

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Dear Friends of Nature,

In 2023, our BROZ conservation association marked its 26th anniversary. I have had the honor of participating in this journey from the very beginning. At first, we devoted our enthusiasm and shared passion for a good cause primarily to voluntary work, focusing on practical measures for nature—burying drainage ditches to help wetland restoration, mowing and maintaining woodlands, and planting native tree species.

We proposed the establishment of new protected areas and nature reserves, especially in and around Bratislava. Several of them were

declared, and we successfully saved hundreds of hectares of floodplain forests from clear-cut logging.

As our organization evolved, more people got involved. We replaced shovels with more powerful machines and started with the first projects. The volume of work and related agenda forced us to go professional. Gradually, we have created and developed cooperation with various state, public, and private subjects active in nature conservation, forestry, water management, agriculture, science and research, defense, as well as fishing and hunting. We try to bring people and different interest groups together to protect

our natural heritage and use our country's natural resources responsibly.

Managing several protected areas ourselves, we showcase that effective conservation is achievable. The success story of Veľkolélsky ostrov island serves as a prime example, where nature conservation efforts have not only restored a captivating site but have also generated employment opportunities for the local community.

In some areas, we have introduced new, pilot, and breakthrough measures and solutions previously unknown to Slovak conditions, such as restoring rivers, river

branches, and wetlands. We aspire to pass the baton to the official state authorities, e.g., water and landscape managers, as we intend to catalyze the right processes without aiming to permanently substitute the state and its institutions.

In today's context, perhaps more than ever, it is important to publicly show support for good causes, to counterbalance the clamor of the naysayers, who are only a marginal part of our society. We greatly appreciate the real supporters and donors whose contributions enable us to do our work and mission. 26 years have passed quickly, like water in the Danube. It has already been a

major part of my life dedicated to nature conservation, the Danube, and our association.

The evident outcomes of our work and the many less visible ones will be appreciated by nature lovers, but especially by nature itself. I sincerely thank all those who have been and continue to be supportive of this enduring endeavor.



Tomáš Kušík
Chairman



What we achieved in 2022

The page features several line drawings of animals. In the top left, there is a large bird in flight and a smaller insect. In the top right, three birds are shown in flight. In the center, there are two dragonflies. In the bottom left, there is a kingfisher, a fish, and a small insect. In the bottom right, there is a frog.

Water

In the Danube floodplain area, where we operate, water is an essential component of the ecosystem. It is only thanks to the river and its wetlands that a huge diversity of life has developed here. As the entire ecosystem here is intrinsically linked to water, without water it would rapidly degrade and consequently disappear. Therefore, if we want to protect and restore nature in the Danube meadows, the first component we need to focus on is water, its reintroduction into the precious wetlands, and its protection. This is a large part of our work, which we have been doing for a long time.



Restoration of the Rudava River

The restoration of the Rudava river represents a unique river revitalization that has never been implemented in Slovakia so far. For the first time, the river, which was previously regulated into an artificial water channel, has been restored to its natural state. We restored the Rudava river in the cadastre

of Veľké Leváre with a total length of 2.2 kilometers (km). The restoration of the natural river consisted of the removal of the bank fortification made of concrete panels from the sides and the bottom of the river bed and from re-meandering the river.

Innovative and nature-friendly bank fortifications were built in areas of larger meanders where it was necessary to ensure the stability of the banks. The trees

that were in the route of the new channel have been removed and incorporated horizontally into the bank with root bales towards the river, thus ensuring bank stability and at the same time providing refuge for a number of species of fish and other aquatic animals.

The project's three-year preparatory phase involved technical studies, project documentation preparation, and extensive negotiations with



designers, water managers, and relevant experts. The four-month implementation phase included the removal of panel fortifications and meander dredging. All done with close collaboration with state expert institutions.

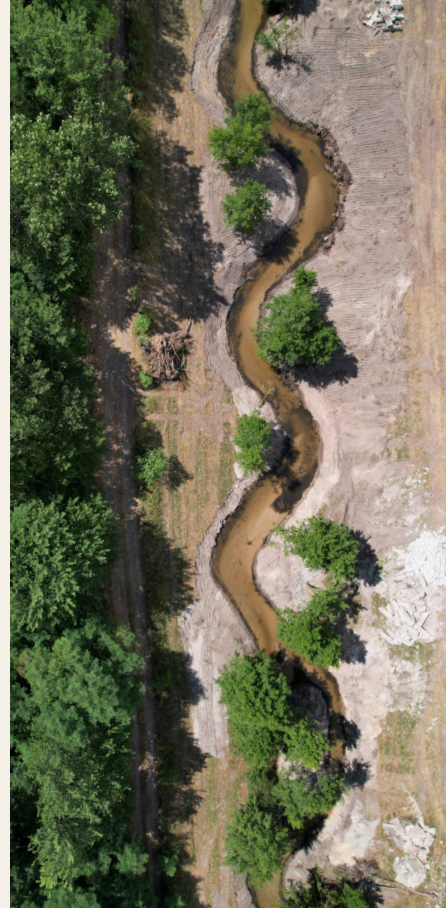


Restoring the river resulted in the restoration of its natural processes, the natural channel began to form and the river thus began to provide a variety of conditions for a variety of species. After the restoration, the Rudava's course extended by 180 meters (m), which has had a positive effect on water retention in the land.



The restoration of the Rudava river has first and foremost a positive effect on nature, biodiversity, and water retention in the land at the time of climate crisis. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in shaping the landscape for future water restoration efforts.

It has helped to identify a number of administrative and legislative obstacles to progress. We are gradually working on removing these obstacles, which in the future will facilitate the process of bringing Slovak watercourses closer to their natural state.





We dug over 1.5 km of the supply channel to restore the wetlands at Istragov

Istragov was, until the Gabčíkovo Waterworks (GWV) launch in 1992, a large river swamp with an area of approximately 77 hectares (ha) located in the lower part of the inland Delta of the Danube. It consisted of a mosaic of shallow water areas, wetlands, and reedbeds. However, due to the construction of the GWV, the water supply to the entire inland Delta area was restricted, and the extreme part, where the Istragov site is located, no longer receives artificially injected water into the

river system. Water flow to Istragov has almost completely stopped, and the once large and essential wetland has been dry for most of the year.

In March and April 2022, we initiated the implementation of the long-planned restoration of this site. We dug a 1 500-meter-long linking canal, which ran through the original built-up channel where the water initially flowed into Istragov. Thanks to the water supply, 70 hectares of the original wetlands were restored at Istragov, and the willow forests were flooded with water after 30 years. The Istragov wetlands were restored from the Pannonian root vole conservation project, so the primary objective was to improve the living conditions for this endemic species and to reconnect its habitats. The importance of



Istragov as a wetland is crucial not only for the European root vole (*Microtus oeconomus mehelyi*), but also for a diverse array of wetland flora and fauna, including insects, amphibians, and, in this case, numerous fish and birds depending on the habitat, which we monitored right after the area was flooded. Post-flooding monitoring immediately revealed a return and increased numbers of these species, reversing a long-term decline. In the past, when the entire flow in the Danube was in the river bed and did not primarily pass through the Gabčíkovo's hydrocentral, Istragov was also a particularly important spawning ground for fish. The wetland dredged in this precious location of the inland Danube Delta was filled during a simulated flood of this area - between May and June 2022.





Restoration of other river branches and wetlands

In 2022, in addition to the significant restoration of the Rudava river, other important river branches or sections of the river were also restored - exactly **2 428 meters** in total. Building upon the works commenced in 2021, we focused on the Šulianske branch, cleaning and restoration along a total stretch of **1 948 meters**.

We have also managed to excavate the original upper inflow into the Veľkolélske branch and thus connect it in the next section with the main channel of the Danube river. The new inflow section was dredged in a total length of **480 meters** and significantly increased

the water supply to the entire system of the Veľkolélske branch.



We restored steep river banks for kingfishers, bee-eaters, and sand martins

In 2022, our conservation efforts extended to restoring habitats for three rare bird species—kingfishers, bee-eaters, and sand martins, all of them dependent on steep river banks for nesting. Along the Morava river, steep river banks in Malé Leváre and the village of Gajary were restored in a total length of **265 meters**. Additionally, **300 meters** of steep river banks were restored along the main Danube river channel in Chřaba, Iža, and Velké Kosihy, with an additional **150 meters** restored in the Danube inland Delta at



Istragov. Altogether, 715 meters of steep river banks were collectively restored across **six locations** in 2022.

The success of these efforts became immediately apparent in the 2022 breeding season, with sand martins (*Riparia riparia*) nesting in the restored bank of the Morava river, hosting approximately **110 nesting pairs**.





Simulated floods of the Danube's inland delta

In 2022, we actively worked to bring simulated floods into the inland Danube Delta. For the second time in history since the construction of the Gabčíkovo hydroelectric power station, 2 simulated floods took place - one in the spring, and one in the summer, both with a 90 m³/s flow rate. We consider this water flowing into the Danube river system just a partial success in the whole process of simulated floods.

Our biggest challenge in the upcoming years is to continue advocating for increased water volumes for our largest wetland —

the Danube's inland delta — specifically aiming for 120 m³/s during the spring and summer floods. The delta, a remnant of the rich Danube branch system, faces alterations due to the hydroelectric power plant construction, and relies solely on artificial water inflow from an inlet structure in the hydropower canal in Dobrohošť, managed under the Gabčíkovo Hydroelectric Power Plant Manipulation Regulations.

