

Wolf Education in

Can Ecotourism Improve Wolf-Human Coexistence?

by Christoph Promberger

During the past decade many people have become aware that the way we travel often destroys the reason why we travel. In many places the natural world has been damaged by an overabundance of visitors; local traditions and cultures have been converted into visitor attractions; and rich tourists display their latest-model cameras, clothing and mobile phones in often poor local communities.

Consequently, ways to develop a more sustainable tourism have been explored, and the term *ecotourism* was coined to describe these efforts. Ecotourism is also called nature tourism, sustainable tourism and

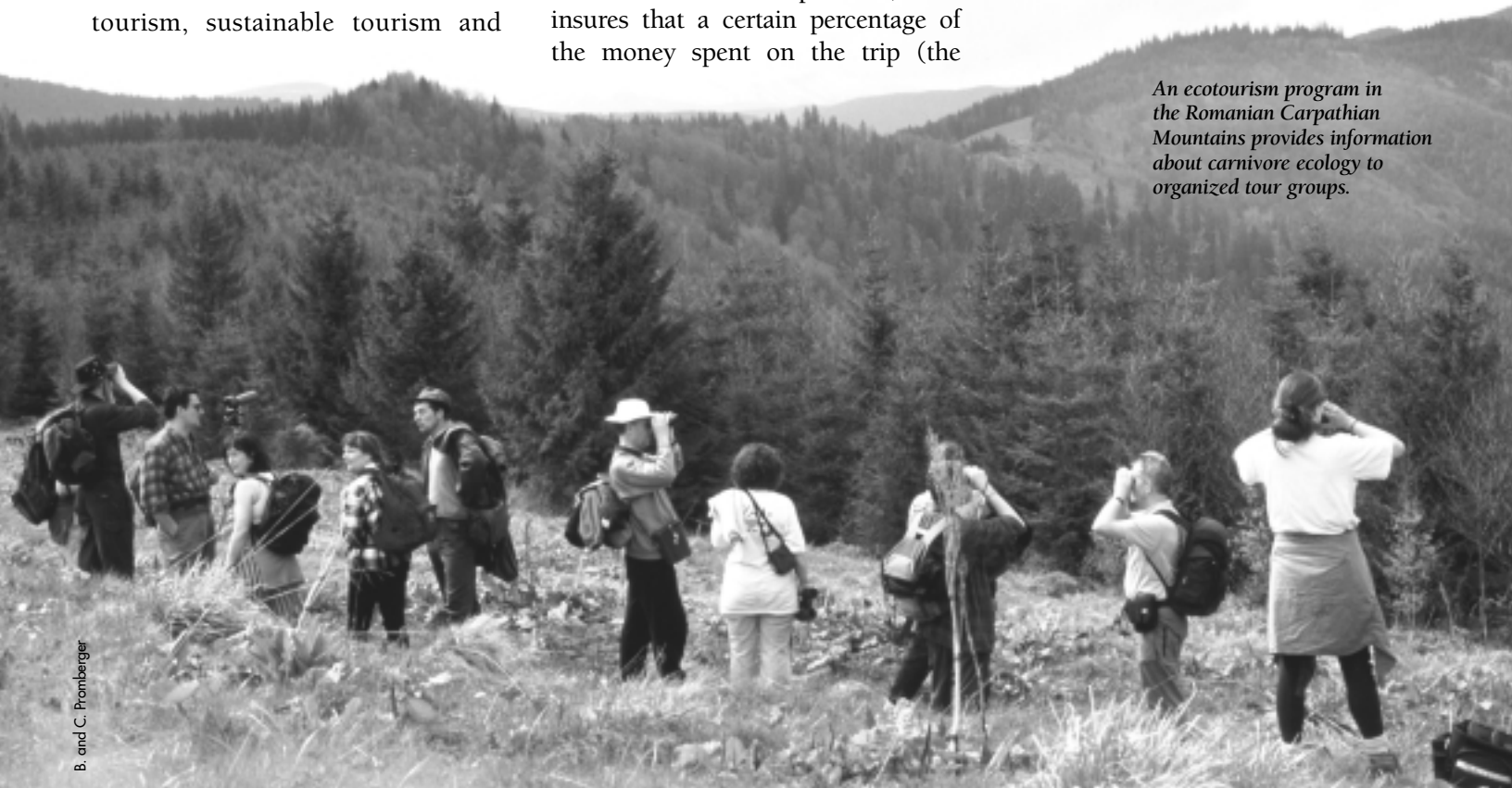
responsible tourism, but they all mean the same: respect for nature and for the people that live there.

The term ecotourism has been widely misused, however. A three-day trip from Europe to a South American national park with immense consumption of fossil energy represents ecotourism as little as a safari lodge owned by a multinational company whose profits leave the area. True ecotourism causes minimum impacts on the environment throughout the entire trip (including the environmental costs of traveling to the destination), includes information and education components, and insures that a certain percentage of the money spent on the trip (the

literature talks about 25 percent) remains in the local community.

