

HUNTING in Slovenia

Key figures

Area

20 273 km²

Protected areas

Approx. 12.6% and 35.5% of Natura 2000. Hunting occurs in these areas.

Population

2 049 129 (2009 statistics)

Number of hunters

Approx. 21 300 (LZS - Lis, 2009)

Main game species

Big game - Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*), European mouflon (*Ovis musimon*), fallow deer (*Dama dama*)

Small game - Common pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*), brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), European magpie (*Pica pica*), hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*), fat dormouse (*Glis glis*), nutria (*Myocastor coypus*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), beech marten (*Martes foina*), European pine marten (*Martes martes*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), European badger (*Meles meles*), raccoon dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) and alpine marmot (*Marmota marmota*).

Hunting in Slovenia

The term hunting includes shooting from high stands, stalking, hunting with hunting dogs and trapping. Hunting takes place in four different biogeographic regions - Pannonian, Alpine, Dinaric and Mediterranean. Biogeographic diversity corresponds with the high diversity of game species. Hunting influences the management of 94% of land in Slovenia. It is an important traditional activity carried out primarily by local men in their spare time.

The game

The most represented and the most common game species is roe deer and it is found in 80% of the country surface. Red deer in comparison to roe deer is covering smaller and more spatially isolated areas. Its core range covers 36% of the country. Wild boar numbers and distribution seem to be increasing recently and the species currently covers close to 50% of the country. Majority of chamois is found in Alpine and pre-alpine areas and smaller islands of distribution are found in the Dinaric region. Chamois range covers approximately 22% of Slovenia. Reintroduced and still very rare game species is alpine ibex, which can be found in just 1% of the country within the Alpine region. The two non-indigenous species, European mouflon, whose range is 6% of the country and fallow deer, whose range is 4% of Slovenia are both found quite rarely. All three native large carnivore species (brown bear, wolf and lynx) are still present in the Slovenian ecosystems. The lynx has been reintroduced by hunters in 1973 while brown bears and wolves have been continuously present. Currently the three species are protected and culling of bears and wolves is carried out under the provisions of nature conservation legislation.

Out of small game red fox and European badger are widespread in Slovenia. Brown hare and the non-indigenous common pheasant are concentrated mainly in lowland areas dominated by grass and other arable land.

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.



<http://fp7hunt.net>

Similar to elsewhere in Europe, the numbers of brown hare have seen rapid decrease due to changes in agricultural land use. It is estimated that in the time period between 1967 and 2005, the numbers have decreased seventeen fold.

Hunting rights

Hunting occurs both on privately and state-owned land in the 411 hunting grounds. However, there are no private hunting estates since game animals in Slovenia are property of the state (all hunting grounds are of public interest). Concessions for hunting grounds are given to registered hunting organizations (hunting clubs) where those with local membership have priority when competing for the 20-year concession. Besides hunting grounds, there are also 12 special purpose hunting reserves which are managed by Slovenia Forest Service, Triglav National Park, and State Protocol Services of the Republic of Slovenia. Hunters responsible for the special purpose hunting reserves are professionals. All hunting grounds are organized into larger Game Management Areas for which 10 year Management plans and yearly Action plans are prepared by the Slovenia Forest Service.

Recruitment

In 2008 there were 380 new members who have done the exam; out of this 20 were women.

The hunter

The number of registered hunters remained the same at around 21000 members over the last 6 years. In the same period, there was a constant increase of women hunters and currently there are 315 female members. The average age is 54 years old and around 250 people are directly employed in hunting. Other hunters are volunteers and pay their membership fees to their chosen hunting clubs, normally in the place where they live.

Prerequisites for hunting

Everyone who has passed the hunting proficiency test and has valid hunting card (you need to be over 18) can become a hunter. Hunting proficiency test consists of minimum of 50 hours of theoretical and minimum of 150 hours of practical training ending with a series of tests. Each hunter who has done hunting exam and has a valid hunting card and no criminal record has a right to purchase ammunition. There is also a statutory obligation for all hunting clubs for annual shooting training.

Management

Wild Game and Hunting Act (Official Gazette, last change in 17/2008) states that "game management facilitates ecological and socio-economic functions of the game animals and their habitats, especially: conservation and protection of game animals as natural heritage; conservation and improvement of biotic and landscape diversity and stability of ecosystems; prevention and compensation of damages caused by and on the game animals; sustainable use of game animals".

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Photo: P. Jordhøy, J. Linnell, C. Næss, O. Strand

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Competent authority for game species management is the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MAFF). Slovenia Forest Service prepares 10 year game management plans for the MAFF. Long-term management plans are being implemented through yearly management plans which are evaluated on a yearly basis. For the protected but culled species, such as the brown bear, there are also species-based strategies and action plans which are approved by the nature conservation authority.

Rules of the game

Hunting legislation defines hunting seasons and all other provisions that set up the hunting rules. Firearms and munitions used in hunting are prescribed for each of the game species. It is forbidden to use automatic weapons, bow and arrow (except in enclosures), leg-hold and non-selective traps, motorized vehicles, air-guns, lights and night vision devices. A blood-tracking dog must be available for big game hunting.

Controversies

- Increased pressure towards commercialization of hunting, mostly by land-owners who wish to profit from the activity that is taking place on their land.
- Conflicts among forestry and agriculture sectors on one side and hunting on the other over the appropriate quotas for wild boar and large herbivore harvest. In order to minimize damages to forests and agricultural crops the two sectors demand radical reduction of wild boar and large herbivore populations.
- Conservation of large carnivores and other protected species (e.g. ravens, cormorants) probably gets the most public attention. Problems that arise in the public debate are the damages that large carnivores cause to agriculture (primarily damages by wolves), competition with hunters for the same prey (wolves and Eurasian lynx) and fear for safety of the local inhabitants (brown bear).

More on Slovenian hunting

Slovenian Hunting Association:

<http://www.lovska-zveza.si/>

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food:

http://www.mkgp.gov.si/en/areas_of_work/fisheries_and_hunting/

Slovenia Forest Service:

<http://www.zgs.gov.si/slo/delovna-podrocja/gozdne-zivali-in-lovstvo/nacrtovanje/index.html>

Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning:

<http://www.mop.gov.si/>

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