has maintained its natural beauty and richness. Since the historical attempts of defining the geographical centre of Europe close to the city of Rakhiv on the Tysa river, many places have claimed a similar position. Wherever Europe may find and define its middle, one fact will not be changed easily: Today’s Eastern Transcarpathia represents a European epicentre of wilderness and autochthonous and functional forests. This unique feature is permanently attracting researchers, students, forest scientists and conservationists from all over the world; especially the well-conserved forests of the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve have become a reference point for European forest ecology and conservation.

In consideration of the continental and global importance of this ecological treasure we have launched an explorative project to identify necessities and options how the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve could be further developed and fostered. In a Ukraine-German endeavour that was also supported by Austrian and British institutions and persons, we have systematically analysed the current and potential future situation of this region and made some progress towards strategic development of the site’s management. Whilst the project generated enormous motivation and capacity among the participating teams, we feel that a public dissemination of all the gathered knowledge and experience can further enhance the management of the area and also stimulate action by additional players. Thus, we offer this project document, not as an encyclopaedic and final treatment of the management issues related to the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, but rather as an invitation to join efforts, learn together and work for the maintenance of the unique heritage of Carpathian forests – across cultures, borders and disciplines. The document also contains original insights about assets, change and transformation processes in an exciting region neighbouring the current Eastern EU border.

Implementing this project special attention was paid to the development of the of the UNESCO World Heritage serial site “Primeval beech forests of the Carpathians”. The political and technical process of fostering and perhaps extending this site towards German lowland beech forests bears enormous potential for joint conservation efforts and the establishment of a new model of international conservation cooperation in Europe.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the DBU Foundation for funding this particular project. Specifically, we would like to thank Dr. Volker Wachendörfer and his colleagues for their support and advice in administrative matters. We would especially like to thank Wilhelm Kulke for his participation in the initial project workshop and for supporting the idea of the project. Without his enthusiasm the project would not have been launched.

Our thanks do also go to the Academy of Sciences Mainz and the Nees Institute for the Biodiversity of Plants, specifically to the project “Biodiversity under change” (Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Barthlott and Dr. Daud Rafiqpoor), for co-financing the fact finding mission that significantly helped developing this project and also for supporting literature research on framework conditions relevant for conservation in the Carpathians whose results are integrated in the present document.

Furthermore, we would like to thank the following people and institutions whose contributions have helped in making this project a success:

- The Michael Succow Foundation, Prof. Dr. Michael Succow and Sebastian Schmidt, for advice and support in the development phase of the project as well as for conceptual support for follow-up projects.
- Several students from Lviv University, Ukraine, including Viktoria Shestopalova, Halyna Hontarska, Natalia Haibonuk and Khrystyna Bobyliak, for their efforts in preparing and improving various spatial datasets.
- Prof. Dr. Hartmut Rein, Prof. Dr. Martin Welp and Christoph Nowicki, Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, as well as Andriy Hamor and Prof. Dr. Stepan Pop from Ushgorod University accompanied and supported this project and the stakeholder workshops in Rakhiv.
- Dr. Peter Hobson and Catherine Norris, Writtle College (UK) for their active participation in the initial stakeholder workshop, follow-up project development (also for never missing an opportunity to cheer us up with their British sense of humour).
- The Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve, Germany, especially Uwe Graumann, and Dr. Michael Luthardt (former referent for ecological forestry at the Brandenburg Ministry for Rural Development, Environment and Consumer Protection; now member of the parliament of the federal state of Brandenburg) for their warm reception and professional assistance of our Ukrainian colleagues during their visit to the Biosphere Reserve.
- Benetech and the Miradi Support Team, especially Jeremy Yoches, for supporting and assisting in the translation of Miradi into Ukrainian.
- All people that took the time to attend and actively participate in the project workshops, thereby strengthening the communication between stakeholders and the CBR administration.

May this be another milestone of friendship and cooperation among peoples coming together to maintain the unique natural heritage of the Carpathians and European forests. This may be the end of a project, but just a moment of documentation in an ongoing process.

Eberswalde/Rakhiv, April 2011

The Editors