

# WOLF POPULATION MONITORING




## PUSZCZA SWIETOKRZYSKA FOREST



POLAND 29.05-07.06 2024



# PEOPLE WHO SPEAK WITH WOLVES



*Howling with wolves is a method used for acoustic monitoring to localize the pack. It is simple - it doesn't require any exceptional abilities or equipment. The biggest chance of hearing them is in the Summer, in their breeding season. So here we are, in the middle of the forest at dusk, howling together. They respond. The mesmerizing, pristine dialogue continues. For many persons it is a deep, enriching experience. One researcher breaks down in tears.*

It is a **taboo species**. Secrets, facts and legends intertwine in the history of interaction between wolves and humans. Cursed by farmers, worshipped by hunter-gatherers, feared by children, followed by naturalists. This labyrinth of contradictions is difficult to navigate. How is it like for real?

**The conflict** between humans and wolves killing the livestock is as old as the history of pastoralism itself. Throughout the ages shepherd communities have developed ways to protect their animals, choosing suitable breeds and guarding them effectively, reducing losses to the minimum. However, modern livestock breeds and practices are different, making farm animals an attractive prey. Therefore wolves became a number one enemy, which was exasperated by folklore, prejudices and media. The hunter became the prey.

**In Poland** after WWII high prizes were offered for killing a wolf or its cubs. Wolves were also poisoned using strychnine and luminal. As a consequence, in 1973 there were only 100 specimens left in the entire country. Nowadays, because of increased understanding of their importance in the ecosystems, they are a protected species, recovering from the brink of extinction and doing well. However, an uncertain future awaits. There are still many questions to answer and many myths to address.

**The remedy for hatred** is knowledge. By studying wolf ecology we aim to prevent human-wildlife conflict that may arise with expansion of this species. We collect data, installing camera traps, taking fur and dropping samples, tracking, howling and trapping wolves to equip them with telemetric collars. Information and dialogue is the key, but a wolf can't speak for itself. It is our job.

*What do we get in return? Fresh tracks on the snow. Summer howling concerts. A bit of fur on a twig. Droppings. Remains of prey. Or a rare sighting of a wolf itself. It stops by, alert and curious. You stop as well. It observes you. Sniffs the air. And fades away. Like a ghost. In a perfect silence. This is it. The moment worth living for.*

# Polish Academy of Sciences

... manages the largest network of research units in Poland. Covering 70 branches of science, PAS publishes over 100 journals and several hundred of books per year. It is recognized worldwide as a member of about 60 international academic organisations.

One of many PAS components is the **Institute of Zoology** focused on the diversity of the Animal Kingdom on our planet, zoogeography and

evolutionism as well as ecology and wildlife conservancy.

The institute has over **200 years of tradition**, dating back to the beginning of XIX century. Its achievements result from continuous, long-term work of past and present generations.

**Now you have the unique opportunity to follow their footsteps and pay their efforts forward.**



**PAN**  
POLSKA AKADEMIA NAUK



# What will I do?

In this edition of our fieldwork we will use **camera traps**. Working in pairs, we will install them in chosen points and collect them back later.

It is **essential to be fit** – we will walk around 6-10 km a day in a difficult, swampy areas without any paths.

**When we reach the destination**, we will select a suitable tree, install the camera facing North and calibrate it to know the distance to the chosen orientation spots.

We will also set up **traps to catch wolves** and equip them with telemetric collars. If we are lucky and a wolf gets captured, there will be a lot of work associated, including following it after the collaring is done, looking for traces of its activity and taking samples.

Then, using your smartphone, you will take the photo of the area as seen on the trap display and **mark the exact final location** on GPS.

**You don't have to be an expert in camera trapping – the training will be provided!**

**When back from the field**, we will download and organize the records, replace the memory cards, charge the batteries and plan the routes for tomorrow.



# Pioneer research

The method used in this study is called Distance Sampling. It will be applied to determine the **density and abundance** of wolves and their potential prey.

After processing of the obtained data we will also be able to identify the ungulate species that are **preferred** by wolves in their diet.

The aim of this study is to cover seven large forest complexes of Puszcza Swietokrzyska Forest. This method of research hasn't been used in the above mentioned area so far. Existing data are very general and of low quality.

**Your work will therefore contribute to a pioneer project.**



# It's not all!

You will participate in our **hands-on certified field course** covering camera trapping but also other research methods, including basics of tracking and telemetry.

**We will explore** various camera trap types, models and brands together with their uses as well as limitations. We will learn about their construction, conservation and functionality.

Apart from the hardware, we will also **focus on the software** for processing the images and management of records, as well as application of Artificial Intelligence for those purposes.

We will learn what happens with the data afterwards, in a **wider context**. We will discuss its importance in wildlife monitoring and management.



