

Wolf ecology, distribution and feeding habits in forests of Latvia

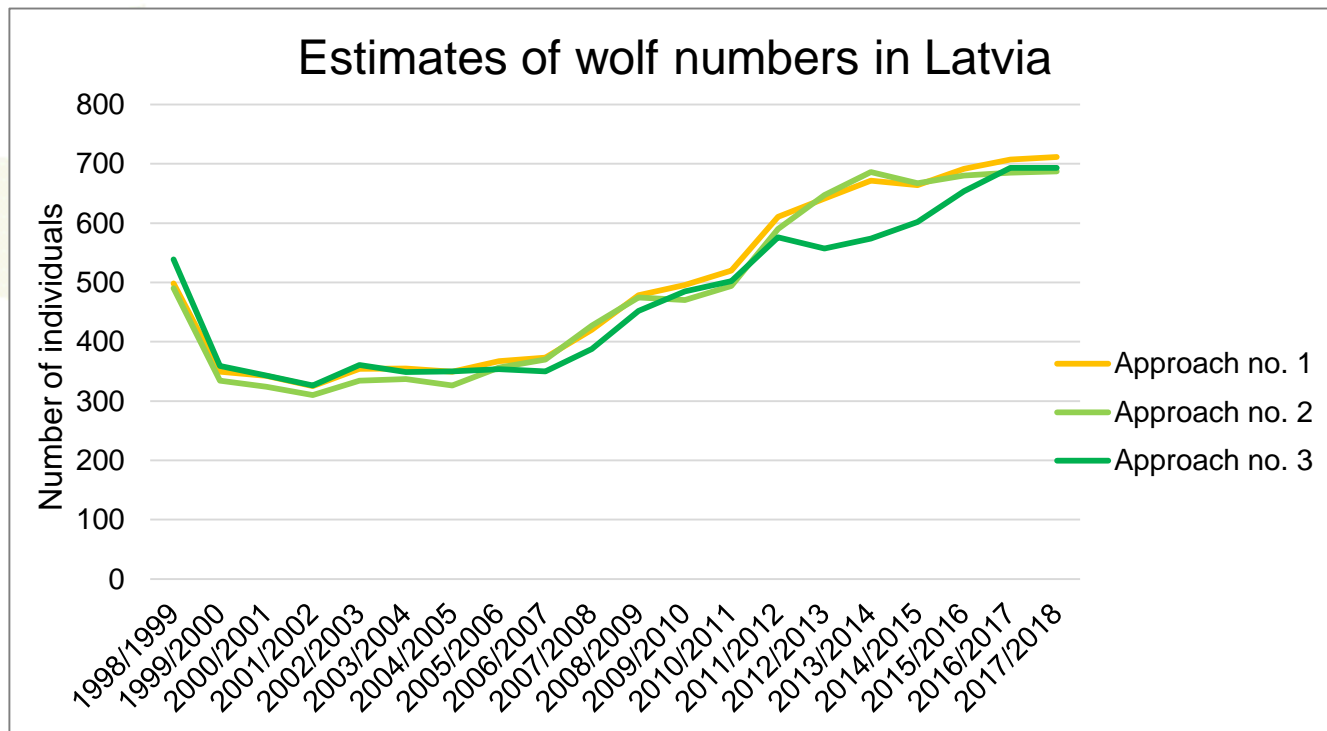
Agrita Žunna

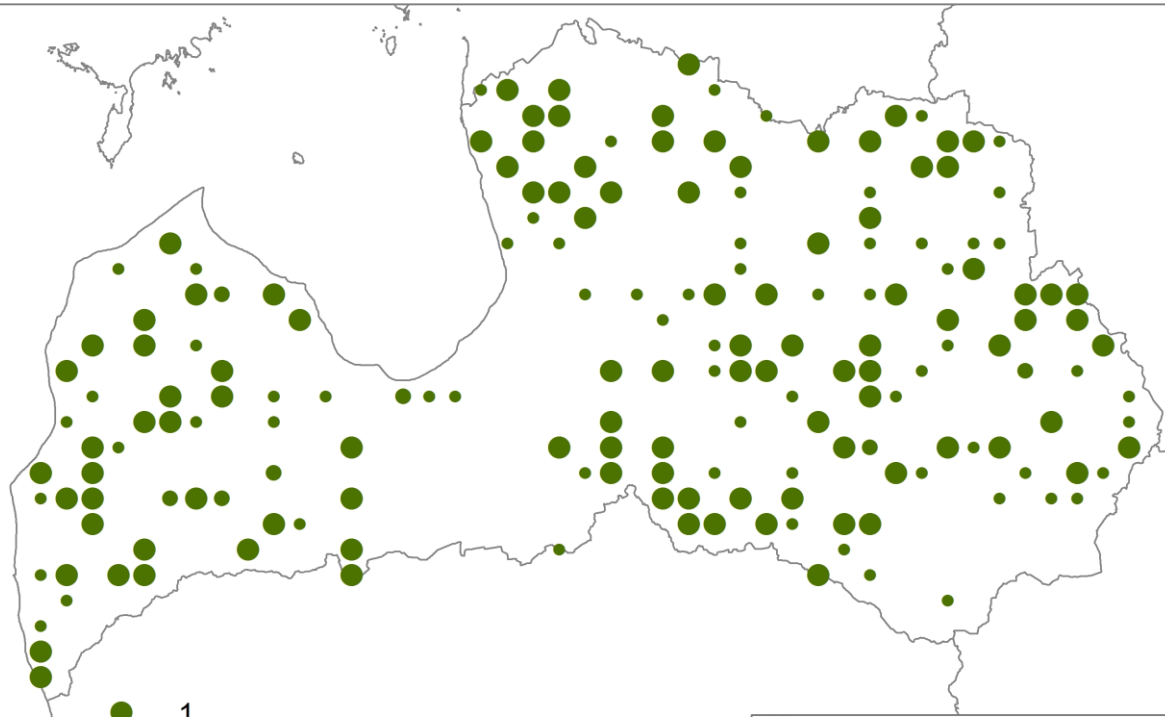
Latvian State Forest Research Institute «Silava»

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- The wolf (*Canis lupus*) is a protected species with an allowance for restricted use in Latvia.
- Latvia is one of the few European countries where wolf harvest takes place.
- Since joining the European Union in 2004, restrictions on wolf hunting were introduced – a closed season from the 1st April till 15th July and a set hunting quota for each hunting season.
- Population status is deemed favourable.

- In order to estimate wolf numbers, age-at-harvest data and age-structured population reconstruction methods were used (Fry 1957, Skalski et al. 2005), which allow to back-calculate harvest data to year-specific and age-specific abundance levels and estimate annual abundance by totaling the age classes.

