

## Abundance trends in *Sus scrofa* and *Cervus elaphus* at selected estates of southern Bohemia, Czech Republic, in the early modern era (Artiodactyla: Suidae, Cervidae)

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Jan ANDRESKA

Department of Biology and Environmental Studies, Faculty of Education, Charles University,  
M. D. Rettigová 4, CZ–116 39 Praha 1, Czech Republic; jan.andreska@pedf.cuni.cz

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**Abstract.** The development of abundance of the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) at selected estates in southern Bohemia is based on available hunting statistics. Old hunting statistics provide the possibility of insight into the specific development of the wild boar and red deer populations individually in the particular estates of Třeboň, Český Krumlov, Vimperk, and Nové Hradky. Data series document the harvested numbers and their development in the 17–19th centuries and their changes under the pressure of the state administration, which since the reign of Empress Maria Theresa (1740–1780) has focused on improving the living conditions of small farmers, among other things, by consistently insisting on compensation for damages caused by the game and also by the forced confinement of the wild boar in enclosures. As a result of pressure from the state administration, the number of red deer living in the wild was substantially reduced and the presence of the wild boar in the wild was completely prohibited by law. In the above mentioned estates, the red deer survived in the wild only as a result of the will of the estate owners to pay for the damage caused, the wild boar was completely absent in the wild until the middle of the 20th century.

**Key words.** Wild boar, red deer, hunting statistics, southern Bohemia.

### INTRODUCTION

The wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) popularity as hunting game has a long tradition in the Bohemian Lands. Accurate records of the harvest as an indicator of population abundance are rather rare. Therefore, a comparison of the available early modern historical data (17th–19th centuries) from southern Bohemia is presented, emphasising that hunting has a very significant impact on the species population abundance. The interventions by the state authorities formulated as patents (laws) or notifications also were of a similarly intense influence. Continuous and minimally gapped overviews of the harvest have been preserved from several estates in southern Bohemia, three of which were owned by the House of Schwarzenberg and one by the House of Buquoy.

The hunting ambitions of the nobility during the 17th and 18th centuries gradually collided more and more with the growing human population and the necessary food production. As a result of historical development trends, the efforts of the absolutist state administration to limit the abundance of the species of large mammals hereto discussed were materialised in the

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second half of the 18th century. With regard to this aspect, regulations of a legal nature which have long-term influenced the abundance of game populations are quoted below.

The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) resulted in a significant decrease of the human population of Central Europe, which led to changes in the land use. A number of villages disappeared, and the area of cultivated land decreased, thus providing conditions for the use of the landscape for hunting, a pastime enjoyed by the feudal owners with such enthusiasm that is difficult to comprehend today. In the Austrian Empire, the ruling House of Habsburg, whose members were avid hunters, served as an example for the nobility. The peak of this hunting affection occurred during the reign of the Emperor Charles VI (1685–1740, in power 1711–1740). The presence of both the wild boar and red deer as a game was encouraged and their numbers were steadily increasing at that time, which enabled high harvest. A negative consequence of the high abundance of the wild boar, in particular, but also of the red deer, was damage to field crops. For small serf fields, rooting and grazing had devastating long-term effects. The situation called for rectification measures, which were impossible to implement for logical reasons. The emperor himself and his wife consistently devoted their time to hunting; it was perhaps even a certain form of obsession. The change occurred after the accession of Empress Maria Theresa (1717–1780) to the throne in 1741. For purely economic and state-building reasons, the empress did not support large numbers of game in the wilderness and the free breeding of the wild boars. She imposed game abundance limitations on the estates controlled by her House shortly after her accession. However, it was only after the death of her husband, Emperor Francis I (1708–1765), who was also an avid hunter and hunting enthusiast, when a series of decrees restricting the breeding of game, especially the wild boar, were passed by the empress. Via specific regulations, Maria Theresa ordered manorial lords to pay compensation for damage caused by the game. It would be pointless to list them all here. However, the regulation of 4 September 1766 is usually quoted as the most important one, stating: “No manor shall allow an excess of wild game but supervise its numbers by the authority therein vested. In addition, the manor shall compensate all damages caused to the subjects.”