# Where will I stay?

We will stay in a **cosy house** at the rural outskirts of a small town called Skarzysko-Kamienna, in Swietokrzyskie county. The nearest airports are Warsaw, Lublin and Radom.

The **conditions are basic** but comfortable. We have a fully equipped kitchen, bathroom with a hot shower and a fireplace. There's also an access to the electricity and Internet available via WiFi. **Outside** we have a garden with a

space for sunbathing or a bonfire.

It is a private house of **Professor Roman Gula** from Polish Academy of Sciences who is the head of the research and will be happy to host you!

We prefer **vegetarian diet** but for meat-eaters we can also cook meat separately. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements or intolerances.



# What's in it for me?



## **Boost your CV with our Certificate of Participation!**

We offer HANDS-ON intensive exchange of specialist theriological experience and knowledge and HANDS-ON field experience in wildlife monitoring abroad, especially important for Students, Wildlife Volunteers and Professionals. We will provide training in high-standard techniques of wolf population research, focused on camera-trapping, but also telemetry and wildlife tracking.



## **Spend Time of Your Life in one of the most stunning forests of Poland!**

We offer deep contact with unspoiled Wildlife, 24 hours a day! You can immerse yourself in this unique Ecosystem and reconnect with rhythms of Nature, contributing to its conservation and giving something back. You will have an opportunity to make lifelong friends with inspiring, like-minded people. You will experience invaluable and refreshing international,

intercultural exchange. You will gain unforgettable memories. It won't always be easy, but it is surely a Challenge worth taking up.



***Experience life like in a documentary movie...  
for real.***



# How much will it cost?

**You will spend £550 on everything necessary.**

The price includes direct and comfortable transfers from the meeting point and during the project, all food expenses and a place in the field base. It also covers our high-quality vocational training confirmed by the Certificate of Participation.

Although our fee doesn't include plane tickets and insurance on the site, everything else is covered for you for the entire length of your stay with us.

***Contribute to world-class conservation research  
of critical importance:***

***Become a part of something  
bigger.***



# Your questions answered

## Do I have to know a lot about wolves to participate?

You don't have to be a wolf expert! Theriological knowledge can be gained on the site. There are persons who help in the research not only for wolves – they want to reconnect with nature or be a part of a friendly community, Apart from Theriologists, our Volunteers are astronomers, businessmen, farmers, teachers, journalists and people from all walks of life.



**Is it dangerous to meet a wolf?** No. They avoid humans and go away when they see people approaching. The best thing to do when you meet a wolf is to stop and slowly back off or stand still to give it the time and space to disappear. They are curious and intelligent, so a wolf may take some time to observe you before it goes away.



## What to bring?

All-weather clothing. The temperatures can be quite high but there can also be some chills typical for the beginning of Spring. You should definitely have a polar fleece and wind-proof jacket as well as comfortable wellies. In early Spring and late Autumn – hat, scarf and gloves. You should have warm socks and spare set of clothes in case you get wet. Sleeping bag is a must. It will be useful to bring waterproofs. Another important stuff is a head-torch or a small torch. We don't have any binoculars so if you want to observe the Birds and other Wildlife with them you have to have your own equipment. It will be useful to take an insect repellent. We don't have midges, but there are mosquitoes and ticks. You can also take a hand sanitizer. Don't forget the electricity plugin adapter. Another important items are flipflops and own towel and telephone charger. Your smartphone has to be able to take photos and edit them.



## What is provided on the site?

Full board and lodging and the transport during the project. The food is covered, but you should inform us if you have any allergies or intolerances.



**Is there a guarantee that I will see a wolf?** We cannot guarantee that. They are quite elusive animals and can sense you long before you see them. Nature is unpredictable, which is a part of a genuine field research experience so we cannot know everything for sure. However, it works both ways. **You CAN have a stunning wolf sighting.**



# Health & Safety tips

**Bring a proof of your insurance with you**, European Health Insurance Card is the best option.

**Report any allergies or diseases** to us before you arrive. Take all necessary medicaments that you use. First aid kit is on site, but it contains only basic supplies.

**Beware of ticks.** In Poland they transmit borreliosis and Tick Borne Encephalitis. There's a vaccination against TBE and it is recommended that you vaccinate yourself. If you notice a tick on your skin, you should remove it as soon as possible. Shower everyday is a good idea – ticks will be removed by the running water. It's difficult to spot them regarding their size – below is an image of a tick on a grass stem.

