

Youths take a Transylvanian trip to conserve nature



Top left to right: James Carlos Vella, Tammy Camilleri, Gilianne Saliba, Naomi Sytske Bonnici, Anike Dietzsch, James Talbot. Bottom left to right: Jasmine Misfud, Sheryl Green (youth leader), Matthias Ciappara and Stephanie Mamo Portelli (youth leader). Photo: Higher Youths Malta

An adventurous group of eight youths from Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School and two youth leaders took off to Transylvania, Romania to learn about nature preservation as a part of an environmentally-focused youth initiative.



The youths measured and studied various bird species.

The group spent two weeks in the foothills of Carpathian Mountains to apply the biological and environmental theory they learnt in school to practice.

"We used the techniques to survey the animals in practice. Although we learnt about the techniques in school, now that we have hands-on experience it all makes more sense," James Talbot, one of the youth participants said.

The youths worked with the scientists to identify bat species, measure birds, study butterflies and moths and examine the traces of small and large mammals. Their aim was to collect data on how to conserve

Romanian nature and wildlife and later to apply what they learnt to the agriculture and nature conservation in Malta.



The group of adventurous Maltese youths and their leaders spent two weeks in picturesque Transylvania, Romania. Photo: Higher Youths Malta

Their aim was to collect data on how to conserve Romanian nature and wildlife as well as to apply what they learnt to Maltese agriculture and nature conservation.

"Malta is all about development. We wanted them to learn how to develop within the limits of nature," Sheryl Green, one of the youth leaders told *The Times of Malta*.



The youths studied small and medium-sized mammals, such as mice, moles and foxes.

"In Romania the students saw development carried out while preserving nature. They saw how life there is slower and happier," Green said.

One of the leaders' trip highlights was seeing the youths' perspective change, as they broke personal barriers and learnt new skills. According to Green, even the youths' parents were amazed at how much their children had matured within two weeks.

"When people were talking about nature preservation, I was thinking 'why should I do it?' Now it makes sense and I want to keep doing it," James Talbot said.

"You don't know what 'better' looks like until you see it with your own eyes. Now that I'm back in Malta, I've started to miss the greenery everywhere," fellow youth participant Tammy Camilleri said.

Back in Malta, the youths have carried on their advocacy work by taking part in other programs during which they exchange ideas and pass on what they learned in Transylvania.

Four of them have since applied to study Earth Systems at the University of Malta, with the intention of making a career out of nature preservation.



Romanian greenery is something the youths said they missed once back in Malta.

The group lived in tents with a group of Romanian youths, teachers and scientists. After the surveys and six hours of walking through Transylvanian nature every day, the groups cooked meals together, danced and visited museums. The Maltese group taught some phrases and numbers in Maltese, and they also learned few words in Romanian.

"Leaving the camp site was emotional for us all," Tammy Camilleri said.

The youths prepared for their trip, that was part of an EU-funded Erasmus+ program, for a year by talking to Maltese farmers, studying Maltese agriculture and holding fundraisers.

For more information about the expedition and to learn how to volunteer, visit the [Higher Youths](https://www.higheryouths.com) website or contact Nathan Adams by emailing nathan.adams@opwall.com