As part of the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project, an international research and conservation project, I developed an ecotourism program in the Romanian Carpathian Mountains. The Carpathians form the most important stronghold of large carnivores in Europe, with 3,000 wolves, 5,500 brown bears and 2,000 lynx living together with some 5 million people in an area of about 70,000 square kilometers (about 27,300 square miles). The program worked through Western travel agencies, which sent organized tour groups to the area. All services within Romania were provided by local businesses, and with the exception of the travel agencies' overhead and the costs for transport to Romania, all money remained in the local communities. We

An ecotourism program in the Romanian Carpathian Mountains provides information about carnivore ecology to organized tour groups.



Action



Participants in an ecotourism program in the Carpathian Mountains learn that lynx and other carnivores don't live only in remote wilderness areas.

trained local guides to provide good information about carnivores and nature to the visitors, and each group was accompanied for two days by project staff in the field who explained carnivore ecology and our research.

As a result of the tourism program local people are more aware of carnivores and feel they have something that other people will travel far to experience. Local citizens are also more aware that the way they use or overuse their natural resources may influence future economic opportunities. After a week in the Carpathians, visitors from western Europe learn that wolves and bears don't live only in remote wilderness areas and that people in Romania can live successfully with carnivores.

Christoph Promberger has led the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project for the past 10 years and is currently engaged in the development of a Large Carnivore Centre in Romania. He also runs a horse-riding center, where people are taken out on horseback to view the fantastic scenery of the Carpathian Mountains. For more information, go to www.clcp.ro and www.equus-silvania.com.

Hunter Outreach: Face to Face Education

by Dorothy McLeer
and Nancy Warren

Every November, as if Muslims making a pilgrimage to Mecca, hundreds of thousands of hunters take to the north country of Michigan and Wisconsin to participate in the generations-old tradition of white-tailed deer hunting. During this popular season, these states have experienced rises in wolf shootings. To help curtail this illegal activity, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) created a program in the mid-1980s called *Hunter Outreach* to meet hunters face to face with information about wolves.

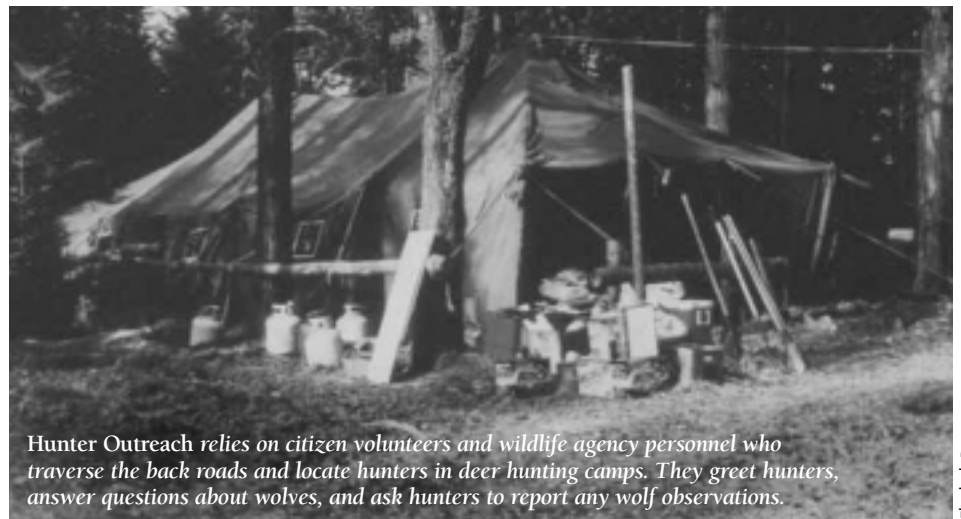
This program relies on citizen volunteers and wildlife agency personnel who traverse the back roads during the few days before the opening day of the season and locate hunters in deer hunting camps. Armed with packets of wolf information provided by the MDNR, the Timber Wolf Alliance and the National Wildlife Federation, they greet hunters, answer questions about

wolves, and ask hunters to report any wolf observations.

Jim Hammill, a now retired MDNR biologist and originator of *Hunter Outreach*, believes this program has been effective on several fronts. He says, "We believe that the presence of people afield during the firearm deer season deters those who may kill a wolf when no one is present. The observation reports submitted over time record a significant number of wolf sightings, helping greatly with winter population monitoring activities."

Recognizing a good thing, Wisconsin adopted *Hunter Outreach* three years ago when strong anti-wolf sentiment reappeared; the Timber Wolf Alliance now coordinates the effort with support from the Wisconsin DNR. This past deer season a dozen volunteers and forest service and DNR personnel took to the back roads and reached nearly a thousand hunters in northeastern Wisconsin and Michigan's western Upper Peninsula.

Dorothy McLeer and Nancy Warren are members of the Timber Wolf Alliance's Advisory Council and its volunteer Speakers Bureau. McLeer is one of the most involved of the Michigan Hunter Outreach volunteers, and Warren coordinates Wisconsin's Hunter Outreach.



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