



European Bison Friends Society

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2010 EUROPEAN BISON FRIENDS SOCIETY, ACTIVITY REPORT

In 2010 the European Bison Friends Society actively realized its Statute goals, like in past years. We acquired 24 new members. Unfortunately in January our honorary member Professor Janusz Gill passed away. By the end of the year 2010, EBFS counts 141 members, including 6 supportive members.

During last year the EBFS was very active regarding breeding care and exchange of bison among breeding centers including:

- On March 4 the herd seasonally staying in Forest Inspectorate Krynki was supervised. This herd lives within the Knyszyn Forest and prospers wonderfully. Among 81 animals, 49 are females, mostly adult. In last year 15 calves were born there..
- On March 15 the first private bison breeding farm in Kiermusy, opened in 2008, was enriched with a male individual. Two years old bison POWIĄK came from Białowieża Breeding Center.
- In May, a transfer of Lowland bison to the largest Breeding Center in Lithuania was successfully completed for the first time for over 30 years. The exchange of animals involved Polish Niepołomice Breeding Center and Lithuanian Panevėžys-Pašiliu Stumbrynas, located in the neighborhood of the town Krekanowa. The beautiful pair of animals from Niepołomice - bull POZORANT and cow POLALFA, were exchanged for GIRUKAS and GINA from Lithuania.
- In the beginning of June one of the longest and one of the greatest bison transports of the last years has been organized. Seven animals from Białowieża and Pszczyna were transported to Kastylia and León, an autonomous region in the northern Spain. In the first part of expedition five cows were taken from Białowieża, among them the youngest was 1 year, and the oldest 11 years old. In wildlife sanctuary "Żubrowisko" in Pszczyna they were joined with two bulls. This long transport has finished with success, although traffic jams and heat in France and Basque Provinces occurred. Bison reached their destination in San Cebrian de Muda

located in Cordillera Cantabrica. The enclosure includes 20 hectares of meadows and mountain forests, where Pyrenees oak predominates over other trees. Part of meadows available to bison were earlier used agriculturally. The enclosure is situated over 1000 meters above sea level. Because of its localization climate is more chilly and humid than the southern part of Spain, known from frequent droughts. It is planned to devote finally even 400 hectares for bison. Soon after animal arrival to Spain the herd has grown. The first new born calf (probably heifer) appeared, then there were other births.

- 🦌 On November 11-12 five bison from Austria and Germany (4 animals from Bavarian Forest National Park in Germany and one young individual from ZOO Park Schlosshof in Austria) were transported to the Skolivski Beskydy National Park in Ukraine. It was a part of the bison reintroduction project in Ukraine. As last year Oksana Maryskevycz welcomed the animals. Oksana Maryskevycz is known as great activist in bison breeding.
- 🦌 It is worth noticing that bison twins were born in Slovak Topolcianki Breeding Center. It was the first case when twins born in captivity were living longer than for few days.

Within the framework of the European Bison Friends Society species protection and advisory activities, international meeting was organized in Warsaw on 26th May. Representatives of Germany, the Netherland, Russia, Romania, Sweden, Czech Republic and Slovakia participated in meeting. In result designed was the long-term project called European Bison Conservation Center (EBCC). Responsible for this Project will be the EBFS and Professor Wanda Olech, as the main Coordinator. European Bison Conservation Center should function as a network, connecting direct reciprocal contact and quick flow of information. It will unite people of varied specializations, seriously interested in European bison protection. Every interested country will be represented by Coordinator –the most knowledgeable person about local problems and conditions, keeping touch with breeders. Coordinators will meet at least once a year. Certainly this enterprise will improve living standards of bison in captivity as well as in natural environment. It should also help in making decisions about transferring selected animals. It is worthy to recommend visiting the www.bison-ebcc.eu.

In the end of June, the European Bison Friends Society organized professional training for guests from Denmark, workers of Rangers Regnskov Tropical ZOO and Aage V. Jensens Fonde Foundation. The goal of their visit was presentation of bison breeding rules and methods. Danish intend to introduction bison to the large enclosure nearby their Center. Training included practical part, conducted in Pszczyna and seminary according with monthly organized "Around European Bison" meetings. Our guests visited Exhibition Bison Enclosure, beautifully localized in historical park and museum of the Hochberg's Castle. After dinner guest were relaxing in Hunting Manor Osowiec, where they were accommodated. Later they went to admire "Żubrowisko" Reserve. The enclosure extends 700 hectares, nevertheless bison were observable for our guests. That was a big joy for visitors. Next they visited the Centre of Ecological Education in Pszczyna-Jankowice and

exhibition enclosure - small in comparison with Reserve. The subsequent point of the sojourn was a meeting with veterinarian - Mr. Mieczysław Hławiczka. Mr. Hławiczka was talking about the health of the bison and provided some valuable advices. The guests were informed about technical equipment of enclosure including: catching pen, pen for calves, feeding station, quarantine enclosure, fences and transporting box. Proper devices are necessary to safe and convenient management of animals. During "Around European bison" meeting, Danish guests were presenting their Center and plans concerning bison.

The EBFS completed work on Bison Protection Plan within the Plan of Protection for the Białowieża National Park. In 2009, the EBFS participated in open tender and was chosen for realization of the plan.. It should be noticed that there were no other competitors. The group elaborating the Plan included: Dr. Z. Krasiński Prof. K. Perzanowski, Prof. W. Olech, Dr. W. Bielecki and Prof. A. Bereszyński. The plan concerned both: captive bison and free-living population of Białowieża Forest. The document was accepted without comments. A long-term strategy for population management was presented there, with description of potential dangers for the stability of free-living herd in Białowieża Forest, methods of assurance food base for bison, target size of free-living herd in Białowieża Forest, methods of mitigation of damages to agricultural fields - inside and outside of the Białowieża Forest etc.

