

Ana-Maria MARIN¹, Dan-Cornel POPOVICI^{2*}, Maria Monica Florina MORARU¹,
Marius ILIE¹, Răducu MARINAȘ², Darius HĂRDĂLĂU³, Narcisa MEDERLE¹

¹University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Parasitology and Parasitic Diseases;

²University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Technologies, Department of Forestry;

³Transilvania University of Brasov, Faculty of Silviculture and Forest Engineering, Silviculture Department

Abstract

Gastrointestinal endoparasites were investigated in 30 wild pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) collected from hunting grounds in Romania. Coproparasitological examination revealed *Eimeria* spp. oocysts in **20.0%** of the examined birds, while caecal nematodes belonging to the genus *Heterakis* were identified in **16.7%** of specimens. These findings represent the first data on gastrointestinal endoparasites in wild pheasants from Romania and highlight the need for continued parasitological monitoring of game bird populations.

Methodology

Study period: 2024–2025 hunting season
Sample size: 30 wild pheasants

Origin: hunting grounds from Timiș, Arad and Brăila counties
Species: common pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Biological samples: faecal samples and digestive tracts
Examined segments: each digestive segment was evaluated separately

Diagnostic methods: flotation technique, macroscopic examination and stereomicroscopic examination of digestive contents

Introduction

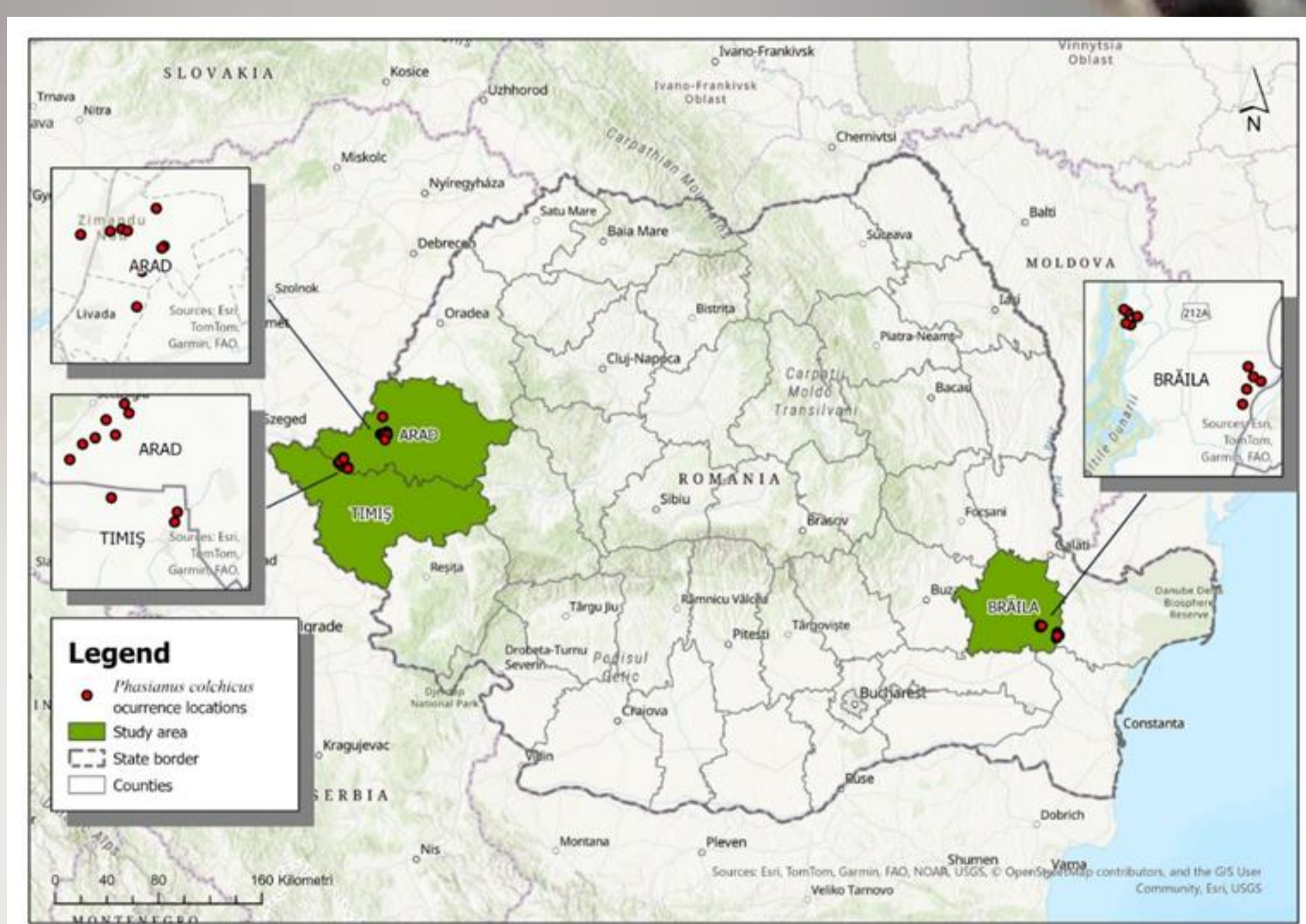
- The common pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) is an important game bird species in Romania.
- Pheasant populations are frequently supported through stocking and restocking activities in hunting grounds.
- Gastrointestinal parasites may affect bird health, survival and population management.
- Data regarding gastrointestinal endoparasites in wild pheasants from Romania are limited.
- Parasitological monitoring can provide useful information for wildlife health and game management.

