

Editorial



Dear readers!

The second edition of the International Brown Bear Newsletter introduces new and long approved activities in large carnivore management across Europe.

The so called Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe, which recently became a Task Force within the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) Species Survival Commission, is an expert group dedicating its work to the protection of large carnivores and enhancing a coexistence with people where ever possible. The networking of 29 countries is a challenge but also a great opportunity to connect knowledge and experience about bears, wolves, lynx and wolverines in Europe.

Furthermore we would like to introduce another LIFE-project about wolves and lynx in Hungary, we inform you about the newest and most informative lynx-link on the Europe-wide-web and we are happy to show you some great photo-trap pictures of bears in Friaul (Italy).

Last but not least we have some encouraging news about bears in Trento (Italy) and in Upper Austria.

*We hope to meet everybody's expectations.
With best regards*



Beate Striebel

Brown bears in Upper-Austria

The first fotos of a brown bear in "Nationalpark Kalkalpen"

Since May 2004 there is legitimate reason to cheer in "Nationalpark Kalkalpen". After a long time of rumours and speculations the existance of brown bears in the area of the national park is proofed. Although the mountainous region in the south of Upper Austria has been an area of passage for brown bears at all times there has not been any clear proof of presence in the last years.



The brownbear in Nationalpark Kalkalpen (Foto: Nationalpark Kalkalpen)

Even though the Austrian population of brown bears is stagnating for a while now it is obvious that especially the male individuals enlarge and shift their home ranges. Proofs of bear presence have so far been restrained to the areas between the Ötscher - Hochschwab region. Lately during the last two years the bears seem to expand to other areas, but there is no certain proof of an increase in the population.

In order to receive more information on the bears in the "Nationalpark Kalkalpen" 10 hairtraps will be installed, to recieve more samples for the genetic analysis. So it will be possible to compare the results with the analysis from the other brown bear regions. The objective is to verify, whether the bears in Upper Austria are "newcomers" from Slovenia or offsprings of the Ötscher - Hochschwab population. First results argue for the second alternative. ■

The Piatra Craiului National Park in Rumania

Intense research on large carnivore conflicts and improving management

The Carpathians are a unique place in Europe. This space full of traditions succeeded to preserve valuable populations of large carnivores. The biggest population of brown bears in Europe lives in Rumania. In its heart lies the National Park Piatra Craiului, the home of about 25 wolves, 15 lynxes and 40 brown bears, and site for one of Rumanians ongoing LIFE-Projects.



The Piatra Craiului National Park in the heart of Romania

Piatra Craiului has retained a semi-natural state up to the present time which has made it possible to maintain these species. But the changing situation in Romania could soon upset this balance. This is all the more likely given the ongoing conflicts developing between these species and those involved in their conservation (hunters and livestock breeders) who are interested in the same

resources. Up to this time the park has not had appropriate management mechanisms to tackle these problems. The European LIFE-Programme supports the development of a management plan ensuring a compatibility of the conservation of large carnivores with the exploitation of natural resources. The crucial step is to involve the local communities and achieve support and acceptance of local people for the conservation work.

Conflicts between users will be analysed and the purchase of 157 hectares of pasture land will make it possible to encourage natural prey in the area. An awareness campaign will be one of the major aspects of this project. All the socio-economic players of the park will be involved and an educational programme will be devised for local schools.

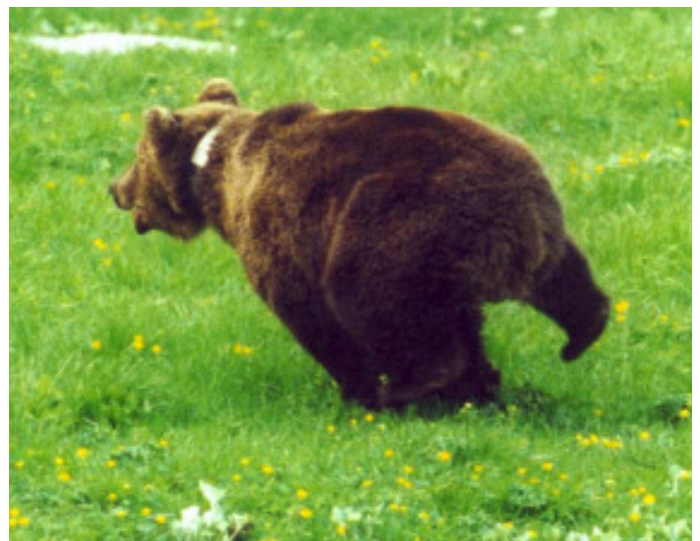
ICAS the Romanian Forest Research and Management Institute is implementing this LIFE project which started in 1999 and ended this year. 4 lynx were caught and provided with a radio collar in order to get better data about home ranges and distribution of the lynx population. Unfortunately no wolf was caught during the project period. To avoid a further increase of damages electric fences were distributed to farmers, as a result the fenced sheep herds were no longer attacked by large carnivores. Electric fences have proven their success as prevention methods also in many other projects around Europe. Many herds in Romania are still accompanied by shepherd dogs who do also provide a well working protection for sheep herds by keeping potential predators away. Generally the number of damages caused by wolves outnumber the damages of bears, leaving lynx damages far behind.