On September 22, after many months of efforts, Warsaw University of Life Sciences signed a contract on the project: "Bison protection *ex situ* in Poland", financed by the Operational Program "Infrastructure and Environment" and National Found for Environmental Protection and Water Management. The main beneficiary is Warsaw University of Life Sciences with four partners including: European Bison Friends Society, Forest Inspectorate Kobiór, Forest Inspectorate Niepołomice and Forest Culture Center in Gołuchów. The project will be realized until the end of 2013. Bison living in the enclosed breeding centers ("Żubrowisko" Reserve in Pszczyna, Bison's Breeding Center in Niepołomice, The Forest Culture Center in Gołuchów) will be under special care. A new enclosure is also planned in Sycowice, in the lubuskie province. Some activities will take place in Wolin and Smardzewice Centers, but it isn't mentioned in the project directly. Money received in this way will be spend on investments, repairs, purchase of food for animals and indispensable monitoring. The most important thing is regular monitoring of the state of bison health. Under the budget of the project, a purchase of special darts is planned. Such darts allow to take samples of skin without immobilization of the animals. That will be a big step towards creation of genetic database for the whole wisent population living in Polish breeding centers. Moreover every bison will have its own genetic certificate. It is important to plan proper mating pattern, especially that our knowledge on particular animals is still not sufficient. In August 2010 the open tender to buy equipment for genetic monitoring has been opened. In the nearest future we are planning to buy a special freezer to keep bison tissues and sperm frozen in liquid nitrogen. That will bring us closer to fulfill our ambition to create a first bank of genes of this royal animal..

In the last year the EBFS participated for the second time in the event: Warsaw University of Life Sciences Days, called a Big Spring Time Outing (14-15 of May 2010). We prepared a presentation of photos taken by Mr. Janusz Sochacki. Photographs of the king of the forest

were taken within his natural habitat. We were demonstrating also skulls of adult bison and a calf, arousing interest of both adults and kids. Many people were asking for information about bison including: body structure, behavior, breeding conditions and places of living. Adults and older kids were checking their knowledge about the bison taking short tests. It raised a big enthusiasm. Youngest were coloring the bison painting books. Moreover we offered to buy souvenirs connected with the bison: cups, bags, t-shirts, magnets, pendants and postcards. Money received this way supplied the activity of the Society.

In August 2010, the European Bison Friends Society was represented at the 4th Bison Day in Lutowiska. A promotional stand was set there, offering our knowledge and leaflets about bison. Similarly like during the Warsaw University of Life Sciences Days, we were also selling original gadgets: pendants, fridge magnets, reflective armbands and t-shirts - everything with the picture of the bison. President of the Society Professor Wanda Olech, delivered a speech about historical bison protection in Poland and Europe and about our present activities. During ceremonial part of the event, the Professor was honored with one of the two awarded Bison Statuettes of Bieszczady Mountain. It is a prize awarded for special achievements in bison protection and popularization this subject in the society. So far she is a first woman awarded this way. The second Statuette received Mr. Włodzimierz Podyma, the mayor of Lutowiska Commune. The EBFS got a nomination to this prize, a congratulatory letter and occasional mug.

On the September 9-10, the Society organized 8th scientific conference "Bison in the Royal Forest". This time an international company met in Niepołomice. Representatives of Belarus, Czech Republic, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary and Poland of course, were participating. During the conference for the first time the title of "Bison Lover" and striking bronze statuettes were awarded. Prize group including: Manager of The General Directorate of National Forests Mr. Marian Pigan, mayor of a town Niepołomice Mr. Roman Ptak, Manager of Regional Directorate of State Forests Mr. Stanisław Sennik, Mr. Ryszard Paszkiewicz from Forest Inspectorate Ustrzyki Dolne - for his involvement in protection of bison living in Bieszczady Mountains, Swedish photographer Mr. Tommy Svensson from Nature Park Eriksberg and finally the Foundation "Royal Castle Niepołomice". During the conference we were listening to 50 presentations about: details of bison anatomy, breeding, bison transfers and situation of those animals in involved countries. In 2010 the EBFS has published the third edition of bilingual European Bison Conservations Newsletter („Żubr i jego ochrona”) including scientific papers and presentations delivered during the conference. Participants appreciated the scientific and organizational level of the conference. We thank National Forest Information Center for financial support of conference.

Following the tradition, in the whole previous year the Society organized monthly meetings "Around the European bison" on following subjects:

- 🍷 In February, our meeting was dedicated to memories of Professor Janusz Gill, who died in January,
- 🍷 In March, Dr Agnieszka Suchecka was speaking about possibilities of surviving small bison herds,

- 🍄 In April, Wanda Olech was telling about first private bison breeding station in Fuzercomlos (Hungary),
- 🍄 In June, guests from Denmark were presenting their plans with regard to new opening of bison enclosure,
- 🍄 In October, Mr. Janusz Sochacki was reporting his journey to Yellowstone National Park (USA),
- 🍄 In November, Wanda Olech was reporting her visit to Denmark and told about possibility of bison departure to Bornholm.

Furthermore in May, in Public Library of Bemowo – Warsaw, XVII Reading-room, took place an exhibition of Janusz Sochacki's photographs “Żubry w obiektywie”. The author is a member of our Society and takes pictures for years. One of his great talents is photographing bison in their natural habitat. Before the exhibition we were listening to dr. Zuzanna Nowak lecture about the biology and history of the bison. Photographs were presented since May 20 to June 28.

The Society supports a development of the European Bison Advisory Center – EBAC and is founding the development of the 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.

During the whole reported period we were supported by Warsaw University of Life Sciences.

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

Wanda Olech-Piasecka
President of the Board