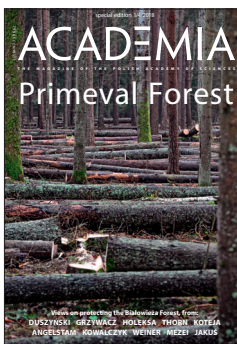




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## Białowieża's Old-Growth Forest

The Polish Academy of Sciences has devoted particular attention to the Białowieża Forest of late: it has been discussed at the General Assembly of the Academy, at meetings of its Division I – Biological and Agricultural Sciences, at various thematic conferences and lastly at a major international conference. All these discussions saw the various substantive arguments raised by both sides – the advocates and opponents of logging in the Białowieża Forest, now affected by a massive bark beetle outbreak – confronted and carefully weighed against each other. The Polish Academy of Sciences has presented

the Polish public as well as the wider community, with scientifically-grounded position statements drawn up by leading national and foreign natural-science scholars. Our standpoint was recently presented in *Science*, the world's most prestigious research journal.

The special bilingual issue of *Academia* magazine you are now reading gathers together the main lines of argumentation presented at the aforementioned scientific conferences as well as the position statements issued by the Academy with respect to the Białowieża Forest, and as such aims to further facilitate merit-based discussion on the topic. Previous special issues of *Academia* magazine in past years have addressed such "hot topics" as human migrations in the modern world and the controversy over whether or not children should be vaccinated.

Before we go on to weigh the various arguments in favor of harvest logging or biodiversity preservation in Białowieża, however, I would here like to point out something more general. Namely, the positive way Poland is perceived abroad today is to a large extent due to the work of certain outstanding personalities who played a significant role on the global scale: Nicolaus Copernicus, Maria Skłodowska-Curie and Stefan Banach in science, together with Frederic Chopin, Karol Szymanowski, Witold Lutosławski, Wisława Szymborska, and Czesław Miłosz in the arts, certainly contributed much to building our country's recognizability and good reputation. However, the uniqueness and beauty of the Białowieża Forest is also one of Poland's most strongly recognized emblems. Just as we need to continually strive to ensure our country's good reputation abroad, we also need to be concerned for preserving Białowieża. A failure to understand this and the destruction of the old-growth forest is not in our country's broader interests.

**PROF. JERZY DUSZYŃSKI,**  
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