

The European Bison Friends Society is now 21 years old

Wanda Olech

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Abstract: In November 2025, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the European Bison Friends Society, hence the title above. This work presents the activities the European Bison Friends Society has undertaken over the years. Whether this is a great deal or a modest one, each reader will be able to judge. However, the European Bison Friends Society's most important achievement is connecting people. Various meetings serve this purpose – large ones like conferences, smaller ones like workshops, and even visits. The goal of this connection has always been to share experiences and knowledge in a friendly atmosphere. I hope we have achieved this most important goal and that our family of wisentologists continues to grow and become stronger. The most difficult moments are when we lose someone forever, but life goes on, and the work of fully protecting the European bison is not finished. I hope that the information about the European Bison Friends Society will fill its members with pride and encourage those who are undecided to join our ranks. On behalf of the Board, I thank you for the past and future years of our shared work.

Keywords: European Bison Friends Society, wisent protection, education

Formal and organizational issues

On August 29, 2005, the European Bison Friends Society was registered in the National Court Register in Warsaw. The statute was prepared by a team of 20 founding members: Wojciech Bielecki, Katarzyna Daleszczyk, Justyna Dybowska, Maria Dymnicka, Joanna Gruszczyńska, Beata Grzegorzówka, Mieczysław Hławiczka, Romuald Jurzykowski, Małgorzata Kasińska, Zbigniew Kasiński, Zuzanna Nowak, Wanda Olech, Ryszard Paszkiewicz, Kajetan Perzanowski, Jan Raczyński, Anna Spalona, Piotr Tetla, Wojciech Tęsiorowski, Maciej Tracz, and Magdalena Tracz.

On November 26, 2005, the first General Assembly of the European Bison Friends Society was held in Warsaw. At that time, the Society had 53 members. The Society's area of operations is Poland, but as stated in its statute, it may also operate outside Poland to achieve its goals. The Society's primary goal is to support nature conservation efforts, particularly for the European

bison (*Bison bonasus*). It pursues this goal by supporting species protection, scientific research, documentation, publishing, organizing meetings, and acting as a party in administrative proceedings.

Subsequent General Membership Assemblies were usually held on the eve of the conference in 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2021, and 2024. At each meeting, the Board and Audit Committee presented reports, members voted on their adoption and on the discharge of the governing bodies, after which the five-member Board and three-member Audit Committee were elected for the following years. The lists of the names of the members of the Society’s governing bodies is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Composition of the Board and Audit Committee of the European Bison Friends Society

	2005	2008	2011	2014	2017	2021	2024
Board	Wanda Olech						
	Kajetan Perzanowski						
	Piotr Tetla				Wojciech Bielecki		
	Magda Malkiewicz	Zuzanna Nowak		Jerzy Dackiewicz	Maria Mellin		
	Zbigniew Krasiński	Katarzyna Daleszczyk	Aleksander Bołbot	Krystyna Cielniak			Daniel Klich
Audit Committee	Mieczysław Hławiczka				Małgorzata Bołbot		
	Ryszard Paszkiewicz		Katarzyna Mierzwa	Zbigniew Kusza			
	Katarzyna Daleszczyk	Barbara Osińska		Katarzyna Olbrych			

During the first General Assembly of Members, a temporary Society logo was selected by vote from several submitted designs. The Board was also authorized to hold a competition for the EBFS logo. The competition was held but, unfortunately, it did not succeed, and as a result the temporary logo became the permanent one. The logo was designed by Ms. Beata Grzegrzółka and is now a recognized symbol of the Society.



In 2006, a cooperation agreement was signed with the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW). Under the agreement, EBFS has free use of room no. 42 in the building at 8 Ciszewskiego Street. This made SGGW our first sponsor.

A domain was purchased and the Society website was created: www.smz.waw.pl. The second domain used is www.wisent.org.



The organizing committee of conference in Czarna (2013). From left: Marlena Wojciechowska, Zuza Nowak, Maria Sobczuk, Wanda Olech, Krystyna Cielniak, Magdalena Łopieńska, Agnieszka Suchecka, Magdalena Matuszewska, Magda Trzeciak

The Society relies heavily on volunteers, but it cannot function without people working under contracts of mandate or employment. The people who have worked in the Society's office at various times during its activity are: Magda Malkiewicz, Izabela Bukowczyk, Ludmiła Macheta, Martyna Sieklucka, Magdalena Matuszewska, Magda Trzeciak, Karolina Zdunek, Krzysztof Głowacz, Elżbieta Strucka, Oliwia Janik, Daniel Klich, Barbara Kołodko, and Jolanta Kaczmarska.

Educational activities

Organizing study visits and training

The Society established cooperation with domestic and international centers specializing in European bison. Study visits and training sessions were organized for many participants. The first group came from Eriksberg in Sweden, followed by groups from the United States, Russia, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Romania, Denmark, and Switzerland.



The visit from Eriksberg (Sweden) to Białowieża Forest. From right side: Jan Raczyński, Tommy Svensson, Anna Spalona

These visits were not one-way. The Society organized study visits to learn about the living conditions of European bison and the methods used in existing breeding enclosures, to consult on plans for new enclosures, and to explore reintroduction sites. Polish specialists participated in habitat assessments, breeding planning, and infrastructure construction. Seminars and workshops were held during these visits to share Polish experience in European bison conservation and breeding. The number of these meetings has been enormous, and the range of issues discussed and experiences presented has been very broad.

