



European Bison Friends Society

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2008 EBFS ACTIVITY REPORT

In 2008 the European Bison Friends Society actively realized its Statute goals. We obtained new members and in the end of the year EBFS gathers 114 European bison friends, including 6 supporting members. Following are main activities in expiring year:

- 1) According to the Statute EBFS takes care about people interested in European bison breeding. In April three members of the Society visited Hungarian Aggteleki National Park. To attract more tourists and to increase biodiversity enclosure for European bison is planned there. The visit included discussions on Park's administration plans, possibilities, perspectives and threats connected with European bison breeding.
Work connected with establishing enclosure for European bison are finished in Kiermusy (Poland), where on April 7 ceremonial opening of first Polish private European bison enclosure. Unfortunately, because of area diminished than previously was planned, only three females are now in the enclosure.
Aggteleki National Park is on the beginning of project, which is greatly advanced in case of Mr. Andras Mester from Fuzerkomlos (Hungary). During visiting Mr. Mester Polish group had possibility to see almost ready enclosure with all necessary equipment. After finishing all works, in August, five European bison from Poland (3 females of Pszczyna and a male from Smardzewice and Leszno) were transported to Fuzerkomlos and ceremonial opening took place in the of the month.
- 2) Care about the breeders and realization of issues included in grant agreement with WCS is also connected with advise and organization of transport to provide separate breeding of European bison belonging to different genetic lines. Therefore EBFS organized exchange of three Lowland-Caucasian bison kept together with Lowland ones in Kropp (Germany). Polish Zoological Gardens in Poznan and Łódź donated three Lowland animals for exchanging on this from Kropp to be sent to Bieszczady. Second project connected with genetic variability protection and separation of the two lines was help in choosing and transporting a few European bison to newly opened reserve in Vama Buzaului (Romania). Five bison of Lowland-Caucasian line from three zoological gardens were chose, including a couple of Goldau (Switzerland), a female from Parco Natura Viva in Bussolengo (Italy) and a couple from Schlosshof (Austria). The transport was organized in November and though some small problems occurred, it was finished with success. Vama Buzaului breeding center will take part in reintroduction project in Carpathians – young animals will

be passed to acclimatization enclosure in Vanatori Neamt (Romania).

3) In the end of June the EBFS completed works connected with expertise for Polish Ministry of Environment entitled “Detailed rules of breeding the European bison in captivity, essential for implementation of “European bison conservation strategy in Poland”. A material effect of the expertise is publishing of a manual “European bison breeding. Manual of management in captivity”. Following are detailed elements of the expertise:

- The manual “European bison breeding. Manual of management in captivity” – This book is the first one that compiles knowledge about main rules of captive European bison management. Due to wide scope of information the manual will be useful for experienced breeders as well as for amateurs. A PDF file (in Polish) is available on EBFS website.
- The rules of establishing and managing private European bison enclosures – with procedures of obtaining permission, requirements for the staff and its training.
- Rules of transporting the animals locally and abroad – with scope of veterinary analyses and methods of transport. A draft of agreement between beneficiary and a donor was proposed after consultation of a lawyer.
- Rules of European bison Gene Bank functioning – some institutional and organizational bases were proposed according to UE law and veterinary resolutions.
- Rules and methods of diminishing damages made by the European bison in agriculture and forestry – with underlining the meaning of natural vegetation enrichment, supplemental feeding, fencing and deterrence.
- Rules of European bison culling and dealing with trophies, skins and meat – with rules of choosing animals to be culled and methods of elimination. In Poland it is necessary to establish legal status of trophy and meat after legal culling.
- Rules and methods of genetic variability protection – scope of information necessary to determine importance of certain individual for the breeding.

4) In 2008 EBFS developed its editorial activity:

- in September Works connected with creation of our educational presentation “A few facts of European bison life” were finished. Now the presentation is distributed among education centers, schools and other interested parties. We are now also working on spreading knowledge on European bison in Warsaw schools. A quiz completing the presentation will be available on EBFS website soon to give possibility to check one’s knowledge about the bison.
- Also in September as 6th European bison conference in Cisna (Bieszczady mountains, Poland) took place, EBFS released first issue of European Bison Conservation Newsletter. An issue will be prepared once a year and will include reviewed papers, scientific and popular.

