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## **Wolf monitoring in the Holy Cross Mountains region – 3<sup>rd</sup> interim report**

### **Monitoring since 15th of October 2013 till 15th of March 2014**

#### **Methods and the area of monitoring**

We continued monitoring of the three forests - the western part of the Holy Cross Forest (PS , forest districts of Suchedniów and Zagnańsk), Forests Niekłańsko - Bliżyńskie (LNB , forest districts of Stąporków and Skarżysko Kamienna) and Forest Iłżecka (PI, forest districts of Starachowice Marcule and Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski). We regularly monitored also the forest area between Przysucha and Końskie towns (PB, forests districts of Przysucha and Barycz) (Fig. 1), where during the spring of 2013 we had gathered a large number of scats. In addition, 7 times we were looking for signs of wolf presence in the forests south of Końskie town, where during previous winter wolf tracks had been seen.

In total, we spent 39 days in the field. Each of the areas we searched for the wolf tracks, scats and other sign of wolf presence. We collected the scats for analysis diet composition of monitored packs and we sampled fresh scats for further DNA analysis. The winter was exceptionally mild and short period of snow cover allowed us to track wolves only for several days in the third decade of January and the first decade of February. During this period, we focused on snow-tracking (using GPS) to estimate the size the packs.

The analyses of collected scats content are performed by Katarzyna Lewalska, in the laboratory of the Jagiellonian University at Krakow. The analysis will be completed by the end of April and will be included to the next report. DNA samples for analysis are stored frozen. As in the previous period we also gathered all the information about wolves from the Forest Service, hunters and others.

#### **Results**

In total, in five monitored locations we recorded signs of wolf presence 198 times and collected 109 scats for dietary and DNA analysis (Fig. 1). In the period of snow cover (20.01-10.02) we found wolf tracks seven times and we conducted 18 km of tracking using GPS.

We were detecting the presence of wolves in a Holy Cross Forest much more often than in the previous winter season. Twice we were able to locate fresh footprints, and then to track the wolves for a distance of several kilometers. In both cases the tracks were belonging to tree wolves, one of which was relatively

large. It point at presence of an adult male in the pack this year (in previous winter, footprints of all three tracked wolves were small). Unfortunately, the snow cover period was too early and short, to let us determine whether there was a female in a pack, and if she was in estrous.

In the area of Iłżecka Forest we detected the presence of four wolves, but during the monitoring period only in one day the snow condition allowed us to track the pack. For this reason, the number of individuals we observed must be treated as the minimum number of wolves in this area. The lack of snow in the estrus period made it impossible to determine whether the female of the pack could be in a heat this year.

