

My story of the European Bison Pedigree Book in Białowieża National Park

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Abstract: For 35 years, the editorial office of the European Bison Pedigree Book (EBPB) operated within Białowieża National Park (BNP). From the very beginning, Dr. Jan Raczyński was the editor and taught me all the details of this specific task. We also worked closely with Prof. Zdzisław Pucek and Prof. Wanda Olech, the coordinators of the European bison population. They both supported the editorial office institutionally and financially. For several months, the European Bison Friends Society (EBFS) took over the editorial office's operations. During those years, there were three conflicts between the editorial staff and different directors of BNP, which are explained in detail in the paper. The fourth conflict was with the current director of BNP after Dr. Raczyński's death. It ended with my resignation from the EBPB editorial office and my departure from BNP. However, I did not stop maintaining the European bison pedigree registers and became the editor of the new International European Bison Studbook (IEBS), with EBFS serving as its publisher. The registration of IEBS and our collaboration with breeders did not sit well with the director of BNP, who tried by every means possible to discredit the new Studbook, as well as to personally discredit Prof. Wanda Olech and me. Most breeders decided to cooperate exclusively with our editorial office, and the International European Bison Studbook 2025 was published in July of this year.

Key words: European Bison Pedigree Book, International European Bison Studbook, editorial office, pedigree register

Years 1991–2004

It has been 35 years since February 1991, when I was hired, along with Dr. Jan Raczyński, by the editorial staff of the European Bison Pedigree Book, affiliated with Białowieża National Park. The director of the Park at the time, Prof. Aleksander W. Sokołowski, appointed Dr. Jan Raczyński as editor of the European Bison Pedigree Book (EBPB) and me as editorial secretary. Previously, the EBPB had been managed by Ms. Joanna Giergiel from the Institute of Environmental Protection in Warsaw, but in December 1988, Ms. Giergiel resigned from her work on the Registry, and for over two years, no one maintained correspondence with breeders or updated the European bison pedigree

records. At that time, the importance of the EBPB was recognized primarily by Prof. Zdzisław Pucek of the Mammal Research Institute in Białowieża and by Dr. Wanda Olech, who used European bison pedigree data in her dissertation, defended in 1987. For several years, Prof. Pucek appealed to decision-makers to reactivate the editorial board of the EBPB. His appeals were taken most seriously by the director of the National Parks Administration at the time, Dr. Jan Wróbel, who decided to create a 1½-full-time position at the Białowieża National Park (BNP) for a secretary and editor of the EBPB. This decision coincided with a change in my job and my move from Warsaw to Hajnówka, where my husband Aleksander lived and worked. After so many years, I can also publicly admit that my hiring at the EBPB editorial office at BNP was arranged with Director Wróbel by the director of the Office of Forest Management and Forest Surveying in Warsaw, Mr. Adam Szempliński, where I was working at the time. My supervisor at the time, Dr. Stanisław Zajączkowski (a great man), knew that I was looking for work in Hajnówka or the surrounding area and asked Director Szempliński for help. That is how I came to be employed at the BNP, specifically in the editorial office of the EBPB. I did not take anyone's job, and no one was forced to leave so that I could take their place.

The appointment of Dr. Jan Raczyński as editor of the EBPB was a natural choice, as he had previously (from 1968 to 1975) served as secretary of the Register when Dr. Jan Zabiński – the long-time director of the Warsaw Zoo and prewar vice president of the International Society for the European Bison Protection – was editor. Dr. Raczyński worked remotely, as he lived in Białystok and held a full-time position at the university. We communicated by phone, and in person when Dr. Raczyński came to Białowieża or I traveled to Białystok. When I started working at the EBPB editorial office, I had no idea how the Register was managed. I learned everything from Dr. Raczyński, and as I gained experience, we worked together to resolve many issues, especially those that required a new approach to pedigree records. It was Dr. Raczyński who decided that European bison herds where – due to a large area, a large herd size, or other reasons – it is not possible to identify individual animals should be registered as semi-free herds. Currently, this situation has changed somewhat, as in many herds, European bison are fitted with ear tags or microchips, that allow the identification of individual animals. The main criterion for classifying a breeding facility as semi-free-range is therefore the large area occupied by the animals.