By the act of 26 August 1770, the empress banned the breeding of the wild boar outside of game enclosures, providing the nobility with a deadline for the elimination of the wild boar by 31 December 1771. Although this deadline was clearly not feasible, some owners of estates, namely Prince Joseph I Adam VON SCHWARZENBERG (1722–1782), tried to comply with the imperial demand on their estates. Their conduct was not surprising as the empress had apparently decided to be very strict on breaches.

In order to help the subjects with regard to the wild boars, it is not to be permitted in the future to keep them in any other way than in fenced-off enclosures, well protected against their escape. Outside these enclosures, whether in the forest or in the open land, any wild boar is considered a predator, permitted to be hunted at any time of the year.

However, in order to provide the manorial lords and anyone entitled to sue with sufficient time either to shoot the wild boar present on their estate or, if to be kept, with time to build the required well-protected enclosures, a final date by which the animals in question must be exterminated or gathered in enclosures is set on 31 December 1771. If after 1 January any wild boar appears outside the enclosure, the owner of the forest section is obliged to kill it immediately, exercising their duty with full responsibility, at the first reported instance, irrespective of the month and season. Otherwise, the subject or anyone else must report the case to the district office, which will promptly ensure the necessary remedy be exercised. The owner of the hunting ground acting in this way will receive, in addition to the obligation to

provide compensation for all damages, a severe punishment depending on the nature of the circumstances (MÜLLER 1840).

Another regulation followed before the term deadline. On 13 September 1771, a regulation was passed according to which: compensation for damage caused by wild animals should not be “lost in procedural verbiage” but granted “*de aequo et bono*” (i.e., in the interest of justice and good) to the victim. (ANDRESKA & ANDRESKA 2016).

Supervision over execution was entrusted to the then regional authorities. An example from southern Bohemia of the procedure followed is the letter from the regional office in Tábor dated 22 December 1771, addressed to the Paarov manor of Bechyně at the time. In the letter, the office states that the wild boars have not yet been exterminated on the manor and that if they are not shot in a foreseeable future, the office will arrange for that at the manor’s expense (KOKEŠ 1987).

In the Circular of the Court Chamber of 19 January 1779, it was ordered: “As soon as a subject makes a report to the manorial lord’s office about damage caused by animals, this office will immediately assign two impartial men to inspect and quantify the damage. The damage determined by them shall be immediately compensated to the subject. If this does not happen or if the manor is reluctant to quantify the damage or postpones its quantification, the subject may appoint their own damage appraisers and request compensation from the administration through the subject’s lawyer” (ANDRESKA & ANDRESKA 2016).

The Hunting Patent (law) of Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790) from 1786 represented the legal anchoring of the end of the free wild boar breeding in the Bohemian Lands. In the preamble, the emperor stated a general change in the view of ownership, cancelled all previous hunting measures due to the inadequacy for the then current situation, and completely changed the concept of legal regulation of hunting in the provisions of the Patent. From the previous protection of the right to hunt as an aristocratic and royal/imperial pastime, the emphasis shifted to the protection of agriculture and food production, thus proving to be a typical product of Josephine Enlightenment legislation. The patent stipulated under Section 3: the wild boar (in the original Schwarzwild) may only be kept in closed areas well secured against the animal escape. If a wild boar is spotted outside the enclosure, then anyone is allowed to shoot or kill the wild boar at any time of the year, as well as wolves, foxes, and other harmful wild animals of prey. If the owners of the grounds or the gamekeepers object, then let them pay 25 ducats and compensate the aggrieved for all the damage caused by the escaped animal. Section 12 also contained an implicit reference, no doubt mainly related to the wild boars. Wild animals may also be driven out of fields, meadows, and vineyards in any way the owner sees fit. No compensation is provided for wild animals that are injured or die in the process to the owner of the hunting grounds (FRANCEK 2008).