AIM

To investigate the presence of gastrointestinal endoparasites in wild pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) originating from hunting grounds in Romania.

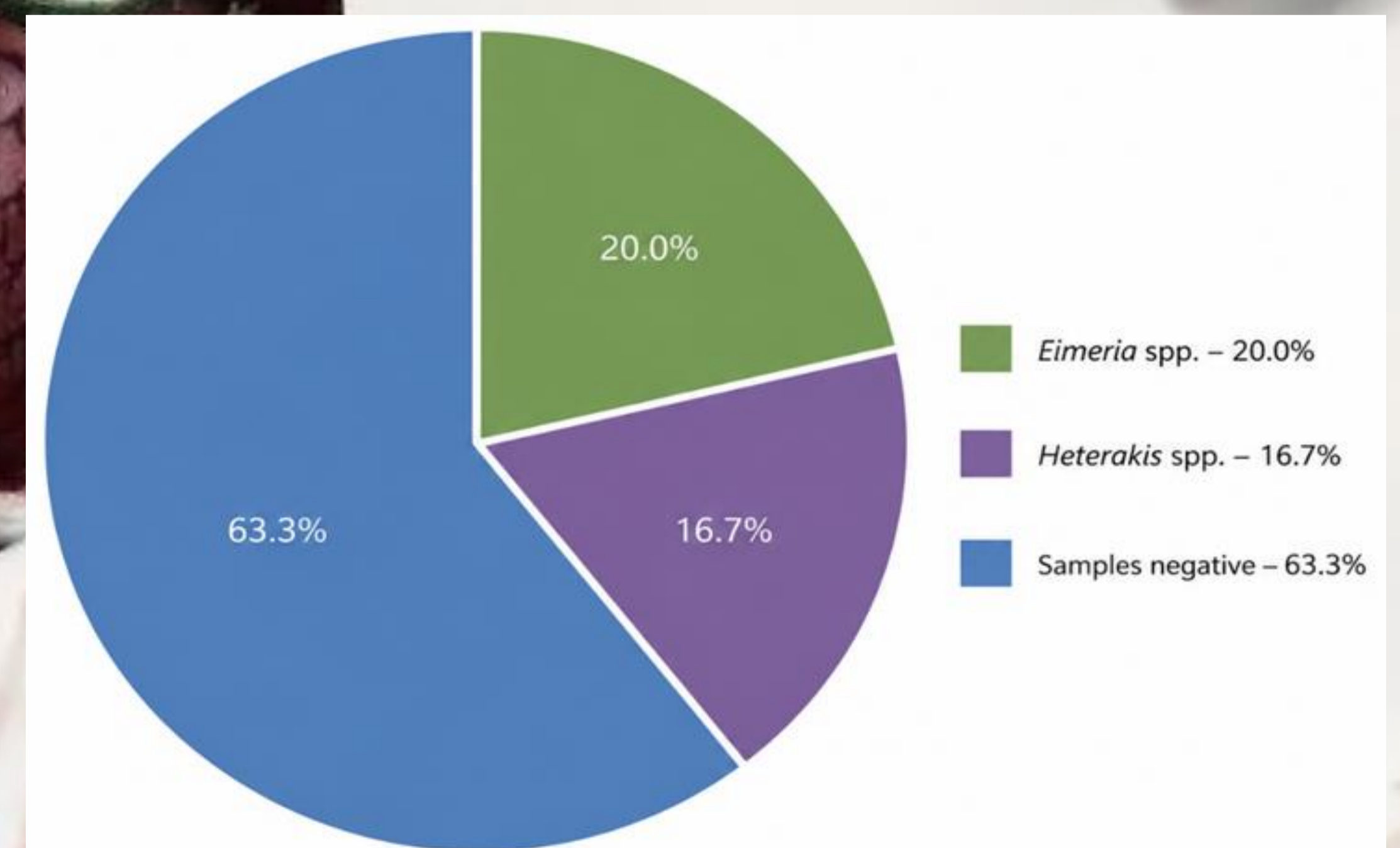
Results

Eimeria spp. oocysts were detected in 6 of the 30 examined pheasants, corresponding to a prevalence of **20.0%**. Nematodes belonging to the genus *Heterakis* were identified in the caeca of 5 specimens, with a prevalence of **16.7%**. No other gastrointestinal parasites were detected, and *Syngamus* spp. nematodes were not identified in the trachea of any examined bird.



Discussion

The detection of *Eimeria* spp. oocysts and adult *Heterakis* spp. nematodes suggests that wild pheasants may contribute to the maintenance of gastrointestinal parasite cycles in managed hunting grounds. The identification of adult *Heterakis* spp. in the caeca, despite the absence of eggs in faecal samples, highlights the importance of direct examination of the digestive tract as a complementary method to coproparasitological analysis. Unlike findings reported in other European studies, *Syngamus* spp. and other gastrointestinal parasites were not identified in the present study; however, this absence should be interpreted with caution, considering the limited sample size and restricted geographical coverage.



Conclusion

This study provides the first data on gastrointestinal endoparasites in wild common pheasants from Romania. The presence of *Eimeria* spp. oocysts and *Heterakis* spp. nematodes indicates that wild pheasants may contribute to the maintenance of parasitic cycles in managed hunting grounds. Further studies using larger sample sizes and broader geographical coverage are necessary to better assess parasite diversity and its implications for pheasant population health.