European Bison Conservation Center (EBCC)

The idea of creating a group of committed individuals from many countries arose in response to the Action Plan's call for cooperation among individuals from different countries to achieve more effective species conservation. Nearly 20 people from more than a dozen countries attended the first meeting. We determined that the EBCC would be a long-term project of the Society, providing organizational support and, where possible, funding. The primary

task of the EBCC is to share information among members. It is worth noting that the Pedigree Book (and Studbook) editors also participated in the work of the EBCC, and thanks to this collaboration, information on the status of European bison in captivity has been up to date for several years.



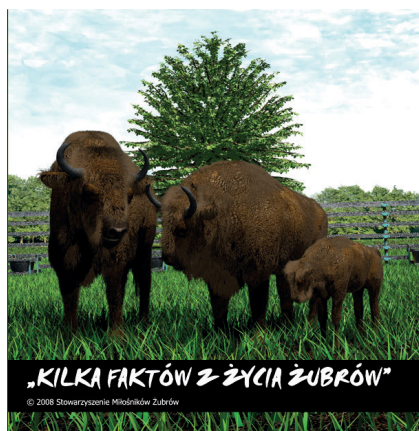
First meeting of EBCC Board. From left: Fernando Moran, Tommy Svensson, Thomas Hennig, Fred Baerselman, Patrice Longour, ?, Sebastian Catanoiu, Razvan Deju, Jan Raczyński, Kajetan Perzanowski

Realized projects

Educational DVD A few facts from the life of the European bison” (2007)

A project was developed and production of an educational DVD for middle school students began. The first part presents the species' history as an animated film, starting in the 10th century, when European bison inhabited the forests of Europe in large numbers, and continuing to the present day, when the bison's situation, despite improvements, still requires significant action. The next part shows European bison in an enclosure, allowing students to

learn about sexual dimorphism in the species and presenting short films illustrating herd structure. The following section features visits with “experts.” A veterinarian, biologist, ecologist, and geographer explain the species’ anatomy, morphology, and behavior, introduce students to issues of restitution, reintroduction, and active conservation, and present the current distribution of European bison in Poland and worldwide. The next part features a sports competition in which a boy tests his skills in various events against a European bison. The presentation concludes with a quiz with simple questions covering the topics discussed throughout the program. An audio track was added, and some text was read by a narrator to enhance the audiovisual experience. Funding: Grant from Bank PEKAO S.A.



Expert opinion for the Ministry of the Environment (2007–2008)

The European Bison Friends Society won a tender to prepare an expert opinion for the Ministry of the Environment titled *Development of Detailed Principles for the Conduct of Restitution Breeding, Necessary for the Implementation of the European Bison Conservation Strategy in Poland*. Thirteen members of the Society participated in its preparation. The primary result was the manual *European Bison Breeding: A Guide to Keeping European Bison in Captivity*. This book, for the first time, systematically presents knowledge on the basic principles of caring for European bison kept in captivity. Because of its extensive practical information, the guide is useful for both experienced and novice breeders. An electronic version of the book in PDF format is available on the Society’s website.

As part of the expert opinion, studies were prepared on the following topics:

- Principles for establishing and operating private European bison enclosures. The procedures for obtaining breeding permits were discussed, along with requirements for staff handling European bison, the scope of their training, and possible additional training for veterinarians caring for the herd.
- Principles for transferring European bison to breeding centers in Poland and abroad, including the type and standard of veterinary examinations and methods of transport. Veterinary regulations regarding transport, health certificates, and necessary tests were discussed. A model agreement (sharing) between two breeders was proposed.
- Principles for the operation of the European Bison Gene Bank were proposed, including the institutional and organizational foundations for establishing the Bank. A sample management structure was divided into supervision, a scientific council, and a working group.
- The effectiveness of various methods for reducing damage in agriculture and forestry was identified and compared. Including European bison in agri-environmental programs would reduce damage to fields in areas where this species is present. Options for enriching the natural food supply, supplementary feeding, fencing, and deterrence were discussed.
- Principles for culling and trade in trophies, hides, and meat were outlined. The selection of animals and methods for culling were discussed. Following legal culling, the issue of trade in trophies and European bison meat requires clarification of the legal situation. Proposals were made to apply game animal regulations to the use of meat or hides from legally slaughtered bison.
- Principles for protecting genetic variability were discussed, including a coordinated captive breeding program, which requires cooperation and ongoing information exchange. These tasks involve the European Bison Pedigree Book



(also the International European Bison Studbook from 2025), the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW), and the European Bison Conservation Center (EBCC).

The guide was very useful and widely used, not only in Poland. Unfortunately, the studies on the topics discussed in the expert report have merely diversified the Ministry's shelves. To date, issues related to the use of meat or culling principles have not been implemented.

Office equipment grant (2007)

We received support from the Taiwan Forestry Bureau through a targeted grant to equip the Society's office with the necessary computer hardware and software.

Support for the development of the Advisory Center (2008)

In February 2008, the Large Herbivore Foundation provided a targeted grant for the development of the Advisory Center. This support made it possible to organize an EBCC meeting in Warsaw and a field session in the Borecka Forest.

Grant for the protection of European bison in the Eastern Carpathians (2008–2012)

In November 2006, Wanda Olech was invited to present a paper on the European bison at the annual conference of the American Bison Society. At that time, there were approximately 3,000 European bison in Europe, and maintaining population growth was an important goal. Ted Turner attended the conference and, after her presentation, proposed bringing hundreds of European bison to his properties in the United States, thereby saving the species. After hearing Wanda Olech's firm objection, in which she explained that the European bison in States is an alien species and that work needed to be carried out in Europe, he decided to financially support the Society's activities.

In 2007, these plans were discussed during a visit to Warsaw by Peter Gogan and James Derr, and at the end of 2007, an agreement was signed with the Wildlife Conservation Society for a five-year grant that specified three tasks:

- development of the Advisory Center (EBCC);
- transport of European bison of the Lowland–Caucasus line to protect the genetic variability of the metapopulation in the Eastern Carpathians;
- sampling, creation of a gene bank, and DNA analysis.



