

HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF THE LARGE CARNIVORES IN LITHUANIA – GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY RESULTS FROM 1999-2001

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Questionnaires were developed in 1999 after a LCIE (European Large Carnivore Initiative) meeting in Cuneo, Italy. In 2000, after the first meeting of BLCI (Baltic Large Carnivore Initiative), they were made compatible with Polish data at the logical level. Unfortunately, to achieve compatibility with Latvian and Estonian data was not possible due to extreme differences in questioning methodology.

The Lithuanian questionnaire consists of several parts. The two main parts are almost identical – one for wolf and the second for lynx. Each part contains four chapters. The first chapter reveals personal attitudes towards a species (in a range from “hate” to “admire”), then to the existence of the species in Lithuania (positive, neutral, negative). Next, there are several questions about the need for species protection, the existence of the species and its role in the ecosystem, damage made on wildlife and domestic cattle and finally human-predator attitude. All these questions are answered by choosing one of five answers (definitely disagree – disagree – no opinion – approve – definitely approve).

The second chapter is devoted to the respondent’s knowledge on species numbers, trends and biology. There are questions about the general population in the country and existence in the nearest surroundings, species weight, breeding capabilities, feeding and pack size (some questions for wolf and lynx are different).

The third chapter is devoted to personal views on population management. Again, on a five-grade scale (definitely disagree – disagree – no opinion – approve – definitely ap-

Structure of the questionnaire

prove) questions are asked on species numbers and management means (compensation of damage made for farmers, rewards for hunters, etc.) and personal attitude to the information availability about species.

The fourth chapter contains questions about the emotional evaluation of various characteristics of predator species. All characteristics are expressed verbally, in five grades, for example:

- I like very much – I like – I do not care – I dislike – I hate;
- Very clean – clean – I do not care – unclean – dirty;
- Sweet – friendly – I do not care – angry – aggressive.

Two more parts of the questionnaire are expected to be completed by all respondents. The first is about personal attitude to nature protection and nature reconstruction according to human needs (was included for the compatibility with Polish questionnaires). The second one is about personal information: sex, age, education, social status, well being, hunting and place of living. No personal identification data were asked. It was expected that only persons who suffered from large carnivores would answer the last three parts of the questionnaire.

To be sure about the quality of information, in the case of cattle damage, personal data are required – at least name, address or phone number (answers without personal data were rejected as defective, unless there was additional information about the conflict provided by other respondents). We asked for the place of the conflict and a description of the surroundings as well as distances (pasture from the forest, place of the conflict to the nearest forest, etc.). Next, respondents were asked to identify the breed of the cattle suffered and answer questions (with choice of possible answer) about the circumstances – guarding of the cattle, etc.

Three questions of the next part are about the farm – the number of cattle, insurance and damage compensation.

The very last part is again about personal attitude – damage compensation and possible financial sources, opinion about carnivore hunting/extermination, etc.

Several persons responded to the last parts without having suffered from carnivore damage. Excluding the answers from youngest age group (up to 16, especially living in big towns), all other information was processed.

Non-selective questioning was mainly done in 2000, spreading questionnaires through Lithuania by means of personal contacts, conferences and meetings, nature-oriented youth camps and through arrangements with the Lithuanian Ornithological Society, schools etc.

In 2001, wide questioning was done through Šiauliai University, reflecting the attitudes of extramural students in pedagogics and their relatives from the north-west Lithuania. The third round, including mostly farmers and hunters, has just started.

Data are organized as the database in Paradox (150 fields), and processed through a series of queries and statistical methods, based on chi-square statistics.

The total size of the processed sample was 810 answers (actual number for separate parts or questions varying). Some respondents failed to answer the questions about lynx, or presented incomplete personal data.

The geographical distribution of information represents almost all the country, with less emphasis on southern and eastern regions (Fig. 1). The biggest number of answers were received from Vilnius city and Šiauliai town, including its surroundings.

