

## Hunting Ban, Unfortunate Decisions for the Bear Population in Romania

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**Abstract :** The Brown Bear population size in Romania is approximately 7300-7600 individuals, which is projected to be 3000 individuals over the ecological carrying capacity. The Habitats Directive imposed certain protection rules on European Union (EU) Member States with Brown Bear populations. These however allow countries like Sweden, Croatia, Slovakia, Estonia to hunting as management tool, harvesting up to 10% of the surplus bear population annually. From the point Romania joined the EU to 2016, active conservation management has contributed to maintaining the highest and most genetically diverse Brown Bear population in Europe. Importantly, there has been good coexistence between people and bears and low levels of human-bear conflict. After social pressure and campaigning by some non-governmental organisations citing issues over monitoring, the environment minister decided in September 2016 to stop the use of hunting as a management tool for bears. Against this background, this paper provides a set of recommendations to resolve the current conflict in Romania. These include the need for collaborative decision-making to reduce conflicts between stakeholders and mechanisms to reduce current human-bear conflicts, which have increased by 50 percent in the past year.

**Keywords :** bear, bear population, bear management, wildlife conflict

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