The most important task was the transport of European bison for reintroduction or enrichment of free-ranging herds in Romania, Ukraine, and the Polish Bieszczady Mountains. During this period, over 80 European bison arrived, primarily from German breeding centers, as well as from Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and France. Transport of a significant portion of these animals was financed by the grant. Of particular importance was the genetic enrichment of the Polish population in the Bieszczady Mountains, where in the 1960s and 1970s individuals were released that were descendants of the only male of this line, bull 163 Borusse, imported to Poland in 1929. As part of the enrichment effort, nearly 40 European bison arrived in the Bieszczady Mountains.

Preparation of a European Bison conservation report for the Białowieża National Park conservation plan (2011)

The Society submitted a proposal to prepare a European bison conservation report for the Białowieża National Park conservation plan. A team consisting of prof. Andrzej Bereszyński, dr. Wojciech Bielecki, dr. Zbigniew Kasiński, dr. Wanda Olech, and prof. Kajetan Perzanowski prepared a species report covering the Natura 2000 site Białowieża Forest, as European bison conservation cannot be limited to the BNP area. Detailed analyses were conducted,



The releasing animals from wooden boxes in Bieszczady Mtns., Poland

including the forest's feeding capacity, the presence of other ungulates, the scope and methods of active conservation, and the potential level of human-wildlife conflict. It was determined that the optimal number of European bison in the area should be 400 (up to 450). The animals themselves demonstrated that the analysis results were accurate, as after exceeding this population size, the European bison began to leave the Natura 2000 area, first during winter and then permanently. The study was financed by Białowieża National Park.

Assessment of potential reintroduction sites (2011–2012)

In September 2011, Maciej Januszczak, a representative of the Society, conducted an expert analysis of habitats proposed for European bison reintroduction in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria. The visit was commissioned by ARK Nature (Stichting Ark). Only one of the three analyzed sites (the Mursalica region) could be considered for European bison release. A year later, Daniel Klich, a representative of the European Bison Friends Society, assessed two protected areas during a study visit: Tsejski Zakaznik and Turmonski Zakaznik in North Ossetia–Alania. These areas have habitat

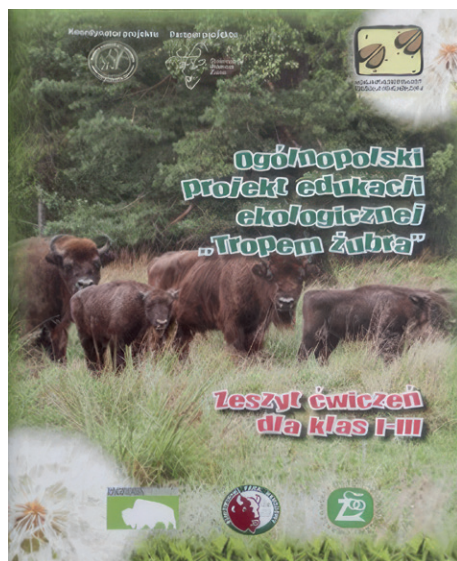
conditions similar to the Bieszczady Mountains and were assessed as potential sites for European bison reintroduction. The analysis was funded by WWF Germany. The results were published in the European Bison Conservation Newsletter.

Project “Ex situ conservation of the European bison *Bison bonasus* in Poland” (2012–2015)

The Society participated as a partner in a project coordinated by the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW). As part of the project, the Society, in collaboration with the Institute of Applied Ecology, built a European bison enclosure in Sycowice. A series of workshops were held in the area surrounding the new enclosure, with details described in publications. European bison from the Pszczyna line, with names beginning with the letters PL, were brought to the enclosure. This established a third center dedicated to conserving the genetic subline originating from the founders PLANTA and PLEBEJER. Funding was provided by European Funds for Infrastructure and Environment.

Project “On the trail of the European bison” (2011–2014)

The project was coordinated by the Agency for Development and Promotion of the Pszczyna Region. The European Bison Friends Society organized a series of educational workshops for preschoolers and primary school students, held in Białowieża National Park and at the Warsaw Zoo. Interactive activities were conducted for 30 groups in Warsaw (1,119 children) and 45 groups (1,793 children) in Białowieża. The European Bison Friends Society prepared educational materials – notebooks with coloring pages, quizzes, and puzzles – adapted for three different age groups: preschoolers and primary school students in grades 1–3 and 4–6. The multimedia CD “A Few Facts About the Life of a European Bison” was also updated, and the activities were based on it. The disc contains information about the history of the



European bison's extermination and reintroduction to its natural habitat, the species' biology, its habitat, and its anatomy. In addition to classroom activities using the disc and notebooks, the workshop also included a field session involving direct observation of the animals in a zoo or exhibition enclosure, depending on the workshop location. Funding was provided by the Voivodeship Fund for Environmental Protection in Katowice.

Project "Selected aspects of wildlife rehabilitation" (2012)

The Warsaw Municipal Zoo, in collaboration with "Ptasi Azył" – a bird rehabilitation center – the Albatros Foundation, and the Panda Foundation, prepared a certified training course for employees and managers of rehabilitation centers and other facilities providing veterinary care to protected and game species. During the two-day training, instructors from the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC), an organization with extensive experience in educating staff at such centers in the USA and many other countries, conducted classes for 70 participants. Lectures were delivered in English with simultaneous translation. The second day included practical sessions directly related to animal care and bandaging. Participants also received a handbook for rehabilitation center managers, translated from English and unique in Poland. The training concluded with an exam that, upon successful completion, entitled participants to receive a certificate. The main goal of the project was to enhance the competence of employees and managers of rehabilitation centers that provide care for protected and game species. Funding was provided by the Panda Foundation at the Warsaw Zoo.

