



**LIFE
DINALP
BEAR**

Population level management and
conservation of brown bears in northern
Dinaric Mountains and the Alps



Analysis of hunting organizations questionnaire

Action C.6: Implementation and promotion of the
non-consumptive use of brown bears

DRAFT

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Introduction

Brown bear is often presented as symbol of preserved nature and Slovenian forests, but it is seldom included in the tourist offer of the country. Slovenian tourism development strategy emphasizes the importance of environmental responsibility, connection to nature and development of nature related tourist offer (Slovenia Green). Therefore the development of tourist products like bear watching or observation of bear presence signs in bears habitat, has a potential to become an important part of Slovenian tourist offer and can contribute to economies of hunting organizations and local communities.

The aim of the action C.6 is the development of the guidelines for sustainable use of brown bears in ecotourism, as well as promotion of bear watching and bear photography products. For implementation of such activities the cooperation with hunting organizations is crucial, since they are one of the key stakeholders in a bear-related tourism undertaking. Therefore we have developed a questionnaire for hunting organizations to better understand how brown bear tourism products have already been marketed so far and if there is an interest to develop these products in the future.

Methodology

We have prepared a questionnaire for all hunting clubs in the area of permanent brown bear presence in Slovenia (Figure 1). Their addresses were obtained on the webpage of The Hunters Association of Slovenia, and the questionnaires were sent to 75 hunting clubs. In the introductory part we have asked that the questionnaire is filled in by hunting club president, director or the person responsible for hunting guests and other tourist activities. The questionnaires were sent in the middle of June and collected approximately for a month, until middle of July 2015. Two weeks after mailing the questionnaires we have called the hunting clubs that didn't yet respond. If there was no telephone number provided, the reminder with an electronic version of the questionnaire was sent by e-mail.

The questionnaire contains 27 questions, intended to research which hunting organizations are marketing bear watching and bear photography products and which hunting organizations would be interested in the marketing of these activities in the future.

Three questionnaires were disseminated to the state hunting reserves with the special purpose and the results are presented separately.

Obtained data was processed in Microsoft Office Excel 2010 and IBM SPSS Statistics 20.



Figure 1: Hunting grounds in the area of permanent brown bear presence.

Results

i.) Hunting clubs

Completed questionnaires were obtained from 55 hunting clubs (72% response rate). In most cases questionnaires were completed by a president or a director of the hunting club (83.7%).

Questionnaires were sent only to the hunting clubs in the area with permanent bear presence, therefore most of the hunting clubs (n=50) is carrying out bear hunting and many of them offer bear hunt also as a service to guests. Based on the estimation of the hunting clubs, the interest for bear hunting in last five years have remained the same (63.3%) or decreased (30.6%) (Figure 2). Main reason behind this trend, as reported by the respondents, was the costly preparation of a bear trophy. Besides bear hunting most of the sampled hunting clubs also offer other services to their guests, most of them offer guidance around the hunting ground and transport (Figure 3).

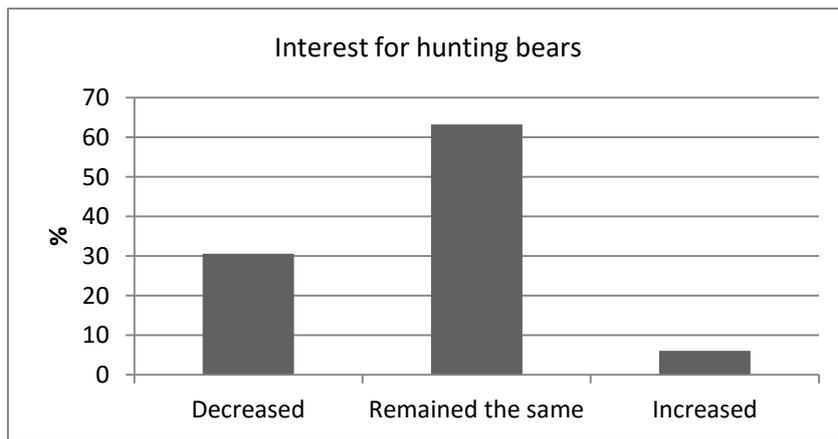


Figure 2: “In your opinion, has the interest for bear hunt in last 5 years increased or decreased?”

