



European Bison Friends Society

Ciszewskiego str. 8 room 42, 02-786 Warsaw

tel. (+48) 22 593 65 80

www.smz.waw.pl,

e-mail: bison@smz.waw.pl

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2009 EUROPEAN BISON FRIENDS SOCIETY, ACTIVITY REPORT

In 2009 the European Bison Friends Society actively realized its Statute goals. We acquired 15 new members including 6 from abroad. Unfortunately Board had to strike off the list another 11 members due to not fulfilling obligation of paying membership fee for over 2 years period. At the end of the year 2009 the Society counted 118 members, including one honorary and 6 supportive members.

During last year the Society was active in a supervision of breeding programs and animal exchange among breeding stations including:

- In June 2009 3 animals - females "POWISŁA" from Warsaw ZOO and "POZIOME CZKA" from Forest Park of Culture and Recreation "Myślęcinek" in Bydgoszcz, and male "POSTRON" from Forest Park of Surprises in Ustroń were transported to Gera ZOO (Germany). Those three young bison were donated by Polish Zoos for which, we are grateful. It was a mutual exchange since Gera ZOO, intending to change the genetic line, donated 6 animals of Lowland-Caucasian line - males: THYRA, THOSKA, THALIA and females THEO, THUNDERBIRD and THASIDOS. Wisents were transported to the enclosure in Skolyvski Beskid National Park in western Ukraine. This herd is a part in Polish, Romanian and Slovakian reintroduction project in Eastern Carpathians. This transport was a great success for our Ukrainian friends, who paid enormous efforts to get new individuals for several years. Special thanks are for Oksana Maryskevich, since the achievement of this goal would not be possible without her commitment.
- In mid July 4 females from Sweden were transported to Vanatori Neamt Nature Park in Romania. Selected females: AVEVA and AVIDA from Avesta

and BOLIVIA and STOJA from Stockholms ZOO joined Vanatori herd in 200 ha enclosure. Preparations for this transfer started over 6 months earlier. Vanatori Park takes part in Carpathian E. bison restitution project. According to the plans wisents in Romania will be released to the wild in 2010.

- 🐾 In the third decade of July, the Society transported 5 wisents to the second Hungarian station Nagykanizsa (located next to Slovenian border). 3 females KARAVANA, KARABELA and KARAGANDA were originally a part of free ranging herd from Białowieża Primeval Forest, 2 males were from Pszczyna Breeding Center. Nagykanizsa enclosure counts several hundred hectares so animals will have comfortable conditions there, and the new owner committed himself to take part in European Conservation Program for this species.
- 🐾 Another transport organized by the Society took place on the turn of September and October. Four females KARELIA, KALEVALA, KALABRIA and KATEGORIA from free ranging herd from Białowieża Forest, and a male POLSAT from Niepołomice were moved to a private station in Bohemian Shumava in the neighborhood of Prachatice.

Hungarian group (7 guests) visited Smardzewice and Pszczyna Breeding Stations. Our potential partners plan to establish 900 ha enclosure at Zamoly in Central Hungary.

In May, delegation of three experts of the Society, including Wanda Olech, Mieczysław Hławiczka and Zbigniew Ryś, visited Eriksberg reserve located in southern Sweden. The reserve is fenced area of 1000 ha situated near Baltic Sea. Wisent is the largest animal living there, but there are also red deer, roe deer, wild boars and other species of European fauna. There is a unique red waterlily site in the park, which was one of the reasons for including the area into Natura 2000 list. Wisent herd counting 30 heads is well adapted there. This is a reserve of “safari” type, where animals and their environment can be seen from a vehicle, and from some selected sightseeing points. It is worthy to recommend visiting the Eriksberg reserve (www.eriksberg.nu).

The WULS Days called the Great Springtime Picnic took place on 15th and 16th May. For the first time EBFS had a stand there. It gave an opportunity to share knowledge about endangered species among broader circles of society. A silhouette of natural size, encouraged the youngest to approach the stand to paint their own bison portrait. Bison painting appeared to be tempting not only for children. Other visitors interested in environmental protection could learn about European bison behavior, population size and distribution, watch movies and posters, and to supply themselves with souvenirs: cups, T-shirts and bags, thus supporting the Society.

The Society prepared a photographic exhibition "Around a wisent". Visitors enjoyed pictures taken by Janusz Sochacki.

On 8th of August took place the 3rd Day of Wisent in Bieszczady Mountains. This event was organized by Lutowiska municipality, forest inspectorates Lutowiska and Stuposiany, and hunting club „Gawra”, under honorary patronage of Edward Balwierczak, director of The Regional Directorate of the State Forests in Krosno. A highlights of the event were: shooting competition and lumberjack derby. Ryszard Paszkiewicz received a honorary Statuette of Wisent from Bieszczady Mountains.

