

General information

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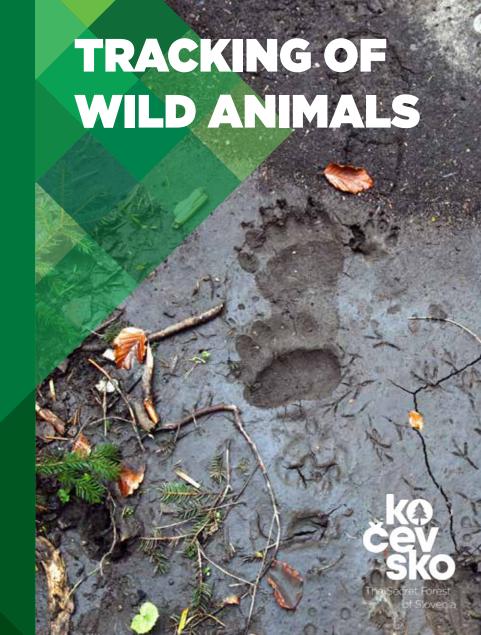


www.kocevsko.com









Welcome to Kočevsko

Slovenia is one of the most forested countries in Europe, since over half of it is covered by forests. However, in the Kočevsko region, the percentage is even greater, because there, forests take up around 90% of the land area. Due to prudent and systematic forest management in the past, many forest surfaces in Slovenia and especially in Kočevsko have been preserved, the structure of which is close to natural forests as reflected in the incredible biodiversity and the conservation of numerous animal species.



In Kočevsko, you can experience the power of our unspoilt forests, where many animal species have found refuge and habitat. In the deepest corners of our secret forests, there are also remnants of primeval forests, where nature has ruled for centuries without human intervention. There are six such forests in the Kočevsko region, and in 2017, the biggest among them, the Krokar primeval forest, was entered on the **UNESCO** list of natural heritage, which demonstrates the great importance of these areas. In these forests, decayed trees are neither cut down nor are they cleaned up, forest fruits are not picked and animals are not disturbed. Because we want to preserve these primeval forests for our descendants, we do not enter them, however we may visit the edges of these forests on marked trails and admire and feel their mightiness by peering inside.

The Kočevje landscape offers primal experiences of forests, where you can feel the immense power of nature and discover the beauty it has bestowed upon us, relax in the shade under the treetops and listen to the soothing sounds of nature. The mightiness of our forests has also been preserved by responsible and sustainable management, which contributes to the fact that the Kočevsko region is the cradle of responsible co-existence with wild animals, particularly large animals, because this is one of those rare areas of Europe where all **three great carnivora** can be found in their natural environment: the bear, the wolf and the lynx.



Observation and tracking of wildlife

In Kočevsko, we have developed numerous programmes for observing and tracking the presence of wild animals in their natural environment. These programmes are intended for all wildlife and nature enthusiasts. In Kočevsko, the participants have a unique opportunity to discover the magic of our pristine nature and learn about the life of its wild animals and their roles in the forest ecosystem.



During observation, you will discover many interesting facts about nature, follow the signs of the presence of wildlife in its natural environment and, with a little luck, you may even see one of the wild inhabitants first-hand.

When establishing contact with wild animals, responsible, monitored and appropriately guided observance is of key importance, because too much contact between people and wild animals may have numerous negative consequences for the latter. As part of the observation and tracking programmes, experienced guides and hunters will provide you with many interesting facts and make sure you will have an unforgettable adventure during your time in the forest.

Kočevsko offers various programmes for observing and tracking wild animals, with the most popular experience being the observation of the brown bear, a charismatic furry giant, which rules over our forests. In 2020, the **»Observing and Discovering Bears in Their Natural Habitat«** experience was recognized as unique and authentic and included in the **Slovenia Unique Experience**s family of 5-star experiences by the Slovenian Tourist Board.



