

TRIP REPORT

BISON SAFARI & WOLF TRACKING 26-28 OCT 2015

3 DAY MAMMAL WATCHING & TRACKING TOUR
IN THE BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST
(1 DAY SHORTER THAN OUR USUAL 4 DAY DEPARTURES)

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ŁUKASZ MAZUREK



TOUR LEADER: ŁUKASZ (LUCAS) MAZUREK

PARTICIPANTS: VANESSA, GORDON (UK)

WILDLIFE: 8 MAMMAL AND 14 BIRD SPECIES RECORDED, FULL CHECKLIST ON PAGE 5

DAY 1, MONDAY 26TH OCT - ARRIVAL

Vanessa and Gordon arrived after 18:00 on this day so we left the airport quickly and were on our way north east. About an hour drive outside Warsaw we stopped for a delicious Polish dinner at our favourite restaurant Gospoda and continued the drive, now in the dark. It was getting misty locally but nevertheless we have seen **2 Roe Deer**, a family of ca. **5 Wild Boar** and a total of **3 Red Foxes** in the car lights as we approached Białowieża.

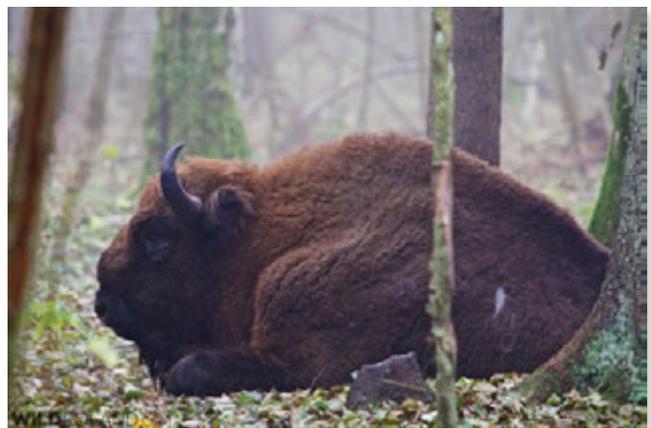
We arrived just after 23:00, got checked in and went straight to bed getting ready for tomorrow early morning Bison Safari.

DAY 2, TUESDAY 27TH OCT - BIAŁOWIEŻA

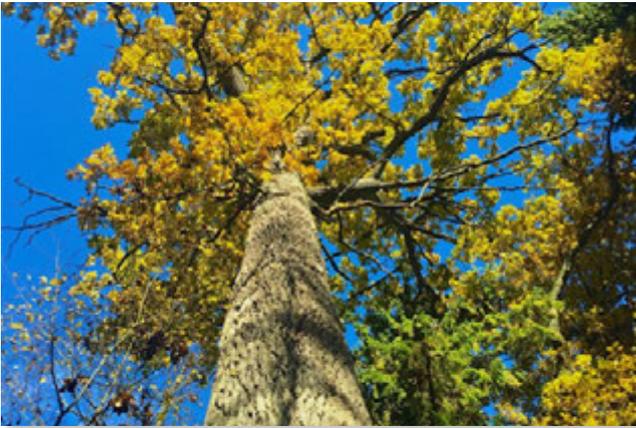
TEMP. 1°- 9° C

We met for a quick cup of coffee early morning and were out searching for **Bison** still before sunrise and our breakfast. It was very misty, we could only see about 50 m away so the task was hard. We started with some meadows at the village edge where I was confident to find some Bison. Within a few minutes walk we saw a single **Red Deer** and quietly continued further. Suddenly, as far as we could see, maybe a bit further than 50 m Gordon spotted a single **Bison bull**. The view was great but the distance was a bit too close as for such a large wild animal and it quickly decided to retreat back into the forest. That was it for this location, we didn't want to disturb that animal any more and we decided to visit a few other sites.

After a brief stop at another vantage point (mist too dense) we decided to transfer to a site where we had seen a group of relatively tame bulls in the last weeks. After a slow drive overlooking the meadows we saw nothing so decided for a walk towards the forest edge. Saw no animals or any very fresh tracks there so with the third attempt we tried in the opposite direction and into the forest a bit and finally saw some fresh footprints. We were on a right track and within a few minutes we saw a huge **single Bison bull** grazing slowly at the forest edge. It gave us some fantastic views feeding and walking into the forest where it lied down for a day's rest. We left him there quietly moving back to where we left the car. A fantastic morning and we were still before breakfast!

