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LEARNING FROM THE FOREST

Photography by Jakub Ostałowski

A small team working in the depths of a primeval forest studies the past and present challenges faced by nature, striving to ensure a better future.

PAS MAMMAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, BIAŁOWIEŻA

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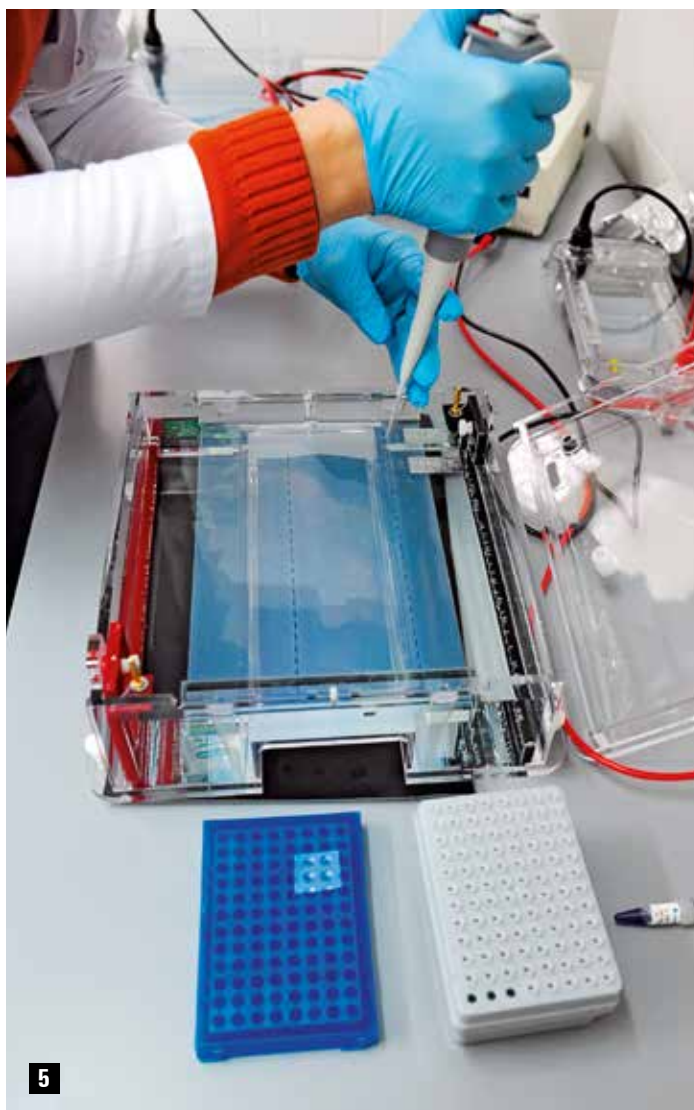
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ACADEMIA Insight In the Lens



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Fig. 1, 2:
Bison skeleton

Fig. 3:
Skulls from the PAS
Mammal Research Institute

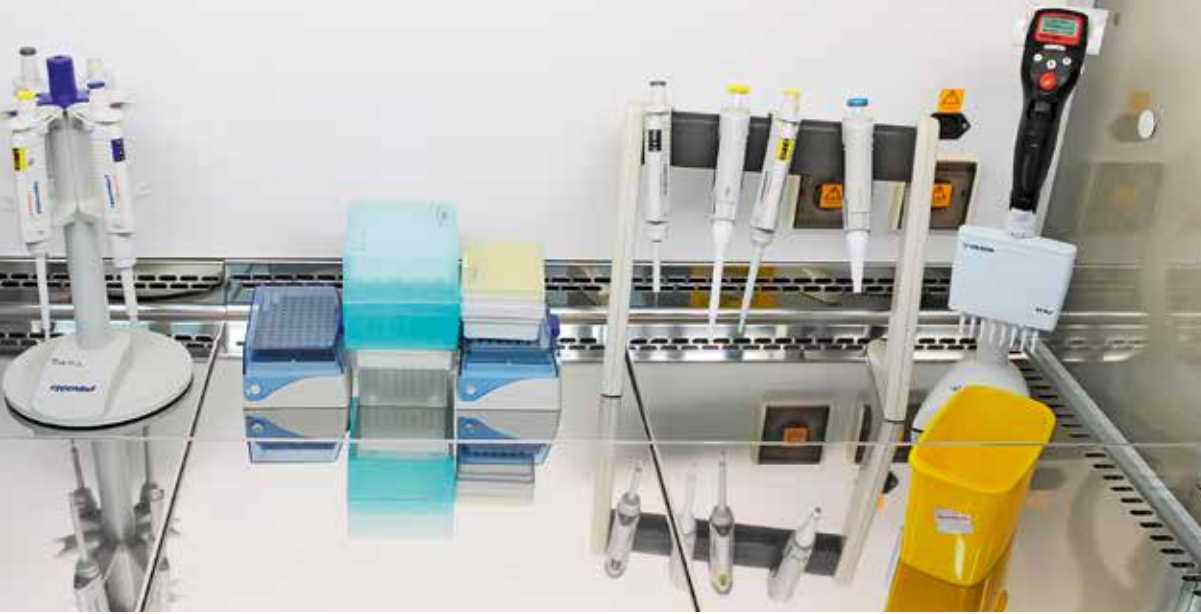
The PAS Mammal Research Institute in Białowieża is the only PAS institute in the Podlasie region. It was founded in 1952 by Prof. August Dehnel, who discovered that the braincase of shrews actually shrinks over the winter and expands again in the spring. The Dehnel Phenomenon has been studied extensively ever since and it has been found to be present in other mammal species.

The Institute's aim is to improve and disseminate our understanding of mammal biology and provide scientific support for practical activities in environmental protection and sustainable development. The Institute is well equipped for research and educational activities, including an enthusiastic team, state-of-the-art labs, and access to the unique environment of the Białowieża Primeval Forest. It is among Europe's top centers working on the genetics, evolutionary biology, ecology, behavioral ecology, paleoecology and ecophysiology of mammals. The forest has long been a site of research into the ecology of bison and large predatory mammals, as well as pioneering work on the natural history of this unique ecosystem.

The Institute also holds one of the largest museum collections in Europe, numbering around 200,000 mammal specimens including skulls, skeletons, hides, pelts, and taxidermied animals. It has also recently been expanded with a DNA bank containing samples from over forty species. The Institute also publishes the journal *Mammal Research*, books on mammal ecology and evolution, and even educational comics.

The Institute hosts scientists from all over the globe, and works alongside many other scientific institutions. It has been granted the status of a EU Centre of Excellence.

More information: www.zbs.bialowieza.pl



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Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7:
Laboratories of the PAS
Mammal Research Institute
are engaged in genetics,
ecophysiology and
parasitology research

Fig. 8:
Sketches of bison on the
walls of the PAS Mammal
Research Institute library