



The European Bison Friends Society

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THE EBFS 2007 ACTIVITY REPORT

Last year enabled us to develop and intensify various activities described in the Statute. We have 24 new members and 3 of them has status of supporting members. In September passed away Professor Zdzisław Pucek, outstanding scientist, great intercessor of European bison conservation. and long-term chairman of Bison Specialist Group SSC/IUCN.

Up to now the European Bison Friends Society gathers 101 members.

In 2007 we initiated and participated in following actions:

1) Educational program

We are in the end of preparing educational program for school students. First part – a cartoon – presents history of the species, beginning with Xth century, when European bison was very common species, through XIX and XXth century, when it has been almost extirpated, to present times, when situation of the species, although improved, still requires numerous actions. The second part presents bison in the enclosure. It allows to notice sex dimorphism and shows short movies with bison groups of different age. The next part is visiting some specialists. A veterinarian, biologist, ecologist and geography teacher describe bison anatomy, morphology and behavior, explain the problem of restitution, reintroduction and active conservation of the species and present actual number of the bison all over the world. A competition in different sport disciplines between a boy and a bison shows the character of bison move and powers.

In the end the student can answer 19 simple questions in a short quiz. We want the soundtrack to be prepared and text to be read by a lector to make the watching program more attractive.

The educational program is sponsored by Polish bank PeKaO S.A. The EBFS aims to get a grant from Polish Regional Fund for Environment Conservation and Water Management to prepare additional brochures and European bison gadgets.

2) An expertise for Polish Ministry of Environment

On November 15th we finished first part of expertise titled “Detailed rules of breeding the European bison in captivity, essential for implementation of “European bison conservation strategy in Poland”.

13 EBFS members take part in expertise preparing.

First part described following subjects:

- creating and managing private bison breeding enclosures,
- rules of local and international bison transport,

- project of a website about restitution and breeding of the species and role of the European Bison Pedigree Book.

We plan to finish the expertise in June 2008 by preparing European bison breeding manual.

- 3) One of very important initiatives, supported by EBFS, was starting to organize European Bison Advisory Center (EBAC). Its main goal is to cover all captive herds with one, coordinated breeding program, advising on animal exchange and matings, based on pedigree analyses to preserve genetic variability of the species. EBAC's website (<http://ebac.sggw.pl>) presents actual data about bison in different enclosures, list of *Bison spp* related publications and other interesting data about the species. EBAC is supervised by Bison Specialist Group SSC/IUCN and European Bison Friends Society is responsible for fund-raising.
- 4) In 2007 we organized 9 meetings "Around European bison", where one can listen and talk about the bison. Meetings are open for all members and friends of EBFS.
 - On January 9 we had pleasure to see a bison photos made by Mr Janusz Sochacki. The author added some personal impressions and circumstances of each photo creation. Afterwards we listened to the lecture of Zuza Nowak, Ph.D., who was speaking about DNA studies and possibilities of sequencing the bison's genome.
 - On February 6 we invited Mr Tadeusz Natkański, who leaded for many years the European Bison Breeding Center in Smardzewice. Our guest told us many interesting stories of the Center history with background of some photos from Smardzewice.
 - On March 6 Beata Grzegorzółka, M.Sc., told about establishing free-living populations of European bison in Poland. An interesting lecture induced a discussion about separate breeding of the two lines of European bison and future of the species.
 - On April 3 a veterinarian Wojciech Bielecki, Ph.D., spoke about balanoposthitis, a disease infecting population from Białowieża Primeval Forest. Afterwards, our guest from France, Mr Emmanuel Schutz, told us about plans of European bison reintroduction in France.
 - On May 8 Wanda Olech presented her impressions of visiting some European breeding enclosures. She spoke about danish safari zoo in Ebeltoft, post military area in Schleswig (Germany), where a new group of bison will be established, 30-years old dutch breeding center in Lelystad, and about Amsterdam Zoo – one of the first institutions connected with the species restitution.
 - The next meeting, on 5th of June, took place in the Witold Stefanski Institute of Parasitology Polish Academy of Sciences. There were 3 lectures – first, about the history of European bison, extinction of its free living population and restitution, was presented by Miss Kasia Hajduk, a student of biotechnology at Warsaw Agricultural University. The following two lectures, of Bożena Moskwa, Ph.D., and Jacek Lachowicz, Ph.D., both from the Institute presented a protozoan *Neospora caninum* and a nematode *Ashwortius sidemi*. It induced discussion about intensity of parasitic infestations in European bison and methods of improving the situation.
 - On July 3 Mr. Fernando Moran told about his plans of establishing European bison breeding center in the north of Spain.
 - After holiday break, on November 6, two animal science students spoke about their summer student practices. Their lecture presented history, present research and future plans of the Polish herd in West Pomerania.

- On December 4 we had pleasure to listen to Professor Franciszek Kobryńczuk, veterinarian, who spoke about veterinary research on the bison and presented some his poems.
- 5) As EBFS aims to support and train future European bison breeders, several visits of interested people from Czech Republic, Spain, Hungary and France were organized. Our guests had possibility to listen to interesting lectures, to consult their plans with bison experts and to see several Polish breeding centers. Also some specialists gathered in EBFS took part in workshops and visited places of planned bison enclosures (e.g. in Hungary and Switzerland).
- 6) The European Bison Friends Society really appreciated obtained sponsorship which was necessary for listed above activities. Warsaw University of Life Sciences - SGWW helped us much by putting EBAC's website on its server. Also bank PeKaO S.A. made next donation for educational purposes. The EBFS obtained some new sponsors, that support its activity.. We obtained a small grant from Forestry Bureau of Taiwan for essential computer and software equipment for EBAC office. In 2007 Wildlife Conservation Society (USA) definitively decided to support long-term European bison conservation project starting in 2008.

The European Bison Friends Society plans to apply for funds from European Commission priority „Infrastructure and Environment” to finance different bison conservation projects. We want also to develop our training and editorial activity – by editing periodical related to the species. We are waiting for new members and sponsors.

Wanda Olech-Piasecka
President of the Board