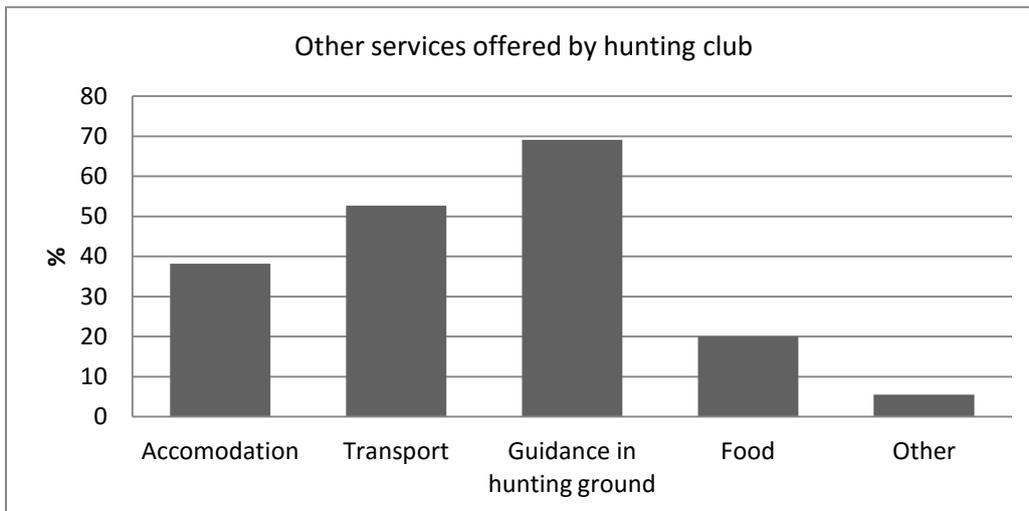


Figure 3: “Besides hunting, do you offer guests any of the following services?”

Compared to bear hunting, not many hunting clubs are marketing bear watching products so far (n=9, 4). However, there were 20 hunting clubs that are currently not marketing these products but would be interested in doing so in the future, mostly because of the expected additional income and promotion of their hunting ground or hometown. Nine hunting clubs also reported interest in setting up a special hide used for bear photography.

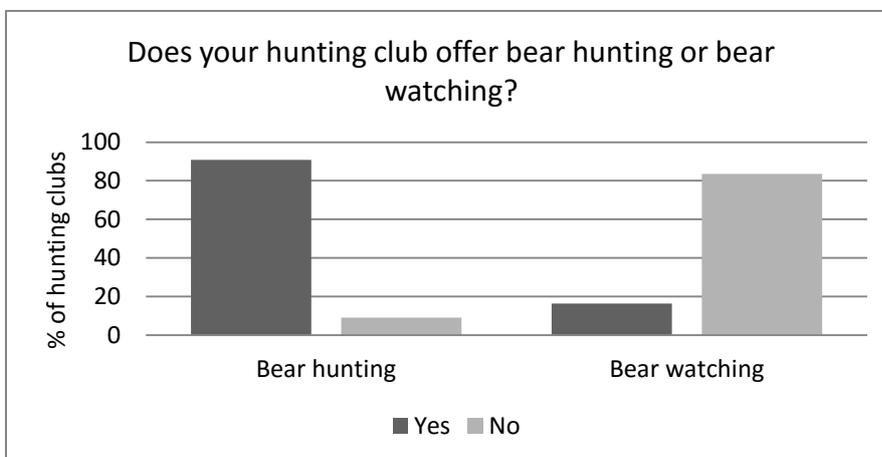


Figure 4: Percentage of hunting clubs offering bear hunting compared to percentage of hunting clubs offering bear watching activities.

Interest for bear hunt among guests is greatest in October and November, while data from hunting clubs that are already marketing bear watching or photography show that biggest interest for these activities is during summer period, most of all in May and June (Figure 5). Currently 43% of bear watching activities are taking place on the same facilities (same hides) as bear hunting. Same facilities can be used as there is not much time overlap between both activities during summer months; however, some caution in planning of visits is needed during April, October and November.