In 2020 our petition to save the Danube's inland delta was signed by more than 11 000 people, and triggered negotiations with the Slovak Ministry of the Environment

and Gabčíkovo Waterworks authorities regarding amendments to Manipulation Regulations. We advocated for increased flows and regular floods in the inland Danube delta. In 2020, there were two floods with a flow of 90 m³/s. In 2021 and 2022, there were again two floods, each with a flow of 90 m³/s, compared to the initially agreed flow of 120 m³/s.

In 2022, we initiated the update of the Gabčíkovo Hydroelectric Power Plant Manipulation Regulations, with active participation of BROZ, the Slovak State Nature Conservancy, and the Water Research Institute.

Throughout the approval process at the Regional Office of the Environment in Bratislava, we consistently emphasized the critical need to provide sufficient water to the inland Delta. Despite our appeals, the Gabčíkovo Waterworks authorities proposed a maximum flow rate of 90 m³/s instead of the initially agreed 120 m³/s.

Therefore, the approval process of the Manipulation Regulations is not yet completed due to the appeals, and we continue to monitor, comment, and draw attention to the issue in the media. The largest Slovak wetlands are worthy of such a systematic struggle, and we plan to actively continue our efforts.





Forests and trees



The floodplain forests around the Danube river create another ecosystem component we focus on restoring and protecting. These are very valuable areas of soft and hard floodplain forests that are directly connected to the regime of periodic floods and water dynamics.

It was the river's dynamics that shaped and exposed the banks on which a very dynamic floodplain forest could grow. Changes in river dynamics and the enclosure of the river in dykes have greatly affected the riparian landscape and the ability of the floodplain forest to grow and rejuvenate. It is therefore important to help the floodplain forests and actively restore them. Our commitment involves annual efforts such as planting native tree species and protecting valuable old growth. Additionally, trees in open spaces are also important, as they offer shelter and food to numerous species, prevent wind erosion, and provide essential shade.



We planted trees in the Danube floodplains, but also the open country. Up to 34 000 trees in total.

The year 2022 has been abundant in tree planting activities, particularly in floodplain forests but also in open rural areas.

In 2022 we strengthened the Danube floodplains with tens of thousands of new native tree plantations, focusing on the restoration of natural floodplain forests.

The planting activity included restoration of softwood forests such as white poplar, black poplar and gray poplar, supported by hardwoods such as summer oak and ash, resulting in the planting of nearly **33,000 trees**.

Softwood floodplain forests, an endangered habitat, face challenges in natural rejuvenation due to changes in river dynamics. Its natural rejuvenation is best achieved on river sections and river branches that have been restored, freed from bank fortifications, or connected back to the natural source of flowing water. The combination of measures to improve the water regime and the direct planting of native riparian species will help to restore these precious ecosystems more efficiently and more quickly,

which is essential in times of climate crisis.

The reason for the additional plantings was primarily the intention of expansion of the food base for the European ground squirrels (*Spermophilus citellus*) and the many other small animals that benefit from the fruit trees. We planted early summer varieties to give the ground squirrels time to fatten up before they go into hibernation. We managed to plant **57 fruit trees** - plums, mirabelles, cherries, pears, and mulberries. We planted **in 8 locations**, namely on the Cerova vrchovina, in the Tisovský kras, in the Muránska planina, and the Slovak Paradise.

In addition, we grafted approximately **50 wild apple trees** in the Muránska planina. Beyond benefiting ground squirrels and

birds, these trees are crucial in supporting insect populations. Large areas of meadows are unsuitable for insects, which need microhabitats to find shade and shelter alongside sunny spots. To create suitable conditions for insects to break up the large monoculture areas of meadows, we planted **625 fruit and forest trees and shrubs** in the special area of conservation (SAC), specifically in the Holuby Kopanice. These were mainly tree alleys, tree plantations, windbreaks, and coppices.

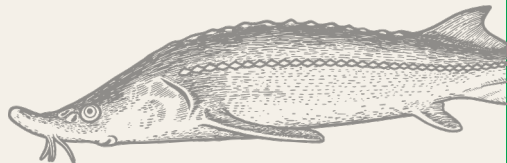
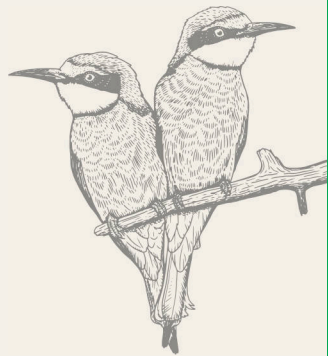
We also planted in the urban areas. Specifically, our urban greening activities are located in Bratislava's Karlova Ves district, particularly in Dlhé diely - one of the largest Slovak housing estates - within the LIFE Deliver project to adapt the area to climate change.



Continuing our multi-year efforts, we replaced dried-up trees and planted **9 decorative *Liquidambar styraciflua* trees**. Furthermore, **over 150 shrubs were planted** to support and enhance biodiversity in the urban environment.



Protection of endangered species



In all our projects, we are dedicated to the protection of endangered species, focusing primarily on their habitat conservation. Whether restoring river banks, branches, wetlands, meadows, or pastures, our activities aim to benefit the diverse flora and fauna -for biodiversity. However, we also have several activities aimed at the direct conservation of endangered species, improving the genetics of their populations, or protecting individuals facing extinction threats in some of their habitat regions. Such species are, for example, the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), the European root vole (*Microtus oeconomus mehelyi*), or the European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*).



Spring trapping of the European ground squirrels to strengthen populations

As every year within the LIFE Sysel' project, in spring 2022 we carried out ground squirrel trapping with the aim to directly strengthen its populations.

The European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*) has long held endangered status in Slovakia. Prior to the initiation of our conservation project, the ground squirrel population was alarmingly low, numbering only 20 000 individuals. This marked a drastic decline of over 99% from

the millions that once populated our country.

The trapping efforts were strategically carried out in three locations identified as having genetically rich and stable populations, as determined by a genetics study conducted in 2021. These locations included **the Bratislava airport, Slovenský kras, and Muránská planina**, with the Bratislava airport hosting the strongest population of ground squirrels, exceeding **10 000 individuals**. Ground squirrels captured at this location were promptly translocated to geographically proximate areas, thereby genetically reinforcing populations with low numbers of individuals.

The conservation project's monitoring of the European

ground squirrel indicates a positive trend, with **the population increasing from 28 000 to 36 000 in 2022**. This significant growth is primarily attributed to the restoration of grazing practices and the clearing of habitats, including the removal of trees and tall vegetation.

To enhance the European ground squirrels' habitats, we have restored 4,5 hectares of grazing areas across diverse regions in Slovakia.

As its name suggests, grazing is integral to strengthen ground squirrel populations. Hence, we have undertaken grazing restoration in multiple locations within its range, including the **Tisovský kras, Muránská planina, and Cerová vrchovina**. Our ongoing

efforts within the **LIFE Sysel'** framework over the next four years will focus on restoring grazing and enhancing population genetics and so we believe, that the ground squirrel population will increase significantly and that existing families, which have so far been in decline, will be stabilized.





Protection of the European pond turtle's nesting sites

Since 2021, we have been implementing a project, supported by the **Operational Programme of Environmental Quality, dedicated to the conservation of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*)** in selected sites in southern Slovakia. To preserve the turtles' habitats, we have taken several actions, including removing litter, restoring wetlands, and maintaining nesting sites in favorable conditions through controlled grazing.

In 2022, we made a unique contribution to the conservation

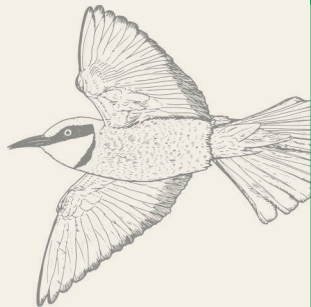


of the rare pond turtle. In one of the most important sites of its population in Slovakia, we recruited the assistance of a specially trained dog named Rexa and her owner. Rexa diligently searched for freshly laid eggs between May and August. Her task was to locate the eggs before predators, particularly foxes, could reach them. Using her keen sense of smell, Rexa thoroughly searched

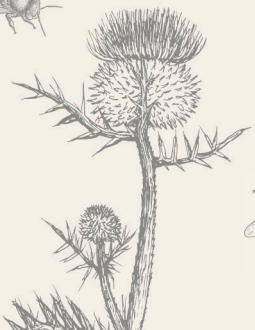
for the buried clutch. Upon finding an egg, she stood by until her owner came and approved the finding. Once the egg was located, a metal grid was carefully placed over the marked spot. This grid allows small turtles to pass through when they emerge from the ground in the following season.



In 2022, Rexa and her owner, Petra Jakubčová, located and secured a total of 16 pond turtle nests. In contrast, predators discovered and destroyed only 5 unprotected clutches. The impact of Rexa's efforts became evident in spring 2023, when we witnessed an impressive number of baby turtles hatching right out from underneath the metal grids.



Grazing



Grassland biodiversity represents another significant area of our ongoing interest and efforts. Meadows and pastures are home to a huge number of plant and animal species. Animal grazing was once a common part of the country. Today, unfortunately, it is different, the animals are locked up in stables and the richness of the pastures is lost in the shade of the bushes and invasive trees. That's why we decided to graze for plants, insects, birds, and also for species like ground squirrels. Especially thanks to the cooperation with local farmers, we are actively engaged in the restoration of grazing practices throughout nearly the entire country.

We started with grazing on several significant sites

Meadows and pastures are important for several photophilous species, including plants, butterflies, hymenoptera insects, ants, beetles and mammals like ground squirrels. As every year, also in 2022 we were actively working to restore grazing in protected areas with the aim to conserve these valuable ecosystems and increase their biodiversity.