For more information about the programmes and experience, visit our website: www.kocevsko.com



The brown bear is Europe's largest carnivora. It is present in numerous countries of Southern Europe and in Scandinavia, with quite a sizeable population living in our forests. The bear is a protected species and it has been placed on the red list of endangered species in Slovenia since 1993. It is also protected by other international conventions. Its body is strong and bulky. When walking, the brown bear presses the entire surface of its paws on the ground, which makes it appear clumsy, although it is actually a very quick and nimble animal. When meeting a brown bear, it is important to remain calm and not scare the bear away by yelling or throwing things at it. Its footprints are very distinct and are nearly impossible to be mistaken for footprints of any other animal species. The brown bear is not territorial. Smaller bears and females avoid larger male bears.

Body mass:

100 - 300 kg

Shoulder height:

90 - 120 cm

Mating period:

April - June

Birthing period:

end of Decemberbeginning of February

Number of cubs: 1 - 4

Habitat:

large dense forests

Behaviour:

solitary, winter hibernation

Peculiarities:

many fur colour variants. The cubs stay with the mother for 2 years.





The wolf is the largest representative of the dog family in nature. The Slovenian wolf population is regarded as one of the rare autochthonous populations which remain in Europe, while the wolves are among the more important elements of Slovenian natural heritage. The size and shape of a grownup wolf's paw print is similar to that of a large dog. The wolf is a predator of large ungulates, which it hunts by exhausting them in a long pursuit. In this way, it mainly prevs on animals in poor physical condition. When searching for food, wolves may travel 40 - 70 km in a day. It can also feed on carrion, smaller vertebrates, invertebrates and even plant-based food. Occasionally, it even attacks farm animals, especially sheep. 50 % of wolves die in the first year of life. Their lifespan is between 12 - 16 years, but they rarely reach such ages in nature.

Body mass: 30 - 50 kg

Shoulder height:

50 - 80 cm

Mating period:

January - February

Birthing period:

April - May

Number of puppies:

3 - 8

Habitat:

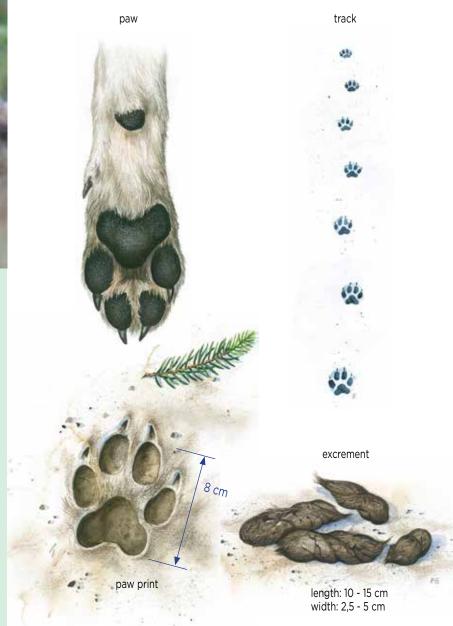
large dense mixed forests

Behaviour:

they live in packs and are distinctly territorial towards other wolves

Peculiarities:

the wolf is a very cautious and timid animal that is afraid of humans





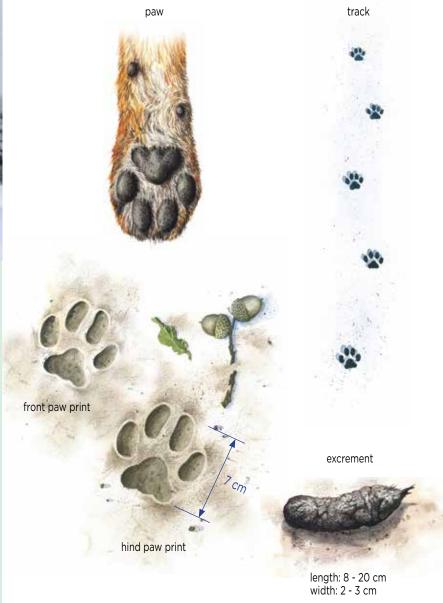
The lynx has all the characteristics of its genus, such as a short and wide head, tufts of hair on its ears, tall legs and a short tail. Its coat has a characteristic brown-spotted pattern. The lynx nearly disappeared from Slovenian lands in the past but was resettled in the forests of Kočevsko in the 1970s. The resettlement was initially very successful, but their numbers began to decline due to the small number of lynxes settled and the resulting inbreeding. That's why in 2019, they began introducing new lynxes. As with other cats, in the paw prints of the lynx, the claws are not visible. The lynx is a territorial animal, with the territories of males and females partially overlapping. It hunts rodents, rabbits and smaller ungulates, especially roe deer. It possesses excellent hearing and sight. Due to its cautious nature, it is extremely difficult to spot in its natural environment.

