

SUMMARY

Grzyl A., Woziwoda B. Monumental oaks in the "Uroczyisko Bażantarnia" reserve near Skierniewice (Central Poland).

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The "Uroczyisko Bażantarnia" reserve is a small (45.03 ha) forest located about 8 km west of Skierniewice (51°57'40" N, 20°08'40" E). This woodland composed of *Tilio-Carpinetum* and *Fraxino-Alnetum* communities was isolated in agricultural landscape since 16th century. During the centuries the structure and species composition of the forest communities have been created by the forest management practices as well as natural succession processes. In 19th century it was one of the Russian tsar hunting forests and the area of pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* farming. The tree-stand was greatly modified for this purpose – most of the trees were cut and removed; only the huge and branchy oaks *Quercus robur* have been leaved in the open parkland area to create habitat appropriate for pheasants. Therefore, the monumental oaks survived to the present day and now are regarded as valuable components of nature and a part of history and culture of this region. They are one of the main subject of protection in the reserve created in 1982.

The old oaks have been monitored since 1969. The trees with trunk girth >200 cm (trunk circumference taken at 1.3 m up from the base of the tree) have been noted in years 1969, 1980, and 2005 and their health condition has been estimated. During 36 years some oldest oaks of this girth class died, but the class have been completed with growing younger individuals and at present, there are 92 oaks with girths over 200 cm. Among them are 13 trees with girth >400 cm; the biggest one attains 497 cm. All the trees are in good health condition.

Another subject of protection in the "Uroczyisko Bażantarnia" reserve is small natural population of European beech *Fagus sylvatica* on the northern border of its natural range in central Poland. Two old monumental trees and a number of young individuals are the remnants of a former beech forests existing here in the first half of 20th century.