

# Poland approves logging Europe's last primeval forest

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Poland on Friday gave the go ahead for large-scale logging in the Bialowieza forest intended to combat a spruce bark beetle infestation, despite scientists, ecologists and the EU protesting the move in Europe's last primeval woodland.

"We're acting to curb the degradation of important habitats, to curb the disappearance and migration of important species from this site," Jan Szyszko, environment minister with Poland's right-wing government told journalists.

Szyszko vowed that the logging plans would not apply to strictly protected areas of the primeval [forest](#) that was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979.

But under the new plan, loggers will harvest more than 180,000 cubic metres (6.4 million cubic feet) of wood from other areas of the forest over a decade, dwarfing previous plans to harvest 40,000 cubic metres over the same period.

Vowing to protect the forest, Greenpeace accused Szyszko of "ignoring the voices of citizens and scientists, the European Commission, UNESCO and conservation organisations."

Along with other environmental groups protesting the move, Greenpeace also said the logging could trigger the EU to launch punitive procedures against Poland for violating its Natura 2000 program.

Sprawling across 150,000 hectares, the Bialowieza forest reaches across the Polish border with Belarus, where it is entirely protected as a nature park.

It is home to 20,000 animal species, including 250 types of bird and 62 species of mammals—among them Europe's largest, the bison.

Europe's tallest trees, firs towering 50 metres high (164 feet), and oaks and ashes of 40 metres, also flourish here, in an ecosystem unspoiled for more than 10 millennia.

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