



**Europe's hay meadows in decline**

**How nature benefits from tourism**  
**a case study from Eastern Transylvania**

Firenze, May 2014



# The Pogány-havas Regional Association

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- Founded in 1999
- Members:
  - The Harghita County Council
  - 11 NGOs
  - 6 municipalities (33 villages)
  - 9 local enterprises
- 23,000 residents
- of which 36% Székely, 64% Csángó, both Hungarian minorities
- and a very small number of Romanians and Gypsies



# The area

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# Uniqueness of Pogány-havas and Transylvania

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- Probably the largest remaining medieval landscape of Europe
- Very high species richness of agricultural areas
- Vast seminatural grasslands (thousands of km<sup>2</sup>s)
- The management regime is: extensive farming, i.e. managing such large nature conservation areas would not be possible by state institutions



# Hay meadow biodiversity

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- World record:
  - Mountain hay meadows are among the most biodiverse areas in the world:  
under 100 m<sup>2</sup> scale no other habitat on Earth is as rich in vascular plants
- Pogány-havas records:
  - Local ecological knowledge: highest number in the world of distinguishing habitats in the local language
  - Number of plant species in a 16m<sup>2</sup> quadrat: third place in the EU, second in Transylvania
  - As much butterfly species on one meadow as in the whole of UK



# Pogány-havas plant species composition

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- Altogether 623 plant species found so far
- 390 species on grasslands (63% of all)
- 81 species in a 16m<sup>2</sup> quadrat (3<sup>rd</sup> place in Europe)
- 38 internationally or nationally protected species
- 33 red listed species
- 12 endemic species







## Threats to mountain hay meadows

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- Abandonment
- Land use change: sheep grazing



