

# POPIELNO RESEARCH STATION

Photography by Mamadou M. Bah and Remigiusz Łoboda

The Polish primitive horse, or *konik*, Poland's only domestic breed of horse, is the only breed descended directly from wild tarpans. The PAS Research Station in Popielno is working hard to preserve the *konik*, which remains threatened with extinction.



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Fig. 1.  
One of the free-living herds  
of Polish koniks, strolling  
along a bike path through  
the Kończewo Forestry  
in Popielno

Fig. 2.  
A young beech tree

Fig. 3.  
A well-aged oak

A heard of semi-wild  
Polish koniks exploring  
the shore of Lake Beldany



Kurze Swamp



The crowns of tall pine trees



Fig. 1.  
A herd of deer amidst the  
Popielno pasturelands

Fig. 2.  
Polish koniks out to pasture

Fig. 3.  
A pine stand amidst  
the Kończewo Forestry  
in Popielno



**T**he Popielno Research Station of the PAS Institute of Animal Reproduction and Food Research is located on the Popielno Peninsula in Poland's Mazurian lake district. The peninsula is a picturesque piece of land situated between three lakes (Śniardwy, Bełdany, Warnołty), covering an area of more than 1600 ha.

The road to the station leads through beautiful forests, mostly of pine, which have been utilized by the station by 1956. The station also possesses the Kończewo Experimental Forestry, situated in the Pisz Forest. Lake Warnołty, on which it borders to the east, has a nature preserve and an island where a cormorant population nests every year.

The most important task of the station since 2016, when it was taken over by the PAS Institute of Animal Reproduction and Food Research in Olsztyn, is preservational breeding of the Polish konik, in both stable and natural conditions. Behavioral research is carried out on the 42 koniks living freely in the forest, whereas in the stable, 49 koniks are studied in terms of their specific traits.

Although 80% of the forest here is dominated by pines, visitors can also admire beautiful sections of ash-alder riparian forest and subcontinental oak-hornbeam forest (i.e. a mixed forest with a prevalence of oak, hornbeam, linden, spruce, and beech), as well as shrubs: hazel, buckthorn, bird cherry and hawthorn. Forest-explorers will also be delighted to find specimens of anemone, hepatica as well as sweet woodruff, martagon lily, wild ginger, guelder-rose, and mezereum.

There are also Smolak Duży and Smolak Mały, two dystrophic lakes – barren reservoirs with low biological production which become overgrown to form mires and bogs.

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HEAD OF THE POPIELNO RESEARCH STATION



Fig. 4.  
A capercaillie in mating season



Fig. 5.  
Cormoran Island



Pine forest along the road to  
a forester's lodge