Scientific conference "80 years of European bison restitution in Białowieża Primeval Forest" was organized for the 7th time. Conference took place in September 28-29 in Białowieża and gathered over 130 people, including almost 40 guests from abroad. During the event, 50 oral presentations and posters were presented. Following the main idea of this year conference, many of them referred to wisent breeding in various countries: Poland, Russia, Germany, Belarus, Romania, Ukraine and Sweden. Breeders presented history of their breeding centers and herds, and actions that they take for the restitution of the species. Our guests reported their plans of creating private wisent herds in Hungary and Spain. Big group presented issues referring to different aspects of wisent health (among the others, a new immobilization drugs). Others referred issues related to wisent genetics, influence on environment, and application of the newest laboratory techniques in procreation. Telemetric methods in monitoring West-Pomeranian herd, and managing wisent population in areas included in Nature 2000 network, options of project fundraising were also discussed. As a result of the conference Society published the second issue of European Bison Conservation Newsletter, containing both: original scientific papers, and summaries of other presentations given during the conference. The way participants see it, it was a very successful event.

Following the tradition in whole previous year Society organized monthly meetings "Around the European bison" and so:

- 🦌 in January, Wanda Olech reported visits she took to Romania and Slovakia;
- 🦌 in March, we were watching films about wisents, a clue of the evening was a movie by Włodzimierz Puchalski taken back in the 70thies. Surprisingly commentaries given in the movie are still relevant;
- 🦌 in April, Professor Janusz Gill become a honorary member of the society. Professor gave us a lecture about "Specific regulation of blood pressure in wisent relating to other ruminant species";

- 🍄 in May Dagmara Kołeczek from the Institute of Applied Ecology outlined issue “Wisent and protected plant species – a threat or a chance of survival”;
- 🍄 in June, Wanda Olech reported her trip to Hungary, where she visited potential breeding stations;
- 🍄 in October, Ph.D. students from the Department of Animal Genetics and Breeding, Ludmila Macheta and Katarzyna Kaczorowska referred the 7th wisent Conference “80 years of European bison restitution in Białowieża Primeval Forest”;
- 🍄 in November, Jerzy Dackiewicz from Białowieża National Park told us about breeding of wisents at Białowieża Breeding Center.
- 🍄 in December, our meeting was dedicated to Professor Kobryńczuk’s poetry about King of the Wilderness.

Since the beginning of February 2009, European Bison Friends Society started to introduce a multimedia project for schools: “Several facts about Wisent’s life”. First lessons took place in Warsaw ZOO as a part of the “Winter in the City” project, thereafter lessons were carried out in schools of Warsaw, and its surroundings including the cultural centre at Mysiadło. The Society had sent CD with this project to institutions related to bison breeding, and ecological education (e.g. the Forest Culture Center in Goluchów, Białowieża National Park, Ecological Educational Center in Pszczyna and others). CDs are successfully used in workshops and classes with youngsters.

Martyna Sieklucka presented the lesson many times in primary schools and junior high schools. Her presentations as well as the lessons itself were enthusiastically accepted by children and teachers. After the lesson children were receiving Society’s advertising materials. The presentation has been shown to over 700 children from 8 to 14 years old. CDs containing this compendium on wisent knowledge were given to all schools taking part in our project. CDs were also sent to School Inspectorate in Rzeszów, which distributed them among schools in region. CDs received high scores in teacher ratings (8 of 10 possible). Several CDs were also distributed in schools of Bieszczady and Lublin. Several remarks on possible improvement of the lesson were made. CD should be supplemented with bison voices. It was also recommended to enlarge photos. Vast majority of questioned responders was interested in the second part of presentation, which is the most positive commentary for this sort of a lesson.

Since September 2007, the Society supports the development of European Bison Advisory Center – EBAC, and is financing the implementation of European Bison Conservation Center (EBCC).

One of the most important tasks of Society is fundraising for bison conservation. This year was very successful – we received grants from:

- 🦌 Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) from United States, which supported us with a significant amount of money dedicated for implementation of three tasks:
 - development of Advisory Center
 - transporting bison of Lowland-Caucasian line to enrich genetic pool of metapopulation in Eastern Carpathians,
 - collection of tissue samples and DNA analysis .
- 🦌 Our educational activities were supported consecutively also by PEKAO S.A. Bank

I want to express our sincere thanks to all our donators and active members of the Society.



Wanda Olech-Piasecka

President of the Board