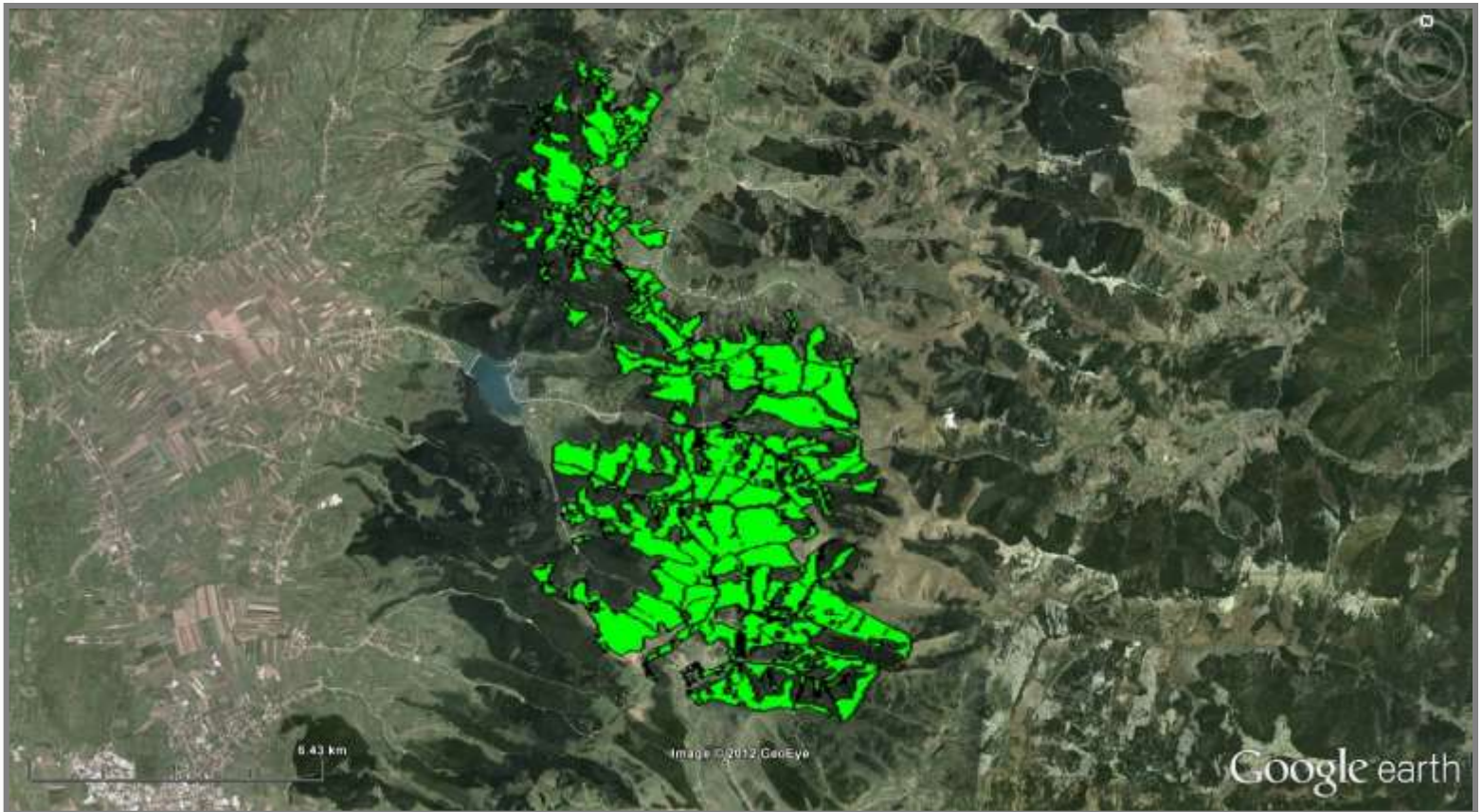






# Threat: Abandonment

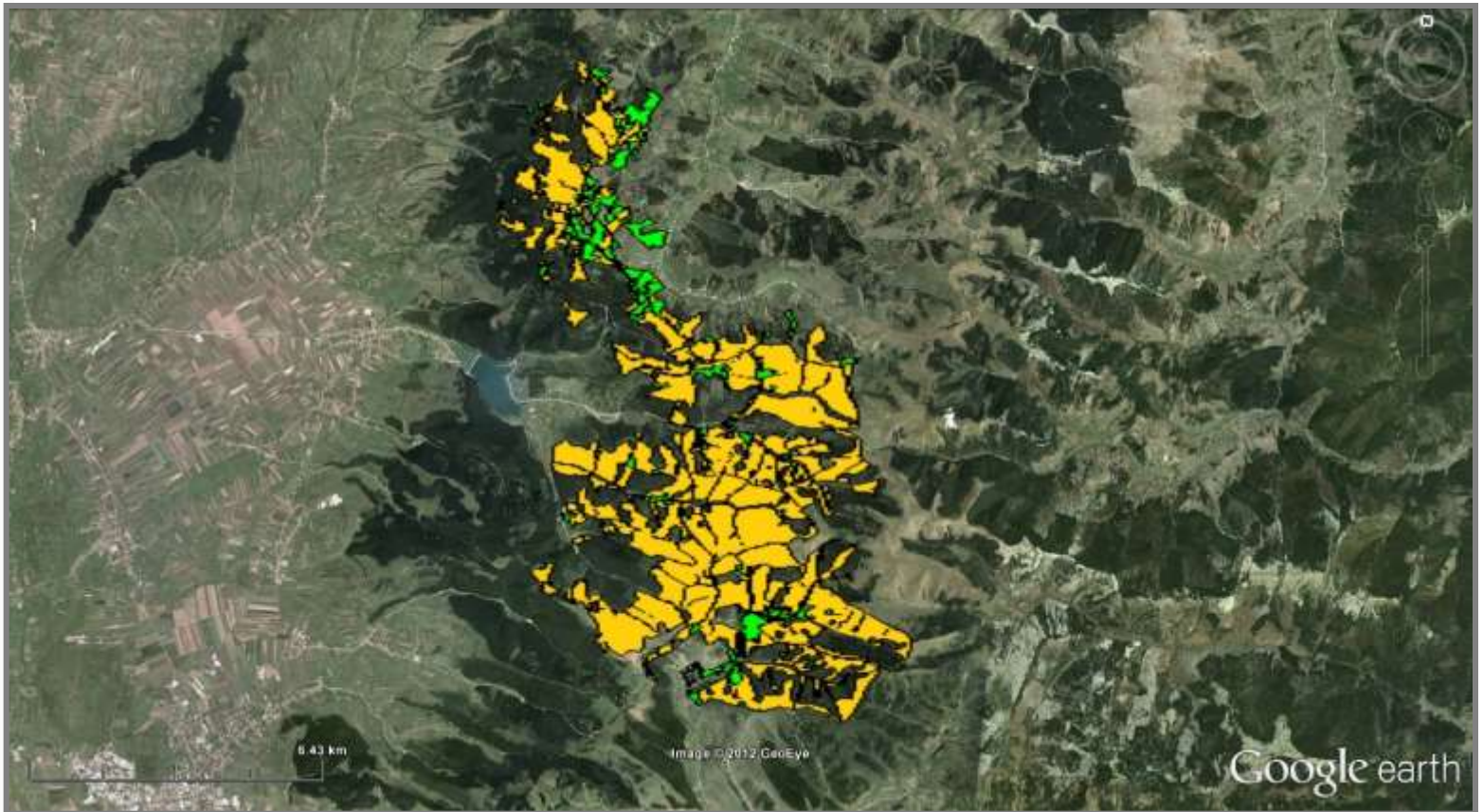
Mountain hay meadows measured in the Pogány-havas area in 2011, 35 km<sup>2</sup>