Changes in the perception of the presence of the wild boar and red deer in the wild during the reign of Maria Theresa and Joseph II were thus paradigmatic to such extent that they resulted in the extermination of the wild boar population and a significant reduction in the number of the red deer in a relatively short period of time. In the spirit of tradition, the pressure on predators was permanently maintained, and thus, in the light of the Theresian and Josephine decrees, it was possible to completely eliminate their populations.

## Třeboň Estate

The longest available line of harvest records comes from the Třeboň (Wittingau) estate. Summary statistics were prepared by HESKE (1909). The data are processed in five-year intervals.

Table 1. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) RD – and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) WB – at the Třeboň Estate in particular quinquennia of the period 1625–1908

years	RD	WB	years	RD	WB	years	RD	WB
1625–1630	4	36	1731–1735	1450	1011	1821–1825	229	441
1631–1635	11	16	1736–1740	1121	794	1826–1830	190	380
1636–1640	5	14	1741–1745	342	91	1831–1835	230	550
1641–1645	17	39	1746–1750	539	292	1836–1840	134	20
1646–1650	18	21	1751–1755	688	472	1841–1845	118	0
1651–1665	–	–	1756–1760	649	474	1846–1850	280	0
1666–1670	18	55	1761–1765	513	698	1851–1855	51	0
1671–1675	37	46	1766–1770	606	379	1856–1860	70	0
1676–1680	40	21	1771–1775	650	208	1861–1865	276	–
1681–1685	62	40	1776–1780	248	318	1866–1870	358	–
1686–1690	105	44	1781–1785	220	453	1871–1875	238	–
1691–1695	102	75	1786–1790	171	432	1876–1880	369	–
1696–1700	72	28	1791–1795	117	464	1881–1885	461	–
1701–1705	30	27	1796–1800	139	335	1886–1890	725	–
1706–1710	17	34	1801–1805	111	435	1891–1895	787	1
1711–1715	32	198	1806–1810	113	361	1896–1900	620	–
1716–1720	61	228	1811–1815	138	523	1901–1906	634	–
1721–1725	123	259	1816–1820	186	435	1907–1908	270	–
1726–1730	179	410						

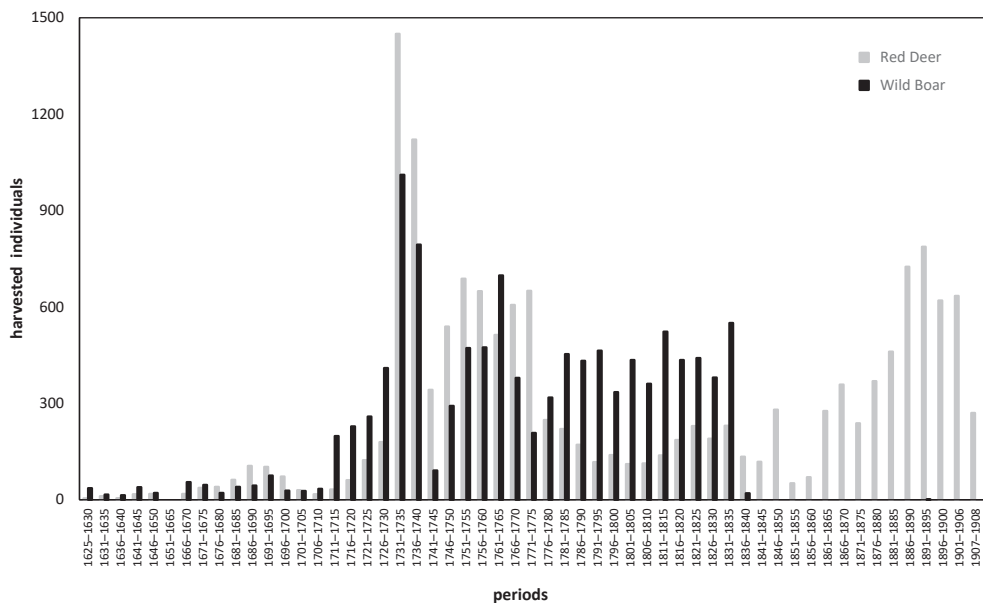


Fig. 1. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) at the Třeboň Estate in particular quinquennia of the period 1625–1908.