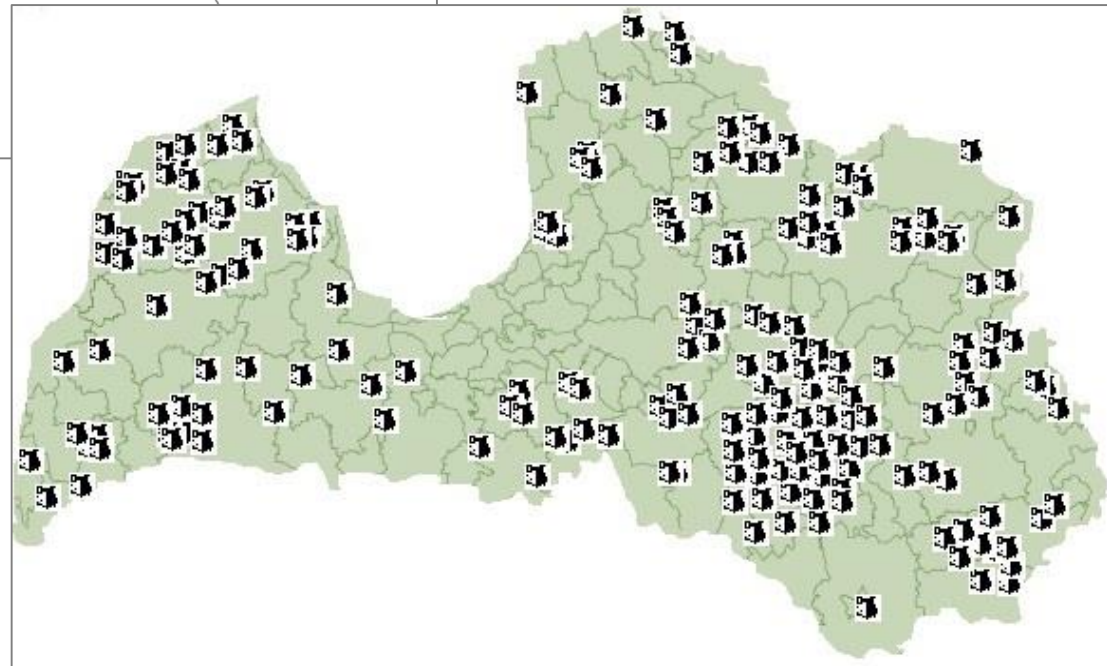




Distribution of wolves based on harvest data 2012-2016

Distribution of wolves based on harvest data in hunting season 2017/2018

(<https://www.zm.gov.lv/valsts-meza-dienests/statiskas-lapas/medibas/es-sfera-esoso-sugu-monitorings?nid=1697#jump>)



Habitat



- Availability of food and safe hiding places for resting and making dens are the main requirements
- Today, forests are the main wolf habitat in Europe because carnivores feel safe there
- Often choose small islands on mineral soils in bogs as sites for safe dens due to their difficult access for humans
- Also occur in farmlands, provided that they are interspersed with forest patches and other suitable hideaways

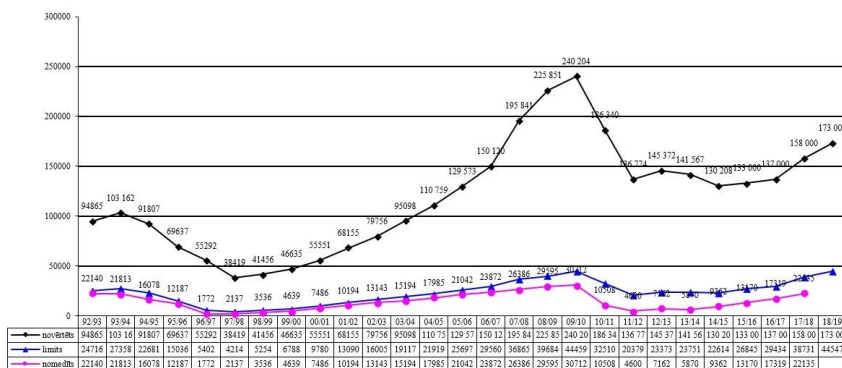
Forests and Forestry



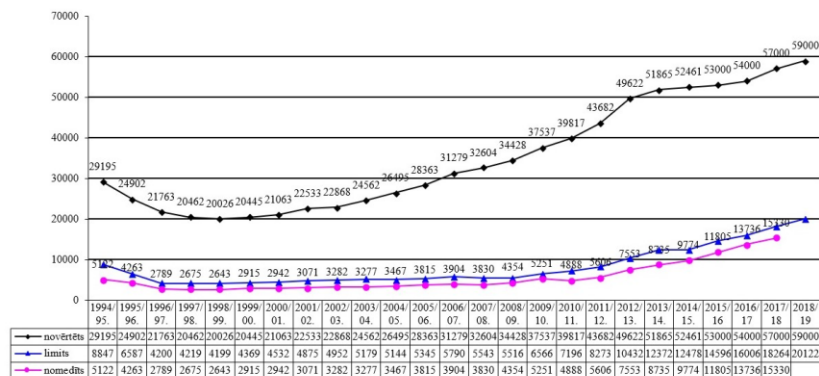
- Ungulate concentration and abundance
- Easier to travel – roads and ditches
- Thinning and clear cuts make it easier to locate and catch prey

- Hunting – keeps high numbers of game animals, provides supplemental feeding

Stīmu (*Capreolus capreolus*) skaita dinamika Latvijā.

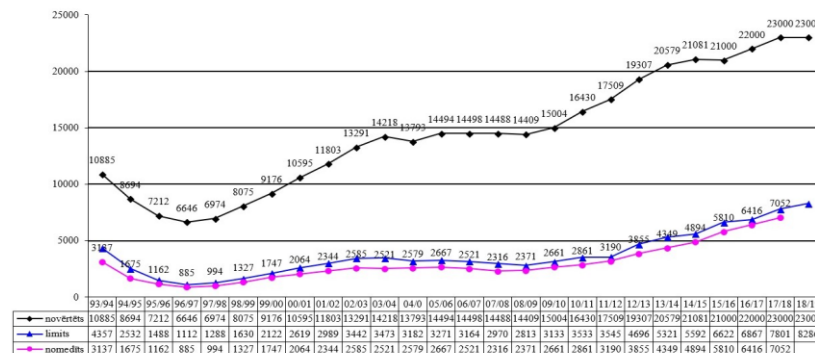


Staltbriežu (*Cervus elaphus*) skaita dinamika Latvijā.



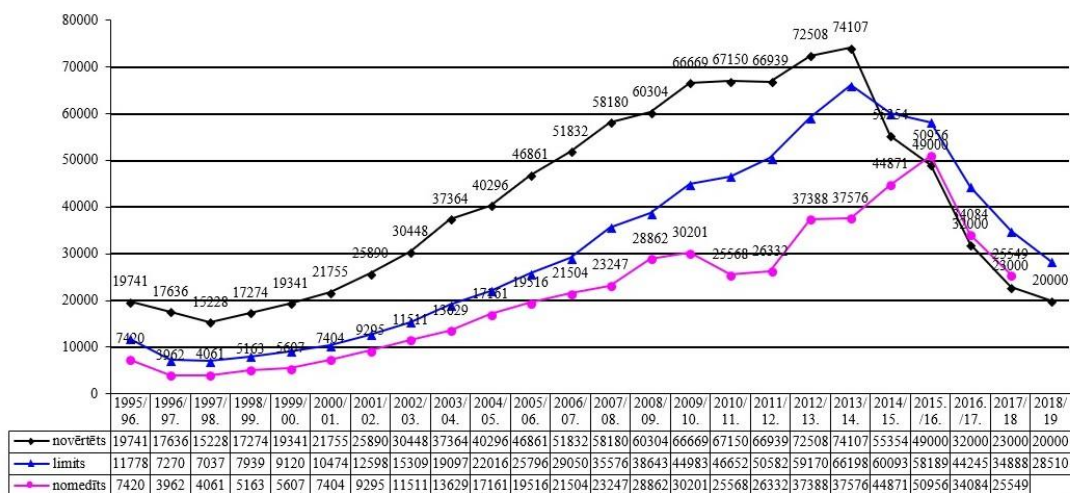
- Ungulate harvest:
 - Roe deer – 17 000 – 22 000
 - Red deer – 13 000 – 15 000
 - Moose – 6000 – 7000
 - Wild boar – 25 000 – 34 000

Aļņu (*Alces alces*) skaita dinamika Latvijā.



- African swine fever – in Latvia since summer 2014.

Meža cūku (*Sus scrofa*) skaita dinamika Latvijā.