Cultivating grazing areas to protect ground squirrels, rare plants, and butterflies

The year 2022 was characterized by preparatory works for grazing, involving clearing and mowing activities. Within the LIFE Sysel project in the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Muránska planina, home to one of Slovakia's largest European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*) populations, we cleared 2.2 hectares of its suitable habitats. Additionally, at the Bolerázske ground squirrel site, we cleared a 6-hectare field of rose hips and bushes. Mowing was conducted on 50 hectares of this ground squirrel site.

In addition to cleaning and mowing, we also engaged in construction activities. At the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Spišskopodhradské travertíny, we built a stable from which, in the spring of 2023, the sheep were herded out to graze on 18 ha of land. And we didn't clean only for ground squirrels, but also for rare insects. Under the butterfly conservation project (LIFE Metamorphosis), we successfully cleared 3.5 hectares and 500 meters of forest margin in SAC Holubyho kopanice, 2,2 hectares and 300 meters of forest margin in SAC Beckovské Skalice, and 0,32 hectares and 2,2 kilometers of forest margin in Fačkovská Homôľka within the Strážovské vrchy. Grazing initiatives will start in the upcoming year at all three locations.

Preparatory work for grazing did not bypass either our project dedicated to the restoration of xerophilous



grassland-herb communities — LIFE Panalp. In SAC Tematínske vrchy in the village of Lúka, Strážovské vrchy SAC in the village of Zliechov, and the Svarkovica protected area, we removed up to 13 ha of non-native tree plantations. We thus managed to restore valuable meadows and pastures. An additional 21 hectares were cleared of woody plants, particularly on former pasture sites, namely: SAC Strážovské vrchy - Zliechov, Podskalský Roháč, Bosmany, Čičmany, Hanušová Pod Vyhnanom; SAC Omšenská Baba - Omšenie, Kopánky location; SAC Baské - Omšenie, Kráľovec, and Lánce location; SAC Vršatské bradlá - Lysá.

Within the same project, in 2022, we also restored the grazing on 27 ha in the SAC Strážovské vrchy—Zliechov, Čičmany, Hanušová Pod Vyhnanom location; SAC Omšenská Baba—Omšenie, Kopánky location; and SAC

Baské—Omšenie, Kráľovec and Lánce location.

In addition to grazing, we have been successful also in improving the habitat of the Apollo butterfly (*Parnassius apollo*) over an area of approximately 3.7 ha at specific sites in the Strážovské vrchy and Javorníky mountains. Furthermore, we sowed seeds of the *Tephrosia longifolia*, which is a food plant for its caterpillars, in precisely 7 areas with an area of 10 m² to support local populations in the SAC Vršatské bradlá - Lysá.

In the Tematín hills (village of Lúka), we restored approximately 6 hectares with the occurrence of the endemic plant species *Dianthus praecox subsp. lumnitzeri*.





We have restored grazing for rare insects and rare plants

Another successful grazing initiative was carried out on a 2.71 ha area within the SAC Holubyho kopanice in the White Carpathians. This restoration activity has proven beneficial for various rare insect species, including butterflies such as The large blue (*Maculinea arion*), the Danube clouded yellow (*Colias myrmidone*), and The clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), as well as beetles, membrane-winged insects, solitary bees, thrips, and others. In SAC Jesenské and Cerová vrchovina, local ground squirrels

are now enjoying renewed grazing on a precisely cleared 4.5 ha area.

As part of the LIFE Juh project focused on xerophilous grassland habitats and rare flowering plants, successful grazing was introduced on 6.23 ha of Pánske meadows in the Lower Považie region. Horses actively engaged in this endeavor, contributing to the restoration of the area. Notably, invasive plants, particularly the tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), were carefully cleared to prevent their rapid growth and the later limitation of surrounding vegetation.

From a project focusing on flowering xerophilous habitats, LIFE Sub-Pannonic, we have progressed with the expansion of grazing by 26,6 ha over 2022. This expansion includes the SAC

Biskupické floodplains and SAC Drieňové in the Cerova vrchovina. Collaborating with a local farmer and shepherd, we have introduced sheep grazing without fences.

Additionally, since 2022, we have also grazed sheep, goats, and cows in SAC Fabiánka, in Slovenský Kras, in cooperation with a local cooperative. These animals provide diversity in grazing, so we can find a diverse mosaic of microhabitats in this area.

Krasín Hill in the White Carpathians has been given a new look thanks to the expansion of the existing grazing area. This captivating location is also a nature reserve full of light-loving rare plants whose seeds have been eagerly waiting to get the



light in the shade of the bushes. And they did.

As part of our grazing activities, we are also trying to restore so-called grazing forests, which are light forest stands particularly rich in biodiversity. We are gradually restoring one such grazing forest in the woodlands near our farm in the Biskupické floodplains in Bratislava (the above-mentioned SAC Biskupické floodplains). In addition, we are systematically working on the restoration of the

Panónský háj near Jurský Šur, where a herd of cows was grazed consequently also in the 2022 season. We have also moved forward with the restoration and clearing of the former grazing forest in Gavurky in central Slovakia, where we are planning to restore grazing as soon as possible.

Grazing is amazing! In the spirit of this motto, we continue our mission across Slovakia.



Pavol Littera
Vice-chairman

"When it comes to grazing, sustainability is key for us. That's why we are restoring grazing on most sites in cooperation with local farmers. This makes the restoration of grazing beneficial not only for nature but also for local farmers."





SAVE A WETLAND

We launched the “Save a Wetland” campaign

In early December 2022, we launched a fundraising campaign to save a 42-hectare wetland in an agricultural part of the country. When we received an offer to buy the entire land property for permanent conservation purposes from one owner and for a reasonable price, we didn't hesitate for a moment. However, the former agricultural field (now wetland) was not part of the Natura 2000 network, so we could not use project funds for the purchase.

That's why we decided to launch the biggest fundraising campaign that we have ever done at BROZ.

This big wetland, which borders a Natura 2000 site, was originally part of the extensive Čiližské wetlands system. Area had been used for agriculture as a corn monoculture until BROZ did not become official owner.

As we did not have the suitable money to acquire this future wetland, we decided to try a public collection. Temporarily, we had to borrow from our other sources, which are critical to the organization's functioning and habitat protection. We took this risk which by the time has proven to be successful. We have now raised more than 85% of the target amount from over 800 donors, demonstrating the public

and supporters' recognition of the importance of wetlands for biodiversity and climate protection. The campaign is still running, and we are still raising money to save this wetland.

As the owner of the land, we have officially applied to the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic for the attachment of the land in the Natura 2000 network. At the same time, we are strategically preparing further systematic measures aimed at increasing and strengthening its protection.

Čiližské močiare wetlands neighboring to our wetland, are mainly reed and sedge habitats inhabited by the European root vole (*Microtus oeconomus mehelyi*) - a Pannonian endemic rodent species. This small, charismatic vole exclusively inhabits wetlands, relying on wetland grass species, particularly sedge, as its primary food source. In addition to our root vole, which will undoubtedly expand into the new 42-hectare wetland which will help to increase and stabilize its population, it provides a suitable habitat for many species seeking refuge in the drained agricultural land.

Wetlands in agricultural landscape function as sanctuaries for amphibians year-round and as hunting grounds for birds such as

herons, white storks, and rare black storks. The wetland also provides a habitat for dragonflies and aquatic invertebrates, forming the base of the local food chain.

At the same time, areas that are not flooded are also important for solitary insects which are essential pollinators. In monoculture landscapes, they do not have enough living space, and yet they are very much needed. Moreover, unmanaged lands' biomass and root systems play a crucial role in sustaining soil bacteria. After chemical interventions in surrounding fields, these areas serve as sources from which soil bacteria can re-invade almost dead agricultural landscape and improve its soil structure. More islands of biodiversity we have in the

agricultural landscape and the more concentrated they are, the better for its optimal recovery and health.

Considering the wider surroundings of the site, the distance to the nearest wetland, called Bahno, is up to 4 km as the crow flies, which is a good illustration of the changes that this formerly wetland landscape of the Danube region has undergone. The area of the Bahno wetland is smaller, under 15 hectares. To give you a better insight, the dimensions of intensively managed fields are roughly 50 -100 hectares.





We promoted and communicated our projects and activities

A successful NGO also needs proper communication and promotion. That is why in 2022, we've devoted time and energy to effective online and offline communication.

Informative posts on our Facebook and Instagram profiles were seen by more than 1 200 000 people in 2022. In total, we had more than 200 outputs in the media - in both online and printed versions of daily newspapers - SME, Aktuality, Denník N, in the RTVS (nationwide public broadcasting, state-funded organization in Slovakia), JOJ and

Markiza TV news as well as in several other media outlets.

Pohoda Festival 2022 and presidential visit of BROZ's promotion stand

On the occasion of the 25th year of the Pohoda Festival, the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová, honored us with a visit to our promotion stand. She demonstrated familiarity with our conservation efforts and a dedication to ongoing environmental participation and supported our endeavors. Of course this special moment was well documented.