The red deer harvests at the Třeboň estate fluctuated, the highest number in the years 1731–1740 is related to the hunting mania during the reign of Charles VI. The number of harvested animals then decreased, after the introduction of the obligation to pay damages to the subjects. The significant decline after 1850 is related to the owner's efforts to prevent poaching after 1848.

Similar to the red deer, the wild boar harvest peaked in the years 1731–1740 and was related to the hunting fashion during the reign of Charles VI. The number of harvested boars then decreased, after the introduction of the obligation to compensate the subjects for damages. After the ban on the wild boar in the wild was implemented in 1770, the wild boars were kept only in the Kolence (Kolenetz) enclosure. When the enclosure operations were discontinued, the presence of the wild boar at the Třeboň estate ended completely, except for two episodic occurrences recorded later on. The extinction of the population is therefore related to closing of the enclosure, otherwise it would be complicated or even impossible to remove the boar from the estate so rapidly.

### Český Krumlov Estate

Statistical data on the Český Krumlov (Böhmisch Krumau) estate were kept by SEITZ (1898). The line is shorter than that of the Třeboň estate, but it still covers most of the 18th century and almost the entire 19th century. The data are processed in five-year intervals.

The numbers of the harvested red deer at the Český Krumlov estate include two peaks, one in the period 1731–1740, the second in 1766–1775. The second period is apparently related to the efforts of the nobility to reduce the red deer numbers after the order to compensate the damage caused by the deer to the subjects passed in 1766. Harvests after 1810 were very low; after 1848 almost none.

The numbers of the harvested wild boars after the takeover of the Český Krumlov estate by the House of Schwarzenberg gradually decreased, which was probably related to the new owners' slightly lesser interest in the wild boar breeding compared to that of the previous owners (the House of Eggenberg). At the same time, the hunting era of the reign of Charles VI ended. After

Table 2. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) RD – and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) WB – at the Český Krumlov Estate in particular quinquennia of the period 1726–1897

years	RD	WB	years	RD	WB	years	RD	WB
1726–1730	397	431	1786–1790	335	–	1846–1850	82	–
1731–1735	1522	335	1791–1795	167	1	1851–1855	–	–
1736–1740	1236	183	1796–1800	182	–	1856–1860	–	–
1741–1745	152	5	1801–1805	110	–	1861–1865	–	–
1746–1750	141	18	1806–1810	199	–	1866–1870	2	–
1751–1755	393	80	1811–1815	52	–	1871–1875	–	–
1756–1760	702	121	1816–1820	34	–	1876–1880	1	–
1761–1765	847	235	1821–1825	41	–	1881–1885	1	–
1766–1770	1447	104	1826–1830	38	1	1886–1890	–	–
1771–1775	1171	10	1831–1835	88	–	1891–1895	–	–
1776–1780	791	8	1836–1840	76	–	1896	–	–
1781–1785	499	6	1841–1845	51	–	1897	–	–