Body mass: 15 - 25 kg Shoulder height: 60 - 70 cm Mating period: February - March Birthing period: May - June Number of cubs/ kittens: 1 - 4 Habitat: large dense forests Behaviour: solitary, hunts prey mainly by waiting and stalking **Peculiarities:** varied colouration of the fur - spotting. Significantly stronger

hind legs. May feed on

larger prey for several

days.





The fox is a solitary animal which relies on its sense of smell and hearing while hunting. It has a distinctly slim body on relatively short legs. Despite this, it runs swiftly and makes long (3 - 4 m) jumps. It also swims fairly well and climbs tree trunks that are not too steep. Its territory is usually about 2.5 - 15 km². Its tail is longer than half of its body with its head, its back is usually reddish-brown, while its belly is a dirty white colour. It is mostly a nocturnal animal, however it can be seen by day in autumn and winter. It feeds on birds, small mammals, insects, carrion and strawberries. Its natural enemies include wolves, lynxes and golden eagles. The lifespan of foxes is up to 12 years. There are more males in the population than females. They can dig their own dwellings but prefer to settle in abandoned burrows of other animals or in karst caves.

Body mass:

5 - 10 kg

Shoulder height:

30 - 40 cm

Mating period:

January - February

Birthing period:

March - April

Number of cubs: 3 - 7

Habitat:

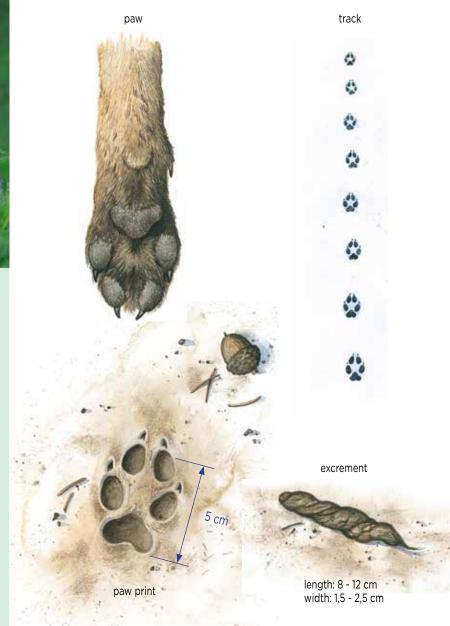
forests, fields, large city parks

Behaviour:

a very cautious and adaptable species, active at dusk and at night

Peculiarities:

transmits rabies, a disease dangerous to humans





The badger is the largest Slovenian mustelid. Its head is pointy, its body strong and bulky and its limbs muscular with long claws on the toes. Its head is white with a wide black stripe running over its eves and ears. Its back is of various shades of grey, while its belly is covered in thin black fur. The tail is short and light in colour. It is mostly active at night. The badger has a well-developed sense of smell and hearing but relatively poor vision. In autumn, it accumulates a lot of fat and significantly increases its mass. It hibernates during the winter. However. this is not true hibernation, as it also sometimes leaves its den. Because it is a very good digger, it digs burrows with several entrances and tunnels up to 10 m long. It also digs latrines (holes) nearby in which it defecates. It is omnivorous, feeding on insects, earthworms, amphibians, small mammals, fruits, nuts and tubers.

Body mass:

10 - 20 kg

Shoulder height:

30 - 35 cm

Mating period:

March / August

Birthing period:

February - March

Number of cubs: 1 - 5

Habitat:

forests, fields, meadows and orchards

Behaviour:

a nocturnal animal that hibernates in winter

Peculiarities:

omnivorous & an excellent digger. Lives in burrows. Defecates almost exclusively in its own "toilets" or so-called latrines.





