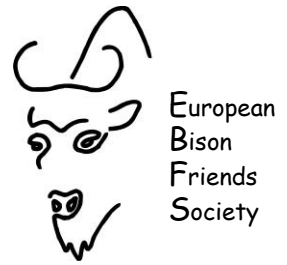
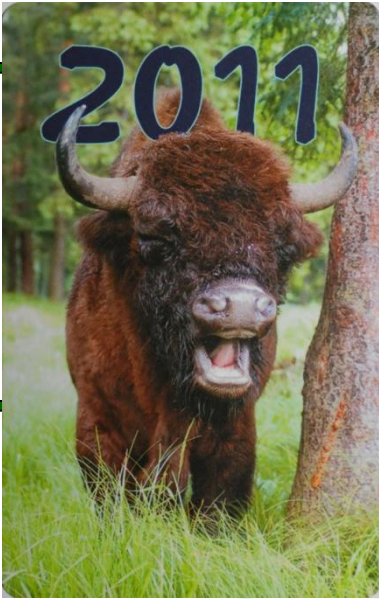


# EBFS News



## no 1/2011



In the first issue of the **European Bison Friends Society News** you will find brief descriptions of key activities and events, in which the EBFS has been involved in the past year.

Many mindful readers of website EBFS already know them, but here you'll find more - and in a more condensed form. The authors of the first edition will be grateful for your comments and suggestions, we will take them into account when preparing the next issue, in half a year.

Enjoy reading

**European Bison Friends Society is 5 years old.** It was established November 26, 2005 year. Since its beginning Professor Wanda Olech from Department of Genetics and Animal Breeding WULS serves as the President. This year, for many years of activity for the benefit of European bison, not only the Polish, she received a statuette of the Bieszczady European Bison.

### Interview with Wanda Olech

**What do during these five years has given you the greatest satisfaction?**

*Above all I am glad that from year to year increases the number of members of the Society. They cover a wide variety of professions: foresters, scientists, naturalists, artists - such as photographers, but also people who simply are interested in European bison and want to support our activities. This, in turn, shows that what we do is interesting, attractive and increasingly popular.*

**Activities of European Bison Friends Society, initially quite limited, start to be visible.**

*Yes, because we start to go out, show up at different events: EBFS participates in WULS Days and this year, for the first time, had its own, separate booth at the European Bison Day in Lutowska, in Bieszczady Mountains and we will present in others. We can see that our visitors are interested in this but knowledge of our royal animal is still insufficient in my opinion. It is worth talking about it as much as possible.*

**Organizing of yearly international „bison“ conferences where researchers and breeders share their experiences is definitely a success.**

*This year in Niepołomice, in a historic palace was held on the eighth such meeting, and interest in it was greater than I expected. As can be seen from this number, initially it was not the EBFS that organized conferences, but the last 5 years we acquired all of the case - the organizational and substantive. I have to commend, on behalf of EBFS: hosts in center in Niepołomice, who saw more than one international conference were very impressed with the professionalism of the participants and excellent atmosphere both in the conference hall and in the lobby. And the result was... gaining some new members.*



*Conferences is the greatest annual challenge but not the only ones. The Society organizes and finance international transports of the bison to different breeding centers. We conduct educational and publishing activities - among the others „Breeding bison. Guide of captive management“*

*The EBFS is also involved in important projects on European bison living in Poland, co financed by the European Union.*

**And what failed?**

*Maybe not so much a "failed", but - what was disturbing and so difficult to fight... Still, in many activities are prevented by excessive bureaucracy and unnecessary formalities. On the one hand, it would seem that we are all proud of European bison, Poland has been successful on a global saving species from extinction. On the other hand present efforts on Wisent protection and in their interest are not always understood. Not only projects of the EBFS.*

*For example, the Institute for Applied Ecology has failed to establish breeding center in Grabin, in Lubuskie, because the local inhabitants protested. It is a pity but it will be created elsewhere, where it will be treated as a real attraction, in many aspects.*