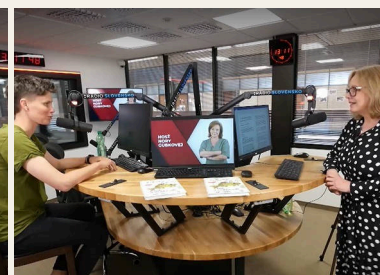
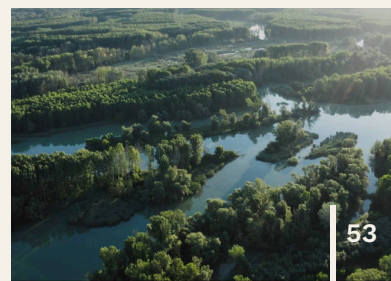
[What Happened to the Forest We Flooded?](#)

"Wings over the river" - our new documentary movie

Our LIFE BeeSandFish project aims to restore river banks and river branches, with a focus on preserving natural habitats of three main bird species – the Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), the European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), and the Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*) – along the Danube and Morava rivers. This June, the project released "Wings above the river," a 28-minute

documentary offering a glimpse into the lives of these river dwellers.

The film highlights the delicate relationship between humans and the natural landscape, emphasizing the importance of preserving the wilderness and restoring the rivers to their natural state. The lens of documentarist Braňo Molnár gives the audience a deeper understanding of these fascinating creatures and their vital role in our ecosystem.





Mossy Earth: Spreading the word through viral videos of shared conservation activities

Our esteemed partners and supporters at Mossy Earth have produced a series of compelling and widely viewed videos showcasing our collaborative project's efforts in providing water supply to Istragov. The dynamic presentation of these videos has garnered millions of views on their YouTube channel. This is an excellent way to spread the word about nature conservation, including our activities abroad.

Check out these videos for more insight:
[We flooded a forest - the result blew our minds](#)
[We are flooding a forest - here's why](#)

Discover valuable natural areas with Lesmír App

Lesmír is a mobile app designed to serve as your guide to exploring natural areas with an informative and engaging approach. The creators of Lesmír approached us to cooperate on two trails situated in areas where we have been restoring habitats and where we are active for a long time – **at the Veľkolský island and on Devínska Kobyla**. Both locations are available in the app, so why not download it and get captivated by the trails? There's so much to discover!

You can download trails here:
[Devínska Kobyla](#)
[Veľkolélský ostrov](#)





Educational screenings of the documentary "Po nás potopa"

As part of our Climate Game On communication project, we have collaborated with director Dorota Vlnova and HITCHHIKER Cinema to produce a documentary film titled **"Po nás potopa" (After Us the Flood)**. This film sheds light on the ongoing climate crisis in Slovakia. Over the past year, we have strategically screened the documentary at various summer festivals and educational institutions. Notably, the film has **been featured in 14 festivals, attracting over 400 attendees**. In school screenings, we collaborated with lecturers from

the SOSNA EcoCenter in Košice and an external lecturer covering schools in Zvolen and the surrounding area.

Since the initiation of the screenings in November, **over 170 students** have actively participated, contributing to insightful and constructive discussions. The feedback indicates that students have limited exposure to information about climate change at schools and express a genuine interest in delving deeper into the subject matter. We are glad that our film raises awareness and fosters meaningful discussions on climate-related issues.





We launched the "Krajina živá (Living country)" project

In 2022, we fully launched the "Living country" program with the objective to promote, reward, and connect farmers who care about the well-being of the land they cultivate. And it does not have to be only those who follow strict ecological standards.

Key criteria is a sincere commitment to ecologically conscious cultivation rather than profit-driven large-scale farming practices. This includes practices such as extensive grazing in protected areas, soil regeneration, no-till farming, water retention in

the landscape, and cultivating fruits or vegetables without excessive pesticide use. To spotlight nature-friendly farms, we have established an interactive map on www.krajinaziva.sk, where consumers can easily find responsible local producers.

In the previous year, we successfully organized the inaugural edition of "Living country - farming in harmony with nature". In June, we visited the registered farms with an expert committee of ecologists, ornithologists, hydrobiologists, landscapers, and pedologists. After getting to know their work and practices, we finally decided to award all six participating farms, as each of them had shown a commitment to creating and maintaining a living, healthy landscape. The winning farms received a plaque from us



and the opportunity to display the logo and slogan of the program on their products. In addition, we made them known through videos and posts on our website and social media.

The second part of the program targets the farmers involved. Through various seminars, discussions, and practical excursions, we want to connect them with colleagues with similar approaches to farming, help them solve practical problems, educate each other, and enhance their knowledge of sustainable farming practices aligned with respect for life and biodiversity.



"In our opinion, nature-friendly farming and its benefits for the country and nature receive little attention. In addition, many honest farmers encounter a number of systemic and bureaucratic obstacles that, in many cases, restrict their farming activities. We aim to contribute to changing this situation and to raise the profile of farms that see a healthy state of the land as one of their key priorities."



Katka Klimová
project manager





Veľkolélsky island

A long term common effort of BROZ experts, local residents, and farmers is working together in branding Ecofarm Island to restore and protect the important Danube floodplains area. It provides care of Veľkolélsky island and nearby protected areas. It offers special services like eco-tourism and environmental education, which also create jobs for locals. All the money it makes goes towards protecting nature, animal care, land management, and improving the visitor experience. You can learn more about what Ecofarm Island offers in the webpage <https://www.ekofarma.sk/>.

Six summer camp tours were runned at Veľký Lél during July

and August. Each tour was carefully planned to include environmental learning activities, horseback riding, and walking tours to explore nature of Veľkolélsky island.

This year, Ecofarm Island and Veľkolélsky island had the privilege of hosting various media and some popular persons among its visitors. Their presence has significantly increased the island's visibility and popularity.

Veľkolélsky island is one of our iconic locations, serving as a central point for promoting our activities. Visitors can witness plenty of conservation efforts in

which we are actively engaged. Herds of animals grazing on the island's meadows are essential in preserving and restoring insect and plant biodiversity. Consequently, the meadows resonate with delightful chirping and buzzing throughout the season.

Within the island's floodplain forests, we are dedicated to restoring native tree species, including black, white, and gray poplars, ash, oak, and fruit trees. This initiative involves replacing non-native species of cultivated (commercial) poplars planted by forest managers in the past, which do not fulfill critical ecological functions.



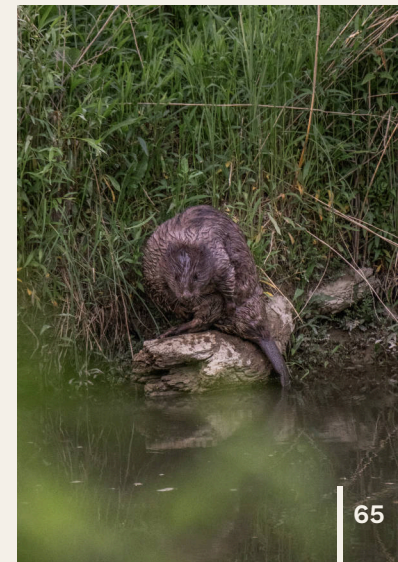
The picturesque mosaic of the Danube Lowlands is further enriched by the presence of towering willow trees along the Veľkolélske branch and the surrounding wet meadows. Moreover, the essence of this Danube island is characterized by water expanses. However, it wasn't always so. Until recently, the Veľkolélske branch suffered from sediment accumulation, with flowing water limited to certain times of the year. In 2013 - 2015

and 2022, we implemented a series of measures, including dredging and reconnecting, to restore and improve the river dynamics, attracting numerous fish and bird species.

In addition to reviving the river branch, we undertook wetland restoration inside the island by modifying the slope of the drainage channel once used by shepherds. This change helps water flow faster from the Danube

river to the wetlands, so we can keep more water on the island for a longer period each year.

Come and wander around the island, dive into its wonders, and let your senses decide what attracts you here the most.





Cooperation with partners and institutions in Slovakia

Our approach to work is characterized by collaboration rather than confrontation. We seek to establish partnerships and collaborators instead of fostering a competitive environment. Among our organic partners involved in the implementation of shared projects are reputable entities such as the State Nature Conservation of the Slovak Republic, the Research Institute of Water Management, the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Comenius University in Bratislava, the National Forest

Centre of the Slovak Republic, Water Management Construction state enterprise, Slovak Water Management Company state enterprise, and various others.

To carry out our activities effectively, we proactively engage in agreements and cooperation with diverse entities and interest groups, including foresters, fishermen, hunters, farmers, municipalities, villages, local inhabitants, conservation associations, and initiatives.

While achieving objectives through collaboration may pose challenges, such results are more likely to gain widespread acceptance and endure long-term. Successes where someone wins and someone loses may be temporary. Instead, we are trying together with partners to find win-win solutions that are good for everyone and, first and foremost, for nature.

International cooperation

In 2022, we worked intensively on our ongoing projects with several foreign partners, mainly from Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, and other EU countries. To protect the European root vole, we are collaborating with the Nationalpark Neusiedler See Seewinkel from Austria and our partner Pisztráng Kör from Hungary. Another cross-border partner is from the Czech Republic - Czech Union for Nature Conservation; together, we are working on insect conservation in the White Carpathians.

We cooperate on the Dynamic Life Lines Danube restoration project with our Austrian partner, the water management company ViaDonau, and the Donau-Auen Nationalpark.

We also worked with Donau-Auen Nationalpark in 2022 on another shared project to improve the ecological condition of rivers, tributaries of the Danube and Morava rivers and their connectivity - the Alpine-Carpathian river Corridor, in which we implemented the restoration of the Rudava river.

Conservation efforts for protecting the European ground squirrel cover the cooperation with an organization from the Czech Republic - ALKA Wildlife - and a partner from Poland - Polskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Przyrody "Salamandra."