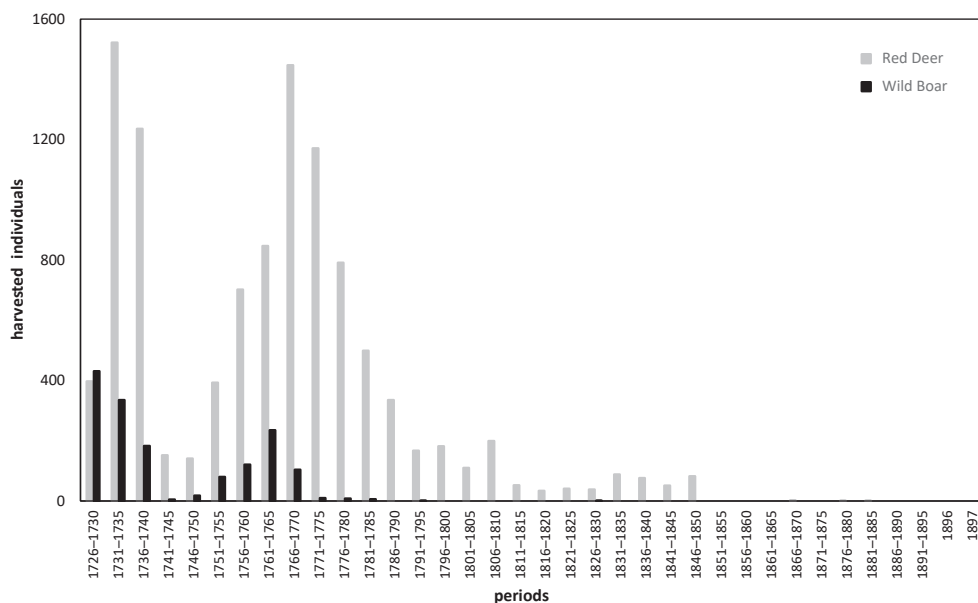


Fig. 2. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) at the Český Krumlov Estate in particular quinquennia of the period 1726–1897.

the ban on free-range breeding was issued in 1770, a game enclosure was not established on the estate and the wild boars were soon completely exterminated.

### Vimperk Estate

Originally the House of Eggenberg manor, which passed into the hands of the House of Schwarzenberg in 1719. Harvest reports were published by ČERVENÝ et al. (2004).

The number of deer catches at the Vimperk (Winterberg) estate was not documented until after 1731. The overall harvests were not high and the high numbers common during the reign of Charles VI are completely absent. Theresian decrees caused high harvests in the decade of 1761–1770, while, subsequently, as a result of limiting the abundance of the deer population, harvest decreased. Per orders of the reigning Prince Johann von Schwarzenberg, the animals at the estate were completely exterminated with the reason being the effort to limit the conflicts of the forestry personnel with the Bavarian poachers. The return of the red deer to the region was done through a reintroduction carried out by the owner after seven decades of the species near absence. The harvests very quickly reached the limit of 1,000 hunted individuals in the last decade of the 19th century, and in the following seven years it even surpassed it in the sum total (CHADT 1909).

The mountain conditions in most of the territory of the Vimperk estate were apparently not supportive for the presence of the wild boar. However, there is a noticeable increase in the number of harvested boars in the decade of 1731–1740. This increase could have been caused

Table 3. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) RD – and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) WB – at the Vimperk Estate in particular decades of the period 1721–1908

years	RD	WB	years	RD	WB	years	RD	WB
1721–1730	–	58	1791–1800	353	4	1851–1860	0	0
1731–1740	487	207	1801–1810	103	0	1861–1870	1	0
1741–1750	15	2	1811–1820	30	0	1871–1880	6	0
1751–1760	229	8	1821–1830	10	0	1881–1890	125	0
1761–1770	1036	2	1831–1840	1	0	1891–1900	989	0
1771–1780	532	0	1841–1850	2	0	1901–1908	1141	0
1781–1790	320	0						

by intensive feeding. In the following decade, the number decreased fundamentally; after 1760, no hunted boar was recorded. Thus, the Theresian and Josephine decrees did not affect the local population as it had already been exterminated. Currently, the wild boar is present in the whole Šumava/Böhmerwald region up to unexpectedly high altitudes (ANDĚRA & GAISLER 2012).