On the district level, there were districts without information (Molėtai and Zarasai districts). The rest of the districts were classified as either having insufficient information (up to 10 answers), elementary information (11-20 answers, Šilalė, Radviliškis, Plungė, Mažeikiai, Raseiniai, Telšiai, Joniškis and

Methodical approach

Overview of respondents

Fig. 1

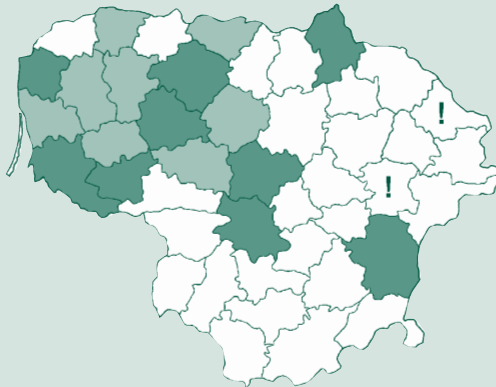
Distribution of respondents (legend – number of answers)



Klaipėda districts) or rather good information (21 and more answers – Šiauliai, Kėdainiai, Vilnius, Kretinga, Šilutė, Biržai, Kelmė, Kaunas and Tauragė districts). This map (Fig. 2) helps to orient focus future investigations.

Fig. 2

Distribution of the respondents according districts. The darkest color corresponds to the highest number, exclamation mark – no answers at all (see text above).



Sex structure of respondents was biased towards woman (243 men: 542 woman accordingly, i.e., proportion of 1:2.2). The age of the respondents was from 10 till 74 years, with the median near 21-22 (Fig. 3). This bias depended on the high number of respondents from Šiauliai University, where pedagogical disciplines are mainly attended by young woman. The second distinguished age group (15-17 years) is formed by schoolchildren of higher grades.

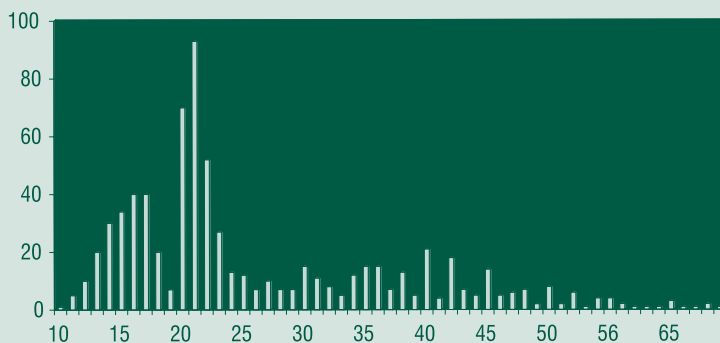


Fig. 3
Age distribution of respondents

For the same reasons (high proportion of students among respondents), a bias could also be observed in educational level, with a prevalence of secondary education (Fig. 4):

Education

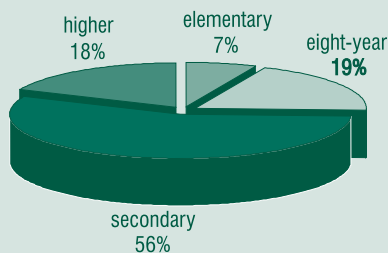


Fig. 4
Proportion of educational groups among respondents

The sample was quite diverse, reflecting the various categories of social status of the respondents. The biggest groups were:

Social status

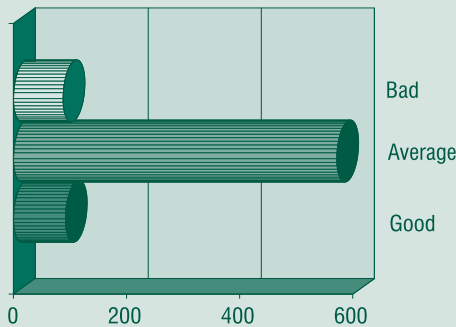
1. Schoolchildren (n=193), representing all age groups from 5th form to the last class of gymnasium
2. Students (n=285), representing a range of specialities, for example, biologists, ecologists and foresters, philologists, medical students, lawyers, economists and others. Nevertheless, the main student body (more than 80%) was represented by various specialities of pedagogical profile, by students studying in Šiauliai University and coming from almost all the country. Extramural students were included into this group, too.