The wildcat, which is guite similar to the domestic cat, is a protected animal species in Slovenia. Its fur is long and thick. A black stripe runs along its back, with rectangular side stripes. The habitats of wildcats are secluded forests and rocky areas, which offer a lot of hiding places. Wildcats avoid people and their dwellings. It is a nocturnal animal that moves around the forest inaudibly. It is also a loner that marks its territory with scent glands and by scratching the trunks of trees. It feeds on mice, birds and small mammals and enjoys being in the warm sun throughout the day. The pregnant female finds an empty den, fox hole, rock crevice or hollow tree, where she prepares a place for her kittens. Kittens like to play and in case of danger climb on tree branches, where they hide right next to the branch in order to be as inconspicuous as possible.

Body mass:

5 - 12 kg

Shoulder height:

30 - 40 cm

Mating period:

February - March

Birthing period:

April - May

Number of kittens:

2 - 6

Habitat:

warm areas of large dense forests

Behaviour:

feeds mainly on small rodents and birds

Peculiarities:

a wild cat can successfully mate with a domestic cat





Martens are the most diverse and numerous family among carnivora, which is reflected in both their physical form and their eating habits. They have a slim body with a chestnut to dark brown coloured coat and short legs. They are mostly solitary animals that feed on rodents, insects, birds, forest fruits and nuts. Martens are excellent climbers which live in all types of forests and in the mountains all the way up to the edge of the tree line. When it comes to climbing, they are even competitive with squirrels, which often end up as their meal. They like to hunt in trees and are often successful in finding food on the ground as well. Their droppings are long and thin. Because they mark their territory by defecating, their droppings are often found in conspicuous places such as on stones. rocks and logs along trails.

Body mass:

1,0 - 1,5 kg

Body length with tail:

40 - 55 cm, tail 20 - 25 cm

Mating period:

July - August

Birthing period:

April - May

Number of kits: 2 - 5

Habitat:

dense forest areas

Behaviour:

active at night, also during part of the day

Peculiarities:

a related species is the beech marten, which lives close to human habitations





The stoat is a member of the mustelid family. As is typical for mustelids, it has a long and elongated body. It has a brown back and a white belly. The tail is 8 - 10 cm long, brown with a black tip. It has a characteristic way of moving, where it's constantly making from 30 to 100 cm long jumps. It is a good climber and swimmer. Stoats are active both by day and night. They make their nests in hollow trees, rock crevices or underground tunnels. They also have well-developed vision. They feed on small rodents, occasionally also on birds, reptiles, bird eggs, larger insects, earthworms, frogs and various berries. Stoats look for food mainly on the ground. Their natural enemies are birds of prey, owls, foxes, wild and domestic cats and other martens.

Body mass: 120 - 300 g Body length with tail: 32 - 38 cm Birthing period: April - May Number of kits: 3 - 7 Habitat: forests, meadows, fields, agricultural areas Behaviour: each animal has its own territory in which it has several homes. While moving and hunting, it often stands on its hind two legs and observes its surroundinas. Peculiarities: changes colour from brown to white in late

autumn, with only the

tip of the tail remain-

ing black





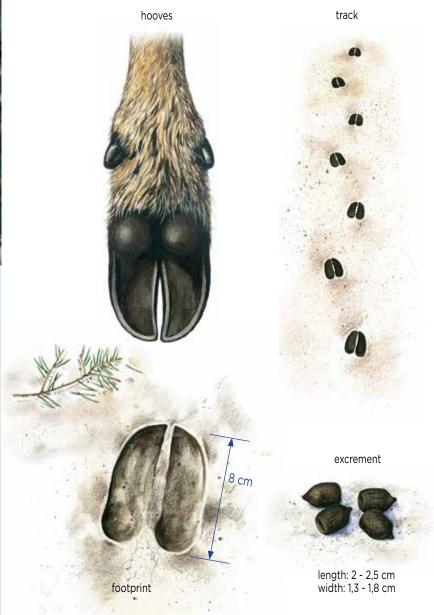
The red deer is the largest wild game animal in Central Europe. The male is adorned with powerful branched horns, which begin to grow at the age of 12 -14 months and fall off every year at the beginning of spring. Its head is long, ears large and pointy, with the tail measuring about 15 cm in length. Its fur is long, a reddish-brown colour in summer and grevish-brown in winter. The red deer is a very changeable animal species. Its body weight and size of its antlers are influenced by the living conditions of the environment. During the day, it rests in the shelter of trees, but at dusk it comes out to graze. The lifespan of red deer is 15 - 20 years, with the average being 5 - 6 years. Most of their diet consists of grasses, seeds and fruits. In winter, they can eat conifers and peel bark from trees. The mating of deer is called a deer rut. It starts in the middle of September and lasts until the beginning of October. The main predator of red deer is the wolf.