The first volume of the EBPB, prepared by Dr. Raczyński and me and published by BNP, covered the years 1987–1991. Subsequent issues were published annually. In 1993, I gave birth to my eldest son, but I did not stop main-

taining the Register. The director of BNP at that time, Dr. Czesław Okołów, agreed to let me work from home. Dr. Raczyński was also satisfied with this arrangement. We discussed most matters by phone or in person at my home. Subsequent volumes were published regularly each year and contained data for the previous year.

In 1995, Dr. Wanda Olech was hired by the BNP on a half-time basis; Director Wróbel tasked her with conducting ongoing analyses of European bison pedigrees and evaluating breeding activities at the enclosures, using data from the EBPB. Later, Dr. W. Olech continued this work at the Ministry of the Environment, collaborating with the editorial staff of the EBPB and BNP.

This situation continued until Director Okołów's retirement.

Years 2005–2007

In 2005, the next director of the BNP, Józef Popiel, decided that I would no longer work from home and ordered me to hand over all materials to the new manager, Dr. Renata Krzyściak-Kosińska. She was to oversee the work of the EBPB editorial team. A newly recruited young person was hired to replace me. From Dr. Raczyński's later accounts, I know that this was also a difficult period for him. Director Popiel was looking for a pretext to get rid of him as well. He paid no heed to Dr. Raczyński's suggestions and opinions, and conducted all discussions in the presence of Dr. Krzyściak-Kosińska.

Dr. Raczyński recalled with sadness that he felt harassed and watched by his superior, whom he suspected of looking for so-called 'dirt' on him. Some dozen or so years later, when we were visiting Professor Małgorzata Krasieńska together – whom Dr. Raczyński had been friends with since his youth – Prof. Krasieńska revealed to us that Józef Popiel, as director of the BNP, had offered her the post of editor of the EBPB. She refused, of course, but this incident clearly illustrates how Dr. Raczyński was treated at the time. As a result, the 2004 issue of the EBPB was published with numerous errors. Dr. Raczyński had no influence over this whatsoever. The list of errors to be corrected, provided by Prof. Wanda Olech (an employee of the Ministry of the Environment, to which the BNP reported!), was also ignored, and the author of that disastrous booklet soon resigned from her post at the BNP of her own accord. She was replaced by another young and inexperienced person, who, however, applied herself much more diligently to her work and listened to Dr. Raczyński's opinions and suggestions. Thanks to this, the next two booklets were much better. When Józef Popiel was detained by the police at the BNP headquarters, and shortly afterwards dismissed from his post as director of

the Park, Dr. Raczyński's situation improved. Furthermore, at the request of Prof. Wanda Olech, in 2007 the Minister of the Environment appointed the Advisory Council for the European Bison Pedigree Book, whose tasks included, among other things, advising on personnel changes within the editorial team. Prof. W. Olech was elected Chair of the Council.

Years 2008–2010

Shortly afterward, the other person holding the post of editorial secretary at EBPB resigned, and Dr. Raczyński, in consultation with the Park's new director, Mrs. Małgorzata Karaś, asked me to return to my former position. After a moment's hesitation, I accepted the offer. It was 2008, and we needed to prepare the 2007 issue for printing as quickly as possible; this issue also had to include a 12-page list of errors and corrections for previous annuals.

Until 2011, the editorial team's work proceeded smoothly and without any hitches; in fact, it was surprisingly successful and efficient, as during this period the BNP became a partner in the project '*In situ* conservation of the European bison in Poland – north-eastern part', coordinated by the Department of Animal Genetics and Breeding at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW) (<http://www.projektinsitu.sggw.pl>). Under this project, which funding was provided for the publication of three further issues of EBPB, as well as two laptops for editorial staff, a printer, filing cabinets and the digitization of archival materials. I must mention that the driving force behind these initiatives was, of course, Prof. Wanda Olech, who specializes in European bison genetics and heads the aforementioned department at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences. Following the death of Prof. Zdzisław Pucek, Prof. W. Olech also took over the coordination of the free roaming European bison population in Poland, and has since been advising on changes (mating, transport, culling) in all Polish breeding centers.