3. Workers (n=31), mainly from rural/countryside population
4. Employee/white collar (n=146)
5. Businessmen (n=10)
6. Officials/functionarys (n=12)
7. Unemployed (30) – this social group requires special attention in the future, because part of them actually may be classified as small-scale farmers, and some other are students or house-wives.
8. Retired (9)
9. Other (9)

Well-being Well-being was assessed subjectively, according to recipient's own view. Three categories were singled out – "good", "average" and "bad". Distribution of answers was as follows, showing that "average" group makes 76% of the total (Fig. 5):

Fig. 5

Distribution of subjectively assessed well-being of respondents

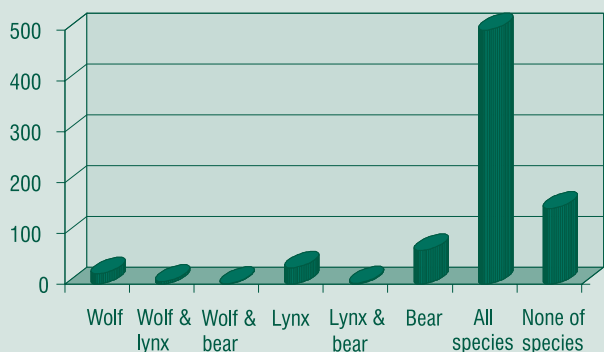


Place of living Place of living was subjectively categorized as town or village by respondents themselves. Totally, out of the 180 responses, 70 named the place as "town" (401 answer) and 110 named as "village" (304 answers).

Hunters Hunters were 25 persons out of 810 total respondents, thus making only about three percent. Hunting experience was as follows: up to 5 years – 6 cases, 5-10 years – 14 cases, 11-20 years – 13 cases, 21-30 years – 6 cases and more than 30 years –

4 cases. This means that knowledge of large carnivores among hunters should be sufficient. Some of them even managed to hunt lynxes (hunting in Lithuania has been forbidden since 1976). The next stage of this research will be oriented specifically to this group and will reveal differences of hunter perception of large carnivores.

Generally, large carnivores are believed to be dangerous. Excluding a very small number of controversial opinions (all of them dangerous – none of them dangerous in the same answer, n=2) statistically more respondents stated that all three species, including bear, which is just a visitor in Lithuania, are dangerous to human (Fig. 6).



Results

Fig. 6

General threat evaluation of large carnivores

Thus, 630 respondents out of 749 have the opinion that large carnivores are dangerous (84.1%), and 149 not dangerous (15.9%). Most people (67.3%) think that all three species are dangerous. Respondents are mostly afraid of bears (8.8%), while wolf and lynx are considered as less dangerous to human (2.7% and 4.3%, respectively).

Knowledge on wolf and lynx population numbers and population trends is quite far from the real situation (Table 1, 2). According to several expert opinions, there are 500-800 wolves in Lithuania, and an increase in the population has been observed in the last decades. Lynx, on the contrary, is newly

Population numbers and trends

included into Red data species list as a rapidly decreasing species. According official surveys, the last number of lynxes in Lithuania is less than one hundred (halved in the last few years).

Table 1
Assessment of wolf and lynx numbers by respondents

Wolf					
	0-100	101-500	501-1000	1001-5000	>5000
N	32	164	124	73	62
%	7.0	36.0	27.2	16.0	13.8
Lynx					
	0-10	11-50	51-150	151-500	>500
N	19	65	103	120	96
%	4.7	16.1	25.6	29.8	23.8

119 of respondents clearly indicated that they did not know the number of wolves and 153 respondents did not know the number of lynxes in the country. Assuming that blank fields in the questionnaire mean the same lack of knowledge, we may conclude that 355 respondents do not know wolf numbers, and 407 respondents lynx numbers.

Only about a quarter of respondents have a sufficient knowledge on wolf numbers, while more than 40% of them are underestimating and about 30% overestimating and highly overestimating the wolf population. For lynx, knowledge is not better. About a quarter of respondents have a sufficient knowledge on lynx numbers, about 20 percent are underestimating and more than 50 percent overestimating the lynx population.

Knowledge on population trends of these species is also far from sufficient (Table 2). For the wolf, it is worse, because about a quarter of respondents think that the species is decreasing. More than quarter of respondents knows about the right, i.e., decreasing, population status of lynx, and less than ten percent think that the number of lynxes is stable or increasing. Half of respondents indicated, that they do not know population trends.