Our most extensive partnership is the LIFE WILDisland project for protecting and restoring the Danube islands. Our partners are organizations from all the Danube

countries in Europe - 14 partner organizations in total: Alsó-Duna-völgyi Vízügyi Igazgatóság (Lower Danube Valley Water Directorate) (HU), BROZ, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (RO), Duna-Dráva Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság (HU), Duna-Ipoly Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság (HU), Fertő Hanság Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság (HU), Hrvatske šume limited liability company, Croatian Forests ltd. (HRK), Javna ustanova „Park prirode Kopački rit“ (HRK), Persina Nature Park Directorate (BG), REGIA NAȚIONALĂ A PADURILOR ROMSILVA RA – SUCURSALA DIRECTȚIA SILVICĂ TULCEA (RO), Uniper Kraftwerke GmbH (DE), VERBUND Hydro Power GmbH (AT), Javno Preduzede „Vojvodinašume“ (SRB), Via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH (AT).





To fellow colleagues for further education

The key to success in complex international projects is seeking new ideas and being inspired by good practices abroad. This is why, in 2022, we have undertaken several study visits to our international partners and affiliated organizations.

In September, we were in the Czech Republic to admire the 2.5 km long section of the river Bečva between Černotín and Skalička, which was restored by the state enterprise Povodí Moravy (Morava River Basin management company).

There, they not only have removed the bank fortifications but they even removed the elevated material from the banks, thus allowing the river to actively form its channel. This has resulted, among other things, in the creation of side branches, which are essential factors in mitigating a possible flood surge.

At Schallemersdorf in Austria, we saw the restored dynamics of a river branch that took away a hectare of forest during the flood. Still, local stakeholders consider this to be natural. In German Bavaria, near Ettling, they explained to us why rebuilding the entire river branch and restoring the missing gravel benches below the dam were necessary.



"In the field of nature conservation, I consider it fundamental to strive for common direction and dialogue between the various stakeholders active in this area. I clearly see great importance in organizing joint excursions, study trips, networking, and conferences. Every year, my colleagues and I put a lot of energy into this work area, hoping it will lead to a brighter future for our environment."



Miriam Miláčková
Executive Director



We are part of DANUBEPARKS network

For the past 12 years, we have been a proud member of the international network of protected areas along the Danube river - Danubeparks.

The Danube river, with its flow and dynamics, shapes and connects numerous valuable territories. National parks have been designated in all European countries except Slovakia and Germany. In Slovakia, we have a big "protected landscape area" on the Danube and several small-scale protected areas in this region. In 2010, the Danube National Park Authorities (or relevant stakeholders along the

Danube River) joined forces to establish the Danubeparks network. This network aims to facilitate Danube-wide nature conservation and address the common challenges which these areas are facing. Within the Danubeparks partnership, of which we have been a proud member since its establishment, we have implemented several large conservation projects since 2010, and currently, we are working together on another Danube-wide project focusing on the Danube islands, LIFE WILDisland. In November, a Danubeparks meeting took place in Linz, Austria, during which a new board was elected.

Our chairman Tomáš Kušík is among these elected board members. Congratulations!

Support from companies and individuals

Mossy Earth

Also, in 2022, we enjoyed excellent international cooperation. Not only with institutions from neighboring countries, which are dedicated to protecting the Danube river, or the protection of rare species, but also with organizations that fundraise money for organizations like us and finance, for example, tree planting or wetland restoration. One such fundraising organization is Mossy Earth, which works based on individual donors from around the world and their

contributions, which fund great conservation and restoration projects in many countries worldwide.

Starting together with tree planting, through direct species conservation, such as trapping European ground squirrels and protecting turtle hatchlings, to the biggest shared project that Mossy Earth has funded in 2022—the dredging of the water supply channel into the Istragov wetland.





Protected species on socks in cooperation with Dedoles company

For the second time, we have teamed up with Dedoles, a company known for its cheerful fashion products. Following our initial collaboration, a tree planting in floodplain forests, they have shifted their focus to raising awareness about rare animal species in Slovakia.



"The idea to create a collection with endangered species came up during an excursion in the floodplain forests with conservationists from BROZ. They identified several species that are still surviving in Slovakia, but their conditions are not suitable due to human interference," says Jana Hrubcová, Sustainability Manager of Dedoles.

Many people in Slovakia are familiar with the ground squirrel or kingfisher. However, only a few realize that these endangered species are disappearing from the country due to human activity. That's why we decided to introduce together endangered species into people's lives through socks and shed light on the issue of biodiversity loss in the nature around us. To enhance the

visibility of the joint collection, Dedoles initiated an intensive communication campaign, "Endangered Species," which ran in the European countries where Dedoles was active in the market at the time, from May 16 to May 22, 2022.

"Due to the abandonment of grazing, expansion of monoculture fields, loss of natural forests, or drying up the wetlands in Slovakia, biodiversity has significantly declined, and the number of originally common plant and animal species has become rare in nature," explains Tomáš Kušík, chairman of BROZ. The Endangered Species collection highlights species that are no longer commonly seen in nature. The socks depict the European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), the black

stork (*Ciconia nigra*), the common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), the European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), the *Ophrys apifera* orchid, and the European common blue (*Polyommatus icarus*).

In addition to selling socks within the campaign, Dedoles has also published information about each rare species on its website (in all languages where they are active on market). This way, people could learn more about the specific causes of the decline of these species and explore possible solutions to protect them and increase biodiversity in Slovak nature.



Ekofond SPP

In 2022, our activities were supported by the eco-funding programme Ekofond SPP, to which we presented several proposals for a possible joint project at the first common meeting. They liked our systematic activities in the inland Danube Delta the most. Since we had the highest number of activities this year in the Istragov area, they supported planting 2 600 trees and dredging part of the canal, which supplies Istragov wetland with water.

Telekom Foundation

This year, we continued our collaboration with the Telekom Foundation which works along with the Pontis Foundation, building on last year's partnership. With their financial support, we successfully restored 10 hectares of wetlands on Istragov, cleaned the surroundings of our farm at the Veľkolélsky island and also a section of the Čiližský brook near the former landfill near Veľký Meder.





Charity pop-up dinner by chef Michal Kordoš

Forms of support from companies and individuals are truly limitless. An excellent example was the haute-cuisine dinner organized by Chef Michal Kordoš in December 2022. He generously donated the profits raised through ticket sales to our conservation efforts, contributing to our SAVE A WETLAND campaign. We highly appreciate this gesture, as it serves as an inspiring example for individuals in other industries to support causes indirectly and innovatively.





Volunteering for BROZ

Many volunteer events took place in 2022. Perhaps the most important of these was the cleaning of the **Čiližský brook**, which also flows alongside the landfill in Veľký Meder. The event took place on a chilly Saturday in November, and in addition to our colleagues, **over 30 volunteers** supported it. The Čiližský brook is not only an essential biocorridor of the Danube lowlands but also connects the habitats of the European rote vole, which we are protecting within the framework of our LIFE Root vole habitat restoration project. Volunteers and conservationists **cleaned up an area of about 200 m²** and took the waste out of the stream bed together. The landfill that caused the waste

in the brook has been closed for a long time, but access to it was restricted entirely only a couple of years ago. During this period, the landfill was unattended, and some people continued to dump their waste at the landfill. So for years, the waste, consisting mainly of tires, concrete blocks, flower pots, and other rubbish, has been falling into this watercourse.

In terms of the number of volunteer actions, most of the following has been carried out within the framework of our LIFE SubPannonic project, in a total of 16, from which we are restoring grazing on dry grassland habitats and clearing sites for several rare plant species (such as *Pulsatilla pratensis* subsp. *bohemica*, *Pulsatilla grandis*, *Adonis vernalis*, and others). Therefore, these actions aimed at restoring grazing

sites along the entire Slovakia - from Zemplín to Bratislava.

We worked on the sites of the SAC Pieskovcové chrbty - Drňa, Veľký kopec, Drieňové, but also in the areas of Biskupické floodplains - Stipacie, Gajc, Panský diel, Topoľové hony, even on Ostrovné lúčky. Volunteers helped us in these areas, especially with removing weeds, mowing, and expanding pastures. Among other things, by mowing, raking, and removing invasive Giant goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*), several sub-pannonic habitats in the area of Biskupice and Danube floodplains have been restored. We also removed more than 300 m of old unused fencing, which was a potential threat not only to the livestock but also to wildlife. More than 230 female and male

volunteers participated in these events in 2022.

Another interesting event took place in November 2022 from the LIFE project Panalp. A group of volunteers embarked on a rescue mission of the critically endangered Red-eyed Hawk butterfly (*Parnassius apollo*), aptly named Mission Apollo. This event was organized in cooperation with the Association For Nature, the International Conservation Group JARO and Administration of the CHKO (Protected Landscape Area) White Carpathians, who motivated up to 70 volunteers from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and France,

who worked in the nature reserves of Babiná near Bohunice near Prusko and Vršatské bradlá. The volunteers removed overgrown trees and non-native, invasive trees and cleared approximately 1 hectare of habitat for this critically endangered species.

Even the ground squirrels received assistance from dedicated volunteers, primarily involved in providing food for them and monitoring predators or any undesired activities within the ground squirrel territories.

Volunteers have also been involved in our educational events. Through the project Climate game on Slovakia, several workshops were organized for pupils in schools in Bratislava. The pupils improved the school grounds, picked up rubbish, and installed birdhouses. Through this project, we regularly plant shrubs and trees. Also, in 2022, we reinforced the city districts with new shrubs, 153 in total, with the help of 28 volunteers.





New projects

LIFE Metamorphosis Project -
Establishment of proven butterfly
conservation practices in Central and
Eastern Europe

The project started on the 1st of
September, 2023, and its activities
are planned to continue until the
31st of March, 2029.