## Since when, and why you are interested in is the European bison?

*European bison is my passion, which I develop for nearly a quarter of a century and the beginning was completely by chance. My supervisor professor Tadeusz Slawinski was invited by Professor Zdzislaw Pucek to Bialowieza in order to consult on rodents breeding. Gentlemen, not only discussed the problems associated with maintaining voles and mice, but went on Wisent topics.*

*Prof. Pucek complained that no one fully uses the data recorded on the pedigree book for many years, and that nobody deals with the genetic aspects of conservation and breeding of these animals. My professor took up the issue and informed prof. Pucek, that the new person who can fill this gap just started working in his department, after returning from Bialowieza informed me that from now on I dealt with the genealogy of European bison. According to his command I began to explore pedigrees and species. It is very difficult to determine at which point it ceased to be only the chiefs' command, and began to be the most important point in my own research. I was just lucky that the professors met in Bialowieza.*

## What would you wish to members and sympathizers of EBFS in the New Year?

*First of all I wish health and family happiness, for we know that these are the elements necessary to be active in every field, including our bison field. I wish also concepts and ideas, which could be shared to enrich and improve the activities of our association.*

## And what would you wish to the European bison?...

*Of course, to be healthy, eat well and to be multiplied - but in moderation, wisely! Just kidding, but their number should not grow excessively. European bison have no natural enemies, so for the good of the population animals with the best characteristics should have the descendants. But above all let us rejoice that we can still admire the European bison - in demonstration enclosures, and free roaming!*

## 2010 EVENTS

- January** year started sadly: Professor Janusz Gill, an eminent expert on the physiology of bison passed away.
- March** to Poland's first private breeding station in Kiermusy went a bull from Bialowieza. Joined the three females living there.
- May** EBFS participates in WULS Days  
EBFS organizes and pilots the exchange of bison between the Poland and Lithuania: from Niepolomice to Lituania go Pozorant and Polalfa, we get Girukas and Gina.  
Society organized the International Conference bison specialists in Warsaw. A program of cooperation and creating a network of mutual contacts between countries is created.
- June** from Pszczyna and Białowieża 7 animals go to Spain. This is one of the biggest and most difficult transport through the whole Europe. It is done by a specialist from EBFS, and everything run smoothly.
- September** 8<sup>th</sup> Conference „Bison in the Royal Forest” takes place in Niepolomice. Conference is organized by EBFS and gathers representatives of 10 countries, including Poland. Conference participants can see an exhibition of photographs by Mieczysław Hławiczka - Pszczyna veterinarian.  
EBFS becomes one of the beneficiaries' of project co-funded by V<sup>th</sup> priority of the Operational Program Infrastructure and Environment: "Ex situ conservation of European bison in Poland". The program will run until the end of 2013.
- October** a new edition of the European Bison Pedigree Book is published (learn more – below)
- November** the Society organizes and funds the bison transport from centers in the Bavarian Forest, Germany and Austrian zoological park Schlosshof to Ukraine, to nature park Skolivski Beskydy near Lviv arrives in good health and condition 5 animals.





## In addition :

- held five open meetings in the series "Around the bison"; at one of them we admired the bison from Yellowstone Park in the lens of the member, a renowned photographer Janusz Sochacki, who later presented his works at the exhibition, in Bemowo, Warsaw

- many young bison were born in Polish herds, but some of them become more famous than the others. Christening Ceremony held in Bialowieza for

Poteelka, whose godparents were students from the Bialowieza Forest Technical school and widely publicized contest for a name for the calf from Pszczyna brought lots of responses from around the country and the effect of name Plessar. We also had good news from Spain, where one cow, transported earlier from Poland gave birth to a calf certainly conceived in our country;

Last year a few bison were killed in road accidents, poached but also killed by clumsy hunters. Among the "interesting" information relating to the protection of the bison and the law should include "Decision to discontinue the investigation before initiating" issued by the District Prosecutor in Lesko. It was about poached European bison - prosecutor did not find signs of the prohibited act. One of the arguments was that "regulation concerns the killing of animals of protected species - "animals" refers to plural which means that fall within the scope of this provision is to kill at least two animals". It seems that poachers intending to kill a single bison can sleep peacefully. At least in the Bieszczady Mountains.