#### Nové Hradý Estate

The Nové Hradý (Gratzen) estate was in the possession of the House of Buquoy for a long time, since 1620. Harvest statistics were compiled by WAGNER (1895). Of the described lines, the

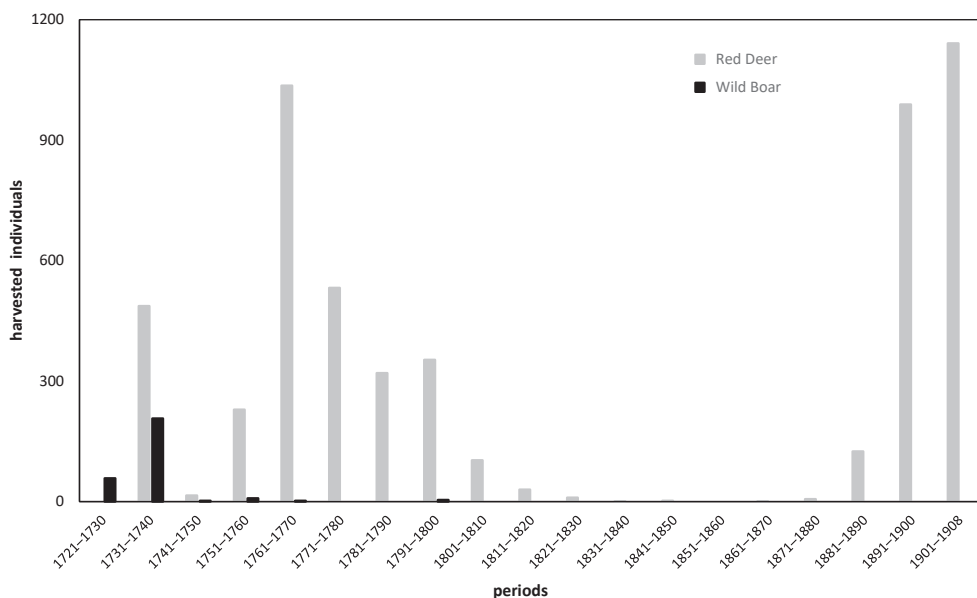


Fig. 3. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) at the Vimperk Estate in particular decades of the period 1721–1908.

Table 4. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) RD – and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) WB – at the Nové Hradý Estate in particular decades of the period 1791–1890

years	RD	WB	years	RD	WB
1791–1800	658	560	1841–1850	512	–
1801–1810	650	498	1851–1860	321	–
1811–1820	485	251	1861–1870	485	135
1821–1830	883	173	1871–1880	468	791
1831–1840	371	10	1881–1890	934	400

Nové Hradý estate line is the shortest, published per decades. To our considerable detriment, data for the 18th century are almost missing.

In the observed period, the red deer were kept both in the wild and in enclosures in this area. There were three game enclosures at the estate, in Kapinos (closed down in 1831), in Horní Hvozď (founded in 1849), and in Jakule (1878). There were no large fluctuations in the harvest size; the lowest harvest indicating a certain decrease in deer abundance after 1848 can be observed in the decade of 1851–1860.

In the observed period, the wild boar at the estate was kept, in accordance with the applicable legislation, in enclosures only. After the estate was taken over by Georg Franz von BUQUOY (1781–1851), the harvested numbers gradually decreased, the last records are from 1831, after