The project is aimed at the
conservation of 15 species of
butterflies listed in Annexes II and
IV of the EU Habitats Directive in
Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania.
Additionally, the project is
dedicated to preserve the 6210
Semi-natural dry grasslands and
scrubland facies on calcareous
substrates, which serve as crucial
habitats for rare species within
the Orchidaceae family.

**Five organizations collaborate
on this project: BROZ, serving
as the coordinating beneficiary,
along with project partners
including the State Nature
Protection of the Slovak
Republic, Fundatia ADEPT
Transilvania in Romania, Őrségi
Nemzeti Park in Hungary, and
the Institute of Zoology of the
Slovak Academy of Sciences.**

Project activities include, e.g.,
removal of overgrowing trees,
grazing and mowing of grasslands,
creation of broad transitional
habitats between grasslands and
forests, creation of wetlands and
places with exposed soil, planting
butterfly food plants, and taking
care to ensure long-term habitat
management and sustainability in
cooperation with local
communities and stakeholders. By
mapping target species, we will

obtain scientific data, particularly
the genetic structure of
populations. Further, it will be
possible to restore locally extinct
populations by releasing artificially
raised individuals or translocating
individuals from sufficiently strong
populations. Furthermore, the
project aims to enhance
stakeholder and public awareness
regarding the target species,
conservation measures, and their
significance. This will be achieved
through a school program,
educational films, volunteer
events, guided tours, and
information boards. The project
also seeks to replicate best
practices in butterfly conservation
with stakeholders at project sites
and beyond.

LIFE Living Rivers

The LIFE Living Rivers Project, "Implementation of the Slovak Water Plan in selected river basins," is focused on executing the Slovak Water Plan in the Danube, Hron, Ipeľ, and Belá river basins. The primary goal is to ensure the good ecological status of waters in 10 water bodies and thus improve a total of 344 km of watercourses through hydro morphological measures, appropriate care for protected areas, restoring floodplain forests and non-forest habitats, ensuring that barriers to fish migration are removed, and fish populations are strengthened.

The project starts in January 2023, and its activities will run until the end of 2032. It involves 10 partners from Slovakia and the Czech Republic, as well as experts from various fields: water managers, scientists, employees of state institutions, and NGOs working in the field of practical nature conservation.





LIFE 4 Steppe Birds

The project is aimed at the protection and restoration of habitats that represent potentially suitable habitats for ten selected species of birds of the European importance: Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*), The European roller (*Coracias garrulus*), Common redshank (*Tringa totanus*), The pied avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), The garganey (*Spatula querquedula*), The red-footed

falcon (*Falco vespertinus*), The Eurasian scops owl (*Otus scops*), The tawny pipit (*Anthus campestris*), The lesser grey shrike (*Lanius minor*), The red-backed shrike (*Lanius collurio*).

The project areas are mostly wet and dry steppe habitats with shallow wetlands degraded by intensive agriculture, inappropriate management, or, on the contrary, lack of appropriate management. Currently, the unfavorable condition of selected habitats

persists in the long term, leading to declining populations of selected bird species or complete abandonment of the habitats. The project's key objective is to reduce the strong negative impact on the target species and their habitats by setting up appropriate management measures such as the restoration of extensive grasslands, restoration of the water regime and wetlands, and the creation of breeding opportunities for the target species.

We celebrated 25 years of BROZ and 30 years of LIFE

In April 2022, BROZ celebrated 25 years since its establishment. Bratislava Regional Conservation Association was founded on 1. 4. 1994 by five conservationists. Since then, we have grown and moved our activities from the Bratislava and the Danube region to territories nearly around the entire Slovakia.

Together, we have implemented many projects from various grant schemes, the most important of which are **23 projects supported by the LIFE programme. Within these projects, we have restored**

over 1 000 hectares of meadows and pastures, 1 200 hectares of wetlands, 70 km of river side-arms and brooks, and planted 120 000 trees within floodplain forests.

In addition to these practical measures, we organized and participated numerous meetings with state institutions and authorities and worked with them on various strategic concepts on nature conservation issues, commented on a number of laws, drafted programs for the management of protected areas,

and submitted proposals within the framework of a number of procedures related to nature, its interventions or its protection. In 25 years, quite a lot has been done. We are pleased that our activity has been possible, sometimes thanks to and sometimes despite collaboration with various institutions, as well as governmental bodies and private sectors.

So, we celebrated our 25 years of efforts and achievements accordingly. Where else than on the Danube river?



Congratulations also to the LIFE programme, which celebrated its 30th anniversary this year and with whose support most of the measures mentioned above for Natura 2000 sites and Slovak nature could have happened. It is not easy to succeed in an international grant competition. Still, we are a proof that it can be done and that this grant scheme is set up both logically and practically and, in many ways, much more straightforward than internal grant schemes within Slovakia.

We keep our fingers crossed for other organizations and state institutions too, so that we can continue to utilize such European resources for our nature in the future.



Lands for nature conservation

At BROZ, we can guarantee permanent nature protection only within the areas we lease for a long-term period, we are having in management or ownership.

As part of our work, we also devote considerable effort to securing land in protected areas, primarily through ownership, but also through long-term lease. The first piece of land was purchased by BROZ in 2005. It was a corner of a field with an area of 3 057 m² in the Protected Landscape Area of the Danube floodplains in Bratislava - Čunovo, which we subsequently started to convert into a floodplain forest.

Today, BROZ owns about 1 000 hectares of land in protected areas, with another 1 600 hectares in long-term leases, mostly for 30 years. The Danube region and the area of Danube floodplains have been our priority since the beginning of our activities; therefore, most of our land is located in this region. Thanks to land purchase and lease, we have succeeded in stopping the clearing of native and natural forests and also succeeded in planting native species of floodplain forests instead of monocultures of non-native trees. Further, to prevent the plowing of protected areas and the expansion of arable land at the expense of nature, to grass up arable land and create meadows and pastures, restore wetlands and flood the surrounding areas, or to remove

stone fortifications to restore the natural banks of the Danube river.

A permanent or at least long-term relationship with the land allows us to implement ambitious conservation projects and ensure the long-term sustainability of the results achieved. We can guarantee this for our donors but also for ourselves. We can carry out conservation measures on "our" land quickly, efficiently, and without unnecessary compromises.

This also saves significant time and considerable resources. Whether in personnel expenses, x-years of negotiation, or for the actual implementation of restoration activities, compared to activities on somebody else's land. When restoring watercourses and

the Danube's side branches, we often encounter requests from other entities for various fortifications, paved crossings and bridges for car crossings, etc. These are expensive measures, which can also significantly reduce the results and effectiveness of restoration measures. In the case of other owners, of course, we respect their legitimate demands. However, we do not have to make such compromises on our lands.

We have been funding this activity for a long time from various sources. In addition to the European Commission and the LIFE+ Nature financial instrument, we receive support from other foreign and international grants and the citizen's volunteer contribution from 2% of annual income tax. BROZ relies on its

own resources and the generous contributions of many individual donors and supporters who trust in our work. It's important to note that the land purchase is not financed from the state budget of the Slovak Republic or funds allocated by the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic.

Permanent use of these lands for nature conservation purposes is guaranteed multiple times from the purchase contract, through the donors' terms and conditions, to our association's statutes. Ownership of land acquired for conservation purposes and the activities of the BROZ shall be transferred in the event of the dissolution of the BROZ or the inability of the BROZ to manage such land in accordance with the requirements of nature conservation, can only be

transferred to a legal entity which operates in particular in the care/ protection of the environment, biodiversity, nature, and landscape, while maintaining all the conditions and guarantees the permanent use of such land for nature and landscape conservation purposes.

Yes, BROZ already owns a considerable amount of land in protected areas. This has already become a target of criticism on social networks by various desolates in Slovakia. Worse, it is also the object of envy of some people in the environment ministry. The Slovak Republic has the resources to purchase lands in protected areas and legal instruments, such as the state's right of pre-emption in areas with a third or higher level of nature protection. However, the state

cannot yet implement this agenda effectively and successfully enough.

For those sincerely interested in our work, it is well known that we do and must address nature conservation through the land. This is just further confirmation that we are serious about nature conservation. We do not 'take' the money we raise but invest it in lasting solutions to benefit nature conservation. And that is also the land purchase from private owners in protected areas.

We are accountable to our members, donors and supporters, auditors, and various control mechanisms. All necessary information and documents are available to them. However, we are not accountable to the shouters on social media, the anonymous,



and the liars whose interest is not to learn the facts but to purposely create a negative image of conservation associations.

In terms of the character of the land, the largest part is made up of floodplain forests. This is followed by meadows and pastures, wetlands, and water areas. We also buy arable land, which we then change, restore, and turn into nature by grassing or even (partial) flooding.

The sustainability of regular management activities following the completion of projects (such as mowing, grazing, and trimming of head willows, etc.) is ensured through our own limited liability company (s.r.o.). We carry out the work with our own equipment but also by subcontracting. For land management, we try to draw

agricultural subsidies from The Agricultural Paying Agency (APA), including payments for agri-environment, ecology, etc. This is entirely in line with the LIFE projects, where we already mention this funding source in the project proposal as part of ensuring long-term sustainability.

