

Participants of the
2nd International Conference on Forests
Neuschönau, Germany
c/o Prof. Dr. Wolfgang W. Weisser
Technical University of Munich
Terrestrial Ecology Research Group
School of Life Sciences Weißenstephan
Hans-Carl-von-Carlowitz-Platz 2
D-85354 Freising, Germany

To
Prof. dr hab. Jan Szyszko
Minister Środowiska
ul. Wawelska 52/54,
00-922 Warszawa
Polen

29.4.2017

Białowieża Forest

Dear Prof. Szyszko,

from 26.-29. April 2017, 150 scientists met at the *2nd International Conference on Forests* in Neuschönau, Germany, to discuss factors that promote forest biodiversity, and modern forest management strategies that combine biodiversity conservation and the usage of ecosystems services provided by forests, including wood production.

A large number of scientific presentations discussed the importance of forest and landscape structures indispensable for a high diversity of beetles, fungi, birds, and other organisms in forests. Old trees and dead wood, standing and fallen, are of crucial importance for biodiversity, and cannot be replaced by other structures such as young trees. Many species in temperate forests need trees older than 100 years (or even 200 years in the case of oak), as only such old trees provide features necessary for their survival or reproduction. Dying and dead trees are required by more than one third of all forest species. Natural disturbances, such as insect outbreaks, are an inherent part in forest ecosystems worldwide that create valuable habitat for many species, and are therefore natural processes. These natural processes need time and area to occur.

Modern forest management strategies now rely on a combination of protected forest areas and forests with integrative management. Protected forest areas are an indispensable part of a strategy to preserve biodiversity, because only in protected areas can large-scale natural processes be allowed. The protected areas need to be large enough so that processes such as windthrows and insect outbreaks can be tolerated. There is a scientific consensus that, in Poland, the Białowieża Forest is the most important forest for biodiversity preservation. In order to maintain the high value for biodiversity conservation, it is necessary that natural processes are allowed in the entire area of Białowieża Forest, using an adequate protection status, preferably a National Park. The current management strategy of using a large part of Białowieża Forest for wood extraction is, in our view, very detrimental to the unique biodiversity of the forest.

An important recent insight discussed in the conference is that salvage logging, i.e. removal of trees and dead wood after a natural disturbance, is detrimental for biodiversity. There are now many studies worldwide that unequivocally show that biodiversity does not benefit from salvage logging (Lindenmayer et al. 2017, Thorn et al. 2017). These insights apply especially to Białowieża Forest, where the removal of spruce attacked by bark beetles endangers this old-growth forest.

Dear Prof. Szyszko, as you are in the position to influence the fate of Białowieża Forest, we, the entomologists, mycologists, botanists, ornithologists and other ecologists and foresters gathered at the *2nd International Conference on Forests* would like to appeal to you as our colleague, to implement the scientific evidence available for preserving the unique status of Białowieża Forest.

Yours sincerely,

(Signatures on the following pages)

Cited references:

Lindenmayer, David, Simon Thorn, and Sam Banks. *"Please do not disturb ecosystems further."* Nature Ecology & Evolution 1 (2017): 0031.

Simon Thorn, Claus Bässler, Roland Brandl, Philip Burton, Rebecca Cahall, John L. Campell, Jorge Castro, Chang-Yoi Choi, Tyler Cobb, Daniel Donato, Ewa Durska, Joseph Fontaine, Sylvie Gauthier, Christian Hebert, Torsten Hothorn, R Hutto, Eun-Jae Lee, Alexandro Leverkus, David Lindenmayer, Martin Obrist, Josep Rost, Sebastian Seibold, Rupert Seidl, Dominik Thom, Kaysandra Waldron, Beat Wermelinger, Maria-Barbara Winter, Michal Zmihorski, Jörg Müller (2017) *Impacts of salvage logging on biodiversity – a metaanalysis*. Journal of Applied Ecology, in press.

| Name | Institute | Field of Expertise | Signature |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Wolfgang Weiser | TU Munich | Ecology | |
| Maro Filla | - | Ecology / Conservation | |
| Suzanne van Boeck Calixte | - | Wildlife Ecology | |
| Kseniia Tashina | Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University | Environmental Management | |
| João Gonçalo Soutinho | Associação Bioliving | Ecology / Entomology | |
| Till Meyer | - | Media/Journalism | |
| Valéria CSIKOS | BÜKK NATIONAL PARK DIRECTORATE | NATURE CONSERVATION | |
| Jochen Linner | NPV Bayerischer Wald | Forester / Nature Conservation | |
| ATTE KOMOMEN | UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKY | ENTOMOLOGIST | |
| BALTZINGER Christophe | Irstea | FOREST ECOLOGY | |
| Per Milberg | Lund Univ. | ecology | |
| Tomas Vrska | VUKOZ; CZ | Forest ecology | |
| Paul Schmidt Gärner | IGB Berlin | Aquatic Ecology / Entomology | |
| Bethina Que | University of Leipzig | Biodiversity research | |
| Antje Heideroth | University Marburg | Ecology / Mycology | |
| Linda Seifert | NP Bayer. Wald | Biodiversity | |
| Veronika Brauner | FVA Freiburg, Germany & Univ. Bern, Switzerland | Conservation biology | |
| Christoph Heibl | Bavarian Forest National Park | Evolutionary Biology | |
| Patrick Jansen | Wageningen Univ. The Netherlands | Ecology | |
| Ekaterina Shorokova | Forest Research Inst. Russian Academy of Sci. | Ecology | |
| Ekaterina Kapitsa | StP State Forest University | Ecology | |
| Susanne Wink | WLF Germany | Forest ecology | |
| Jim Buckwald | University Copenhagen ^{DK} | Forest biodiversity | |
| Kerith Kirby | University of Oxford | Forest biodiversity | |
| IVEL BECKA | NATIONAL PARK SUTAVA | Ecology | |
| Elena Balbenthien | FVA-BW | Animal Ecology | |
| Reka Aszalos | MTA OK | forest ecology | |
| Stefanie Gärtner | NLP Schwarzwald | forest ecology | |
| TOMAS DOBROTVR | SILVA TAROUCA P.I. | deadwood decomp. | |
| Aino Hamäläinen | Swedish Univ. of Agricultural Sciences | forest ecology / micology | |
| JAN BETA | VUKOZ V.V.I. BRNO | Mycology | |
| Bernhard KOHLE | WLF Tashina | Ornithology | |

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