Project "In situ protection of the European bison – southern part" (2011–2014)

As part of the project coordinated by the Regional Directorate of State Forests in Krosno, the Society carried out two tasks. One involved monitoring in three areas: genetic, health, and parasitological. All dead European bison underwent necropsy, and blood was collected from animals immobilized for collaring or transport. The extensive database of biological material enabled cross-sectional serological, microbiological, and histopathological studies. These samples, along with hairs with follicles collected in winter, were used to assess the genetic variability of the herds. The second task was to conduct workshops on the biology, history, and conservation of the European bison. Funding was provided by European Funds for Infrastructure and Environment.

Participation in the assessment of habitat conditions and potential reintroduction sites in Germany (2013–2014)

Together with WWF Germany and Humboldt University of Berlin, a detailed analysis of potential European bison reintroduction sites in Germany was conducted. Following a field visit and extensive discussions, a report was prepared. Unfortunately, it was not implemented because of the poor execution of the European bison reintroduction in the Rothaar Mountains. Funding was provided by Humboldt University in Berlin.

Projects for protection of West Pomeranian herds

- *In situ conservation of West Pomeranian European bison (2011–2014)*
- *Diversification and development of the European bison population in Northwestern Poland (2015–2018) – LIFE Project*
- *Expansion of the European bison service base (2020–2023)*

As part of projects coordinated by the West Pomeranian Nature Society, the European Bison Friends Society carried out two tasks. The first involved parasitological, genetic, and health monitoring, and the second involved organizing a series of open workshops. Annual reports presenting monitoring results were prepared, and some of the findings were published in scientific papers.

A manual titled *Supervision of free-ranging European bison herds – A Guide* was prepared as part of the POIiŚ project. The guide includes chapters on monitoring, cooperation with local communities, methods of minimizing damage, and ways of raising funds for conservation.

The project “On biodiversity for the future – or how to teach that a roe deer is not a red deer’s wife” (2014–2016)

The project aimed to increase public awareness of biodiversity and educate students in this area, in relation to climate change and the economic value of ecosystems. As part of the project, teaching materials were developed: two multimedia CDs and two accompanying guidebooks, supplemented with sample lesson plans, field trip scenarios, and student worksheets. One set was intended for teachers and students in grades 4–6 of primary school (level II), and the other for teachers and students in middle and high schools (levels III and IV). In 2015, 32 methodological workshops were held across the country for teachers



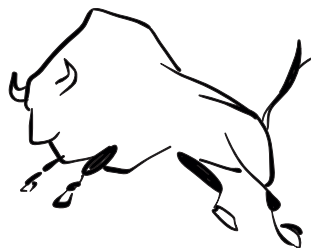
implementing the curriculum at levels II, III, and IV of education, as well as for members of the Polish Hunting Association who volunteer to conduct outdoor nature lessons with students. The teaching materials were made available free of charge to workshop participants and members of non-governmental organizations involved in environmental education. Funding was provided by the EEA Grants (Norwegian Grants).



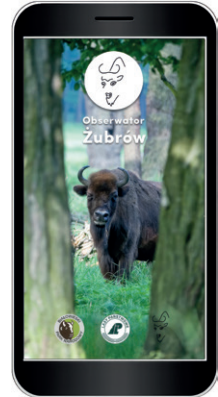
Research project “Assessment of the attitudes and knowledge of local communities towards free-roaming European bison” (2017–2020)

The research project included the following elements:

- Selecting a logo to designate the Comprehensive European Bison Protection Project by the State Forests. It is now a well-recognized symbol of European bison protection.
- Organizing a total of 14 workshops (including three online), during which 83 presentations were delivered to 560 attendees. Two meetings were for veterinarians, and one was devoted to education about the European bison.



- Conducting surveys to assess (1) the level of knowledge about the European bison; (2) the degree of acceptance of the European bison in the immediate vicinity; and (3) the quality and scope of the workshops.
- Developing a free “European Bison Observer” smart-phone application (Android) to support European bison inventory and track migrating individuals.
- Maintaining a fan page for the European Bison Friends Society (EBFS) on Facebook, providing fast and easy access to news. The most popular posts reach 50,000 people.
- Preparing a special supplement about the European bison for the quarterly “Echa Leśne,” in cooperation with the State Forests Information Center. Financed by the Forest Fund.



***Project LIFE22-NAT-NL – “LIFE with Bison”
(2024–2025)***

Within this project coordinated by WWF Romania, EBFS provided consultancy services to produce a report containing recommendations for the content of a National Strategy and Action Plan in Romania on the following topics:

- General overview of the European legal and policy framework regarding European bison;
- General overview of national strategies and action plans in countries where European bison has been reintroduced, particularly in Poland;
- Recommendations for the Romanian National Strategy and Action Plan, and recommendations for potential policy intervention based on Polish experience.

The analyses were based on available scientific studies. The result was *The report on the reintroduction of European bison – an analysis of the legislative frameworks, reintroduction strategies and management experiences*. In addition, experts from EBCC took an active part in meetings and workshops organized by WWF Romania.

Project “What to buy to protect biodiversity – supporting education for pro-environmental consumer attitudes” (2023–2025)

The project aimed to raise public awareness of the impact of everyday consumer choices on biodiversity, animal welfare, and climate change, and to foster pro-environmental attitudes in daily life.

The project developed e-learning materials, a textbook (in both e-book and print formats), and lesson plans aligned with the textbook’s content for use in classes with individuals with special needs. The textbook’s topics focus on biodiversity conservation and everyday products. Chapters on meat, cold cuts, eggs, fish, fruit, vegetables, grains, clothing, wood, and feathers present the importance of the product, how to assess quality, and describe processing.