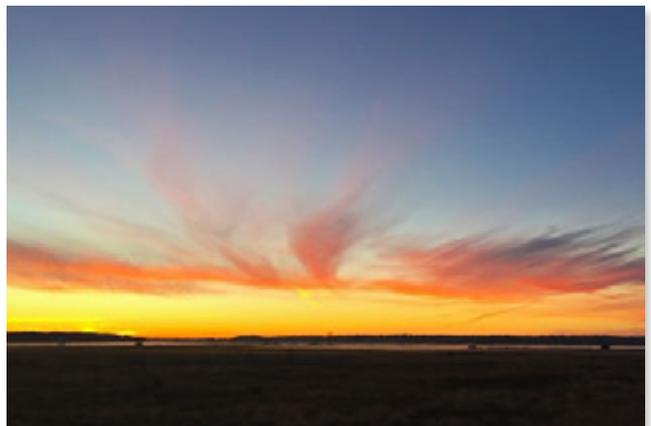


After a hearty breakfast back at our guesthouse we went for a guided walk in the strictly protected area of the National Park, the UNESCO site and a Biosphere reserve. We saw a few birds like the **Greater Spotted Woodpecker**, **Mistle Thrush**, **Nuthatch** and a **Red Squirrel** there but most of all - a stunning centuries old forest.



After the walk we had our lunch of sandwiches and freshly brewed coffee at the forest edge and continued with **Bison Safari** in the afternoon and evening. We drove to the north of the forest where we hoped for some Bison herds out at the forest edge and in the meadows. On our way through the forest we saw **2 Red Deer**.

When we reached the north of the forest we drove around for about an hour checking different sites, saw **4 Roe Deer** and finally, just when the time and light was right, we have found a **mixed herd of 11 Bison** that came out of the forest to feed in the meadows at sunset.



On our way back to the hotel for a usual substantial dinner, the full moon was just amazingly huge and we saw **2 more Roe Deer, 4 Red Deer** and a total of **2 Foxes**.

After dinner we went for a short walk near our hotel to search for Beavers in the Narewka River in torchlight. It was getting misty and cold but we briefly **saw one Beaver** in the water, giving a huge splash with his tail. Quite a productive day!

DAY 3, WEDNESDAY 28TH OCT - BIAŁOWIEŻA TO WARSAW

TEMP. -2° TO +6° C

We started early once again as we were out before sunrise. The goal was to visit a **Wolves' territory** so we decided to start with an area where we were **successful last month**. It was a nice frosty morning and after the first kilometre walking we found some **fresh Wolf territory marking** - scratching on the ground. They were still visiting here! We continued deeper into the forest, saw a **huge single Wild Boar**, many Bison and Red Deer footprints, **Black and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers** and yet **more Wolf scratchings** - fresh marking of one individual. It was a good morning walk of ca. 6 km and we happily drove back for a warm breakfast.



After the usual hearty breakfast we packed our stuff as we had to leave this day for Warsaw but it wasn't the end of our Wolf tracking. We planned for a yet another walk of 6 km in a territory of another pack of Wolves before lunch, one of our favourite sites.

The choice was right, once again, as we found **fresh Wolf footprints** within the first kilometre of our walk. Wild Boar burrowing was plentiful but we saw none on this walk. Some time later, we have seen a herd of **4 Red Deer hinds** that gave us great views.



Back at the car, we decided to eat our lunch of warm soup and some pierogi (traditional Polish dumplings) at a local bar and we hit the road for Warsaw. We arrived safely and on time at the Le Regina Hotel down town Warsaw.

CHECKLIST

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

MAMMALS

Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	SUM
European Bison <i>Bison bonasus</i>		14	F	14
Red Deer <i>Cervus elaphus</i>		7	4	11
Roe Deer <i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	2	6		8
Wild Boar <i>Sus scrofa</i>	5		1	6
Wolf <i>Canis lupus</i>			F	0
Red Fox <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	3	2		5
European Beaver <i>Castor fiber</i>		1		1
Red Squirrel <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>		1		1
Number of species:	3	6	4	8

BIRDS

Common Buzzard
Sparrowhawk
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Middle Spotted Woodpecker
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Black Woodpecker
Nuthatch
Treetreeper
Mistle Thrush
Hawfinch
Bullfinch
Great Tit
Blue Tit
Marsh Tit
Crested Tit

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