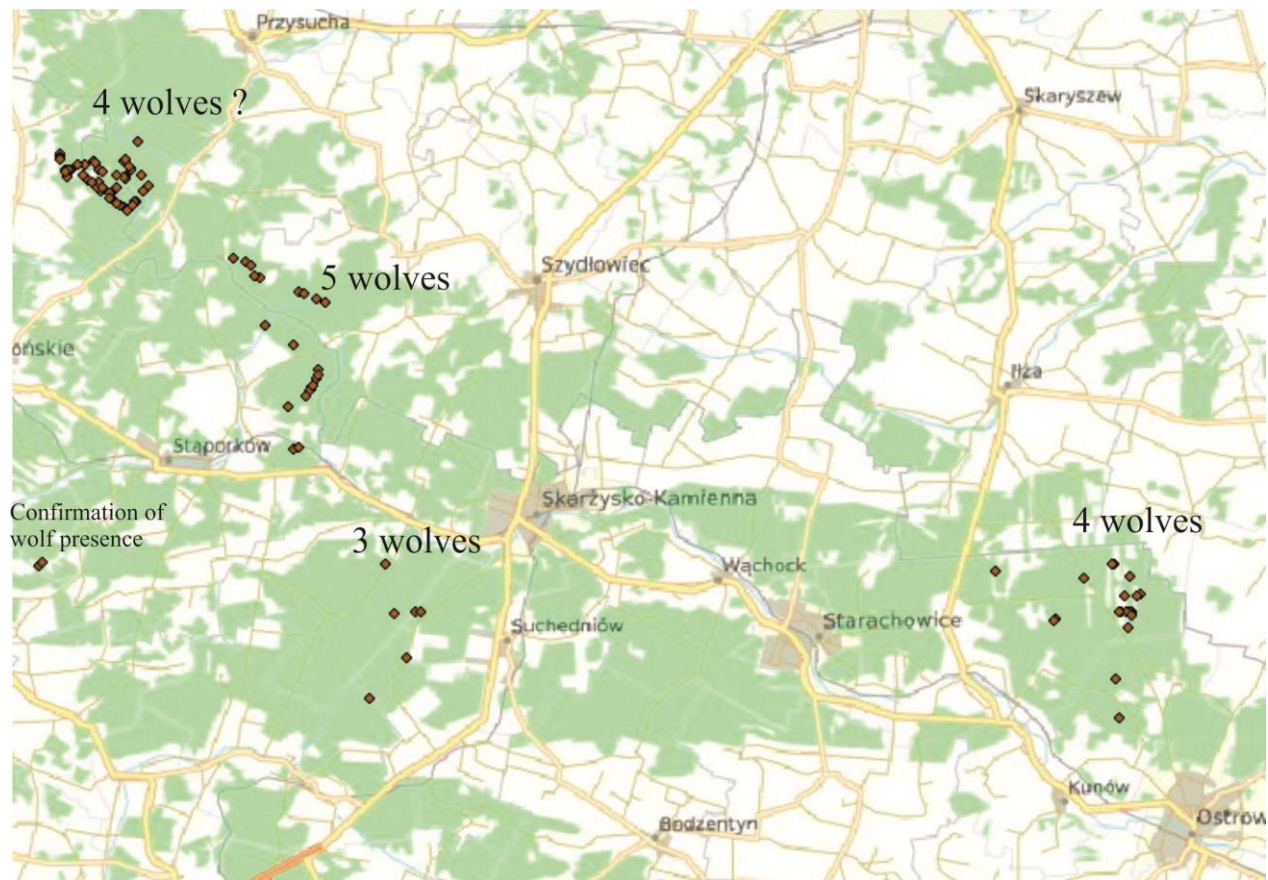
In the western part of Holy Cross Mountains region we recorded the presence of 5 wolves in the forest district Stąporków and Skarżysko Kamienna (LNB) and 4 in the forest district of Przysucha and Barycz (PB). Snow tracking held on 1st of February in both areas indicated that two separate packs occupy these areas. In both cases, the tracks we found were fresh, not older than of last night (14-18 hours). The distance between two locations was about 15 km. Footprints of 4 wolves in the PB Forest were of similar size, while 3 of the 5 tracks recorded in the LNB Forest were substantially smaller. It will be possible to ascertain unambiguously whether we are dealing with one or two families, after analyzing DNA from scats collected in these 2 areas and/or by locating the wolf dens/rendezvous sites by howling stimulation in July.

In the forests located south of Końskie town (near Piekło village) we found 2 wolf scats, but no track, despite we controlled the area twice when snow cover was suitable for snow tracking.

#### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Marzena Milanowska for her help in the field work. Włodzimierz Wojciechowski and Krzysztof Król provided valuable information about tracks and visual observations of wolves.

Fig. 1 Results of the monitoring of wolves in the Holy Cross Mountains region in winter 2013/2014. The points indicate locations of collected wolf scats. Numbers of wolves given for each area are the largest group sizes recorded during snow-tracking.



