

Hunting in Croatia

Key figures

Area :
56.542 km²

Protected areas
9.5%

Population
4.8 million

Number of hunters
51.308 registered hunters
(2008)

Main game species

Big game: wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), fallow deer (*Dama dama*), chital (*Axis axis*) roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), mouflon (*Ovis aries musimon*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*)

Small game: pheasant (*Phasianus sp.*), rock partridge (*Alectoris graeca*), chukar partridge (*Alectoris chucar*), hare (*Lepus europaeus*), wild cat (*Felis silvestris*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), european polecat (*Mustela putorius*), golden jackal (*Canis aureus*). There are also many ducks and geese in some areas.

Hunting in Croatia

Game richness in Croatia is a result of diverse climate conditions and habitat heterogeneity. Hunting is seen as an individual spare-time activity and it is not of great economical significance for the state, although there are attempts to transform it into an important economical resource. Hunting tourism is perceived as a traditional and an increasingly desirable branch of hunting.

The game

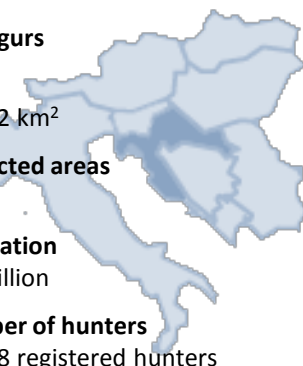
Wild boar is the most commonly shot big game and its number in the majority of Croatian hunting grounds is above the prescribed numbers.. Second most hunted big game is roe deer and the third place is reserved for the other three cervids present in Croatia (red deer, fallow deer and chital). The population of all cervids is increasing but it still has not reached potentially reachable numbers. Among the small game, pheasants represent the most commonly shot game. Noticeable trends within the small game are low numbers of brown hare which has not reached the pre-war (before 1990) population, increased number of both rock and chukar partridge and touristic hunting being oriented towards hunting of the woodcock, common snipe, common quail, bobwhite and ducks.

Hunting rights

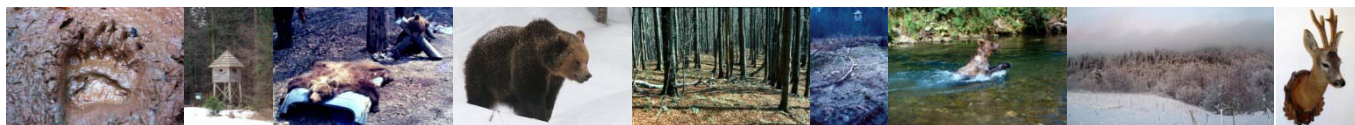
Land is private or state-owned, and the hunting rights can either belong to landowners or they can be given to other parties by concession or lease. There exist three types of hunting grounds in Croatia, which are based on type of landownership and the number of landowners whose land is included in one hunting ground: private, commune and state-owned hunting grounds. Hunting can be done without the landowner's permission if his land is a part of a commune hunting ground.

The hunter

The number of hunters has been fluctuating in last few years; in 2005 there was around 43 000 hunters, two years later their number increased to more than 55 000 , while in year 2008 that number lowered to 51 000 registered hunters. The majority of them are members of the Croatian hunting association composed of many smaller, local hunting associations. The exact number of female hunters is unknown, but it is estimated that there are no more than 100 female hunters in Croatia. In 2008 there were more than 6000 registered foreign hunters. On an average, around 4.500 foreign hunters register yearly.



HUNT is an interdisciplinary international research project, financed by the EU's 7th Framework programme, looking into the wider meaning of hunting in the 21st century.



Recruitment

About 1000 per year (926 novice hunters in 2008)

Prerequisites for hunting

Hunting can be done by a person who has passed a hunting proficiency test, has a valid hunting card and possesses a written permit from the hunting ground owner. Hunting proficiency test consist of 125 theoretical and practical hours ending with a written test. The hunting card is issued for a five-year period and is valid only with a yearly tag on it.

Management

Game management is based on hunting management plans for a ten years period. Hunting season for each species is regulated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management in collaboration with the Ministry of culture – Directorate for nature protection. Bear management presents an exception since it's managed by a separate document - Brown Bear Management Plan for the Republic of Croatia.

The rules of the game

The minimum age for game hunting is 18 years. Firearms and munitions used in hunting must correspond to the game strength and resistance. It is forbidden to use automatic munitions, bow and arrow, motorized vehicles, air-gun and illuminating hunting equipment. It is also forbidden to hound chase big game with the exception of wild boar hunting. A bloodhound must be present in the hunting ground populated with big game. Hunting trophies can be exported from the country with a required trophy certificate. High-quality hunting trophies can not be permanently exported from the country. Foreign hunters can hunt in Croatia if they had passed a hunting proficiency test, have a valid hunting card and possess a written permit from the hunting ground owner.

Controversies

Hunting grounds that have been grounded to other parties by concession or lease tend to have problems with profitability. Furthermore, hunting ground owners are not willing to tolerate their big game being killed by predators, especially those predators protected by the law (e.g. wolf and lynx). Introduced or dispersed species, by causing damage to agriculture, often stir up tensions between domicile inhabitants, hunters, and administration (brown bear and wild boar on the Croatian islands).

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