100 - 250 kg Shoulder height: 90 - 130 cm Mating period: September - October Birthing period: May - June Number of fawns: 1, rarely 2 Habitat: dense forests, fields Behaviour: active at dusk and at night. Lives in herds. Peculiarities: during the rut (mating), the males prove themselves with powerful mating calls

that echo across the

forests

Body mass:





The roe deer is a small species in the deer family. Its lower back is positioned higher than its shoulders, it has big eyes and ears and practically no tail. Its fur is long, rigid and brittle, a reddish-brown colour in the summer and grevish-brown in the winter. It is quick and nimble when moving through dense undergrowth. It saves itself from danger by quickly jumping into thickets. It prefers forests with a thick undergrowth but can also be found in grasslands and pastures that transition into smaller forests. It stays in the same area all year round, usually around where it was born. According to its eating habits, the roe deer picks out specific foods and does not graze, like the red deer. This means that it picks out its food and eats only the richest and most juicy parts of plants. Its main predators are wolves and lynxes, however young roes can also become the prey of foxes or larger birds of prey.

Body mass:

15 - 30 kg

Shoulder height:

65 - 75 cm

Mating period:

July - August

Birthing period:

May - June

Number of fawns: 1 - 3

Habitat:

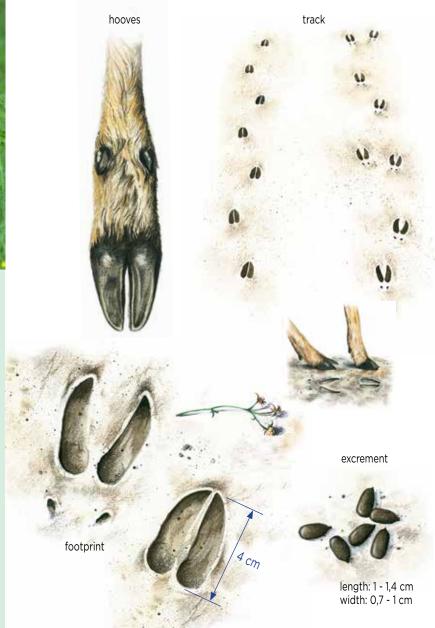
forests, fields, meadows

Behaviour:

active in the evening and morning hours, also at night. It often stays near human habitations.

Peculiarities:

ruminant. In winter, it lives in small herds.





The wild boar has a typical massive body stood on short and stout legs. The front part of the body is particularly strong, and the long, spiked head gradually narrows into a pointy snout. Its eyes are relatively small, the ears are short, wide and upright and its short tail ends with a tuft of hair. Its body is covered in strong bristly fur of grevish-brown or dark brown colour. It is very careful and active, especially at night, foraging through forest or agricultural soil, looking for worms, roots, grubs, insects, snails, eggs and carrion. The main predators of the wild boar are the lynx and the wolf, which prev on it particularly successfully in deep snow. The fox also preys on its young. In Slovenia, the wild boar was exterminated at the end of the 18th century but reappeared in the beginning of the 20th century and is now widespread throughout Slovenia.