### Land Rover of SAVE Foundation in the wolf study in Lower Silesia Forest

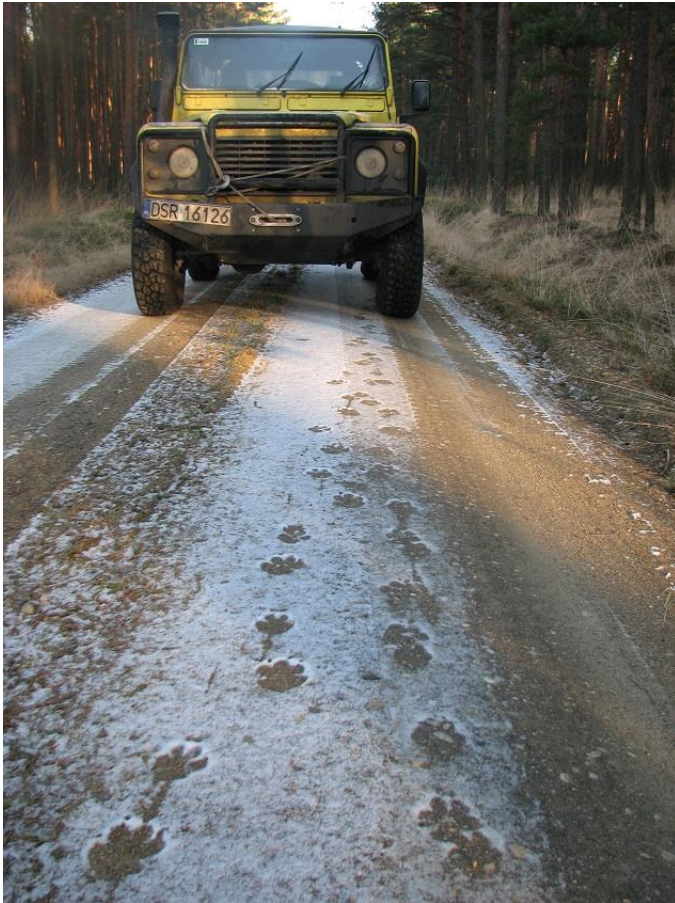
Land Rover Defender of SAVE Foundation through the fall and winter (7 months) was used in Lower Silesia Forests for the study of wolf ecology conducted by the Institute of Nature Conservation and Museum and Institute of Zoology, both being part of Polish Academy of Sciences. Katarzyna Bojarska of INC PAS was in charge of the field work planning and activities. The vehicle proved to be valuable means of transportation in rough terrain of Silesian forest. It served for setting and checking traps, tracking wolves, collecting wolf scats, attempts of wolf catching in the nets and valuable mean of equipment, materials and supply transportation. In addition, the car served during activities aiming to improve the public perception of wolves in local communities. For example it accompanied us during the field workshop for students of the Jagiellonian University, it served as an attraction for children and young people from all over the province during the lecture about wolves given on the Women's Day by K. Bojarska (<http://ruszowplus1.blogspot.com/2014/03/muchy-w-kropki-i-wilki.html>), and at a meeting of local municipalities (<http://www.wegliniec.pl/pl/article/2321>). Yellow Land Rover labeled with SAVE Foundation traveled over 8000 km within the region and has become a hallmark of Silesia Wolf Project. Its photos can be found on the local website (<http://ruszowplus1.blogspot.com/2014/03/wilki-ukad-z-schengen.html>).

Here is a brief photo essay from this project.

Fot. 1. Person prepared to set live-traps for wolves.



Fot. 2. Land Rover during snow tracking of wolves



Fot. 3. Silesia wolf research team.



### **The meeting on the system of wolf monitoring in Świętokrzyskie Province.**

At the wolf seminar organized last year by Foundation SAVE in Suchedniów (April 2013) the Provincial Nature Conservation Officer promised to make attempt to organize a system for collecting information about the wolf presence operating in entire Świętokrzyskie Province. The meeting on the subject, organized by the Provincial Conservation Office was held on 28th of January at the headquarter of Forest Superintendence Suchedniów. Among the invited guests were Chief Superintendents from majority of regional forest districts and the Director of Świętokrzyski National Park. The meeting was chaired by the Provincial Conservation Officer Jaroslaw Pajdak. At the beginning, R. Gula presented the updated results of the wolf monitoring carried out by the Foundation SAVE in the northern part of the region. Then, the concept of provincial monitoring was discussed. The basic plan is to introduce a standardized form to which the forest rangers and other employees of the forestry and the national park would bring their information on the presence of wolves. Form would be then sent to the conservator's office, the data would be integrated into a computer GIS database and published in the form of periodic reports. The participants endorsed the idea and expressed their willingness to participate in such an organized system. The technical details of the system will be discussed at the next technical meeting in which also professor Henryk Okarma from the Institute of Nature Conservation PAS is going to take part.