

Former Iron Curtain still barrier for deer

April 23 2014, by Karel Janicek



In this picture taken near the town of Harrachov, Czech Republic, on Tuesday, April 8, 2014 deer cross a creek in a winter enclosure. The Iron Curtain was traced by a real electrified barbed-wire fence that isolated the communist world from the West. It was an impenetrable Cold War barrier _ and for some inhabitants of the Czech Republic it still is. Deer still balk at crossing the border with Germany even though the physical fence came down a quarter century ago, with the painful Cold War past apparently still governing their behavior, new studies show. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)

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Cold War barrier—and for some inhabitants of the Czech Republic it still is.

Deer still balk at crossing the border with Germany even though the physical fence came down a quarter century ago, new studies show.

Czechoslovakia, where the communists took power in 1948, had three parallel electrified fences, patrolled by heavily armed guards. Nearly 500 people were killed when they attempted to escape communism.

Deer were also victims of the barrier. A seven-year study in the Czech Republic's Sumava National Park showed that the original Iron Curtain line still deters one species, [red deer](#), from crossing.

"It was fascinating to realize for the first time that anything like that is possible," said Pavel Sustr, a biologist who led the Czech project. Scientists conducting research on German territory reached similar conclusions.

The [average life expectancy](#) for deer is 15 years and none living now would have encountered the barrier.

"But the border still plays a role for them and separates the two populations," Sustr said. He said the research showed the animals stick to traditional life patterns, returning every year to the same places.

"Fawns follow mothers for the first year of their life and learn from them where to go," Sustr said.



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Wildlife officials recorded the movement of some 300 Czech and German [deer](#) with GPS-equipped collars which sent data to computers.

"I don't think it's a surprising result," said professor Ludek Bartos of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, who was not involved in the research. "These animals are really conservative."



In this picture taken near the town of Harrachov, Czech Republic, on Tuesday, April 8, 2014 a stag crosses a creek in a winter enclosure. The Iron Curtain was traced by a real electrified barbed-wire fence that isolated the communist world from the West. It was an impenetrable Cold War barrier _ and for some inhabitants of the Czech Republic it still is. Deer still balk at crossing the border with Germany even though the physical fence came down a quarter century ago, with the painful Cold War past apparently still governing their behavior, new studies show. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)



In this picture taken near the town of Harrachov, Czech Republic, on Tuesday, April 8, 2014 stag walks in a winter enclosure. The Iron Curtain was traced by a real electrified barbed-wire fence that isolated the communist world from the West. It was an impenetrable Cold War barrier _ and for some inhabitants of the Czech Republic it still is. Deer still balk at crossing the border with Germany even though the physical fence came down a quarter century ago, with the painful Cold War past apparently still governing their behavior, new studies show. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)



In this picture taken near the village of Kvilda, Czech Republic, on Wednesday, April 9, 2014 the reconstruction of Iron Curtain stands in the Sumava National Park. The Iron Curtain was traced by a real electrified barbed-wire fence that isolated the communist world from the West. It was an impenetrable Cold War barrier _ and for some inhabitants of the Czech Republic it still is. Deer still balk at crossing the border with Germany even though the physical fence came down a quarter century ago, with the painful Cold War past apparently still governing their behavior, new studies show. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)



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Citation: Former Iron Curtain still barrier for deer (2014, April 23) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-iron-curtain-barrier-deer.html>

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