

**Poster 7****BROWN BEAR DAMAGES IN CROATIA DURING THE 5-YEAR PERIOD 2004 – 2008**MAGDA SINDIČIĆ<sup>1</sup>, ĐURO HUBER<sup>2</sup>, TOMISLAV GOMERČIĆ<sup>2</sup>, ZRINKO JAKŠIĆ<sup>3</sup>, ANNETTE MERTENS<sup>4</sup>, ALEKSANDRA MAJIĆ SKRBINŠEK<sup>5</sup>, ALEN SLAVICA<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> Department for game biology, pathology and breeding Veterinary Faculty University of Zagreb Heinzelova 55, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia<sup>2</sup> Biology Department Veterinary Faculty University of Zagreb, Heinzelova 55, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia<sup>3</sup> Hunting Department Ministry of regional development, forestry and water management, Ulica grada Vukovara 269 a/V, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia<sup>4</sup> Via Sassetta 40, 00138 Roma, Italy<sup>5</sup> Biology Department Biotechnological Faculty University of Ljubljana, Večna pot 111, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

The brown bear (*Ursus arctos L.*) population in Croatia has been steadily increasing since 1950`s, nowadays reaching its biological and social carrying capacity - a population of around 1 000 individuals inhabits an area of 12 372 km<sup>2</sup> (almost 22% of the land surface). Since 2005 bears are managed by a National Management Plan, which regulates yearly quotas and requests recording and reporting all relevant events, including bear caused damages on human property. In areas where bears are hunted damage compensation is paid by hunting unit leaseholders, whereas in national parks and in areas with only accidental presence of bears compensation is paid from the state budget.

Data about human-bear conflicts in Croatia prior to implementation of the Management Plan are scarce, with no precise recordings about damage on agriculture and domestic animals. This paper analyzes data about human-bear conflicts in Croatia, gathered during the first 5 – year period (2004 – 2008) of organized data collection. It is probable that not all the damage got registered, but we believe that this data truly reflect the real situation. In total 220 cases of bear damage have been reported in this period (average 44 per year), with cost approximately 42 000 \$ in terms of compensation. In these five years the number of damage cases was: 23, 88, 16, 46 and 47, in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. In most cases damage has been on agricultural goods: cereals – 44 cases (20.0%), orchards (mostly plum and apple) – 34 (15.5%) and vegetable (mostly carrot) fields – 38 cases (17.3%). Totally 20 cases (9.0%) of damage in apiaries have been documented. Attacks on poultry (20), sheep (15) and rabbits (8) accounted for 81% of the damage on domestic animals, and 19.5% of the total damage cases. Larger domestic animals rarely were injured or killed. In fact, during the 5-year period only 5 attacks on goats, 2 on cows, one each on a donkey, pig and horse have been documented.

All attacks have happened within the area where bears are hunted, so in this period no bear damage has been compensated by the state. Consecutive series of attacks, which were concentrated in a shorter period, indicate that those attacks were caused by the same problematic individuals, probably attracted by garbage. Bear attacks on humans have not been recorded in this period.

As presented in this paper, human-bear conflicts were infrequent in Croatia and the material damage was not significant for a population of 1 000 bears. This reflects the good traditional knowledge of people used to coexist with bears. However, during the same period media occasionally reported about an “oversized, problematic” brown bear population. Therefore more damage prevention and management of problematic bears are the key issues of the bear management in Croatia, as well as cooperation with hunters and general public, including strong public campaigns.