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The wild bear that visited ZOO Ljubljana in April was found dead in June 2009!

For the occasion of the EAZA Campaign 2009 “Dirty Dozen”, ZOO Ljubljana prepared an exhibit with 16 large panels. Reporters were invited to the opening on April 16, 2009. However, in the early morning hours on the day of the “Dirty Dozen” exhibit opening, the security guard heard some loud rustle coming from the bushes from outside the ZOO Ljubljana entrance. To his surprise it was brown bear. Both the security guard and the bear got scared. The bear escaped into the forest surrounding ZOO Ljubljana, while the security guard went into his office to call the zookeeper on duty. Together they checked the bear enclosures and realized that none of the zoo’s bears were missing.

They then informed the information centre about the bear as it became clear that the brown bear had wandered into the centre of Ljubljana from the hill area of Rožnik. This is a protected wooded landscape park in the middle of Ljubljana and Ljubljana’s main recreational park.

The policemen and an intervention group, which is taking care of problem-causing bears in Slovenia, came rushing in. They tried to catch and tranquilize the bear all day and finally they succeeded in the late evening.

The bear was named “Rožnik” and was equipped with a GPS collar and released into the forest in the southern part of Slovenia, which is a main habitat of Slovenia’s bear population.



Video footage of the bear capture can be view at http://www.carnivorecampaign.eu/media/video_bear_release.php

However, two days later it reappeared in the proximity of Ljubljana, some 70 km from the location where it was released. The media contacted the zoo and together with the opening of the “Dirty Dozen” exhibit the zoo use the opportunity to explain to the public the problems carnivores in Slovenia and in Europe are facing.

This incident with the brown bear has contributed to a lot of awareness in the media in Slovenia; however the need to understand the problems and dealing with them appropriately still needs to be developed. The numbers of bears in Slovenia is also lower than believed – Slovenian scientists have estimated by faecal samples that the bear population in Slovenia is only between 394 – 475 individuals.

Unfortunately the story has a sad ending. Bear “Rožnik” was roaming Ljubljana’s surroundings and was illegally killed near the border in Austria. There was a last GPS location on 30 May and the remains were found on 11 June 2009. It was found without its head, fur and legs in a stream near the main road at the Slovenia border.

By Irena Furlan, biologist at