2011 – March 2012

On May 19, 2011, the then director of BNP, Zdzisław Szkiruć, made a decision – which came as a surprise to the editorial team – to terminate Dr. Jan Raczyński's employment contract with effect from August 31 on grounds of age. This was not only distressing, but downright offensive, as Dr. Raczyński, in his capacity as editor, was still actively working and had no plans to leave, feeling fully capable of continuing his work. In his letter, Director Szkiruć named Dr. Katarzyna Daleszczyk, a lecturer in the BNP Scientific Section, as the person who was to take his place. Professor Wanda Olech, who had

already objected to Director Szkiruć's plans in a letter dated April 12, 2011, convened a meeting of the EBPB Advisory Council for August 30, 2011. During that meeting, which was also attended by Director Szkiruć, the Advisory Council firmly opposed the director's decision, and I informed him that if he dismissed Dr. Raczyński, I would also resign from my position at the EBPB editorial office. Director Szkiruć withdrew the decision, but less than two weeks later, Dr. Raczyński and I received notice of changes to the terms of our employment contracts, with an offer to remain in our posts on reduced salary. We did not accept this proposal and challenged it in the labor court.

The first hearing took place on November 2, and the very next morning I received a phone call from the BNP secretariat informing me that Director Szkiruć, accompanied by others, was coming to my home to carry out a work inspection. Both the timing (the day after the hearing) and the fact that this was the first inspection during my many years of remote work for the EBPB editorial office came as a surprise. Director Szkiruć was accompanied by an IT specialist, Mr. Ireneusz Zacharewicz, and the aforementioned Dr. Katarzyna Daleszczyk. The inspection itself was limited to checking the number of emails received and sent from my computer.

The next court hearing was not due to take place until January 2012, i.e., after the expiry of the three-month notice period and the termination of our employment contracts with BNP. For this reason, Prof. Wanda Olech convened a meeting of the Advisory Council on December 28, 2011 at the headquarters of the Department of Animal Genetics and Breeding in Warsaw. The Council decided that, pending the court's ruling, it would accept the proposal from the Board of the European Bison Friends Society (EBFS) to employ Dr. Raczyński and me, so that we could continue our work on the Book. The EBFS therefore signed contracts of mandate with us and, in effect, took over the running of the EBPB for a certain period.

Meanwhile, the situation at Białowieża National Park was very dire, not only regarding the EBPB but, above all, financially. Consequently, an audit was carried out there, after which Director Szkiruć was dismissed, and the Secretary of State at the Ministry of the Environment informed the public as follows: *"The dismissal of the director of Białowieża National Park was the result of irregularities in the management of financial resources identified during an audit carried out at the park. The consequence of these irregularities was a lack of funds to pay the park's staff."* Well, it turned out that the savings made on the EBPB editorial staff did not save the Park's finances.

Our court case concluded with a judgment handed down on March 14, 2012, under which the court ordered that Dr. Raczyński and I be reinstated at BNP with our previous salaries, and that we be paid compensation for the

period during which we were out of work. In the grounds for the judgment, the court stated, among other things, that *“The former director of the BPN [Zdzisław Szkiruć] confirmed through his testimony that he lacked comprehensive knowledge of the matters dealt with by the claimants and of what their work actually entailed”*. I must mention here the tremendous support that Dr. Raczyński and I received at that time from members of the European Bison Conservation Center (EBCC), who, having been informed of the situation by Prof. Wanda Olech, sent letters of protest to Director Szkiruć against the changes in the EBPB editorial team.

