

IWO'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY TO THE SOUTH

Iwo, a 5-year old bear collared in Poland, went from the Tatra Mountains through the whole Slovakia to Hungary in one week.

Iwo was captured and collared in the Polish Tatras by researchers of the Tatra National Park and the Institute of Nature Conservation in Krakow a year ago. Since then, his collar takes his position with a GPS at time intervals and sends them via SMS to a computer. This way, researchers can gain understanding of the movements, space needs and food habits of this secret species for better protection. Iwo's collar is programmed to drop-off in one year.

Exactly a year ago in spring, Iwo also did a large round trip, this time 80 km to the west, and then back in the Liptov region. Iwo is also an amazing climber and three times he walked through the Tatra Mountains at 2200-2400 m high. A week ago, he started from the Propad region in Slovakia a journey to the south of more than 120 km. Subadult bear males are often dispersing long distances from their natal areas. Opposite, females are staying close to the place of birth. In his way, Iwo had to travel in the night to avoid people, look for food in unfamiliar areas and overcome numerous barriers, like railways and roads. The most dangerous part was the highway D1 in the High Tatras in Slovakia, which Iwo crossed thanks to a wildlife overpass. On 3rd May 2015 he crossed the southern border of Slovakia and reached Hungary. Now he is 15 km from the Slovakian-Hungarian border.

Hungary has not a permanent bear population, although bears, also females, have been occasionally observed in the northern part of the country, where Iwo is moving at the moment. Bears are now in their mating time and this can be the reason of Iwo's trip, as he did last year. The researchers following Iwo strongly hope that he will continue his trip safely. Bears are protected in Hungary, but few cases of poaching have been detected in last years in that region. Whether Iwo will stay in Hungary or be back to Tatra Mountains is an open question.

This study on brown bears is fruit of the cooperation between the Tatra National Park and the Institute of Nature Conservation PAS in Krakow, strengthened now under the project GLOBE, where the Scandinavian brown bear research team also participates. GLOBE aims at disentangling the effects of climate and human-induced changes on the ecology of brown bears and is funded by the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme.

More information on:

- <http://www.globeproject.pl/pl/>
- <http://carpathianbear.pl/>
- <http://tpn.pl/>
- <http://www.iop.krakow.pl/>

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