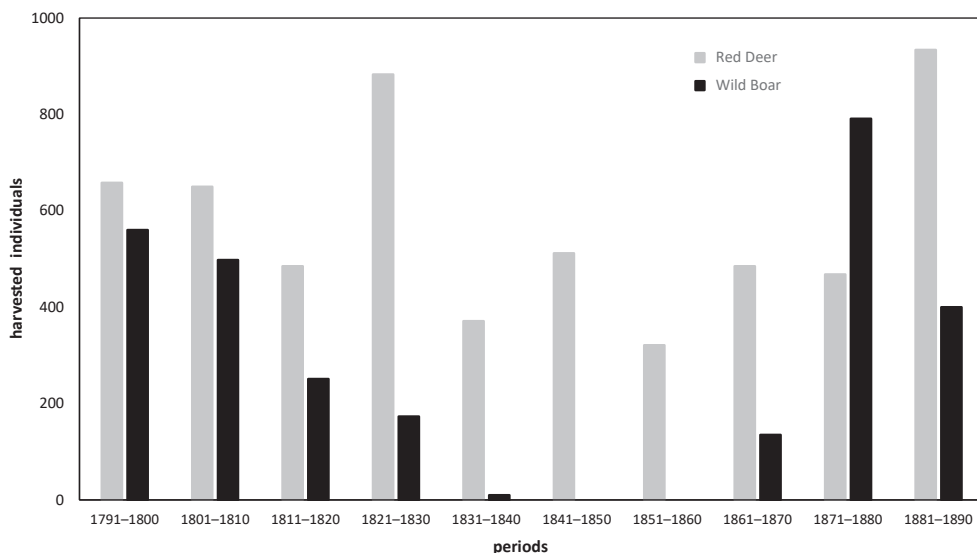


Fig. 4. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) at the Nové Hradý Estate in particular decades of the period 1791–1890.



which the Kapinos enclosure was closed by the owner of the estate. The wild boars were not kept at all at the Nové Hradý estate for almost four decades, and breeding was resumed only after 1878, after the establishment of the Jakule enclosure.

To facilitate the comparison, the data were combined into totals per decades. However, it still proved difficult to compare the records, as the required data are not available from all estates for the entire period evaluated. Data for the estates of Vimperk and Český Krumlov quoted by ČERVENÝ et al. (2004) were combined, without indicating the source estate. However, thanks to the availability of data from the Český Krumlov estate, it was very easy to obtain the Vimperk data by simple subtraction.

Where the data overlap sufficiently, two peaks in catch counts are evident. The first peak corresponds to the decade of 1731–1740, i.e., the years of the reign of Charles VI. The high abundance of the harvested animals can only be explained by the support of breeding and the simultaneous pursuit of high harvests in the spirit of the hunting passion of the time. The second culmination in the years 1771–1780, on the other hand, is apparently related to the effort to reduce the number of populations of both game species as a result of the restrictive measures of the state administration. After the ordered extermination of the wild boar in the wild, only specialised farms were preserved and these were easy to liquidate at the owner's will (Nové Hradý 1831, Třeboň 1837).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Fluctuations in abundance, especially the decline of both species in the territory of the monitored estates, are difficult to document. Primarily because during the 20th century, the boundaries of territorial administrative units were changed several times, and land reforms took place, which completely changed land ownership.

Table 5. Harvested numbers of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) RD – and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) WB – in four southern Bohemian estates per twenty-year sections of the period 1631–1910

	Třeboň		Český Krumlov		Vimperk		Nové Hradý	
	RD	WB	RD	WB	RD	WB	RD	WB
1631–1650	51	90	–	–	–	–	–	–
1651–1670	18	55	–	–	–	–	–	–
1671–1690	244	151	–	–	–	–	–	–
1691–1710	221	164	–	–	–	–	–	–
1711–1730	395	1095	–	–	–	58	–	–
1731–1750	3452	2188	3051	541	502	209	–	–
1751–1770	2456	2023	3389	540	1265	10	–	–
1771–1790	1289	1411	2796	24	852	0	–	–
1791–1810	480	1595	658	1	456	4	1308	1058
1811–1830	743	1779	165	1	40	0	1368	424
1831–1850	762	570	297	0	3	0	883	10
1851–1870	755	0	2	0	1	0	806	135
1871–1890	1793	0	2	0	131	0	1402	1191
1891–1910	2211	1	0	0	2130	0	–	–

Statistics kept by the state have only been available since 1874 as recorded per provinces (Bohemia, Moravia, Austrian Silesia). From the times prior to 1874, the available data lines are full of gaps. Thus, seemingly non-zoologically, one can only rely on local hunting statistics. These show significant fluctuations in the number of harvested game, but all anomalies can be explained by the hunting ambitions of the owners of specific estates and, at the same time, the legislative framework, which shifted from the favour of hunters and owners of individual domains to the protection of owners of small plots of land.