Body mass:

50 - 180 kg

Shoulder height:

70 - 100 cm

Mating period:

November - December

Birthing period:

March - May

Number of piglets:

3 - 8

Habitat:

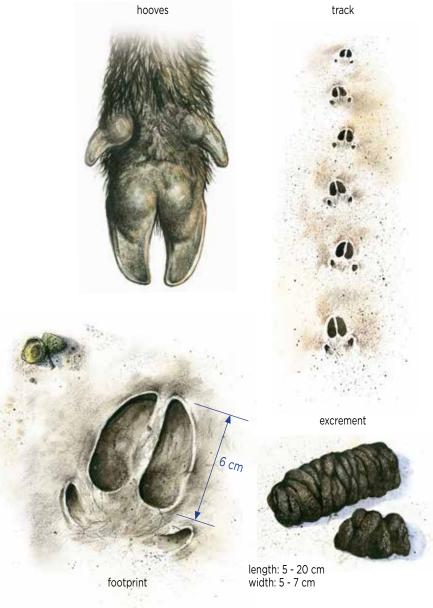
forest, meadows, fields

Behaviour:

nocturnal animal, lives in sounders. Adult male boars are solitary animals.

Peculiarities:

omnivorous. Can cause great damage in agriculture.





The chamois is brown to dark grey in colour with a white head. On each side of its head, a broad dark stripe runs across the eyes, all the way to the tip of its muzzle. The winter coat is longer than the summer coat, so it looks slender in the summer and robust and stocky in the winter. The chamois is a social animal that lives in herds. The largest herds are made up of goats with kids. Sexually mature males prefer to keep to themselves. Males are about a tenth larger than females. Natural enemies of adult chamois include the wolf and lynx. Younger specimens can also be threatened by golden eagles. The chamois lives in open rocky areas and overhangs above the forest line, but it can also be found in steep rocky gorges at lower elevations. It is well adapted to mountain conditions. It feeds on grass and herbs, while also chewing on trees and bushes.

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Body mass:

25 - 30 kg

Shoulder height: 75 cm

Mating period:

November - December

Birthing period:

May - June Number of kids: 1 - 2

Habitat:

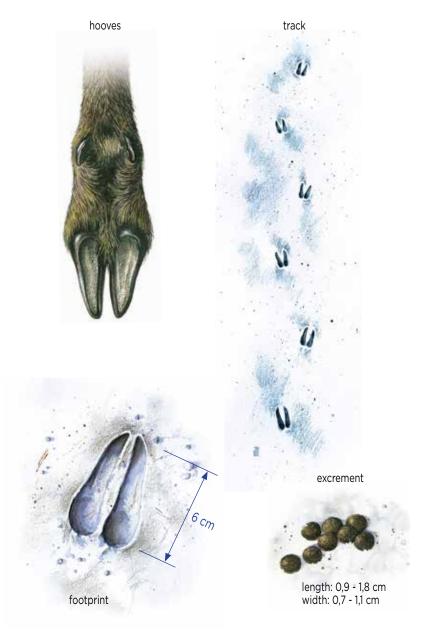
rocky areas, cliffs, higher elevations

Behaviour:

they live in herds and stay in inaccessible areas where they are safe from predators

Peculiarities:

both sexes develop horns that are resinous black in colour and curved at the tip. The horns are hollow and already start growing in the first year. The horns do not fall off and grow for the entire life of the animal.



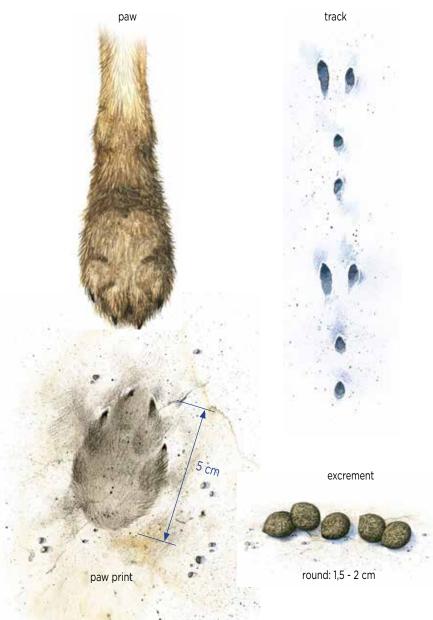


The hare is 40 to 70 cm long. Its upper part is yellowish-brown in colour with a grey coating, while the lower part is white. Its ears are very long with black tips, while the hind legs are longer and stronger than the front legs. It has thick fluffy fur, which gets replaced in the spring and autumn. Hares' best developed sense is their hearing. They are also nimble and fast runners and, relying on these skills, can quickly save themselves from predators. They are active both by day and night. If they get upset or excited, they tap with their paws on the ground. They feed on grass, herbs, clover, mushrooms, plant buds and fruits. It can also eat some crops, shrubs and young trees, chewing on their bark and young shoots. The lifespan of a European hare is 12 - 13 years, but in the wild, they rarely grow older than five years. Their greatest predator is probably the fox, but the young are also preved upon by birds of prev and martens.

