

Historia poznania, występowanie i rozmieszczenie świstaka tatrzańskiego (*Marmota m. latirostris* Kratochvíl, 1961) w Tatrach

The history of research, current occurrence and distribution of the Tatra marmot (*Marmota marmota latirostris* Kratochvíl, 1961) in the Tatra Mountains

WOJCIECH GAŚNIENICA BYRCYN

Tatrzański Park Narodowy
34-500 Zakopane, ul. Chałubińskiego 42 a
e-mail: wgbyrcyn@tpn.pl

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Abstrakt: Podgatunek świstaka *Marmota marmota latirostris* żyje wyłącznie w Tatrach, gdzie osiąga północną granicę zasięgu geograficznego gatunku. W Polsce ssak ten należy do grupy najmniej licznych zwierząt kręgowych i jest zaliczany do grupy silnie zagrożonych. Stan jego populacji w Tatrach Polskich liczy 150–200 osobników, a w całych Tatrach niespełna 1000 zwierząt. Po polskiej i słowackiej stronie tych gór zinwentaryzowano 207 nor głównych, w których hibernują rodziny tych gryzoni, a w Niżnich Tatrach – 46. Większość tych nor w Tatrach Polskich zlokalizowano na wysokości 1750–1950 m n.p.m. ($x = 1870$ m n.p.m.). W całym tym masywie pionowe rozmieszczenie stanowisk nor rozciąga się od 1380 do 2330 m n.p.m. Gatunek ten preferuje budowę nor na stokach o wystawie: wschodniej, południowo-wschodniej i południowej. Cały jego areał występowania w naszym kraju znajduje się w Tatrzańskim Parku Narodowym.

Summary

During the last glaciation the Alpine Marmot *Marmota marmota* (Linnaeus, 1758) was common in western Europe, but until now it has survived in the two enclaves: the Alps and the Tatra Mountains. At present, its main and natural area of occurrence is Alp mountains populated by the subspecies *Marmota marmota marmota* (Linnaeus, 1758). The Tatra Marmot *M. marmota latirostris* occurs in the Tatra Mountains within the bilateral Polish-Slovakian Tatra National Park (Fig. 1 and 2). It is an endemic to the Tatra Mountains as well as the West Carpathians and is under legal protection both in Poland and Slovakia. It was at risk of extinction in the past. Even nowadays, the marmot is included in the Red List of Endangered Species in both countries.

Marmota marmota latirostris Kratochvíl, 1961 occurs also in the Low Tatra Mountains, where it was introduced. The gene-flow between both subspecies could have been occurred in the XIX century, what was mentioned by some authors, but this should be eventually clarified by genetic research.

The first information about the presence of the marmot in the Tatras dates back to the beginning of the XVIII century. Well before this, the species had been known by the inhabitants of Podtatrze. They

used to take the advantage of its meat but mostly the fat, which, in the folk medicine, was considered a miraculous drug. The exploitation of the marmot was the reason why its distribution became drastically limited. In 1864 only 8 valleys in the High Tatras were populated by this species. The survival of this animal was possible due to the consequently undertaken protective efforts. After the establishment of national parks in the Tatras in the middle of XX century, the recovery of *Marmota* began and it has been lasting till nowadays.

This work presents the data on distribution and biology of *Marmota m. latirostris* from whole area of its geographic range in the Tatra Mountains. There are also given the locations that were known in the past but are not currently populated by these species because of many different reasons (Fig. 3). The number of wintering burrows in the Tatras is 207 and in the Slovakian Lower Tatras – 46. Most of them occur at an elevation ranging from (1380) 1750 to 1950 m a.s.l. ($x = 1870$ m a.s.l. ± 35 m).

The distribution of the marmot is determined mainly by food supply and possibility to dig burrows and, also, by predators' pressure as well as various human activities within its home-ranges. Since the establishment of the national parks in the Tatras – the protection of the area consequently limited many types of negative anthropological impacts. Unfortunately, the negative impacts of tourism sport activity in the Tatra Mountains and poaching remain the important limiting factors of the species distribution and population growth, especially in the Polish Tatras. It has to be admitted that the protection of *Marmota m. latirostris* and its habitat is a priority in both borderland national parks. Moreover, this species is also guarded properly within the Low Tatras and it can constitute valuable gene resource for the Tatra Marmots.