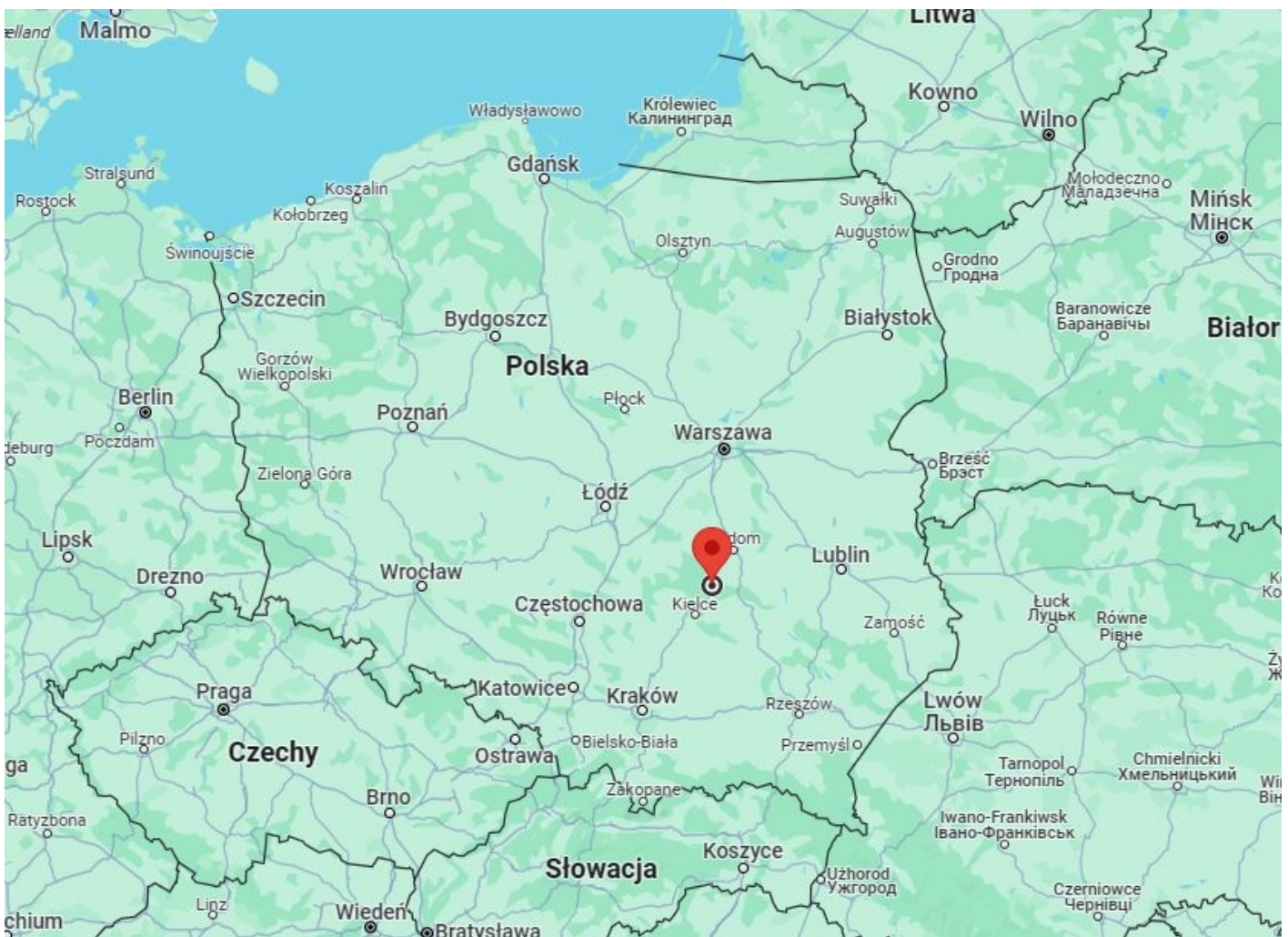
**Sosnowsky's hogweed** (*Heracleum sosnowskyi*) is a poisonous plant that you might encounter in Poland. Don't touch it – it causes severe burns. It is a tall, impressive umbellifer, reaching up to 4 meters of height.

**You may meet wild boars with their young.** The tiny piglets are of course very cute but don't be tempted to approach them. If you will frighten them the adults may want to protect their offspring and attack you. Never go between the mother and the young. Instead, stop and wait until they go away or slowly back off and bypass them from a distance.



# Project factfile

Contact Person in UK:	Joanna Chmielewska info@wildareas.net +48 662 503 766 1 Old Union Street Dumfries DG1 2BQ United Kingdom
Camp base location:	Skarzysko-Kamienna, Swietokrzyskie Voivodeship, POLAND
Available dates:	29.05-07.06.2024
Camp language:	English, Polish
Meeting point and time:	Skarzysko-Kamienna Railway Station



Our location in Poland



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**CONNECTION**



**[www.wildareas.net](http://www.wildareas.net)**