April 2012 – April 2024

Over the following years, up until 2023, we continued working calmly, and conscientiously performing our duties. In July 2023, a new Labor Code came into force in Poland, and the next director of Białowieża National Park, Dr. Michał Krzysiak, decided not to continue remote work within the Park, and placed the EBPB editorial office under the supervision of Ms. Barbara Iwaniuk, Head of the Education Section. I agreed to work on-site at the BNP headquarters in Białowieża, whereas for Dr. Raczyński, commuting from Białystok was out of the question due to the excessive distance. Director Krzysiak offered Dr. Raczyński a contract for specific tasks on unacceptable terms and with an embarrassingly low salary, which was downright insulting to a distinguished, long-serving editor; in response, he submitted his resignation on October 4, 2023 in the following words:

“Having considered the terms of the contract of engagement drawn up by BNP in connection with the proposed continuation of my work – on new terms – as Editor of the European Bison Pedigree Book, I have concluded that this proposal does not befit the standing of this publication, which operates on behalf of and for the benefit of all European bison breeders worldwide.

The duties imposed without prior agreement in the contract do not reflect the Editor’s position within the editorial office of the European Bison Pedigree Book and drastically reduce my financial remuneration for performing the duties of managing the Book’s editorial office. The defined scope of duties could serve as a pretext for calling into question the many years of experience gained in practicing methods of collaboration and cooperation with the ever-growing number of European bison owners and breeders worldwide, thereby restricting the Editor’s freedom of decision-making.

Given the unilateral restrictions imposed on the powers of the Editor of the European Bison Pedigree Book, I do not see how the Editorial Office can operate independently under my leadership within the structures of Białowieża National Park.”

Director Krzysiak presumably accepted Dr. Raczyński's resignation with some satisfaction, as in his reply dated 5 October he wrote, among other things: *"In view of the above, I hereby declare that I shall act as editor of the European Bison Pedigree Book in a personal and voluntary capacity."* Was this precisely what he had in mind? Professor Wanda Olech pointed out to Director Krzysiak that he could not serve as editor of the European Bison Pedigree Book, as it would constitute a conflict of interest for him, as Director of the BNP, to supervise himself in that capacity. The situation resolved itself in January 2024, when Dr. Michał Krzysiak was dismissed from his post as Director of the BNP, and his duties were entrusted, pending the outcome of the competition for a new director, to the deputy director, who at the time was Aleksander Bołbot. He contacted Dr. Jan Raczyński, reached an agreement with him and signed a contract of mandate on terms favorable to the doctor. Unfortunately, Dr. Jan Raczyński passed away on 31 March, and his recent distressing experiences had undoubtedly taken their toll on his health.

The passing of Dr. Raczyński, who was not only my supervisor but also my mentor and friend, has left a huge void in the world of European bison experts. Tears streamed down my face as I read the moving words of many of Dr. Raczyński's breeders, friends and supporters, including the following:

"Jan's death is a great loss to the European bison community. He was a fantastic man and an absolute expert on European bison."

Thomas Hennig

"I know that he fought for the species and its registration in the Book right up until his final days with incredible courage and dedication, particularly given his advanced age."

Fernando Mórán

"I had known Jan Raczyński personally since the 1980s. He was a wonderful man and a true professional in his field. He genuinely cared about the welfare of the European bison and all efforts aimed at its conservation. With Jan's death, an entire era of saving this species worldwide comes to an end."

Taras Sipko

"It's a huge loss when someone like him is no longer with us. He was a very friendly person, so we must think of him and remember the lovely moments when we had the chance to meet and talk to him. [...] I think of him every time I work with Erna Mohr's photographs."

Tommy Svensson

"When that Man once suggested to me: 'Let's be on first-name terms', I felt honored, because I had come into contact with a legend...' ..."

Wojciech Bielecki

“He shared his incredible knowledge with me without reservation. We met every year in Poland and several times in Hardehausen. Jan, thank you for your friendship. You leave a huge void in the European bison world.”

Rainer Glunz

“His death is a great loss to the European bison community. We all owe him our thanks and will cherish his memory.”

