

# Fauna of Medvednica

The mountain's name preserves the memory of the bear—a magnificent animal that has not roamed the forests of Medvednica for centuries. The expansion of settlements, habitat destruction, and the intensive exploitation of natural resources have driven many other species from Medvednica. Among those that have vanished are the lynx, wolf, red deer, capercaillie, and otter. Today, they can be found only in the names of numerous villages, streams, and areas, such as Medveščina, Medveščak, Medvedski Breg, Vučje Jame, Vukov dol, Risovo polje, Risnjak, Orlove stijene, Jelenovac, and Jelenja Voda.

Historical accounts provide a timeline for these losses: the last lynx on Medvednica was killed in 1833 near Stubica, and the last capercaillie was taken by Count Miroslav Kulmer in 1916. The otter inhabited the lower courses of Medvednica streams until the end of the 19th century, while wolves roamed the mountain even in the years following the Second World War.

Nevertheless, it is encouraging that several of Medvednica's toponyms—such as Lisičina, Srnec, Mačkova Pećina, and Mačji Kamen—are still representative of the mountain's current inhabitants, from roe deer and foxes to wildcats.

The mountain has nonetheless partially resisted the pressures of its surrounding million-strong urban environment, preserving an exceptionally rich and diverse fauna that has attracted the interest of numerous biologists since the second half of the 19th century. Since the Public Institution's establishment, further efforts have been directed toward systematic faunal research of fauna, as well as observation and monitoring of individual species and their habitats.

Veternica cave is a particularly significant animal habitat. Beyond the cave bear, which was an occasional inhabitant, the cave has preserved traces of other long-extinct species, including the cave lion, leopard, hyena, rhinoceros, aurochs, and giant deer. Today, bats dominate the cave, with as many as 16 species recorded to date. As these nocturnal flyers are particularly sensitive during their winter hibernation, the cave remains closed to visitors through the colder months.

We recommend a visit to Veternica cave! It can be reached via trail no. 3, by a short descent from the Glavica mountain hut or by a longer ascent along the Dubravica stream.



**Owl from Medvednica**  
Tomislav Marković, 2021 / MGZ

**Longhorn beetle from Medvednica**  
Zvonko Radičanin, 2011 / MGZ

**Bat from Veternica cave**  
JU PP Medvednica

**Feeding a fawn**  
Vladimir Horvat, 1935 / MGZ