	Increasing	Stable	Decreasing	I do not know
Wolf	135 (16.9%)	67 (8.4%)	222 (27.8%)	374 (46.9%)
Lynx	27 (3.5%)	50 (6.4%)	280 (36.0%)	421 (54.1%)

What do respondents think about the presence of large carnivores in their neighborhood? For the countryside dwellers the answer means knowledge about population status in the nearest vicinity, but for the cities the answer is more or less rhetoric. Almost all respondents answered these questions (796 answers about wolf, 780 about lynx). As the distance of neighborhood was not indicated in the question, we may conclude that about half of respondents know the wolf situation quite precisely (Table 3). Of course, we should doubt answers about 10 or more wolf individuals present in the neighborhood, though in some cases even some of these answers may be truthful (of course, not 30-100 individuals). As for the presence of lynx, the expected number of negative answers should be close to one hundred percent, because we did not cover single farms situated in deep forests in our questioning. It seems that lynx presence and number is much overestimated.

	I do not know	Absent	Present		
			Number unknown	< 10 ind.	>10 ind.
Wolf	268 (33.7%)	197 (24.7%)	206 (25.9%)	70 (8.8%)	55 (6.9%)
Lynx	327 (41.9%)	374 (47.9%)	55 (7.1%)	18 (2.3%)	6 (0.8%)

What do people think about the former species range in the country? To a question “did the species earlier occurrence cover all country?” three possible answers were proposed – yes, no, and I do not know. For the wolf, 521 respondent out of 795 answered positively, 55 – negatively, 219 – that they lack this knowledge. For the lynx, corresponding numbers were 259, 102 and 418 out of 779. This definitely shows that people think of wolves and lynxes as being more abundant and widely distributed in the past.

Table 2

Assessment of wolf and lynx population trends (n, % of total answers)

Table 3

Assessment of wolf and lynx presence and/or population number in the neighborhood of respondent (n, % of total answers)

Analysis of the personal attitude

Next, some aspects of the personal attitude to species are presented (Tables 4, 5). Out of 17 questions about the need for species protection, existence of species and its role in the ecosystem, damage made on wildlife and domestic cattle, and finally human-predator attitude, we singled out seven, which seems to us most informative. A full analysis of personal attitudes will be done later.

Table 4
Personal attitude of respondents towards wolf existence (n)

	Definitely disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Approve	Definitely approve
Wolves in Lithuania should be under strict protection	21	194	102	418	67
Existence of wolves should be secured for the next generations	6	38	34	517	210
Hunting of wolves is required, but not in the period of raising young	21	99	83	408	189
Wolves kill many domestic cattle	40	302	177	247	38
Hunting of wolves should be year-round	150	387	174	75	20
Where wolves are abundant, they attack humans	118	332	229	105	20
Wolves must be exterminated by all possible means/ways, including killing of their cubs	439	285	42	22	17

Data in both tables show us that, in general, the personal attitude of people towards large carnivores is positive. In some cases it even goes too far, for example, approving the need

for strict protection of the wolves, or believing that being abundant, both wolves and lynxes attack humans. Some people believe also that lynxes kill domestic cattle. This is obviously false, and we have not got any report of lynx made damage from our respondents. Attitude for the direct extermination of both species is mainly negative, though some respondents would like year-round hunting of both species (11.8% - wolf, 5.5% - lynx), or even extermination of the species by all possible ways, including kill of their cubs underground (4.8% and 2.8%, respectively).

	Definitely disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Approve	Definitely approve
Lynxes in Lithuania should be under strict protection	17	75	124	380	189
Existence of lynxes should be secured for the next generations	1	27	46	513	197
Hunting of lynxes is required, but not in the period of raising young	71	185	127	310	89
Lynxes kill many domestic cattle	115	348	264	49	6
Hunting of lynxes should be year-round	197	384	159	39	4
Where lynxes are abundant, they attack humans	107	301	286	75	10
Lynxes must be exterminated by all possible means/ways, including killing of their cubs	396	298	66	9	13

Table 5

Personal attitude of respondents towards lynx existence (n)

Knowledge of the species' biology

Knowledge of species biology is key for a correct point of view of a species, because knowledge of biology means also an understanding of the role of a species in an ecosystem, apprehension of damage and, last of all, correct calculations. Here we present just a general situation of this field. For us, it is quite strange that more respondents answered questions about biology, not about the number and trends of population. The knowledge of biology is always more specific, and this information, as a rule, is not presented in mass media.