Johannes Riedl

May 2024 – January 2026

I was left alone in the EBPB editorial office. In May 2024, a meeting of the Advisory Council was held in Białowieża, during which the Council recommended that I be appointed editor of the Book and that a new person be appointed as secretary, with whom I would share my knowledge and experience. A. Bołbot, who was still acting as director, could have appointed me as editor immediately, but the Council members and I decided that the 2023 issue of the Book, then in preparation, would still be published under the editorship of Dr. Jan Raczyński, and that the new director, selected through a competition, would appoint me as editor at a later date. This new director soon turned out to be Mrs. Olimpia Pabian. However, her plans were entirely different.

Both Professor Wanda Olech and Aleksander Bołbot informed her of the Advisory Council's position and the need to appoint a new member to the EBPB editorial team, but for many months the new director made no decisions, did not speak to me and seemed completely uninterested in the EBPB affairs. In January 2025, Mrs. Agnieszka Dalbiak from the Ministry of Climate and the Environment spoke with her, and only after this conversation did a job vacancy announcement for the EBPB editorial office appear on the BNP Facebook page. Two people applied, one of whom – Mr. Wojciech Sobociński – was hired on a probationary basis in the editorial office, effective April 1, 2025, as a specialist. I was still serving as editorial secretary, and Director Pabian had not spoken to me about a change of position, a change in my duties, or familiarizing Mr. Sobociński with the work of the editorial office.

Therefore, on 2 April, I sent a letter to Director Pabian (life has taught me that it is better to have a written reply from the director), in which I wrote:

“...in accordance with previous arrangements and the position of the EBPB Advisory Council dated 10 May 2024, I request that my duties as Senior Specialist – Editorial Secretary of the EBPB be changed to those of Senior Specialist – Editor of the EBPB, effective 1 April 2025. This change should be reported to the District Court in Białystok

as soon as possible, in accordance with Article 20(5) of the Press Law of 26 January 1984 (Journal of Laws 2018.1914, consolidated text)."

I never received a reply to this letter. Nevertheless I took an honest approach to Mr. Sobociński's employment in the editorial office and familiarized him with the rules governing the EBPB.

Prof. W. Olech sent numerous emails to Director Pabian, but received no reply. It was not until the spring of 2025 that Director Pabian asked Prof. W. Olech to convene a meeting of the Advisory Council. On 12 June 2025, a meeting of the Advisory Council of the EBPB took place at the BNP headquarters, during which Prof. Wanda Olech proposed expanding the Council's membership to include foreign experts specializing in European bison and reiterated her request for my appointment as editor of the EBPB as soon as possible, as the next issue of the EBPB – which I had prepared myself – was due to go to press shortly and should feature the name of the new editor.

Unfortunately, Director Pabian stated that she did not intend to appoint me as editor, as – in her words – 'I will set myself above others', and in her view the EBPB was to be run by a 'team'. I must admit that both these statements came as a great surprise, especially as the 'team' running the EBPB had always consisted of an editor and a secretary, while the claim that 'I will set myself above others' was a completely bizarre, and I do not know how such a remark could have been uttered by the director of a respected state institution toward any employee. In this way, Director Pabian has demonstrated her lack of manners and respect for her subordinates (or perhaps just for me?).

On June 20, 2025, I described the situation at the EBPB editorial office in a letter to Mr. Mikołaj Dorożala, Chief Nature Conservator, who is responsible for the national parks. As I received no reply, on 30 July I sent another letter to Mr. Dorożala, in which I emphasized that the EBPB exists thanks to breeders and for breeders, and that its proper management depends on their trust. I also stated that the affiliation of the EBPB editorial office with the BNP is, in a sense, an added value for the Park, which must be nurtured to ensure the continued high quality of the Register's management. I further informed Mr. Dorożala that, in my view, Director Pabian is doing everything she can to make me leave the BNP. In response to this letter, I received a curt reply from Ms. Patrycja Zasepa, Director of the Department of Nature Conservation, who assured me that the Park would ensure the proper management of the EBPB. I was not certain of this. Professor Wanda Olech also sent letters to the Ministry of Climate and Environment regarding the EBPB and the proposal for the EBFS to take over management of the Register, but most of them went unanswered; after a long wait, a single reply arrived from Mr. Dorożala.