We encourage to send papers to EBFS office! Detailed rules for authors are available on EBFS website.

5) On 15 of November the second General Members Assembly was organized in Warsaw. Only 23 members appeared but it was still possible to discuss some important issues. The Assembly once again elected Mrs Wanda Olech-Piasecka to be the President, while in

the Board Ms. Zuza Nowak and Ms. Katarzyna Daleszczyk replaced Ms. Magda Malkiewicz and Mr. Zbigniew Krasiński. Mrs. Barbara Osińska is a new member of the Audit Commission. The General Members Assembly favored Mr Janusz Gill with a status of honorary member of the EBFS. The gathering agreed that it is a good idea to organize General Members Assembly during national conferences devoted to European bison protection.

6) „Around European bison” – monthly meetings open for members and friends of EBFS.

- On January 8th Katarzyna Olbrych, Ph.D., veterinarian, presented her doctoral thesis about morphology of European bison female reproductive organs. Interesting presentation started discussion about future research on European bison.
- In the beginning of March Mieczysław Hławiczka, veterinarian, described his experience in veterinary care on European bison herd in Pszczyna. The presentation was enriched with interesting pictures of different veterinary interventions and observations.
- In April Zuza Nowak, Ph.D., from Department of Genetics and Animal Breeding Warsaw University of Life Sciences presented variety of theories on European bison origin and its relations with American bison and other *Bovidae*.
- On Tuesday, 6 May, we invited Bogdan Jaroszewicz, Ph.D., from Białowieża Geobotanical Station. In his very interesting presentation entitled “For what plants need European bison?” Mr. Jaroszewicz described principles and preliminary results of studies on role of European bison in distributing of seed. Our guest presented European bison menu, much extended comparing with published data, as including several dozen of plant species more.
- In the beginning of June the meeting participants had opportunity to see almost finished educational program for school students. Some correction after the meeting were made.
- After holiday break we had opportunity to watch some archive and contemporary movies with European bison – all courtesy of Mr Janusz Sochacki.
- In November Mrs Danuta Sztych showed really interesting presentation about influence of European bison on different aspects of culture. After discussion participants agreed that there is necessity of gathering information about all elements of mass culture, architecture and beauty arts influenced by European bison and Mrs Sztych seems to be a perfect guardian of the data base.

If you know about any artistic presentation, literature mention or other interesting details on European bison, let us know!

- In December Ms Maryna Sieklucka, B.Sc. student on Animal Science faculty, proposed way of presentation of our educational programme in schools. Interesting way of presenting and contact with audience resulted with great enthusiasm of all meeting participants. Ms Sieklucka will gather information about usefulness of our presentation in spreading the knowledge about European bison and sensitivity to endangered species protection.

7) Since September 2007 EBFS supports development of European Bison Conservation Center (EBCC) and in December 2008 first EBCC Board meeting was organized. Gathered participants – 20 people representing NGOs, administration and breeders from 8 countries discussed organizational issues, EBCC main goals and fund raising. Last part of the meeting

– trip to Borecka forest – induced big enthusiasm of our guests. The meeting was fruitful and ended with decision of establishment of Polish NGO with foreign Regional Offices as members.

8) One of important activities of EBFS is gaining money for European bison protection. First six months of this year were really successful in this topic – we received financial support from:

- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) from USA, which gave a big grant for realization of three activities:
 - European bison Advisory Center development,
 - transport of Lowland-Caucasian European bison to protect genetic variability of metapopulation in East Carpathians,
 - collecting samples and DNA studies.
- Large Herbivore Foundation, which gave donation for development of European Bison Advisory Center.
- Once again our educational activity was supported by Bank PEKAO S.A.

I wish to thank all our supporting Friends and Members!

Wanda Olech-Piasecka