The average weight of an adult wolf by respondents was specified as:

- up to 30 kg – in 51 case (6.4% of answers)
- 31-60 kg – in 383 cases (48.1% of answers)
- 61-90 kg – in 205 cases (25.8% of answers)
- and over 90 kg – in 31 case (3.9% of answers)
- 126 respondent (15.8% of answers) answered “I do not know”.

The average weight of an adult lynx by respondents was specified as:

- up to 15 kg – in 99 cases (12.7% of answers)
- 16-25 kg – in 210 cases (27.1% of answers)
- 26-35 kg – in 180 cases (23.2% of answers)
- and over 35 kg – in 107 cases (13.8% of answers)
- 180 respondents (23.2% of answers) answered “I do not know”.

For a correct answer we may refer to “Fauna of Lithuania. Mammals”, the only book which is available, though very limited and outdated in print. Here the weight of an adult wolf male is referred to as 45 (31-65) kg, wolf female – 37 (24-51) kg. The body weight of an adult lynx is referred as 23 (15-38) kg. In this case, we may conclude that correct answers comprise ca. 50 percent for the both species. An estimation of the weight shows us respondent's imagination about animal's size, and at the same moment, the possibility of threat. Quite a large percentage of the respondents answered that they have seen

both predator species in freedom or in a zoo, thus their knowledge of body size may be based also on their personal impression.

The second aspect in the knowledge of species biology may be the number of the cubs born. We may suppose that number of imagined cubs reflect respondent's opinion on the species capability to reproduce and spread. Thus, average number of cubs per wolf female by respondents was specified as:

- 1-2 cubs – in 69 cases (8.7% of answers)
- 3-5 cubs – in 473 cases (59.3% of answers)
- 6-8 cubs – in 103 cases (12.9% of answers)
- ca. 10 cubs – in 15 cases (1.9% of answers)
- 12 and more cubs – in 3 cases (0.4% of answers)
- 134 respondents (16.8% of answers) answered “I do not know”.

Average number of cubs per lynx female by respondents was specified as:

- 1-2 cubs – in 195 cases (25.2% of answers)
- 3-5 cubs – in 273 cases (35.2% of answers)
- 6-8 cubs – in 41 case (5.3% of answers)
- ca. 10 cubs – in 4 cases (0.5% of answers)
- 12 and more cubs – in 3 cases (0.4% of answers)
- 259 respondents (33.4% of answers) answered “I do not know”.

Average litter size of the wolf in “Fauna of Lithuania” is referred to as 5.2 (1-9 cubs in the litter with most cases of 3-7 cubs) and of the lynx as 1-4 (most cases 2-3) cubs. Based on these data, almost all answers about litter size of both species are correct. Only 2.3% of respondents indicated overestimated litter size of wolf and 6.2% of respondents of lynx.

Several questions let us form an image, what do people think about the food of large carnivores, their appetites and influ-

ence on other species. First of all this is an answer to a question, how much meat do wolves and lynxes consume per day. The same scale for both species was given as a choice. For the comparison or possible correct answer, we again may refer to "Fauna of Lithuania". The largest volume of meat found in the wolf stomach was 4.5-4.7 kg (2 cases) and the average is referred to as about 1.8 kg. For the lynx, a considerable less amount of food is required. The largest volume of meat found in the lynx stomach is referred to as 0.6 kg, and for Bialowieza forest 1.1 kg.

Answers about daily volume of the wolf diet were as follows:

- less than 0.5 kg of meat – 24 cases (3% of answers)
- 1-2 kg of meat – 214 cases (26.9% of answers)
- 5-10 kg of meat – 265 cases (33.2% of answers)
- more than 10 kg of meat – 41 cases (5.1% of answers)
- 253 respondents (31.8% of answers) answered "I do not know"

Answers about daily volume of the lynx diet were as follows:

- less than 0.5 kg of meat – 70 cases (9% of answers)
- 1-2 kg of meat – 255 cases (33% of answers)
- 5-10 kg of meat – 132 cases (17.1% of answers)
- more than 10 kg of meat – 32 cases (4.1% of answers)
- 285 respondents (36.8% of answers) answered "I do not know"

Thus, we may conclude that in general lynx appetites are overestimated in a larger proportion of answers. About one third of respondents gave the correct opinion on wolf diet, more that one third overestimated it and a less than one third are unaware of this answer at all. Only about a tenth of answers are correct about the lynx diet, more than half of respondents overestimated lynx's appetite (and in more than 20 percent of answers this overestimate is enormous), and more than one third of respondents are unaware of this answer.