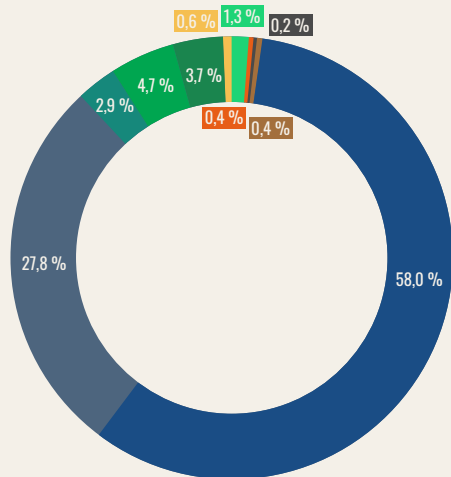
Many small localities, now only fragments of the original habitats and large natural areas, cannot be economically independent and viable in today's system because of their size and character. Protecting their outstanding natural values and biodiversity, therefore, requires external financial resources in the long term. A notable example of our work is, for example, the Veľkolélsky island on the Danube river, which we have been taking care of since 2006.

Financing in 2022

Revenue 2022

4 807 985,23 € 100 %

Revenue from main activities	60 653,25	1,3 %
Contributions received from legal entities, grants, donations	17 100,00	0,4 %
Contributions received from individuals, donations	10 703,61	0,2 %
Contributions from the share of tax paid 2 %	18 569,38	0,4 %
Grant Programme LIFE - EC*	2 790 299,98	58,0 %
Grant Programme LIFE - MŽP	1 336 727,92	27,8 %
Grant Programme DEAR	141 646,77	2,9 %
Grant Programme Interreg	226 844,28	4,7 %
Grant Programme OPKZP	176 197,59	3,7 %
Grant Programme NFM	29 242,45	0,6 %

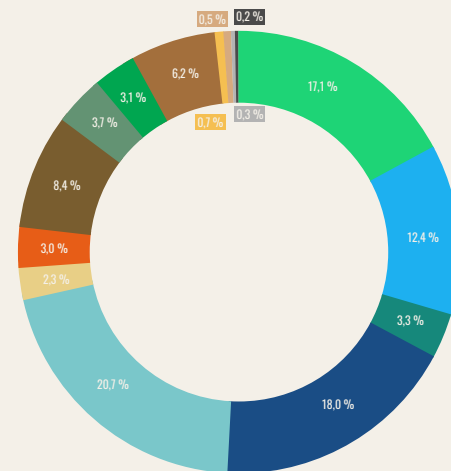


* LIFE projects are awarded in an EU-wide competition from hundreds of applicants across the EU. This money is not allocated or claimable for specific countries. It will only go to the best performers, based on an independent scoring process. Around 20% of the applications submitted are approved. If our projects are not successful, the money is spent in other EU member states and not here in Slovakia.

Expenditure 2022

4 808 049,16 € 100 %

Grazing - preparation of grazing sites, fencing, fodder, animal care and veterinary services	822 487,17 €	17,1%
Wetland restoration and water restorations - Rudava river, Sulianské branch, Istragov, etc.	595 835,00 €	12,4%
Floodplain forests restoration - purchase, planting and care of seedlings	156 734,65 €	3,3%
EC contributions to partner organizations in LIFE projects	867 035,90 €	18,0%
Staff and external collaborators - 79 people	997 644,93 €	20,7%
External consultants, experts, forest managers, surveyors, experts, legal services, translation, interpretation	112 147,98 €	2,3%
Training and communication, volunteer events, meetings with stakeholders	143 104,42 €	3,0%
Purchase and lease of land for nature conservation	404 465,60 €	8,4%
Travel allowances, petrol consumption, machinery repairs and spare parts	176 887,92 €	3,7%
BROZ overheads	150 312,75 €	3,1%
Depreciation of assets - machinery, vehicles, stables, animals, etc.	299 980,77 €	6,2%
Other services: energy, software support, transport, postage	31 272,94 €	0,7%
Consumables	25 022,65 €	0,5%
Bank, administrative fees, property insurance, exchange rate losses	14 316,48 €	0,3%
Audit	10 800,00 €	0,2%





Our projects

Project acronym

[BeeSandFish](#)

[Zo života hmyzu](#)

[Dunajske luhy](#)

[Deliver](#)

[CZ-SK SOUTH LIFE](#)

Full name of the project

Restoration of nesting and feeding habitats of Sand Martin, Kingfisher and European Bee-eater in Danube-Morava region

Conservation of selected Natura 2000 insect species in the cross-border region (CZ-SK) of the Western Carpathians

Restoration and management of Danube floodplain habitats LIFE14 NAT/SK/001306

Human settlements as living places resilient to climate change

Optimizing the management of NATURA 2000 sites in the South Bohemian Region and southern Slovakia

Project duration

1. 1. 2014 - 30. 6. 2022

1. 7. 2017 - 31. 12. 2022

1. 8. 2015 - 31. 1. 2024

15. 6. 2018 - 31. 12. 2023

1. 9. 2017 - 30. 6. 2024

BROZ 2022 budget

356 177,65

226 706,58

238 666,40

52 774,79

411 028,53

BROZ status

coordinating beneficiary

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = AOPK Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (Czech Republic)

coordinating beneficiary

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = Karlova Ves municipality (Slovak Republic)

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = South Bohemia Region (Czech Republic)

Project partners

VÚVH - Water Research Institute
VV - Slovak Water Management Enterprise
PříFUK - Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University

ZO ČSOP Bílé Karpaty (Czech Republic)
ČSOP Salamandr (Czech Republic)
Vzdělávací a informační středisko Bílé Karpaty - Education and Information Centre Bílé Karpaty (Czech Republic)
Infinity Progress (Czech Republic)

VÚVH - Research Institute of Water Management
VV - Slovak Water Management Enterprise
NLC - Národné lesnícke centrum (National Forestry Centre)
DINPD - Duna-Ipoly Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság - Directorate of the Danube-Ipoly National Park (Hungary)

CDI=Carpathian Development Institute
CI2, o.p.s. (Czech Republic)
IEPD=Institute for Passive Houses

ZO ČSOP ONYX (Czech Republic)
Regional school management office (Czech Republic)
SNC SR = State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic



Project acronym

[SubPannonic](#)

[Microtus II](#)

[DLLD](#)

[Panalp](#)

Full name of the project

Conservation of subpannonic dry grassland habitats and species

Restoration of habitats for root vole *Microtus oeconomus mehelyi*

Dynamic LIFE Lines Danube

Restoration of drought-loving herbaceous communities in the contact area of the Pannonian and Alpine bioregions

Project duration

1. 9. 2018 - 31. 12. 2024

1. 9. 2018 - 31. 8. 2025

15. 7. 2019 - 30. 6. 2026

1. 9. 2020 - 28. 2. 2027

BROZ 2022 budget

342 759,38

461 269,08

330 296,94

290 637,96

BROZ status

coordinating beneficiary

coordinating beneficiary

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = Via Donau - Österreichische Wasserstraßen- Gesellschaft GmbH (Austria)

coordinating beneficiary

Project partners

ČSOPK – ONYX (Czechia)
SNC SR = State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic

VÚVH - Water Research Institute
Comenius University in Bratislava
State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (SNC SR)
EDUVIZIG-Észak-dunántúli Vízügyi Igazgatóság – North-Transdanubian Water Directorate (Hungary)
Pisztráng Kör Waldorf Természetvédő és Természejáró Egyesület – Trout Circle Association (Hungary)
Nationalparkgesellschaft Neusiedler See – Seewinkel – National park Neusiedler See – Seewinkel (Austria)

National park Donau Auen (Austria)
WWF Austria (Austria)
NLC = Slovak National Forest Center
PRIFUK = Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Natural Sciences

DINPD = Duna-Ípoly Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság - Duna-Ípoly National Park Directorate (Hungary)
PP - Píliši Parkerdő Zártkörűen Működő Részvénytársaság) - Pilis Park Forestry Company (Hungary)
SNC SR = State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic



Project acronym

[Sysel'](#)

[Wildisland](#)

[Metamorphosis](#)

Full name of the project

Conservation of European Ground Squirrel

WILDisland – Danube Wild Island Habitat Corridor

Developing best practices in butterfly conservation in Central and Eastern Europe

Project duration

1. 9. 2020 – 31. 12. 2027

1. 9. 2021 - 31. 8. 2027

1. 9. 2022 - 31. 3. 2029

BROZ 2022 budget

331 952,17

65 114,29

50 593,92

BROZ status

coordinating beneficiary

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = Nationalpark Donau-Auen GmbH (Austria)

coordinating beneficiary

Project partners

ALKA Wildlife, o.p.s. (Czechia)
 Polskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Przyrody "Salamandra" (Poland)
 SNC SR = State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic
 National Zoo Bojnice
 PRIFUK = Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Natural Sciences

Alsó-Duna-völgyi Vízügyi Igazgatóság (Lower Danube Valley Water Directorate) (Hungary)
 Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (Romania)
 Duna-Dráva Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság (Hungary)
 Duna-Ipoly Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság (Hungary)
 Fertő Hanság Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság (Hungary)
 Hrvatske šume limited liability company, Croatian Forests ltd. (Croatia)
 Javna ustanova „Park prirode Kopački rit“ (Croatia)
 Persina Nature Park Directorate (Bulgaria)
 REGIA NAȚIONALĂ A PADURILOR ROMSILVA RA – SUCURSALA DIRECȚIA SILVICĂ TULCEA (Romania)
 Uniper Kraftwerke GmbH (Germany)
 VERBUND Hydro Power GmbH (Austria)
 Javno Preduzeće „Vojvodinašume“ (Serbia)
 Via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH (Austria)

State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (SNC SR)
 Fundatia ADEPT Transilvania (Romania)
 Őrségi Nemzeti Park (Hungary)
 Institute of Zoology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences



LIFE 4 STEPPE BIRDS



Project acronym

4 Steppe Birds

IP Living Rivers

AKK Rudava

EU DEAR Game Over

Full name of the project

Conservation and return of steppe birds to lowlands of Slovakia

Implementation of the river basin management plan in selected river sub-basins in Slovakia

Alpine Carpathian River Corridor - the habitat network of aquatic organisms in the Slovakian-Austrian border area

Game On! Don't let climate change end the game

Project duration

1. 12. 2022 - 30. 11. 2028

1. 1. 2023 - 31. 12. 2032

1. 9. 2017 - 31. 8. 2022

1. 11. 2019 - 31. 10. 2023

BROZ 2022 budget

0,00

0,00

232 143,96

157 385,30

BROZ status

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = SOS/Birdlife Slovakia - Slovak ornithological Society

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = VÚVH - Water Research Institute

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = Nationalpark Donau-Auen GmbH (Austria)

project partner, coordinating beneficiary = CEEweb for Biodiversity (Hungary)

Project partners

SOS/Birdlife Slovakia - Slovak ornithological Society

Ministry of Environment = MoE
Slovak Water Management Enterprise, state enterprise = SWME
SNC SR = State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic
WWF = WWF Slovakia
Catch Me if You Can = CM
University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (Czechia)
Administration of the Tatra National Park = TANAP
VV - Slovak Water Management Enterprise

SNC SR = State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic
Schwechat Wasserverband (Austria)
Stadtgemeinde Fischamend (Austria)
Österreichische Bundesforste AG (Austria)
Via donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH (Austria)

Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation (Bulgaria)
Latvijas Dabas fonds (Lithuania)
Lithuanian Fund for Nature (Latvia)
Milvus Group (Romania)
Na myslí (Czechia)
National Society of Conservationists - MTVSZ (Hungary)
PersonaR (Hungary)
Romero Initiative (Germany)

Project acronym	Full name of the project	Project duration	BROZ 2022 budget	BROZ status	Project partners
Korytnačka	Protection of the European pond turtle (<i>Emys orbicularis</i>) in selected localities of southern Slovakia	15. 3. 2020 - 31. 12. 2023	185 471,15	project BROZ	-
Nórsky fond Warrior	Wetlands for life and prosperity	1. 2. 2022 - 22. 6. 2024	30 862,58	project partner, coordinating beneficiary = Green Foundation	NINA=Norsk Institutt for naturforskning (Norway)

SPRÁVA NEZÁVISLÉHO AUDÍTORA

31. 12. 2022

Bratislavské regionálne ochrannárske združenie
Na Rivière 7/A
841 04 Bratislava

D.P.F., spol. s r.o.
ekonomicko-poradenská a auditorská spoločnosť

SPRÁVA NEZÁVISLÉHO AUDÍTORA

Štatutárnemu orgánu občianskeho združenia Bratislavské regionálne ochrannárske združenie,
Na Rivière 7/A, 841 04 Bratislava

SPRÁVA Z AUDITU ÚČTOVNEJ ZÁVIERKY

Názor

Uskutočnili sme audit účtovnej závierky občianskeho združenia Bratislavské regionálne ochrannárske združenie („Organizácia“), ktorá obsahuje súvahy k 31. decembru 2022, výkaz ziskov a strát za rok končiaci sa k uvedenému dátumu, a poznámky, ktoré obsahujú súhrn významných účtovných zásad a účtovných metód.

Podľa nášho názoru, priložená účtovná závierka poskytuje pravdivý a verný obraz finančnej situácie Organizácie k 31. decembru 2022 a výsledku jej hospodárenia za rok končiaci sa k uvedenému dátumu podľa zákona č. 431/2002 Z. z. o účtovníctve v znení neskorších predpisov (ďalej len „zákon o účtovníctve“).

Základ pre názor

Audit sme vykonali podľa medzinárodných auditorských štandardov (International Standards on Auditing, ISA). Naša zodpovednosť podľa týchto štandardov je uvedená v odseku Zodpovednosť audítora za audit účtovnej závierky. Od Organizácie sme nezávislí podľa ustanovení zákona č. 423/2015 o štatutárnom audite a o znenie a doplnení zákona č. 431/2002 Z. z. o účtovníctve v znení neskorších predpisov (ďalej len „zákon o štatutárnom audite“) týkajúcich sa etiky, vrátane Etického kódexu audítora, relevantných pre náš audit účtovnej závierky a splnili sme aj ostatné požiadavky týchto ustanovení týkajúcich sa etiky. Sme presvedčení, že auditorské dôkazy, ktoré sme získali, poskytujú dostatočný a vhodný základ pre náš názor.

Iná skutočnosť

Organizácia nespĺňa veľkosťnú kritériá pre povinný audit účtovnej závierky v zmysle zákona o účtovníctve, a teda nemusí ani vypracovať výročnú správu. Pre audit účtovnej závierky sa rozhodla dobrovoľne.

Zodpovednosť štatutárneho orgánu za účtovnú závierku

Štatutárny orgán je zodpovedný za zostavenie tejto účtovnej závierky tak, aby poskytovala pravdivý a verný obraz podľa zákona o účtovníctve a za tie interné kontroly, ktoré považuje za potrebné na zosúladenie účtovnej závierky, ktorá neobsahuje významné nesprávosti, či už v dôsledku podvodu alebo chyby.

Prí zostavení účtovnej závierky je štatutárny orgán zodpovedný za zhodnotenie schopnosti Organizácie nepretržite pokračovať vo svojej činnosti, za opätovanie skutočností týkajúcich sa nepretržitého pokračovania v činnosti, ak je to potrebné, a za použitie predpokladu nepretržitého pokračovania v činnosti v účtovníctve, ibaže by mal v úmysle Organizáciu zlikvidovať alebo ukončiť jej činnosť, alebo by nemal inú realistickú možnosť než tak urobiť.

(1)

Zodpovednosť audítora za audit účtovnej závierky

Nášou zodpovednosťou je získať primerané uistenie, či účtovná závierka ako celok neobsahuje významné nesprávosti, či už v dôsledku podvodu alebo chyby, a vydať správu audítora, vrátane názoru. Primerané uistenie je uistenie vysokého stupňa, ale nie je zárukou toho, že audit vykonaný podľa medzinárodných auditorských štandardov vždy odhalí významné nesprávosti, ak také existujú. Nesprávosti môžu vzniknúť v dôsledku podvodu alebo chyby a za významné sa považujú vtedy, ak by sa dalo odvodzene očakávať, že jednotlivito alebo v súhrne by mohli ovplyvniť ekonomické rozhodnutia používateľov, uskutočnené na základe tejto účtovnej závierky.

V rámci auditu uskutočneného podľa medzinárodných auditorských štandardov, počas celého auditu uplatňujeme odborný úsudok a zachováme profesionálny skepticizmus. Okrem toho:

- Identifikujeme a posudzujeme riziká významnej nesprávosti účtovnej závierky, či už v dôsledku podvodu alebo chyby, navrhujeme a uskutočňujeme auditorské postupy reagujúce na tieto riziká a získavame auditorské dôkazy, ktoré sú dostatočné a vhodné na poskytnutie základu pre náš názor. Riziko neodhalenia významnej nesprávosti v dôsledku podvodu je vyššie ako toto riziko v dôsledku chyby, pretože podvod môže zahŕňať tajnú dohodu, falšovanie, úmyselné vnechovanie, nepravdivé vyhlásenie alebo obdlenie internej kontroly.
- Oboznamujeme sa s internými kontrolami relevantnými pre audit, aby sme mohli navrhnúť auditorské postupy vhodné za daných okolností, ale nie za účelom vyjadrenia názoru na efektívnosť interných kontrol Organizácie.
- Hodnotíme vhodnosť použitých účtovných zásad a účtovných metód a primeranosť účtovných odhadov a uvedenie s nimi súvisiacich informácií, uskutočnené štatutárnym orgánom.
- Robíme záver o tom, či štatutárny orgán vhodne v účtovníctve používa predpoklad nepretržitého pokračovania v činnosti a na základe získaných auditorských dôkazov záver o tom, či existuje významná neistota v súvislosti s udalosťami alebo okolnosťami, ktoré by mohli významne spochybniť schopnosť Organizácie nepretržite pokračovať v činnosti. Ak dospijeme k záveru, že významná neistota existuje, sme povinní upozorniť v našej správe audítora na súvisiace informácie uvedené v účtovnej závierke alebo, ak sú tieto informácie nedostatočné, modifikovať náš názor. Naše závery vychádzajú z auditorských dôkazov získaných do dátumu vydania našej správy audítora. Budúce udalosti alebo okolnosti však môžu spôsobiť, že Organizácia prostane pokračovať v nepretržitej činnosti.
- Hodnotíme celkovú prezentáciu, štruktúru a obsah účtovnej závierky vrátane informácií v nej uvedených, ako aj to, či účtovná závierka zachytáva uskutočnené transakcie a udalosti spôsobom, ktorý vedie k ich vernému zobrazeniu.

Bratislava, 27. júna 2023

D. P. F., spol. s r. o.
Cernicová 6, 831 01 Bratislava
Licencia SKAU č. 140

Obchodný register Okresného súdu
Bratislava I, odd. Sro, vl. č. 23006/B


Ing. Jana Paulenová
Štatutárny audítor
Licencia SKAU č. 442

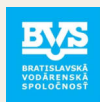
(2)

We thank our partners for their cooperation:

Vúvň Výskumný ústav
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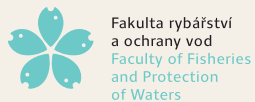
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PERSONAR

We thank the following donors for their financial support:





Your team BROZ