 $2 - 5 \, \text{kg}$ Body length: 40 - 70 cm Mating period: January / August Birthing period: March / September Number of leverets: 1 - 6 (3 - 4 times a vear) Habitat: fields, meadows, pastures, forests Behaviour: solitary, hides near the around when in danger Peculiarities: the hare can have 3 - 4 litters per year. The leverets are born covered with fur and

can see immediately.

Body mass:





The dormouse is a particularly nocturnal rodent. Its fur is silvery grey in colour with a white belly. The tail is characteristically bushy. It is an excellent climber that does not like to stay on the ground. The body weight of the dormouse is very dependent on the season. Before winter, it fattens up for its winter sleep (hibernation). For the location of its winter sleep, it prefers to choose small underground caves or tunnels under the roots of large trees, while for daytime rest it chooses tree hollows, abandoned bird hatcheries and human habitations. It feeds mainly on seeds, nuts, fruits and insects, occasionally also on smaller mammals, eggs and young birds. Females give birth once a year and gestate for 30 days, with the birthing period lasting throughout the summer. During years when beech or oak do not bear fruit, dormice do not reproduce. It is preved upon by lynxes, foxes, weasels, martens and owls.

Body mass:

60 - 250 g, or more **Body length:**

14 - 20 cm, tail 10 - 16 cm

Mating period: June - July

Birthing period:

July - August

Number of young: 4 - 9

Habitat:

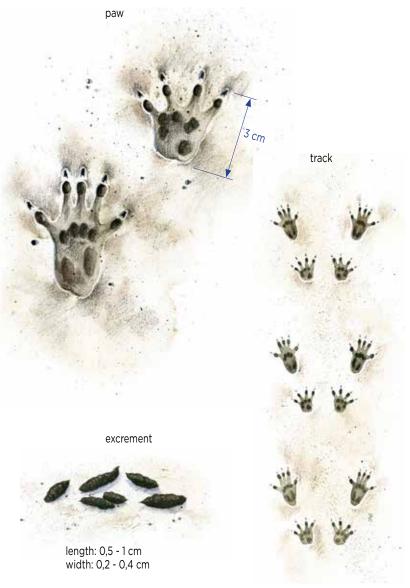
deciduous and mixed forests

Behaviour:

active at night when they search for food in the canopies. We often hear their characteristic "sneezing" calls and the sounds of them moving from tree to tree.

Peculiarities:

sometimes hibernates for up to 7 months





The Eurasian jay is a medium-sized bird from the crow family with very colourful plumage. It is most recognizable by its azure, black-striped cover feathers on the wings. The head, back, chest and belly have a soft pink-brown colour. It is fairly sociable and can form small flocks. It is an omnivorous bird that feeds mainly on acorns, nuts, seeds and insects but occasionally also preys upon young birds and small mammals. It stores beechnuts, acorns and other nuts in different locations and thus inadvertently plants many trees. It has 1 brood per year and lays eggs that are grey-blue-green with tiny rust spots. Both parents incubate the eggs for 16 to 18 days. The hatchlings are extremely vocal in colonies and can produce quite a racket.

Body mass:

160 - 180 g, or more **Size:**

34 cm, wingspan: 55 cm

Nesting period:

April - June

Number of hatchlings:

5 - 7

Living space:

