
PLENARY TALK: Population monitoring and management

Challenges for ungulates in the era of the alpha generationŠprem, Nikica^{1*}¹ University of Zagreb, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Fisheries, Apiculture, Wildlife Management and Special Zoology, Zagreb, Croatia

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The relationship between humans and ungulates is closely interwoven, especially as there are around 740 million inhabitants and around 25 million ungulates on the European continent. Europe is a largely human-dominated landscape, and the importance of ungulates is generally based on ecological, cultural, and economic reasons. Especially now, in the age of the alpha generation, the best-equipped and most technologically adept generation ever, where artificial intelligence is playing an increasingly important role, the greatest challenges for the coexistence of humans and ungulates are emerging.

Ungulates tend to increase their geographical range and numbers and are therefore the most important game species of great hunting interest, mainly for their meat and trophies. Throughout history, and especially today, the relationship between ungulates and humans is at a turning point due to various human interventions. There are several key points, but in this talk the focus will only be on reintroduction, hybridization, non-native species, and hunting management.

Reintroduction is the process of translocation and releasing wild animals into areas where they were previously extinct or considered endangered. Unfortunately, these interventions were often carried out with farm animals of unknown genetic origin, which can lead to hybridization. Hybridization between individuals of different (sub)species is a major conservation concern and can lead to changes in genetic, phenotypic, and fitness traits. Non-native species are widely recognised as a major global threat to biodiversity, with several species being classified as invasive without scientific basis. With this in mind, the focus will be on case studies of "invasive" ungulate species where policy decisions have been made without scientific basis. Ultimately, the impact of seven million hunters and an annual hunting bag of seven million ungulates in Europe could lead to evolutionary change.