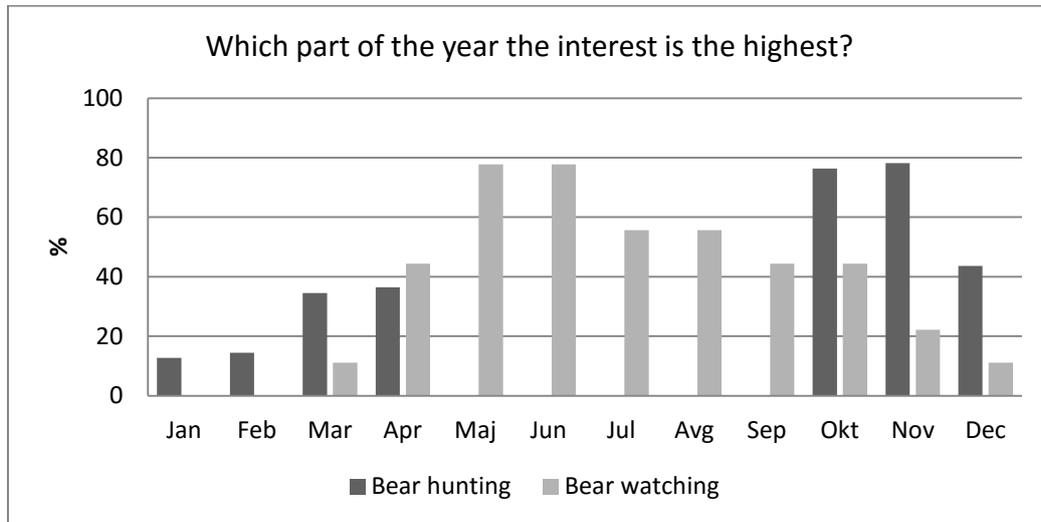


Figure 5: Interest for bear hunting and bear watching during the year.

In the Table 1 the average number of bear hunt guests per hunting club in one year is compared to the average number of bear watching guests. Hunting clubs have on average one hunting guest per year. These guests are mostly coming from Germany, Austria and Italy. Mean price they are willing to pay for the bear hunt in hunting clubs that have provided this answer (n=28) is 1.234 €.

Those hunting clubs already offering bear watching have approximately 11 guests interested in such products per year and mainly they come from France, Spain or Italy (Table 1). Mean price that hunting clubs marketing the bear watching are charging is 66 € (n=4). Approximate revenues from both activities are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of number of reported guests and revenues for bear hunt and bear watching in hunting clubs.

Activity	Minimum number of guests in 3 years per hunting club	Maximum number of guests in 3 years per hunting club	Average number of guests per year per hunting club	Mean of the most frequent price for each activity	Approximate revenue for hunting club per year
Bear hunting	1	8	1,3	1.234 €	1.604 €
Bear watching	8	100	11,1	66 €	733 €

Hunting clubs offering bear watching report that maximum number of guests taken for bear watching in one day is on average 4,5 and maximum number of guests that are on the hunting hide for bear watching or photography at the same time is on average 2,5. In most cases (63%) guests have 80% chance of seeing a bear while bear watching (Figure 6).

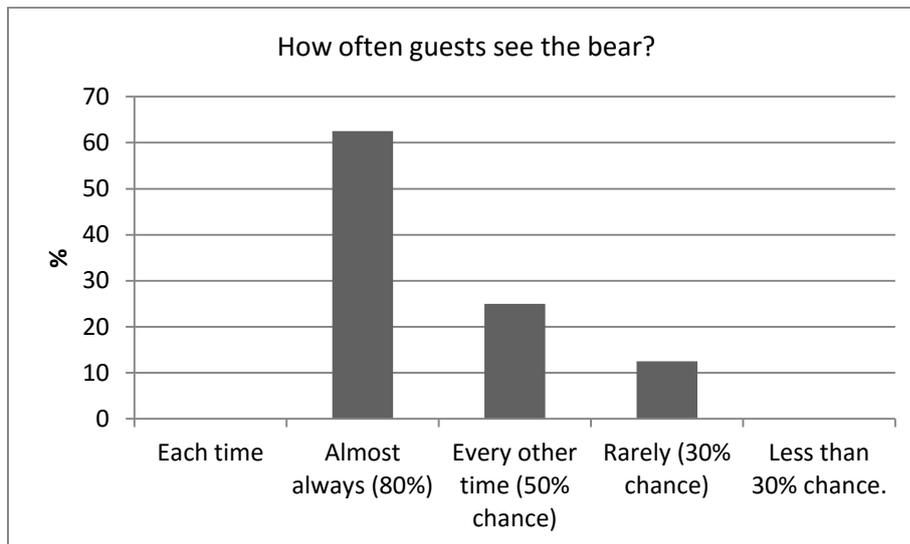


Figure 6: “How often guests that are taken for bear watching/photography see the bear?”

Five hunting clubs (56%) are already cooperating with tourist agencies for marketing of bear watching/photography service. Guests coming for bear watching are in all cases accompanied by member of the club, no external guides are used so far. Only three of the hunting clubs report that this person is always staying with the guests on the hide while bear watching or photography is taking place (Figure 7).

