

Foreword



This and the previous issue of the *Estonian Journal of Ecology* include selected presentations of the 7th Baltic Theriological Conference held in Hotel Lepamäe in southwestern Estonia on the coast of the Gulf of Riga on 1–5 October 2008. The conference was organized by the Estonian Theriological Society.

This conference brought together over 100 participants from 14 countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Finland, France, Japan, Norway, Poland, Russia, Spain, and Sweden. During two and half days 40 oral and 34 poster communications on mammals in the Baltic fauna were presented. The presentations ranged from small mammals to large carnivores and from ecology and genetics to sociology and conservation. The conference was topped with the Baltic Large Carnivore Initiative workshop entitled “Population Level Management of Large Carnivores in the Baltic Region: The Lynx in the Baltic Region”.

This conference, differently from previous ones, invited two speakers to talk on specific topics of general interest. The following presentations were made:

1. Dr Johan Michaux (France): Phylogeographic history of North European mammals: implications on their genetic diversity and conservation
2. Dr Heikki Henttonen (Finland): Zoonotic rodent-borne viruses in Europe.

The organization of the 7th Baltic Theriological Conference in 2008 would have been unthinkable without the generous support from the following institutions: Environmental Investment Centre, State Forest Management Centre, Tallinn Zoological Gardens, and Vendomar Ltd.

This was the 7th conference of its kind since 1990 and this decade-long tradition deserves a short retrospect. In the late 1980s the researchers from three Baltic countries meeting during regular mammoth-size conferences of the All-Union Theriological Society in Moscow often discussed the need to meet regionally. It was realized that smaller regional meetings would ease the communication between experts in these countries. The importance of launching such conferences was further highlighted by the lack of academic research groups on mammals in Estonia and Latvia. Only Lithuania had such research groups at the Institute of Ecology. The conferences were hoped to increase interest in mammals, especially among young researchers.

These ideas were finally materialized in the first Baltic Theriological Conference at Kääriku (Estonia) in 1990. This first conference was met with great enthusiasm by all attendants. It was agreed to hold the conference every third

year and, to reduce the administrative load, it was decided to rotate the organizing country. Since then conferences have been grown in all aspects (Table). Beginning from 1996 proceedings of the conferences have been published.

These meetings have really met the expectations: they have provided a forum for exchanging ideas and launching new joint projects and young researchers have had an opportunity to make their very first presentations in an international conference. Last but not least, a number of students have become enchanted by mammal research challenges. This has often played a decisive role in choosing their professional career.

History of the Baltic Theriological Conferences in figures

No. of conference	Country	Location	Time	No. of countries	No. of participants	No. of oral presentations	No. of posters	Reference of publication
I.	Estonia	Kääriku	1990	?	>4	?	?	–
II.	Lithuania	Vilnius	20–23 Sep 1993	?	?	?	?	–
III.	Latvia	Salaspils	26–30 Sep 1996	6	67	15	22	<i>Proc. Latvian Acad. Sci., Section B</i> , 1998, 52 (1/2) and <i>B</i> , 1999, 53 (2) (601)
IV.	Estonia	Sagadi	18–20 Apr 1999	8	79	15	29	<i>Folia theriologica</i> , 5, 2000, Estonian Acad. Publ., 176 pp.
V.	Lithuania	Birštonas	15–18 Apr 2002	11	57	28	28	<i>Acta Zool. Lituonica</i> , 2002, 12 (4); 2003, 13 (1)
VI.	Latvia	Kempeni	11–15 Nov 2005	12	102	29	29	<i>Acta Zool. Lituonica</i> , 2006, 16 (2)
VII.	Estonia	Lepanina	1–5 Oct 2008	14	104	40	34	<i>Estonian J. Ecol.</i> , 2009, 58 (2, 3)

Tiit Maran