Training sessions were conducted for teachers from integrated schools, nature educators, representatives of non-governmental organizations, employees of public libraries and cultural centers, and included a series of workshops on the project and the individual products described in the textbook. The workshops presented ways to improve access to education for people with special needs. All materials are available on the educational portal, and a concluding conference was held at the end of the project, which generated considerable interest. Funding came from the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management.



Preparation of a European bison conservation plan for the Natura 2000 Białowieska Forest site (2023–2024)

The Society submitted a proposal to develop a European bison conservation plan. A team composed of dr. Wojciech Bielecki, dr. Daniel Klich, prof. Wanda Olech, prof. Kajetan Perzanowski, and dr. Maria Sobczuk prepared a conservation plan for the European bison at the Natura 2000 Białowieska Forest site. Detailed analyses were conducted, including the forest's feeding capacity, the presence of other ungulates, the scope and methods of active conservation measures, and the potential level of human–bison conflict. It was confirmed that the optimal number of European bison in the area should be 400 to 450 individuals. It was noted that the minimum population size for the winter census within the forest should be 300 individuals. The study was financed by the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in Białystok.

Handbook “Practical aspects of European bison population management” (2025)

Commissioned by the State Forests, a team consisting of Wanda Olech, Wojciech Bielecki, Daniel Klich, Maria Sobczuk, and Krzysztof Żoch prepared a handbook presenting best practices in the protection and breeding of European bison. The handbook covers a wide range of topics, including the systematics and history of the species, its biology, and ecology. Aspects related to health, captivity, and monitoring of free-ranging herds are discussed. Legal issues, transport organization, and the importance of the European bison to humans are also addressed. Funding came from the Forest Fund.



Cooperation with WWF Germany and Berlin Zoo

In May 2026, a letter of intent was signed in Berlin between Berlin Zoo, WWF Germany, and EBFS concerning cooperation in the development of European bison populations in the Caucasus region. In May and June, Daniel Klich conducted multi-day study visits to Azerbaijan and Georgia. A conference commemorating the centenary of the extinction of the natural population of

the Caucasian European bison is also planned, along with a meeting of the SSC Bison Specialist Group. Initial information will be presented at the 2026 conference.

Publishing the International European Bison Studbook (2026)

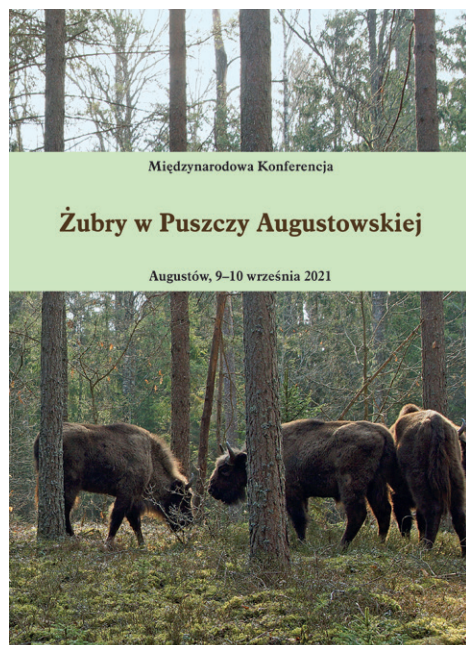
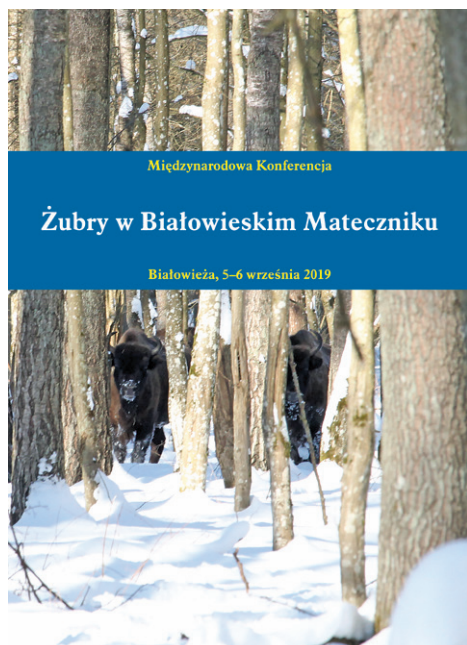
Beginning in 2026, the Society registered a new publication, International European Bison Studbook, and collected data from breeders. The 2025 year-book was released in July 2026. The logo was designed by Ewa Szuszkiewicz. The IEBS's content is much broader than that of the Pedigree Book published by Białowieża National Park. The editorial team successfully collected data from all but one breeder worldwide.

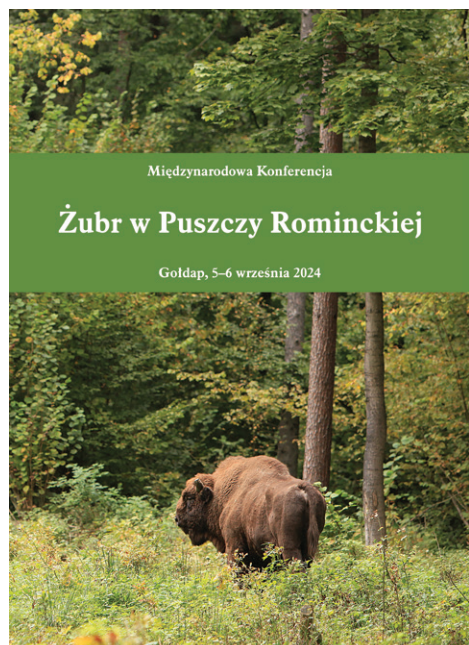
Conferences

In October 2006, the European Bison Friends Society co-organized an international scientific conference for the first time, in cooperation with the Kobiór Forest District. Previous conferences (2003–2005) were organized by the Department of Animal Genetics and Breeding of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW)—in 2003 independently, a year later jointly with the Białowieża National Park, and in 2005 with the West Pomeranian Nature Society. All conferences were international in scope, and for over a decade papers have been simultaneously translated into English.