# Threat: Abandonment

Mountain hay meadows mown (in green) in 2011: 4,3 km<sup>2</sup>, 14% (!)





# Threat: Grazing

Location of sheepfolds in the 1990-s





# Threat: Grazing

Location of sheepfolds in 2012









# Our activities to protect mountain hay meadows

- Biological and social research
- Organizing scientific conferences
- Developing policy recommendations
- Lobbying in Bucharest and Brussels
- Increasing of the profile of family farming: celebrities visits
- Article about hay culture in National Geographic (July 2013)
- Support local farming by:
  - Support farmers associations to collect EU standard milk
  - Develop and market new HNV products
  - Write grant applications





# International Hay Making Camp

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- Tourists learn all steps of traditional hay making
- They learn about local nature and culture
- They eat local food for every meal
- They network – we network
- Locals learn about the importance of their farming methods
- Rather low number of participants
- Environmentally and socially sensitive





# Activities during the Hay Camp

- Hay making
- Learning about tool making
- Learning about traditional cheese making
- Learning about each others work – evening presentations
- Having fun: traditional dance, music











































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# Downsides of tourism

- Built heritage vs. new building culture – „we have a sophisticated taste too”
- Not organised, individualistic and opportunistic
- Showing off – playing the traditions
- Often no sense for the actual uniqueness of the area
- Risk of mass tourism: damages places, industrial scale kills real traditions





# Upsides of tourism

Prince Charles learned how to mow in our garden in 2011

He created a Transylvanian meadow in one of his gardens – in Highgrove

His grandson, Prince George received a wildflower meadow in the Transylvanian hills for his christening





# Results

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- Around 70 participants during 5 years
- Local income generation (more than 10 haystacks 😊)
- A model for locals to copy
- Yearly awareness raising around traditional farming
- Increased local interest and pride on farming
- We inspired other hay making actions in the region
- We inspired two hay festivals launched in the UK
- PHA became part of international networks of hay culture





Come and learn from  
locals how to mow!

International Hay Camp  
in Gyimes

**4 - 10. August 2014**







**Thanks for your kind attention!**

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