

# Distribution and abundance

In the Slovak Republic the brown bear is present in the mountain areas of central and northern Slovakia. The East Carpathian population reaches as far as to the Low Beskids and the Bieszczady Mountains in the North-Eastern Slovakia but these areas are connected only in Poland (Kropil, 2014). According to the most recent report on the brown bear conservation status prepared by the European Commission, its population size is estimated at 600-900 individuals (Anonymous, 2012a).

In terms of size the Slovak bear population is second only to Romania. Its mountain population is estimated at 800-1100 individuals (data of 2010-2011) (Kaczensky et al. 2013). It is assumed that currently 95% of the eastern Carpathian bear population lives in Slovakia, the other 5% in Poland and the Czech Republic. Within the country 2 main partially isolated subpopulations have been identified: eastern and western, connected only in Poland and Ukraine. The western bear subpopulation size is approx. 800 - 900 individuals. It was reconstructed from a very small relic population which had only 20-60 individuals in the 1930'. It was probably when, due to intensive hunting, the population was divided into 2 isolated subpopulations. According to estimations prior to World War I only 120 bears lived in Slovakia and the population rapidly declined in the following years due to hunting. As a result, in 1928 the population size was only 35 -40 individuals. It was not before the species was put under protection in 1932 that the population size started to rebuild slowly. Currently the brown bear inhabits most of the mountains of central and northern Slovakia. The cumulative area of bear population is estimated at 14200 km<sup>2</sup> (of which 13000 km<sup>2</sup> is inhabited by the western subpopulation) (Rigg and Adamec 2012).