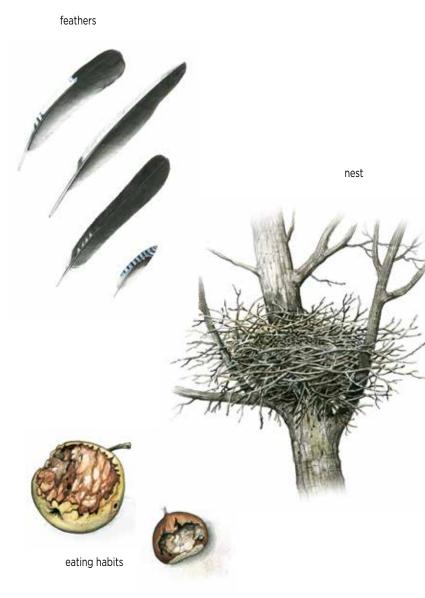
forests and larger parks

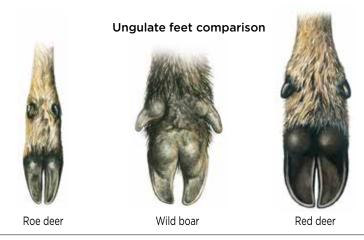
Behaviour:

when upset it can ruffle the feathers on its crown and head

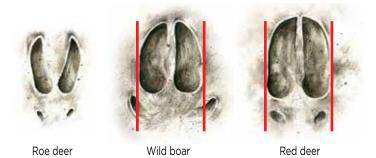
Peculiarities:

when it detects an owl, a goshawk, birds of prey, other predators or a human, it lets out its characteristic "scaaaaak" cry, which warns other animals of danger

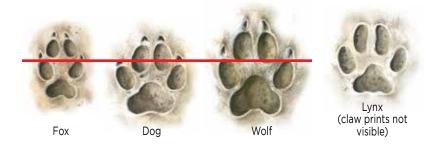




Ungulate footprints comparison



Distinguishing carnivoras' paw prints



How to behave in a bear area

Kočevsko is known as the land of bears, and although encounters with them are rare, it is good to know the guidelines on how to act in such a case.

The bear is a cautious animal, which as a rule perceives humans as dangerous and therefore avoids them and stays far away. Meeting a bear rarely happens, mostly when it is surprised or provoked, because in such a case it has a natural defensive reaction. The most common circumstances that lead to such behaviour are:

- an off-leash dog irritates a bear, then seeks refuge with its owner,
- surprising a female bear with its cubs,
- surprising a bear that has no possibility of immediate retreat,
- · approaching a bear while feeding,
- approaching a bear that has lost its fear of humans (habituated bear).

Therefore, in order to avoid an encounter with a bear, we must know and follow some general rules of behaviour areas where bears are present:

- in order to not surprise bears when visiting the forest, you should not keep too quiet. Warn them about your presence especially when passing through dense vegetation and in areas of low visibility,
- keep your dog on a leash, as the dog can irritate the bear and lead it straight back to the owner in an angry state,
- if you see a bear, do not approach or disturb it,
- never feed a bear!

When a bear detects a human, it will immediately leave the area, in most cases even before we can detect its presence. If an encounter with a bear should nevertheless occur, it is important to remain calm and assess the situation, so we offer you some useful tips on how to behave in such a case:

- If you notice a bear from far away, slowly move back the way you came from and leave the bear enough space to continue its path. Never run!
- If you find yourself in the immediate vicinity of a bear: stand still, keep calm and slowly move in the direction from where you came. Move slowly, without sudden movements and do not scream.
- Do not throw stones or other objects at or in the direction of the bear
- In exceptional cases, the bear can carry out a so-called false attack, in which there is no physical contact. Its purpose is simply to scare away the unwanted visitor. In such a case, do not try to defend yourself, simply stand still or slowly lie face-down on the ground, while trying to remain as quiet as you can until the attack is over. By pretending to be dead, you will show the bear that you are not a threat and physical contact will most likely not even occur.
- Remember: never run from a bear or climb a tree! Bears are good climbers and can reach speeds of up to 50 km/h.
- Never approach bear cubs, even if they seem curious or look abandoned.

Green tips

- don't leave any traces of your presence in the forest and take all waste back with you.
- do not enter primeval forests (marked with blue horizontal lines) and do not collect protected plants, fruits or flowers, and do not destroy the undergrowth,
- use only beaten forest paths,
- when visiting forests, do not make unnecessary noise that would disturb the animals and do not feed or touch forest animals.
- before visiting the forest, make sure to wear appropriate shoes and clothing and bring all other necessary equipment as well as enough food and water.