In September 2025, the European bison conference organized by the European Bison Friends Society was held in Pszczyna, during which Prof. W. Olech outlined the situation regarding the EBPB. In the vote that followed, everyone except three BNP staff members voted in favor of my continuing to manage the Register as its editor. This decision met with strong opposition from the BNP representative, Dr. Katarzyna Daleszczyk, who stated that the Park's director had the right to appoint whomever she wished and that no one could dictate otherwise. Prof. Wanda Olech then asked those present whether the EBFS should continue to maintain the European bison pedigree registers, a proposal that was accepted by those present.

Upon returning from the conference, no new decisions were taken, 'EBPB 2024' was published under the editorship of Dr. Jan Raczyński, although he had in no way contributed to its preparation, yet he was still listed in the court register as the editor of EBPB. On 7 October, Prof. Wanda Olech sent a letter to Director Pabian, in which she wrote, among other things:

"The European Bison Pedigree Book can only be properly maintained by an experienced person whom the breeders know and trust. It is the breeders who should decide who is to manage the Register and to whom they entrust information about the European bison. The BNP is one of more than 300 European bison breeders worldwide, and you, as the director of this institution, cannot authoritatively dictate to the breeders how the Register is to be managed or who is to be appointed to the Editorial Office.

I therefore request that this issue be resolved urgently, by the end of October this year, by appointing Mrs. M. Bołbot as editor and expanding the EBPB Advisory Council.

Otherwise, in accordance with the breeders' wishes, from 1 January the Register will be maintained and published by the European Bison Friends Society."

There was no reply, and under these circumstances it became clear to me that I would not be able to reach an agreement with Director Pabian, so I decided to leave my position at the BNP with effect from February 1, 2026 – officially to retire, as I had reached the required age, but in reality I already had plans to collaborate with Prof. Wanda Olech and create a new Book. At this point an incident occurred that speaks volumes about Director Pabian, who, while I was still working at the BNP, appointed two new staff members: Dr. Renata Krzyściak-Kosińska as editor of the EBPB (replacing Dr. J. Raczyński) and Ms. Barbara Żukowska as editorial secretary, a role I was still holding. A letter with an attachment containing information about these changes was sent to all breeders and Advisory Council members. In response to this situation, Prof. W. Olech wrote to Director Pabian, in which she emphatically stressing that the EBPB Advisory Council had not been consulted on this decision, even though personnel changes within the editorial

office require such consultation; consequently, Prof. W. Olech resigned from the Advisory Council. At the same time, without prior notice, my access to my work email account was revoked. This marked the effective end of my work in the editorial office of the EBPB at the BNP.

February 2026 – to the present day

Prof. W. Olech kept her word and registered the publication ‘International European Bison Studbook’ with the Regional Court in Warsaw, listing me as editor and the European Bison Friends Society as publisher. The title ‘European Bison Pedigree Book’ is still attributed to Białowieża National Park as the publisher.

The International European Bison Studbook (IEBS) sets a new standard. It is not identical to the EBPB, but constitutes the European bison pedigree registers, initiated by Goerd von der Groeben in the 1920s, first published in the Studbook (Zuchtbuch) edited in 1932, and subsequently maintained by Dr. Erna Mohr, Dr. Jan Żabiński, Dr. Jan Raczyński, and several others, for more than 100 years. The two most important strengths of the IEBS are, first that it is published by the EBFS, a non-governmental organization composed primarily of European bison breeders, rather than by a state institution, which is often guided by political and party considerations and sympathies, as well as various arrangements, rather than by merit; and second that most breeders place their trust in the IEBS editorial team – specifically in me and Prof. Wanda Olech – and wish to cooperate exclusively with us. I shall immodestly admit that this is largely due to my 35 years of work with Dr. Jan Raczyński on the Book, which has become a current and reliable source of information on European bison. Breeders have placed their full trust in us, knowing that the information entrusted to us will be properly recorded and processed, in line with our knowledge and many years of experience. Good cooperation is, after all, the foundation for creating comprehensive, up-to-date pedigree registers, as evidenced by the first published ‘International European Bison Studbook 2025’.

