

BELARUSIAN SCIENTISTS CALL FOR THE TERMINATION OF THE BORDER FENCE CONSTRUCTION AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS OF THE BIALOWIEZA FOREST

The Bialowieza Forest is a unique object of Europe's preserved nature of exceptional environmental value protected by law since the beginning of the XV century.

The wealth of the Forest is thousands of old-growth trees, hundreds of plant and animal species, including the world's largest bison population.

The Bialowieza Forest is registered in UNESCO World Heritage List and represented as a single natural object located on the cross-border territory of Belarus and Poland. The uniqueness and exceptional environmental value of the Forest lies, first of all, in its scale and species diversity. There are no borders for animals, the Belarusian and Polish parts of populations function as a single whole migrating within the entire territory of the Forest.

In addition to being in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Bialowieza Forest also possesses a number of international nature conservation statuses:

- UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (1993);
- the European Diploma of Protected Areas (1997);
- Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA);
- Important Plant Areas (IPA);
- the object of The Emerald Network;
- a wetland of International Importance – Ramsar site (wetland complex “Dikoe bog”).

The construction of border barriers within the territory of the Forest will have a huge negative impact on the state of the rare ecological system and will result in extinction of rare and protected plant and animal species due to destruction of natural vegetation and habitats; disruption of wildlife habitats; isolation of individual micropopulations with their subsequent degeneration (diminishing of individuals, growth of morphological anomalies etc.); disturbance of wildlife populations; reduction of genetic diversity of wild animals.

Belarusian scientists call on the Polish government to reconsider its decision to build a border fence in Bialowieza Forest and also appeal to international organizations whose activities are aimed at protecting nature to take measures to prevent possible colossal damage to a unique natural object.

Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus