

Turopolje Pig

The Turopolje pig came close to extinction during the war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The rescue of the pigs from between the lines of battle by members of the SAVE network is probably one of the most dramatic rescue operations SAVE has ever conducted. As the war in Croatia broke out in 1991, the pigs could no longer be left to roam on the pastures. Keeping the pigs inside incurred higher costs for farmers. The meat market had collapsed and pigs were being shot by soldiers for food. SAVE, together with the Schönbrunn Tierpark in



Austria and EuroNatur, were able to remove some animals to safer places during the winter of 1993/94 whilst marking others so that a herdbook could be started. The interest shown in the pig breed helped to bring hope in a difficult time for the local farmers.

Turopolje pigs are excellently adapted to the floodplains of the Sava river and are, thus, unique. They are able to look for food in the water and sometimes even dive for mussels. The breed is descended from the lard-type pigs of Croatia crossed with local meat pigs, then crossed with English Berkshire pigs in the 19th century.

The exciting rescue of the Turopolje pig breed was a success story – but this success was only possible because there was somewhere to place the pigs at short notice. Rescue stories such as this led to the concept of Ark and Rescue Stations, which resulted in the projects Arca-Net (see: www.arca-net.info) and ELBARN (see: www.elbarn.net)

Good Chances for Turopolje Pigs

The adventurous rescue operations of civil-war times belong to the past now. Structured breeding is the rule today. The Croatian partner has now created the preconditions necessary for an independent self-management of the project. The rough pastures and flooded hard-wood valleys situated between Sisak and Stara Gradiska were fused into the Nature Park Lonjsko Polje which comprises of ca. 500km². A park administration was set up. Biologist Goran Gugic who has worked dedicatedly for years on behalf of Euronatur for the establishment of the park, was elected as park director. Gugic also co-ordinated the Turopolje Project of the SAVE Foundation in the region.

The Nature Park Lonjsko Polje represents a cultural landscape which was typical for large parts of Central Europe about 100-150 years ago. Today, the flooded river valley and rough pastures in Lonjsko Polje are an unique "living" example of such a landscape. With the creation of the Nature Park, governmental conservation measures for the Turopolje Pig are reinforced. The breed is the most endangered Croatian livestock species besides the Dubrovnik Pramenka sheep. The park administration has obliged itself to actively support the conservation of Turopolje Pigs and to integrate the pig into the park' conservation concept. The animals proved to be an important factor for the management of the rough pastures: they keep them open. Since the year 2000, funding has been applied for and approved to buy breeding animals and to establish a nucleus-herd owned by the park.

SAVE Foundation could hand over its conservation project to the Park's Administration with a safe conscience already in spring 2001.

One of the most difficult SAVE-projects finds thus its end. Thank you to all activists involved in the project! Additionally, we would like to especially thank

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