However, before ‘IEBS 2025’ was published, Director Pabian made several attempts to discourage breeders from cooperating with us, and to undermine trust in Professor Wanda Olech and in me. Breeders received numerous emails claiming that I had retired and that EBFS was Prof. W. Olech’s ‘private organization’. The latter claim is a blatant lie, as EBFS is a non-governmental organization, not a private company; and while I have indeed retired from BNP due to my age, I have not disappeared – I am still alive and continue to work on IEBS. Moreover, a former employer’s disclosure to third parties of

an employee's retirement breaches the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation, a matter I have reported to the President of the Personal Data Protection Office. The current the EBPB editorial team at BNP has also informed breeders that it is the sole authorized recipient of data on European bison, which is simply not true, as every European bison breeder decides for themselves to whom, in what form and on what terms they entrust data about their animals and their breeding center. The editor responsible for the pedigree registers should be aware of this and should understand that it is not the breeders who exist for him and for the Register, but rather the Register and the editor who are there to serve the breeders.

Director Pabian also attempted to undermine the standing of Professor Wanda Olech by sending false and defamatory letters to the IUCN, the Rector of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW) and the State Council for Nature Conservation. In these letters, she presented the BNP as the only place where the Register could be maintained. Yet this is simply not true. The Park is neither the originator nor the initiator of the EBPB, nor is it the only place where the Register has been maintained; what matters above all are the people who have good contacts with European bison breeders and maintain the Register properly. All of Director Pabian's efforts came to nothing and merely brought the Białowieża National Park, on whose behalf she was acting, into disrepute. Only the State Council for Nature Conservation issued a statement appealing to European bison breeders to send information to the EBPB at the Białowieża National Park, which is strange, as this institution has no authority to comment on the studbook of any species, while the breeders themselves decided with whom they would cooperate.

Conclusion

Some may wonder why I have described the fortunes of the EBPB editorial office in such detail, given that I worked at BNP for almost 35 years. I did so because no one but me would have been able to describe them. It was I, together with Dr. Jan Raczyński, who experienced harassment from the directors of the BNP on three occasions. The fourth time, it concerned only me. I have seen nine directors come and go at the BNP, and I can say quite openly that good cooperation with the EBPB editorial office only occurred when the director did not interfere or get in the way. The crux of the matter is that hardly any BNP director knew anything about the purpose of the Book, how it is compiled, or for whom it is maintained. All the directors who were at odds with the editorial team were convinced of their own omnipotence and that the EBPB was meant to serve only their subjective aims; consequently,

an independent editorial team was seen as a nuisance. Such directors saw only editorial staff members who were ‘not on their side’, and did not bother at all with the proper management of the Register or good cooperation with breeders. They seemed to think that breeders were indifferent as to whom they worked with. However, time and again it became clear just how wrong they were, although they never admitted it and plowed on, filling editorial posts with incompetent individuals who lacked knowledge and experience, but humbly and unquestioningly carried out every order.

