

SUMMARY

Nature of the Białowieża National Park 25 years after including in the UNESCO World Heritage List

The Białowieża Primeval Forest is the largest biodiversity refuge in lowland part of Europe. It represents nemoral zone with elements of boreal forest. There are primeval forest ecosystems with characteristic structure: diverse, multi-layered and all-aged stands. Large diversity of plants, fungi, and animals exist here. Primeval forest relic species, which in other places extant, are still numerous here. Their protection is necessary in order to preserve biodiversity. All vascular plants and cryptogams association and animals describe as a “relic of European lowland forest” are subject of protection. The restitution programme of the European bison was started in 1920. In 1971 the number of free-living bisons exceeded 200.

Fundamental functions of Park are: scientific research, education and tourism. Scientific research and projects are aimed at the best recognition of natural processes and ecological relationships indispensable in functioning and life of forest. All research projects are verified by the Scientific Council of the Park.

Important events from the history of the Białowieża National Park

1919 – A group of naturalists under the leadership of prof. Szafer arrived in Białowieża in order to check if European bison's survived the war.

1921 – “Reserve” forest district with the area of 4594 ha was created – including the Strict Reserve area, 1061,11 ha of which was placed under strict protection, and the rest was under partial protection.

1924 – The Reserve forest-district got the status of the forest inspectorate and since 1929 the whole area (i.e. 4640 ha) has been under strict protection.

1932 – A special administrative unit, “the National Park in Białowieża” was created (the area of 4693.24 ha).

1947 – The Białowieża National Park with the area of 4716 ha was created.

1977 – The Białowieża National Park was awarded the status of world biosphere reserve.

1979 – The Białowieża National Park was awarded the status of a World Heritage object, as the only natural spot in Poland.