



THE HABITAT FOUNDATION

Министерство на околната среда и водите

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Ministry of Environment and Water
(MEoW) of the Republic of Bulgaria
"Kn. Maria Louise" 22 Blvd.
1000 Sofia, Bulgaria

Subject: Action plan for the conservation of the European ground squirrel / souslik

Date: June 29, 2021

Dear reader,

Bulgaria is one of the countries with the highest diversity of mammals, according IUCN Regional Red List of European species¹.

Bulgaria is located in the centre of the distribution of a number of steppe mammal species, such as souslik and hamsters, some of which are even European endemics. Until recently, it was thought that in Bulgaria the souslik has the most stable population in Europe. However, recent studies show a rapid decline, not only in numbers but also in area of distribution.

Scientific publications and national monitoring studies have identified the species to be of "Unfavourable-bad" status in Bulgaria, which is a direct function of habitat destruction. In the proposed "Action plan for the conservation of the European ground squirrel / souslik (*Spermophilus citellus*) in Bulgaria (2021-2030)" we see serious professional work and analysis both globally and locally to stop the decline of the souslik in Bulgaria.

Regarding the status of sousliks and mammals in Bulgaria, we have personal experience from conducting numerous field studies of mammals in southeastern Europe. This action plan presents the legal and direct conservation framework for the protection of the species. Last but not least, it provides guidelines for monitoring and research and adaptive mitigation measures.

In our opinion, the adoption of this plan is imperative to the protection of the souslik in Bulgaria and will contribute a lot to the restoration of its populations.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Wansink

Chairman The Habitat Foundation

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist/mammals/geographic_patterns.htm