And the strangest thing is that, in the more than 100-year history of the Book, events similar to those that took place at BNP had already occurred twice before. The first instance concerned Erna Mohr, who, following Goerd von der Groeben’s resignation as editor, seemed to be the only suitable candidate for the post. However, at the International Society for European Bison Protection congress in June 1939, the new president, Lutz Heck, did not appoint her to the post, but instead chose Dr. Georg Steinbacher, a friend of his who was completely obedient to him in all matters. As a result, not a single further issue of the Book was published in Germany, while Erna Mohr remained the only person collecting data on European bison. The second conflict arose following the death of Dr. Jan Żabiński, when the then secretary, Dr. Jan Raczyński, seemed the natural successor to the post of editor. However, when he asked Professor Kazimierz Krysiak (who at the time was making decisions on many matters relating to European bison) what would happen next with the Register, he was told: ‘You’ll find out in due course.’ Dr. Raczyński had his pride, and he could only respond to such a remark in the one proper way – by tendering his resignation from his post on the EBPB editorial office. He still wanted to inform the breeders of his decision and thank them for their cooperation, but he was ordered to return his work typewriter immediately. Doesn’t the fact that my access to email has been cut off without warning remind you of that situation from 50 years ago? Professor Krysiak appointed himself editor of the EBPB, and the first issue edited by him was published four years later, after his death.

I have written a book on the history of the Book entitled ‘European Bison Pedigree Registers’, published by EBFS in 2023, while this text serves as a postscript to it, presenting my personal assessment of the facts and interpretation of events. And if a sequel is written in the future, it will concern only the International European Bison Studbook. My part in the history of the European Bison Pedigree Book at the Białowieża National Park is now complete.

Moja historia z Księgą Rodowodową Żubrów w Białowieskim Parku Narodowym

Streszczenie: Przez 35 lat redakcja Księgi Rodowodowej Żubrów (KRŻ) funkcjonowała w ramach Białowieskiego Parku Narodowego (BPN). Od początku pełniłam funkcję sekretarza, zaś redaktorem był dr Jan Raczyński, który 20 lat wcześniej był sekretarzem i współpracował z dr. Janem Żabińskim, ówczesnym redaktorem. Od dr. Raczyńskiego uczyłam się i zdobywałam doświadczenie we właściwym prowadzeniu KRŻ, zaś w późniejszych latach wspólnie ustalaliśmy wiele spraw i podejmowaliśmy decyzje. Blisko współpracowaliśmy także z prof. Zdzisławem Puckiem i prof. Wandą Olech – koordynatorami populacji żubrów. Prof. W. Olech wspierała także działalność redakcji systemowo (inicjując powołanie Rady Merytorycznej KRŻ) i finansowo (zakup sprzętu, druk i wysyłka kilku roczników KRŻ), a przez kilka miesięcy Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Żubrów (SMŻ) przejęło utrzymanie redakcji.

W tym czasie trzykrotnie doszło do konfliktu redakcji z trzema różnymi dyrektorami BPN, począwszy od dyr. Józefa Popiela, który odsunął mnie od pracy nad Księgą, zaś dr. Raczyńskiego chciał zastąpić inną osobą, poprzez dyr. Zdzisławę Szkirucia, który chciał zwolnić dr. Raczyńskiego, a ostatecznie obniżyć nam obojgu pensję, co zakończyło się sprawą w sądzie, aż do dyr. Michała Krzysiaka, którego decyzje doprowadziły do rezygnacji dr. Raczyńskiego ze stanowiska redaktora KRŻ. Czwarty konflikt z dyr. Olimpią Pabian przechodziłam już sama po śmierci dr. Raczyńskiego. Zakończył się moją rezygnacją z pracy w redakcji KRŻ i odejściem z BPN. Nie porzuciłam jednak prowadzenia rejestrów rodowodowych żubrów, gdyż rozpoczęłam współpracę w prof. Wandą Olech w ramach Stowarzyszenia Miłośników Żubrów i zostałam redaktorem nowej Międzynarodowej Księgi Stadnej Żubrów (MKSŻ) z SMŻ jako jej wydawcą. Rejestracja MKSŻ i współpraca z hodowcami nie spodobały się dyr. Pabian, która na wszelkie sposoby próbowała zdyskredytować nową Księgę oraz prof. Wandę Olech i mnie przed hodowcami i różnymi instytucjami. Większość hodowców zdecydowała się współpracować wyłącznie z naszą redakcją i "Międzynarodowa Księga Stadna Żubrów 2025" ukazała się drukiem w lipcu tego roku.

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