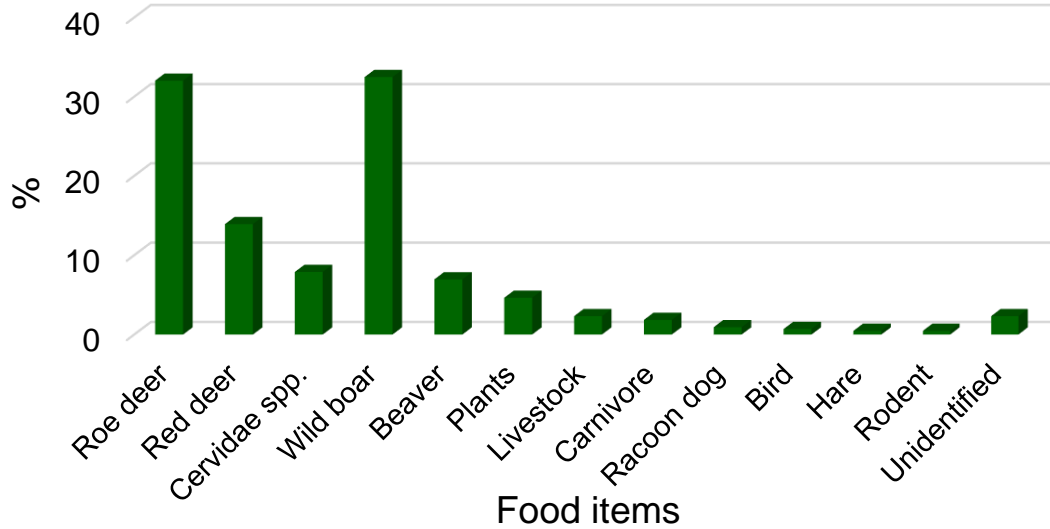


- Lynx as a competitor

Food habits

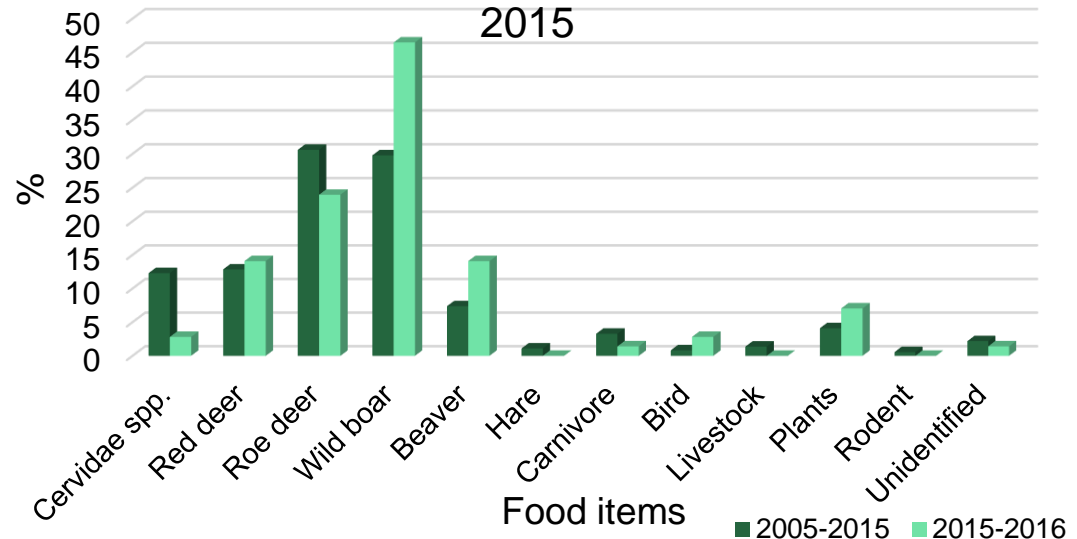


Food habits of wolf (2008 - 2018)



Stomach content analyses of harvested wolves

Food habits of wolf until and after April 1st



- Changes in the populations of the large carnivores depending on hunting pressure
- Developing a system for genetic monitoring of wildlife species
- Renewal of the grey wolf *Canis lupus* conservation plan

Thanks to my colleagues –
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Thank you!