How many roe deers are eaten by an adult lynx per year? This answer goes in pair with the previous one. As most re-

spondents overestimated the appetite of the lynx, in the same way the number of prey animals was overestimated. Out of 520 respondents who answered this question at all (blank spaces do not included), only about one third said, "I do not know" (184 answers). The rest of answers were: 10 and less roe deer per year – 136 (26.2%) answers, 11-25 roe deer – 86 (16.5%) answers, 26-100 roe deer – 92 (17.7%) answers and over 100 roe deer – 22 (4.2 %) answers. In fact, this answer is very important. First of all, we may conclude that people are unaware of the population number of roe deer. Secondly, overestimating lynx appetites helps to form a negative image of the species.

Are the large carnivores a big threat to domestic cattle? Indirect answer to this question may be obtained by analyzing answers to the question: "Wolves (lynxes) kill domestic cattle only in the case when there is lack or no natural prey – wild animals". A positive answer means that most of the prey is supposed to be wild game, while a negative answer that cattle form a part of predator foods. There was no statistically reliable difference between species (chi-square=0.43, NS), but a fairly large number of respondents see wolf as a "cow-killer" (ca. 25% of answers), and lynx as "sheep-eater" (almost 20% of answers).

What are personal attitudes to current numbers of large carnivores and their perspective? Could we stand bigger numbers of wolves and lynxes? Should these numbers be diminished? Or maybe we should exterminate both species, leaving a few specimens in the deepest forests? Distribution of the opinions is presented in Table 5 for wolf and Table 6 for lynx.

From the presented answers we conclude that in general our respondents were quite tolerant to large carnivores, and the tolerance of lynx is higher. Current wolf numbers are considered as appropriate by one third of respondents, and about the same proportion of them even suppose that our country

Table 6
Personal attitude of respondents towards wolf population numbers and management (n)

	Definitely disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Approve	Definitely approve
Lithuania could bear more wolves than it has now	51	307	220	192	26
Current wolf number is appropriate/sufficient	17	248	269	242	18
Wolf numbers are evidently too high and should be diminished	100	364	223	84	24
Wolves must be exterminated, leaving only a few in deepest forests	295	366	63	58	12

could maintain a bigger wolf population. On the other hand, 13.5 percent of respondents urge wolf numbers to be diminished and about a tenth of them will support extermination of this species.

Current lynx number is considered as insufficient by 43.6 percent of respondents, and about a fifth of them consider current lynx number as appropriate. Only 5.5 percent of respondents will support diminishing of lynx numbers, but about 7.5 percent may approve lynx extermination.

How many of respondents have seen large carnivore in freedom or in the zoo? Proportion was surprisingly high, especially of the observation in the wild (Fig. 7).

And as the last item of analysis, some emotional valuations of the large carnivores are presented (Table 8). For both species these valuations are quite similar. Wolf and lynx are considered as quite familiar, valuable and useful species. Familiarity is expressed in 60% of answers for about both species. As a valuable species, wolf and lynx is treated by almost 70% of respondents. Usefulness of the wolf is indicated in 75% of answers, of the lynx in 68% of the answers.

	Definitely disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Approve	Definitely approve
Lithuania could bear more lynxes than it has now	15	157	268	254	85
Current lynx number is appropriate/sufficient	32	278	299	154	14
Lynx numbers are evidently too high and should be diminished	155	370	205	38	5
Lynxes must be exterminated, leaving only a few in deepest forests	307	341	71	44	14

Table 7
Personal attitude of respondents towards lynx population numbers and management (n)

