

The Role of Wolf (*Canis lupus* L.) in the Rhodope Mountains in the Beginning of the 21st Century

Petar Genov^{1*}, *Aleksandar Dutsov*¹, *Daniela Dimitrova*¹, *Nikoleta Stoyanova*¹, *Ivaylo Angelov*², *Diana Zlatanova*², *Danielo Peshev*², *Dimitar Arabadjiev*³, *Tosko Georgiev*⁴, *Georgi Serafimov*⁵, *Stoyan Sariyski*⁶

¹ Institute of Zoology/Bulgarian Academy of Science, 1, Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria; Email: genov_bg@yahoo.com

² Bulgarian Society for Preservation of Birds, PO Box 50, Musagenitsa, Bl. 104, Entr. A, Fl. 6, 1111, Sofia, Bulgaria
E-mail: ivailoangelov@abv.bg

³ Biological Faculty/Sofia University. 1164 Sofia, 8, Dragan Tsankov Blvd., Bulgaria; E-mail: zlite2@mail.bg

⁴ Game Breeding Station „Shiroka poljana”, Batak POB 4580, Bulgaria; E-mail: ddsshiroka_poliana@nug.bg

⁵ Game Breeding Station „Beglika”, Batak POB 4580, Bulgaria; E-mail: DDSBeglica@nug.bg

⁶ Game Breeding Station „Izvora”, Devin, POB 4800, Bulgaria; E-mail: DDSIzvora@nug.bg

Abstract: The number and distribution of wolf (*Canis lupus*) has shown a constant growth in the last 15 years. Regarding the official census data there are about 2000 wolves inhabiting the country the last years. Attempts for density control are made and annually around 200-400 individuals are shot. Wolves are harvested while hunting wild boar – 80% of the cases. Remaining 20% are shared between organized drive hunt for predators – 5%, bating sites (with carcass) – 5%, from herds man – 5% and accidental – 5%. Official census data reports wolf number in West Rhodope Mountains for the period 2001 – 2006 to be between 280 (in 2003) to 216 individuals (in 2006). Our estimation gives an average number of wolves in the area of 91 individuals. The average annual harvest is about 58,3 individuals, which is 64,1% of the estimated wolves number. Wolf packs in the region of the West Rhodopes are 30 with between 2 up to 11 pack members, average pack members are 4.4±2.09. Five of the packs were raised from 1 to 6 puppies. Official census data reports 145 wolves in the East Rhodope Mountains in 2001 with constant growth next years. In 2006, 225 individuals have been reported. This gives us mean density of 0,6 up to 1,1 individuals inhabiting 1000 ha, which is ecologically impossible. Our data shows for the period of research (2003-2006) average number of 94 individuals and totally 202 harvested wolves for the whole period. Wolves packs are 11, with mean 6.0±2.28 individuals which compared with the West Rhodope Mountains shows significant difference (t - Student, p = 0.04 t = 2.1176).

Key words: Wolf, *Canis lupus*, Rhodopes, control, harvest