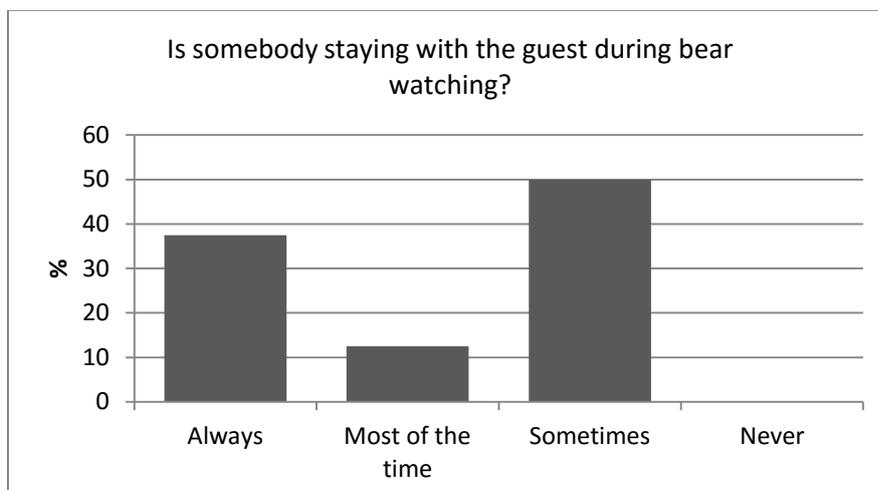


Figure 7: “Is the person that accompanies guests staying with them during bear watching/photography?”

ii.) **State hunting reserves with a special purpose**

We have also received completed questionnaires from three state hunting reserves with a special purpose in the study area: Jelen Snežnik, Kočevje (Medved, Snežnik Kočevska Reka and Žitna gora) and Ljubljanski vrh. Two of them, Jelen Snežnik and Kočevje, are offering bear hunting and bear watching.

In the two state hunting reserves they have approximately 8 guests interested in bear hunt per year. Guests are usually willing to pay 2.000 to 3.000 € per bear hunt and approximate revenue from bear hunting per year is 14.700 € to 25.000 €. There are approximately 35 - 50 bear watching guests yearly and the price charged for bear watching in state hunting reserves is on average 150 €. Approximate revenue from bear watching in state hunting reserves with a special purpose is 5.400 € to 7.500 € per year.

Conclusions

Hunting clubs have interest in offering bear related tourist products in the future but would need further assistance on marketing and promotion of these activities. General guidelines, including bear safety issues should be developed as most of the hunting clubs report that they are not always staying with the guests on the hide.

Brown bear is a protected species in Slovenia and bear hunting is based on the culling quota defined by the state, making it difficult for hunting clubs to market bear hunt as a tourist product. There is no time overlap between bear watching/photography and bear hunt in the summer months, when interest for bear watching products is the highest, while hunting is not allowed. Therefore bear watching and photography have a potential to become an additional service of hunting clubs in the future, especially in the summer months

Annex 1

The list of questions in the questionnaire

1	Please let us know who will fulfill the questionnaire
2	Member of which hunting club are you?
3	Is your hunting club offering bear hunting?
4	Which part of the year is bear hunting mostly taking place? (mark appropriately)
5	What is the joint number of guests visiting your hunting club for bear hunt in the last three years?
6	In your opinion, has the interest for bear hunt in last 5 years increased or decreased?
7	Why do you think that is and what are the reasons for this trend?
8	Which countries are guests interested in bear hunting mainly from? (name three most common countries)
9	Which is the most common price guests are willing to pay for a bear hunt?
10	What share of hunting activities (hunting, trophies, game) represents bear hunt in your hunting club?
11	Besides hunting, do you offer guests any of the following services (more answers are possible)?
12	Does your hunting club market bear watching and/or bear photography?
13	Would your hunting club be interested in offering bear watching and or bear photography in the future?
14	Do you have available hides designed especially for photography?
15	Which part of the year is bear watching/photography mostly taking place? (mark appropriately)
16	Which countries are guests interested in bear watching/photography mainly from? (name three most common countries)
17	What is the joint number of guests visiting your hunting club for bear watching/photography in the last three years?
18	What is the maximum number of guests that are taken for bear watching/photography in one day?
19	What is the maximum number of guests that are on the hunting hide for bear watching/photography at the same time?
20	Is bear watching/photography and bear hunting taking place on the same hunting hides?
21	How often guests that are taken for bear watching/photography see the bear?
22	What other information do you offer to the guests visiting for bear watching/photography?
23	Who accompanies guests interested in bear watching/photography to the hunting hide?
24	Is this person staying with the guests during bear watching/photography?
25	Do you cooperate with tourist agencies for marketing of bear watching/photography service ?
26	What is the price guests are willing to pay for bear watching/photography per person?
27	What share of hunting activities (hunting, trophies, game) represents bear watching/photography in your hunting club?