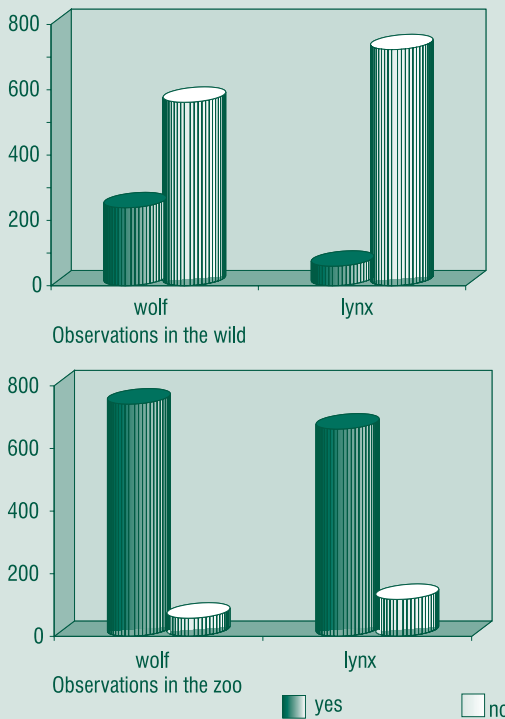


Fig. 7
Proportion of the respondents, which answered positively about observations of the large carnivores

Table 8
Emotional point of view to
some characteristics of
the large carnivores (n)

	Very familiar	Quite familiar	I do not care	Not familiar	Alien
Wolf	55	365	171	100	16
Lynx	44	365	185	80	10
	Very valuable	Quite valuable	I do not care	Of no value	Worthless
Wolf	55	431	137	76	8
Lynx	60	423	171	29	7
	Very useful	Useful	I do not care	Not useful	Harmful
Wolf	74	470	97	39	40
Lynx	38	440	158	35	30

Conclusions

This is the first presentation of results of questioning made in 2000-2001. After preliminary analysis of 810 answers, several conclusions may be drawn:

1. Territorial embracement of this study is insufficient. While northwest Lithuania and the vicinity of the biggest cities are adequately covered, southern and eastern regions were investigated inadequately. Two administrative districts, Molėtai and Zarasai, were not covered. The number of respondents in 25 more districts was limited to less than ten.
2. Two age groups – schoolchildren of age 15-18 and 20-23 year old students, dominate the sample. The middle-aged population is obviously under-investigated. Sex structure of respondents is biased towards woman. Urban and rural inhabitants are investigated adequately. At least three social groups – farmers, foresters and hunters – desire special attention in the future.
3. 85% of respondents consider large carnivores as dangerous, stressing, that all three species (wolf, lynx and bear) are threatening to human. Despite this, wolf and lynx are considered as quite familiar, valuable and useful species. Familiarity is expressed in 60% of answers about both species. As a valuable species, wolf and lynx is treated by almost 70% of respondents. Usefulness of the wolf is indicated in 75% of answers, of the lynx 68% of the answers.

4. Population numbers of wolf and lynx is known to about a quarter of respondents. The lynx population size is mostly overestimated. Population trends of wolf and lynx are unknown to about 50 percent of respondents. In general, knowledge on lynx estimates is better than on wolf. When speaking about the existence of large carnivores in the neighborhood, respondents gave quite truthful estimates of wolf. Lynx was highly overestimated. Most respondents suppose that both species in former times inhabited all the country.
5. Body size of wolf and lynx is known to about 50 percent of respondents. Most people, who responded to questionnaires, know litter size of these species. About one third of respondents gave a correct opinion on wolf diet, more that one third overestimated it. Lynx appetites are overestimated in a larger proportion of answers. About ten percent of answers about the volume of lynx diet are correct, more than half of respondents overestimated lynx's appetite (and in more than 20 percent of answers this overestimate is enormous), and more than one third of respondents are unaware of this answer. The number of roe deer eaten by one adult wolf per year is also overestimated.
6. Fairly large numbers of respondents (20-25 percent of answers) regard wolf and lynx as cattle killers. Despite this, in general, our respondents were quite tolerant to large carnivores, and the tolerance of lynx is higher. Current wolf numbers are considered as appropriate by one third of respondents, and about the same proportion of them even suppose that our country could maintain a bigger wolf population. Current lynx number is considered as insufficient by 43.6 percent of respondents, and about a fifth of them consider current lynx number as appropriate. 13.5 percent of respondents would support diminishing of wolf numbers, and about a tenth of them will support extermination of this species. For lynx, these proportions are 5.5 and 7.5 percent respectively.