## PLANS FOR 2011

- In January, European Bison Friends Society launches new website of European Bison Conservation (EBCC) [www.bison-ebcc.eu](http://www.bison-ebcc.eu), where one may find important and current information on number of animals and their distribution in different countries and breeding centers - certainly interesting for professionals, and for people interested in this species. The site will be drawn up in English.

- Implementation of the subsequent stages of two projects financed by the Operational Program Infrastructure and Environment: "Ex situ conservation of European bison in Poland," and "In situ conservation of European bison in Poland,"

- Organization of 9<sup>th</sup> conference with the participation of specialists from across Europe - this year in the Forest Borecka

## European bison health: THE WISENT IS LARGE, BLANK PAGE

Summary of one of the papers presented at this year's international conference in Niepołomice begins with the sentence „European bison is a species relatively poorly explored”. What we would like to learn more about European bison, which we look after all the decades?

As it turns out - there are plenty issues waiting to be worked out. First of all, we, veterinarians, are interested, what upsets European bison, which diseases afflict them- says dr. Wojciech Bielecki from WULS.- We still really know very little about it yet the possibilities for research are limited.

Veterinary care of the bison is a pastime for enthusiasts, while brave men, as it is and difficult, and sometimes simply dangerous. But certainly fascinating because of many mysteries and blank pages in knowledge about anatomy and physiology of the king of the forest. Each research can bring something new. So what is bothering European bison? Now, as it turns out, their biggest problem are gastrointestinal parasites. Numerous, diverse, which may cause considerable health problems. They are also very difficult to treat, which is possible only in case of any animals from breeding centers and practically unrealistic for free roaming animals. In Bieszczady free roaming population there have been isolated cases of tuberculosis, which are urgent and important problem to be solved.

But the Polish European bison are generally in excellent condition - and it's worth noting.

Coming back to this paper, which was co-authored by Dr. Wojciech Bielecki - it is related to density of European bison hair cover.

Although it may seem impractical to the layman, it is very important subject to develop potential treatments for diseases of the skin, if necessary.

Many basic scientific research, proved to be invaluable for the years of practice. In Poland we have a unique opportunity to broaden the global awareness of European bison.





Westpomeranian herd, fot. Jacek Więckowski

## ABC OF EUROPEAN BISON PEDIGREE BOOK

In the autumn came the next edition of the European Bison Pedigree Book containing information about animals and breeding stations at 31 December 2009. This is a true compendium of knowledge for breeders - not only in Europe but also beyond. This year's report includes data from 219 breeding centers and 35 free-roaming and semi free-roaming herds, from 30 countries.

- The first pedigree book was published in 1932 and listed 177 European bison.
- In the past there have been interruptions in the issuing of the European Bison Pedigree Book, but now - since 1994 it is published every year.
- There are recorded only animals of pure blood. Information on pedigrees allows to select adequate European bison for breeding so they are not closely related each other, also to move them and combine in a controlled way, the best for the future of the species.
- European bison from closed breeding centers are particularly well known. Each has a name. also parents are registered in the Pedigree Book.
- Just first letters of bison's name are very knowledgeable for specialists and breeders. They know exactly the source of animal, because in Pedigree Book certain letters are attributed to certain breeding center. For free roaming herds only number of animals can be known, there is impossible to control the pedigree of bison.
- Sending information about the European bison to the editors of the Book is voluntary, but each of the breeders who are seriously thinking about breeding does it, because the registration of animals in the Book is a kind of "certificate" - you know what is the origin of each of the bison.

Preparing the next edition of the European Bison Pedigree Book is responsible, meticulous and hard work of **Dr. Jan Raczynski**, editor of the Book, and **Mrs. Małgorzata Bołbot**, assistant editor, of editorial office which is located in Białowieża.



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