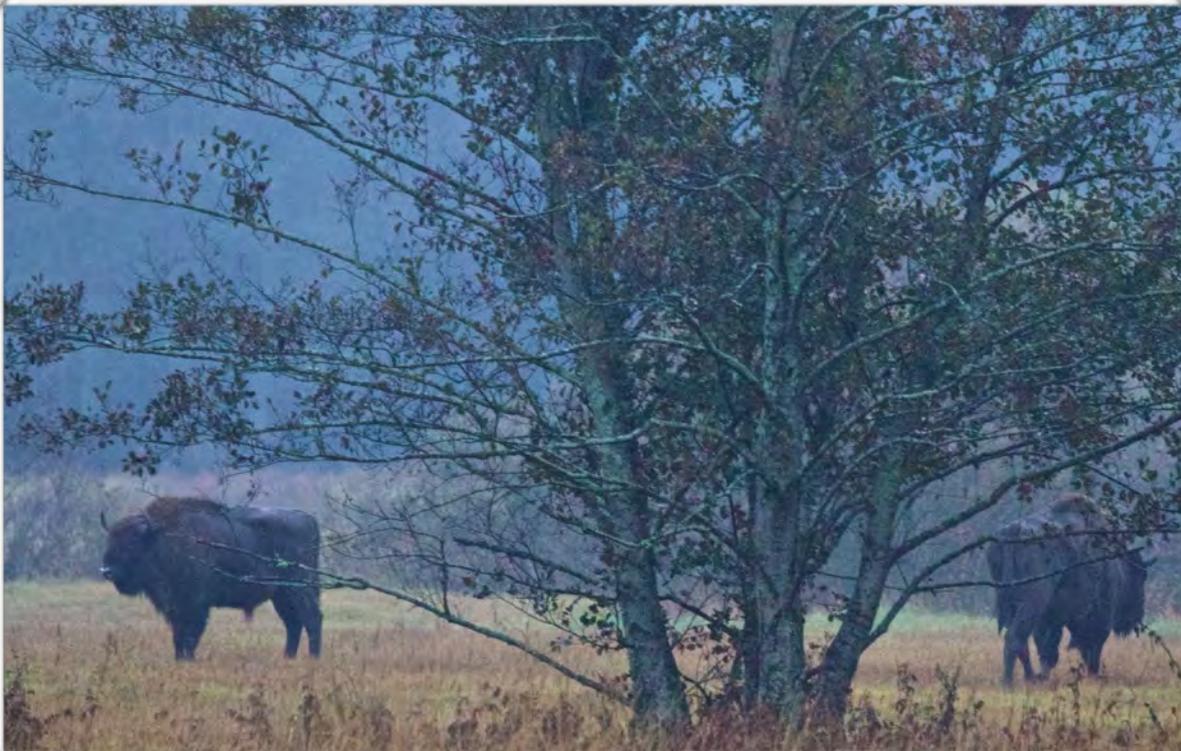


TRIP REPORT

BISON SAFARI & WOLF TRACKING 16-19 OCT 2015

4 DAY MAMMAL WATCHING & TRACKING TOUR
IN THE BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ŁUKASZ MAZUREK



TOUR LEADER: ŁUKASZ (LUCAS) MAZUREK

PARTICIPANTS: JACQUELINE, WLODEK, DAN, NICOLE (UK, USA)

WILDLIFE: 10 MAMMAL AND 19 BIRD SPECIES RECORDED, FULL CHECKLIST ON PAGE 5

DAY 1, FRIDAY 16TH OCT - WARSAW - BIAŁOWIEŻA

TEMP. 10° C

Everyone arrived the day before so we picked up everyone downtown and were on our way still before noon. About an hour drive outside Warsaw we stopped for a delicious Polish lunch at our favourite restaurant Gospoda. It was still early enough to make it to the forest before dusk so we decided to do some wildlife watching before getting to the hotel.

We visited the meadows in the north of the forest knowing some of these areas are favoured by herds of Bison that come out to feed at dusk. We arrived there on time to a beautiful rainbow in the sky. A quick scan of the area and we saw a **mixed herd of ca. 10 Bison** in the distance. We approached a bit closer and found **even more Bison** a bit further away, hidden by some taller vegetation. Enjoying our views we stayed there until dusk, seen a yet another **single Bison bull** coming out of the forest and marching right in front of us only to finally see the whole herd walking out of the vegetation into the open meadows. Happily, we retreated back into the bus and drove through the forest to our guesthouse in Białowieża, seeing some **Wild Boar** and a **Raccoon Dog** in the car lights.



DAY 2, SATURDAY 17TH OCT - BIAŁOWIEŻA

TEMP. 10° C

After a hearty Polish breakfast we went on to see the Strict Protection Area of the National Park. We met with Bogdan, our guide for this walk, former deputy director of the Park and now the director of the Geobotanical Field Station of the University of Warsaw.