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Linas Balčiauskas

LIETUVOS STAMBIŲJŲ PLĖŠRŪNŲ SOCIALINIAI ASPEKTAI – 1999-2001 METŲ APKLAUSOS REZULTATŲ APŽVALGA

Pirmą sykį spaudoje pateikiami dvejus metus vykdytos apklausos būdu gauti Lietuvos stambiujų plėšrūnų socialinių aspektų tyrimo rezultatai. Atlikus preliminarią 810 atsakymų analizę, paaiškėjo, kad šalies teritorija tyrimu apimta nepakankamai. Geriausi rezultatai yra iš šiaurinės ir vakarinės šalies dalies bei didžiųjų miestų regionų. Menkai ištirta pietinė ir rytinė šalies dalis. Visai nėra atsakymų iš Molėtų ir Zarasų rajonų.

Tarp respondentų vyravo moterys bei dvi amžiaus grupės – 15-18 metų moksleiviai ir 20-23 metų studentai, tuo tarpu vidutinio amžiaus grupė atspindėta nepakankamai. Kaimo ir miesto gyventojų proporcija buvo tolygi. Trijų socialinių grupių – ūkininkų, medžiotojų ir miškininkų – apklausa numatoma kitam tyrimo etapui.

Vilkų ir lūšių skaičių pakankamai gerai žino tik ketvirtis atsakiusiųjų. Ypač dažnai atsakymuose pervertinamas lūšių

skaičius. Populiacijos kitimo pobūdžio nežino maždaug pusė respondentų. Tačiau vilkų buvimas netoli gyvenamosios vietos yra vertinamas gana realiai. Lūšių skaičius yra stipriai padidinamas.

Net 85% atsakiusiųjų stambiuosius plėšrūnus laiko pavojingais žmogui, pabrėždami, kad pavojingos yra visos trys jų rūšys – vilkai, lūšys ir lokiai. Nepaisant tokio požiūrio, žmonės vilką ir lūšį vis tiek laiko esant pažįstamus (60% atsakymų), vertingus (70% atsakymų) ir naudingus. Vilką naudingus laiko 75% atsakiusiųjų, lūšį – 68% atsakiusiųjų.

Maždaug pusė respondentų pakankamai tiksliai apibūdino vilko ir lūšies kūno masę, o dauguma žino abiejų rūšių vados dydį. Trečdalis atsakiusiųjų žino, kiek maisto vilkui reikia per parą, kitas trečdalis šį kiekį pervertina. Didesnė pusė atsakiusiųjų pervertina lūšies suėdamą maisto kiekį.

20-25% atsakiusiųjų pervertina naminių gyvulių reikšmę vilko ir lūšies mitybai, tačiau nepaisant to, dauguma yra pakankamai tolerantiški plėšrūnų atžvilgiu. Trečdalis atsakiusiųjų mano, kad vilkų skaičius Lietuvoje yra optimalus, o kitas trečdalis – kad vilkų galėtų būti netgi daugiau. Lūšių skaičių šalyje nepakankamu laiko per keturiasdešimt procentų respondentų, o dvidešimt procentų mano, kad lūšių yra tiek, kiek reikėtų. 13.5% atsakiusiųjų pritarė vilkų skaičiaus sumažinimui, netoli dešimties procentų atsakiusiųjų – jų išnaikinimui, paliekant tik keletą gyvūnų miškų glūdumoje. Lūšių skaičių sumažinti pageidautų 5.5% respondentų, o jas išnaikinti – 7.5%.

Už pagalbą rengiant anketas, jas spausdinant ir apklausiant respondentus autorius dėkingas Henrikui Okarmai (Lenkija), Hariui Valdmanui (Estija) bei Egidijui Adomaičiui, Aleksandrai Balčiauskienei, Giedrei Balčiauskaitei, Rimantui Budriui, Gražinai Drąsutienei, Idalijai Gasiūnienei, Edmundui Greimui, Aldonai Jatulevičienei, Rimvydui Juškaičiui, Jūratei Kuliešiūtei, Stasei Litvinaitei, Vidmantui Lopetai, Vladui Naruševičiui, Vaclovui Stukoniui, Vidai Vėgėlienei, Jonui Vėgėlei, Aliui Ulevičiui ir Henrikui Volodkai.