

Distribution, abundance and damages caused by European beavers (*Castor fiber*) in Polish forests

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Based on data from the National Beaver Census, carried out in Poland in 2000-2001, and using data from Polish State Forestry and National Parks we analysed the distribution and abundance of the beavers in Poland and damages caused by this species in Polish forests. The beaver has been recorded in 252 Forest Districts (out of 413) and 13 National Parks (out of 19). Based on collected data we estimate the approximate size of beaver population to be 14,500 individuals. Tree damage caused by cutting and debarking by beavers show clear seasonal pattern, they were recorded in the autumn-winter period. Intensity of such damage was correlated with the number of recorded beavers. Tree damage caused by cutting and debarking occurred in 25% of forest districts settled by beavers, while flooding was observed in 29%. Tree species that beavers preferred the most were: oak (*Quercus* sp.), willow (*Salix* sp.) and birch (*Betula* sp.), whereas black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Scotch pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and lime (*Tilia* sp.) were the least preferred. Based on low intensity and spatial distribution of damages we concluded that this species does not generate a strong negative impact on Polish riparian forests.

Keywords: beaver abundance, beaver distribution, *Castor fiber*, forest ecosystem, tree damage