

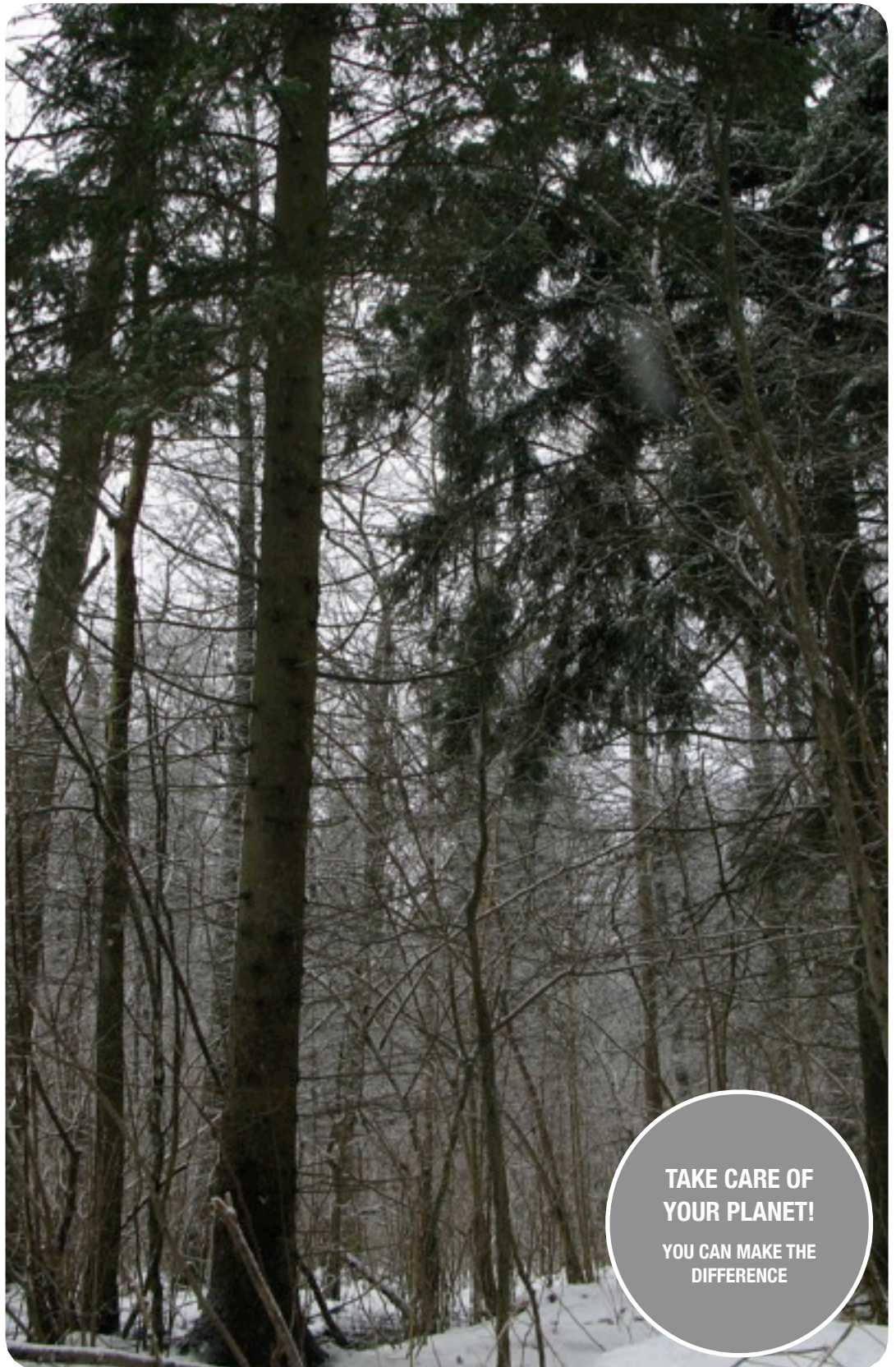
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WASIA

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TAKE CARE OF
YOUR PLANET!

YOU CAN MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE

BIAŁOWIEŻA NP

This national park is the last remaining primeval forest in Europe. Precious, wonderful but threatend. This news letter will tell you about the past and

the future. In the past the region was used as hunting ground of the Tsars pushing many species to extinction such as wolves, bizons, and bears. Lynx, deer, and beaver survived, however populations

collapsed. Loss of habitat caused by deforestation remains a threat. Despite the conservation efforts the future is hard to tell. Will this last piece of wilderness survive, become a zoo or even gets larger?

BIODIVERSITY



WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biodiversity is the diversity of all life. That means all kind of living plant and animal species in an area. For example Białowieża National Park contains some special species which hard to find anywhere else in Europe like: the Bizon (Bison bonasus) and the wolf (Canis lupus).

“I’ve been living here for years, but I’ve seen it only twice”

This is the first ECO POD news letter with biodiversity as the central theme. 2010 was the year of biodiversity but it seems to be still a hot topic.

Today we can see the effects of human on the environment. Especially in Europe after the industrialisation, the population has been growing. A lot of forest was altered to agricultural land as it is still nowadays. Fortunately not all the primeval forest disappeared. The only remainings of this forest can be visited in the protected area in Poland’s Białowieża National Park.

In this park some of Europe’s rarest species live, such as bisons (Bison bonasus), wolves (Canis lupus), lynxes (Lynx lynx), and Tarpan horses (Equus ferus caballus). The bison and Tarpan horse were wiped out in the ... century, but some individuals survived in zoos. With these individuals a succesful breeding programme started. This resulted in geneticaly diverse group of Tarpan horses and bisons that were ultimately reintroduced in Białowieża National Park. Here they managed to survive with the bison population reaching up to 800 individuals.

However, the reintroduction programme was a succes; surviving of these species still

remains unsure. Not only for these larger mammals, but also for many bird species, bats, fish, dragon flies showing declines in recent years.

Poaching remains an ever going threat, but on top of this loss of habitat is the biggest threat. Illegal logging in private owned zones surrounding the national park decrease the buffer effects around the national park. These areas are cultivated for agriculture. Becoming barriers for the species that once used these areas for migrating to search for food. Also the construction of roads, pipelines, and so on fragment the habitat of animals and plants and become barriers in the ecosystem.

“Habitat loss is the biggest threat!”

The Via Baltica is one of the current projects that threatens the fragile forests. This is an example of fragmentation, but thanks to environmental organisations this plan got a lot of attention. This help call was even heard in Brussels where the European Commission put the motorway plans on hold. The debate still continues whether the motorway should bypass the primeval forest. For now the forest is saved. Let’s hope that a new route will save the environment and at the same time opens the way to built this new road.



Extinct first,
later
reintroduced