



EcoTrain 3- Poland Information Sheet

The project will send three cohorts of two volunteers out to the Mammal Research Institute (MRI), Bialowieza, Poland for 9-week placements at intervals during 2010.

Cohort 1: Mon 3 May to Mon 5 July 2010 (2 places)
Cohort 2: Mon 12 July to Mon 13 Sept 2010 (2 places)
Cohort 3: Mon 20 Sept to Mon 22 Nov 2010 (2 places)

Host Organisation

The Mammal Research Institute (MRI) is a grant aided research organisation which carries out a range of ecological studies into the mammals of the Forest. These studies inform management decisions and increase our understanding of an internationally recognised site of nature conservation importance. Bialowieza Forest is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve.

www.zbs.bialowieza.pl

Travel

Ambios is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of all operations and we are therefore avoiding travel by plane wherever possible. Travel to placement will be arranged by train and you will be collected from the local station by representatives of MRI.

Accommodation and Food;

Accommodation is provided close to the site at the reserve in a shared flat with cooking facilities. A number of international volunteers are usually present at MRI. A food budget will be provided along with a small weekly allowance.

Programme for the placement period

You will be assigned a mentor from MRI who will provide support and guidance and you will be assigned a particular project which you will work on for the duration of the placement. You will receive an introduction to the site and the working practices of MRI, familiarisation with local culture, geography, fauna and flora. Volunteers will learn and practice field and laboratory techniques relevant to their placements. You will be expected to settle into a partly autonomous (but overseen) role for the placement period, working the same core hours as MRI staff (7.30 am to 3.30pm each day), plus out of hours work as fieldwork requires. Weekends will normally be for leisure and cultural activities which will generally be the responsibility of the trainee. Some weekends may require a commitment to working hours and trainees are expected to join in fieldwork as and when required. The overall programme of fieldwork, laboratory time and library research for the training period will remain flexible because local weather conditions and the need to respond to events may mean that the timetable and work plan needs to be adjusted.

Tasks for volunteers

MRI researchers will give full training so that volunteers can undertake some or all of the following tasks as part of a research team;

Locating roe deer, Bison and wild boar using VHF radio-tracking equipment. Quietly approaching target species in the field to be close enough to allow download of GPS data from radio collars. Locating target species on local maps and noting data on record cards. Collecting dung samples, analysing location data (data input to computers). Locating and sampling dung from target species. At the appropriate time of year, sampling biomass from vegetation types grazed by target species and participating in field surveys to establish population counts. Other associated activities such as checking/cleaning equipment, refuelling vehicles, logging field samples, etc.

Knowledge and skills to be acquired

Volunteers will gain knowledge of Polish culture and have the opportunity to develop basic language skills as well as ecological survey and monitoring techniques on different European mammals. They will experience and practice a range of field skills for identifying the field signs left by different species and their significance. Employability skills acquired will include time and financial management as well as communication skills, teamwork and the ability to be adaptable in response to changing working circumstances. Volunteers will work on MRI project activities which may include the following for example;

European Bison Conservation in Bialoweiza Forest 2006-2010

The objective of the project is to introduce a new strategy for the sustainable conservation of the European bison in Bialoweiza Forest by improving the living conditions of the species and creating possibilities for its natural migration within the region.

Project activities include:

- Improving access to food and water for bison through the reclamation of meadows
- reintroducing appropriate meadow mowing regimes
- Enrichment of food supplies of plant species preferred by bison
- Creation of small water reservoirs and additional feeding sites
- Prevention of damage caused by bison in farming and forestry areas
- Creation of, and securing existing, ecological corridors to facilitate natural distribution of bison
- Monitoring the bison population,
- Supporting the development of eco-tourism in the region under the symbol of the European bison
- Information and education campaign(s) about the species.

This project is part of *Natura 2000* programme which aims at creating an ecological network of protected areas in the European Union. The programme is designed to protect the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe. *Natura 2000* is based on the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive which are EU legal Acts binding European countries to fulfil certain objectives. These, along with the designations for Special Protection Areas for Birds and Special Areas of Conservation for Habitats are outlined within the *Natura 2000* ecological network information available online.

Application for a placement

Please read the 'application information' pdf and complete the application form and return to Ambios by e-mail and also by post. An interest and some experience of mammal ecology and research would be most relevant or just a desire and commitment to find out more and contribute to the great work MRI do at this unique reserve.