List of conferences organized:

- *Importance of Research for Wisent Protection in Poland*, Warsaw, June 13, 2003 – SGGW;
- *Breeding and Protection of Wisent in Poland*, Białowieża, June 3–4, 2004 – Białowieża National Park and SGGW;
- *Protection of the West Pomeranian European Bison*, Ińsko, September 15–16, 2005 – West Pomeranian Nature Society and Warsaw University of Life Sciences;
- *Prospects for the Development of the European Bison*, Pszczyna, October 14–15, 2006 – jointly with the Kobiór Forest District;
- *The Role of Ex Situ Conservation in Restitution of European Bison*, Gołuchów, October 2–3, 2007 – jointly with the Forest Culture Center in Gołuchów;
- *The European Bison in the Natura 2000 Network*, Cisna, September 15–16, 2008 – jointly with the Cisna Forest District;
- *80 Years of Wisent Restitution in Białowieska Forest*, Białowieża, September 28–29, 2009 – jointly with the Białowieża National Park;





- *The Wisent in Royal Forest*, Niepołomice, September 8–9, 2010 – jointly with the Niepołomice Forest District;
- *Wisents, Forests, Lakes*, Malinówka, September 22–23, 2011 – jointly with the Borki Forest District;
- *Wisent in Polish Tradition*, Kiermsy, September 6–7, 2012 – jointly with the Dworek nad Łąkami in Kiermsy;
- *Wisent in Carpathians*, Czarna, September 5–6, 2013 – jointly with the Stuposiany Forest District and the Lutowska Forest District;
- *Wisent in the Mirosławiec Bioregion*, Wałcz, September 4–5, 2014 – jointly with the West Pomeranian Nature Society;
- *Wisent in the Forests of Pszczyna – 150 Years of Breeding*, Pszczyna, September 10–11, 2015 – in collaboration with the Kobiór Forest District;
- *Wisent in the Land of Dinosaurs*, Bałtów, September 8–9, 2016 – in collaboration with the Delta Foundation;
- *Wisent in Culture and Art*, Gołuchów, September 13–14, 2017 – in collaboration with the Forest Culture Center in Gołuchów;
- *Wisent in the San Valley*, Muczne, September 5–6, 2018 – in collaboration with the Stuposiany Forest District;
- *Wisent in the Białowieża Backwoods*, Białowieża, September 5–6, 2019 – in collaboration with the Białowieża National Park;

- *Wisent in the Augustów Forest*, Augustów, September 8–9, 2021 – in collaboration with the Augustów Forest District;
- *Wisent Return to Janowskie Forest*, Janów Lubelski, September 8–9, 2022 – jointly with the Janów Lubelski Forest District;
- *100 Years of Wisent Restitution*, Borek, September 6–8, 2023 – jointly with the Niepołomice Forest District;
- *Wisent in the Romincka Forest*, Gołdap, September 5–6, 2024 – jointly with the Gołdap Forest District;
- *Wisent in Pszczyna Land – 160 Years*, Pszczyna, September 11–12, 2025 – jointly with the Kobiór Forest District and the Pszczyna Region Promotion and Development Agency;
- *Wisent in the Zawkrze Land*, Waplewo, September 10–11, 2026 – jointly with the Dwukoły Forest District.

During these twenty-three conferences, 981 papers were presented and reports were published in abstract form.

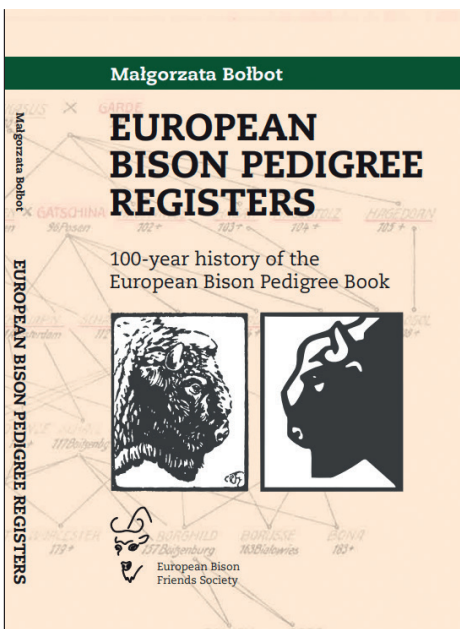
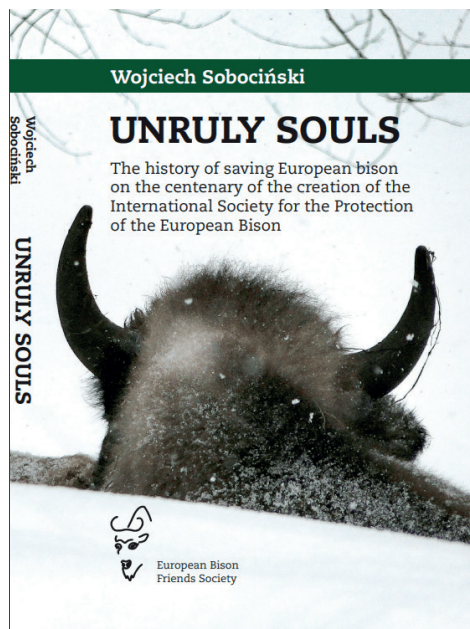
Publications

Over many years of the Society's activity, a total of 12–13 programs, strategies, and conservation plans have been developed, primarily covering the European bison population in Poland, although the methodological aspects and principles related to the species' protection are general in nature. Several other materials have also been published, including CDs, textbooks, and other educational resources.

Programs and Strategies Development

- Olech W., Bielecki W., Bołbot A., Bukowczyk I., Dackiewicz J., Dymnicka M., Hławiczka M., Krasiński Z., Nowak Z., Perzanowski K., Raczyński J., Tęsiński W., Wyrobek K., 2008. European bison breeding: a guide to keeping them in captivity. European Bison Friends Society. Warsaw, pp. 1–100.
- Krasiński Z.A., Olech W., Perzanowski K., Bielecki W., Bereszyński A., 2010. Białowieża National Park fauna conservation plan: European bison. Białowieża National Park, pp. 1–70.
- Perzanowski K., Olech W., Bozik K., Kolenda B., Sienkiewicz M., Sieradzki W.P., 2012. European bison conservation strategy in the Knyszyńska Forest within the State Forests. Żednia Forest District, pp. 1–26.
- Perzanowski K., Bielecki W., Olech W., 2014. Supervision of free-ranging European bison herds: guide. European Bison Friends Society, Warsaw, pp. 1–41.

- Olech W., Perzanowski K., 2014. Handbook of best practices for European bison conservation. Environmental Project Coordination Center, Warsaw, pp. 1–98.
- Perzanowski K., Olech W., 2014. Program for the protection, breeding, monitoring, and research of the Bieszczady population of the European bison (*Bison bonasus* Linnaeus, 1758) for 2015–2025. Regional Directorate of State Forests Krosno, pp. 1–79.
- Kuemmerle T., Perzanowski K., Olech W., 2015. Potential European bison (*Bison bonasus*) habitat in Germany. European Bison Friends Association, Humboldt University Berlin, WWF Germany, pp. 1–60.
- Olech W., Mellin M., Wyrobek K., 2008. European bison (*Bison bonasus*) in the Borecka Forest: history, current status, and population management program. Borki Forest District, Kruklanki, pp. 1–23.
- Olech W., Perzanowski K., 2020. European bison conservation and management strategy in the Augustowska Forest. Augustów Forest District, pp. 1–64.
- Olech W., Perzanowski K. (eds.), 2022. European bison (*Bison bonasus*) strategic species status review 2020. IUCN SSC Bison Specialist Group and European Bison Conservation Center, pp. 1–148.
- Bielecki W., Klich D., Perzanowski K., Sobczuk M., 2024. European bison operational report for the N2000 area conservation plan. Regional Directorate of Nature Protection in Białystok, pp. 1–40



Other Publications and Materials

- Educational CD “A Few Words from the Life of a European Bison,” 2006, European Bison Conservation Center.
- Olech W., Matuszewska M., Strucka E., 2014. European bison calendar book. European Bison Friends Society, pp 1-80
- Exhibition album “Ladies and Gentlemen, Here’s a European Bison,” 2015, Silesian Botanical Garden, pp. 40.
- Łopieńska M., Wilemska J., Zahorodna J., 2015. About biodiversity for the future – or how to teach that a roe deer is not a red deer’s wife. Upper secondary level. Warsaw, pp. 1–64, with CD and scenarios for the textbook.
- Klimaszewski K., Balcerak M., Marszał D., 2015. About biodiversity for the future – or how to teach that a roe deer is not a deer’s wife. Elementary level. Warsaw, pp. 1–56, with CD and scenarios for the textbook.
- Development of a collapsible European bison model in the form of a wooden puzzle (skeleton and internal organs).
- Bołbot M., 2023. European bison registers. European Bison Friends Society, pp: 1–100
- Sobociński W., 2023. Unruly horns. European Bison Friends Society, pp: 1–219
- Collective work, 2024. What to buy to protect biodiversity. Warsaw, pp. 1–200.
- Olech W., Bielecki W., Klich D., Sobczuk M., Żoch K., 2025. Practical aspects of managing European bison populations. Forest Nature Guide series.

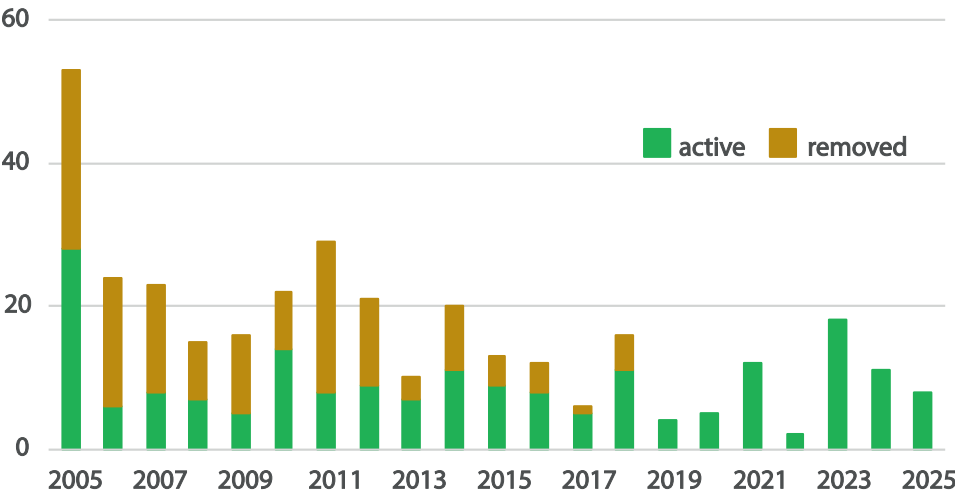
European Bison Conservation Newsletter – a scientific and popular-science journal, published annually since 2008. To date, 218 articles have been published, including 141 in English and 77 in Polish.