The decrease in the number of hunted deer was related to the fading of the manic hunting passion of the era of Charles VI. Another incentive to try to reduce the population numbers was the Theresian measures, which forced manorial lords to compensate their subjects for damage caused by their game. At the Vimperk estate, poaching was the impetus for the extermination of the red deer (CHADT 1909). The last measure, this time widespread and affecting estates in southern Bohemia, was the 1848 report by HEYROVSKÝ, which recommended that the red deer in the wild shall be eliminated rather than continue to be a source of conflict between the nobility (specifically the House of Schwarzenberg) and the inhabitants of their estates (ANDRESKA & ANDRESKOVÁ 1993).

Data from the hunting grounds of the Šumava National Park indicate that the wild boars are currently found and hunted in unexpectedly high numbers in the mountainous areas of its south-Bohemian part, i.e., especially at the former estates of Český Krumlov and Vimperk. The average annual harvest for the decade of 2013–2022 amounts to more than 200 individuals. However, the hunting grounds of the Park cover a significant minority of both estates, so they cannot be reliably compared with the historical data (ANDĚRA & GAIŠLER 2012).

Julius KOMÁREK suggested a remarkable, but apparently erroneous explanation for the extinction of the wild boar population in the Bohemian Lands (KOMÁREK 1954). He explained the decline and extinction of the population by unspecified infections. These indeed occurred from time to time, but they could not have been the cause of the total and widespread disappearance of the wild boar in the 20th century (KOKÉŠ 1987).

It can be considered remarkable that none of the authors has yet postulated the idea of the potential growth of the red deer and wild boar populations in relation to the extermination of large carnivore populations, which also occurred during the 18th century. The number of individual bears, wolves, and lynxes recorded in the 19th century in southern Bohemia was completely negligible and could no longer have a significant influence on the abundance of ungulates (ANDRESKA & ANDRESKOVÁ 1993).

It is clear from the hunting statistics of the estates of Třeboň, Český Krumlov, Vimperk, and Nové Hrady that despite the paradigmatic change in the perception of hunting during the 18th century, the owners of the estates as game management operators were left with options to preserve the populations of the monitored species at their estates. The red deer continued to be kept in the wild. If the population was locally exterminated in the wild, it was preserved in game enclosures. Conflicts with small farmers continued to occur in free-range breeding. The situation culminated in 1848, when, as a measure to prevent illegal hunting, the House of Schwarzenberg, on the recommendation of the director HEYROVSKÝ, proceeded to a very significant reduction in the number of free-ranging red deer. Afterwards, the abundance of the species gradually, sometimes even significantly, increased.

A different development occurred in the case of the wild boar. The boar living in the wild was completely exterminated and only the population kept in the enclosures was preserved. However, the enclosures were economically unprofitable, they were understood as a matter

of voluptuousness, in today's language leisure, and for pleasure. As it became clear after the Second World War, the landscape of the Bohemian Lands remained well prepared for the return of the wild boar. The harvest size has been increasing practically continuously since 1950, and the numbers greatly exceed any statistics previously recorded (ANDRESKA & KRUPKOVÁ 2021).

The dynamic growth of the abundance of both species after 1948 raises a number of questions. Hunting passion of the era of the reign of Charles VI has turned into a passion of the 20th and 21st centuries, which can easily be labelled neo-feudalism. A sociological research of this undeniably interesting question is completely beyond the scope and possibilities of this article. It almost seems that Maria Theresa and Joseph II as the legislators of that time looked at the issue of the presence of the red deer and wild boar in the culture landscape more rationally than the today legislators.

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