



EUROPEAN BISON—This animal is larger than his more famous American cousin, but his species is now reduced to a mere 93 pureblood head.

WILDLIFE

European Bison May Have Chance of Survival

► **EUROPEAN BISON**, a species distinct from and larger than the more familiar American bison, have a bare chance for survival as a species. First general stock-taking since the war shows the existence of 93 animals, 50 of them cows. The first postwar pedigree book has recently been published by the International Society for the Protection of the European Bison, under the editorship of Dr. Jan Zabinski, director of the Warsaw Zoological Park.

Only animals known to be pure-bloods of the European species are listed in the book; the rather numerous hybrids with the American bison are excluded. Eleven specimens in Germany constitute a borderline case, since they might have an admixture of American bison blood.

Possible value of the European-American hybrids in restoring the European bison species is not excluded, though these animals will not be used for that purpose unless the need becomes evident. A prewar project, promoted mainly in Germany, called for breeding mixed-blood cows only to European bulls, thus gradually increasing the proportion of European blood in successive generations of offspring until practically no American bison strain was left in them. This procedure was known in German as "Verdraengungszucht," or suppression-breeding.

Places where European bison may be bred in Europe now number nine, with three in Poland, two each in Germany and Sweden, and one each in the Netherlands and the USSR. There are also a few animals on the estate of the Duke of Bedford, in England.

The European bison, or zubr, as the animal is also called, once ranged in great numbers over the entire continent and well into Asia, as its images on ancient Mesopotamian cylinder-seals testify. It was a prime game animal throughout antiquity, known until late Roman times in Gaul and in the forests of the Rhine and Danube.

With the advance of civilization during the Middle Ages, and the increase of population in Europe, its numbers dwindled, though at least two numerous herds survived into recent times, one in eastern Poland, at Bialowiez, the other in the wild lands of the Caucasus. During the time of anarchy and hunger after the first World War the latter herd was practically exterminated, but a few animals survived of the Polish group.

This small herd at Bialowiez is still one of the breeding nuclei. There they have been joined by the handful of animals representing the only survival of the Caucasian strain. Breeding is now carefully controlled, not only to insure if possible the survival of the European bison as a species but to preserve the different strains within the species.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Foundation Bill Fails

Hope for enactment of a science foundation bill is again frustrated with the recent adjournment of Congress. This marks three straight years of failure.

► **SPEEDY ADJOURNMENT** of Congress has killed hopes that a national science foundation might be set up this year.

The foundation has been proposed as a civilian agency to direct government support of basic science in fields outside the realm of the Atomic Energy Commission. It has been termed a "must" for three years by leaders in science, education and the military.

But legislation for the foundation has failed to become law for three straight years. In 1946, the Senate passed a science foundation bill, but the House failed to act. Last year, President Truman vetoed a foundation bill at the end of a session.

Bills believed to meet the administrative objections raised in the President's veto statement were introduced in both the House and Senate early this year. The Senate passed it, for the third straight year, but the measure died in the House.

A move to get it enacted by the House with unanimous consent was blocked by an objection from Rep. Robert F. Rockwell, Rep., Colo. The bill, brought out of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce late in the session, did not come up for debate on the floor of the Lower Chamber.

When President Truman called Congress back into session July 26, he urged a national science foundation among his secondary requests. No action was taken on the bill during the short session. The yet-to-be-established foundation even came in for a recommended \$15,000,000 in the budget submitted last January.

Meanwhile, no one seems to be opposed to the foundation itself. Some of the details have been controversial, but no open attack on the establishment of the foundation has been made.

The foundation was first suggested by the scientists who directed the mobilization of science in World War II. They envisioned it as a peacetime successor to the famed Office of Scientific Research and Development. It was originally proposed that it would take over from OSRD, which has long since closed shop. The job which the foundation was expected to do has fallen to other government agencies, particularly military organizations such as the Office of Naval Research.

Three years after the end of the war, the foundation which was to play a major role in government aid to postwar science has not been started.

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