Society Members

Number of Members

A total of 340 membership declarations have been submitted, with 196 currently active members, including 35 foreign members and 9 supporting members. The main reason for removal from the membership list is non-payment of dues for several years. The number of declarations submitted each year, with active and removed members indicated in color, is presented on Figure below.



Honorary Membership

In accordance with the Society’s Statutes, the General Assembly of Members, upon a motion by the Board, may grant the title of honorary member. The honoree receives a certificate and a gold pin and is exempt from paying dues. The individuals who have been awarded the title of honorary member are listed below.

- 2008 Janusz Gill
- 2011 Tadeusz Natkański
Jan Raczyński
- 2014 Mieczysław Hławiczka
Jerzy Kita
Małgorzata Krasińska
Zbigniew Krasiński
- 2017 Piotr Tetla

2021	Jerzy Dackiewicz Magdalena Matuszewska
2024	Kajetan Perzanowski

“Wisent Lover” Title

Since 2010, the Society’s Board has recognized individuals or institutions with the “Wisent Lover” title, along with a statuette. The list of honorees is presented below. Initially, several individuals were recognized, but starting in 2021, based on a resolution of the Board, one person has been recognized annually. The award ceremony takes place during the conference (honored institutions are shown in italics).

2010	Royal Castle in Niepołomice Ryszard Paszkiewicz Roman Ptak Marian Pigan Stanisław Sennik Tommy Svensson
2011	Małgorzata and Zbigniew Kasińscy Viola and Lothar Härtelt Maria Mellin Krzysztof Wyrobek Ryszard Ziemblicki
2012	Jerzy Dackiewicz Rainer Glunz Mieczysław Hławiczka
2013	Kajetan Perzanowski Joachim Menzel Forest Promotional Complex Bieszczadzkie Forests Regional Directorate of State Forests in Krosno
2014	Fred Zentner Magda and Maciej Tracz Sylvia Jurzyk-Nordiów Piotr Świdorski Piotr Pawlik
2015	Fernando Moran Wojciech Bielecki European Bison Breeding and Forest Education Center Jankowice The Wisent Enclosure of the Agency for Restructuring and Promotion of the Pszczyna Region

2016	Małgorzata Bołbot Halina Kisiel – „Delta” Society Thomas Hennig
2017	Magdalena Matuszewska Forest Culture Center in Gołuchów Kryspin Kuberka
2018	Grażyna Zagrobelna Stanisław Kaczor
2019	Białowieża National Park Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok Regional Directorate of Environment Protection in Białystok Krzysztof Oniszcuk
2021	Barbara Gołowacz
2022	Małgorzata Czyżewska
2023	Jan Mazur
2024	Krzysztof Żoch
2025	Krzysztof Anusz
2026	



Special Recognition

During the 2025 conference in Pszczyna, a special recognition was awarded to Mieczysław Hławiczka. A diploma for this honorary distinction was prepared, reproduced below in the original and translation.



Honor is the reward of virtue

The members of the European Bison Friends Society, the participants of the International Scientific Conference “Wisent in Pszczyna Land – 160 years”, gathered here in Pszczyna, hereby declare on behalf of the Board of the Society that Mr. Mieczysław Hławiczka, veterinarian, deserves an honor that is not given to everyone.

Almost all his life, from the childhood to the present day, he has served the European bison (*Bison bonasus*) with his knowledge, experience and daily work. He is involved both professionally and, thanks to his innate sensitivity, in the artistic field, creating static and moving images. He does not keep his works for himself, but dedicates them to public benefit. He protects and treats the European bison and gives good advice to other veterinarians, foresters and other professionals involved in the restitution of this species.

We hereby award Mr. Mieczysław Hławiczka the honorary title of honorary doctor in the field of bisonology, along with a commemorative ribbon of honor.

Sponsors

Many institutions have provided financial or material support to the Society. These include:

Warsaw University of Life Sciences



Wildlife Conservation Society



Bank PeKaO SA



Ecotone



State Forests, many Forest Districts, some regional and General Directorate of State Forests



Large Herbivore Foundation



Foundation Carpathia



Canadian Wildlife Federation



Wrocław Zoological Garden



Foundation DODO



We all deserve a huge thank you. We also thank all the people who helped us by giving us what is most valuable – their commitment

Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Żubrów ma 21 lat

Streszczenie: W listopadzie 2025 roku obchodziliśmy dwudziestolecie Stowarzyszenia Miłośników Żubrów, stąd tytuł powyżej. W niniejszej pracy przedstawione są działania jakie SMŻ podejmowało przez te lata. Czy to dużo, czy mało każdy z czytelników oceni. Ale najważniejszym dokonaniem SMŻ jest łączenie ludzi ze sobą. Służą temu różne spotkania, duże jak konferencje, mniejsze jak warsztaty, czy odwiedzanie się nawzajem. Celem tego łączenia zawsze była potrzeba dzielenia się doświadczeniami i wiedzą w życzliwej atmosferze. Mam nadzieję że udało się to najważniejsze zadanie spełnić i nasza rodzina żubrologów cały czas rozwija się i rośnie w siłę. Najtrudniej jest gdy tracimy kogoś na zawsze, ale życie płynie dalej a dzieło pełnej ochrony żubra nie jest skończone. Mam nadzieję, że informacje o SMŻ napęlnią dumą członków, a niezdecydowanych zachęcą, aby wstąpić w nasze szeregi. Dziękuję w imieniu Zarządu za minione i przyszłe lata wspólnej pracy.