The walk was fascinating and very informative, as usual. We saw some **woodpeckers** and **tits** but most of all - plenty of old trees and a pristine habitat with Bogdan's thorough and insightful explanations. Everyone was thrilled. After the walk, we stopped for lunch at the edge of the forest. Home made sandwiches and our usual freshly brewed coffee were a very welcome treat.

After lunch, we went on to one of our favourite trails in the middle of the forest hoping for bison and other mammals. The walk was very atmospheric, we saw some **Wild Boar** and a few **Black Woodpeckers** but no Bison this time. Back at the guesthouse, everyone enjoyed the traditional substantial Polish dinner and drinks.



DAY 3, SUNDAY 18TH OCT - BIAŁOWIEŻA

TEMP. 6° C

We started early on this day as we wanted to try some of the sites for Bison at dawn. After a quick sip of coffee we were out and on our way. It was just about the first light as we arrived to these meadows at the edge of the village and there we saw **3 Bison bulls**



quite near the road, finishing their breakfast of the last fresh grasses of the season. We left the bus and approached slowly not to disturb them and enjoyed our views at the first light. We watched them for about half an hour, until it was about sunrise. Not that we could see any sun as the clouds were very thick but Bison obviously knew and they retreated back to the forest exactly about that time. Happy, we drove back to our guesthouse for a warm and hearty breakfast, saw **3 Red Deer** on our way back.



After the usual plentiful breakfast we started off our wolf tracking trip. The first site we visited was a big success as we immediately found very **fresh Wolf tracks** and intensive territory marking of a few individuals. We followed the tracks in both directions, as far as we could still clearly see them and counted **at least three Wolves**. At some point we have also come across **a family of Wild Boar** of 3 adults and at least 6 juveniles that gave us stunning views for a few minutes.



Two other sites we visited produced no more fresh Wolf prints but we saw some fantastic habitats ranging from the deciduous forest to the Pine raised bog. About sunset we stayed at a nice vantage point in the Narewka River valley and heard at least three different **Pygmy Owls whistling**. On the way back to the guesthouse we saw a nice **Red Fox** in the torch light and several huge **Common Toads** on the road.

DAY 4, MONDAY 19TH OCT - BIAŁOWIEŻA TO WARSAW

TEMP. 7° C

This early morning everyone was up early once again eager to visit the Wolf territory at dawn. We arrived into the forest still before the first light and stayed at the heavily marked crossroads we had found the day before looking out for possible Wolves. No success this time but we saw a nice **Black Woodpecker** and a **Red Squirrel** there. Back at the hotel a usual warm and plentiful breakfast was a nice welcome. After that, we packed and were on our way to Warsaw.

We arrived at the Warsaw Old Town on time and had a short walk showing the most important sites of the Old Town and its history, followed by a nice lunch at a small jewish restaurant there.

Afterwards, we drove everyone where they wanted, hotel downtown and airport, everything smooth and on time.



CHECKLIST

F - footprints
D - droppings
H - heard
C - common

MAMMALS

Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	SUM
European Bison <i>Bison bonasus</i>	40+		3		2
Red Deer <i>Cervus elaphus</i>	1		3		2
Roe Deer <i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		1			1
Wild Boar <i>Sus scrofa</i>		2	9		2
Wolf <i>Canis lupus</i>			F		1
Red Fox <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		1	1		2
Raccoon Dog <i>Nyctereutes procyonoides</i>	1				1
European Beaver <i>Castor fiber</i>			evidence		1
Red Squirrel <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>				1	1
European Hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i>			2		1
Number of species:	3	3	7	1	10

BIRDS

Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	SUM
049 Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		15+			1
091 Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	3				1
093 Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>			1		1
211 Pygmy-Owl <i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>			3H		1
225 Black Woodpecker <i>Dryocopus martius</i>		3	3H	1	3
227 Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>		2			1
227 Middle Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos medius</i>		2			1
255 Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		2			1
259 European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			3		1
319 Crested Tit <i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>			H		1
319 Willow Tit <i>Poecile montanus</i>			H		1
319 Marsh Tit <i>Poecile palustris</i>		5	H		2
323 Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>		1	H		2
325 Treecreeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>		1			1
331 Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>		+			1
333 Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		++	++		2
337 Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>		H			1
347 Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			+		1
351 Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>			+		1
Number of species:	1	11	11	1	19

OTHER

Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	SUM
Common Toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>			5+		1
Number of species:	0	0	1	0	1

FOR FULL SIZE PHOTOGRAPHS, PLEASE VISIT OUR NEWS AT WWW.WILDPOLAND.COM
OR OUR FACEBOOK PAGE: WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/WILDPOLAND