The research of this project also showed that 80% of large predators attack on livestock occurs inside or at the vicinity of the forest. Thus the project aimed to reduce livestock grazing in forests and at the same time supported the trophic capacity of open alpine meadows and enhanced flock protection by shepherds, fences and dogs.

Forza Italia: Non ci basta mai!

Abundant Offspring in Natural Park Adamello Brenta. Population increases up to 17 individuals.

Good news from our Italian partner project of the Natural Park Adamello Brenta: 5 cubs have been born this winter. With financial help of 2 LIFE projects the park Adamello Brenta reintroduced 10 bears into the Alpine region of Trentino where it was believed that at least 2 or 3 autochthonous bears have survived. The old autochthonous bears most probably died without leaving any offspring but the newly released bears, originally from Slovenia, seem to have adapted well to their new environment:



"Joze" is one of the reintroduced bears in the Natural Park of Adamello Brenta. He was released in 2000. (Foto: P. N. Adamello Brenta)

In 2002 two cubs survived, In 2003 one of the two born cubs was killed by an eagle but the other one survived luckily and this year one female has given birth to 3 cubs in the valley of Brenta the other gave birth to two young in the valley of Tovel.

This great success leaves the overall Trentino population at a number of 15-17 individuals (one adult died and one female is missing since she went on a visit to Austria). The ongoing genetical research will show who are the 2 mothers of this years offspring. From the known geographic home ranges of the bears the researches so far suspect Jurka and Daniza to be the mothers of the year. ■

Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe

For more than ten years the LCIE is one of the main networks for the conservation of bears, lynxes and wolves.



In June 1995, WWF together with partner organisations and experts in 17 European countries, launched a Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE). The LCIE is a dynamic network of representatives from governments, international and national non-governmental organisations, scientists and other experts. With members from 29 countries, it works across Europe to promote the coexistence of brown bears, lynxes,

wolves and wolverines with human societies.

The LCIE builds on important activities throughout Europe, disseminating valuable experience and knowledge. The mission statement:

“To maintain and restore, in coexistence with people, viable populations of large carnivores as an integral part of ecosystems and landscapes across Europe.”

This device is reflected in its work in 3 big issues:

- Human dimensions
- Monitoring of Populations
- Damage prevention

Since most countries with large carnivores deal with the same problems, important work is done by this initiative in coordinating large-carnivore work in various projects, developing common guidelines and manuals for damage prevention. An important focus is made on the human dimension in large carnivore management. The opinion of people remains the most endangering factor for bear, lynx and wolves in Europe.

For European policy issues as well as for the distribution of expertise knowledge the LCIE plays a crucial role and remains highly important.

More information can be found on the LCIE website:

www.lcie.org ■

Wolves and Lynxes in Hungary

A LIFE project deals with questions of population distribution and conservation of these large carnivores.

Not much is known about the population of lynx and wolves in Hungary. A few cases have been observed, but is this enough to state that there is a stable population in Hungary? Or are there just occasional vagrants from the still thriving populations in the Carpathian mountains of Slovakia and Ukraine? A LIFE project with the telling title "Funding the base of a long term large carnivore conservation in Hungary" is being realized by the St. Stephens University of Gödöllő and follows these questions since May 2001.



The European lynx. The main occurrence of these Animals in Hungary is in the northern hill ranges. (Foto: WWF-A)

The main objective of the project is to establish the distribution of wolf and lynx in Hungary and to prepare the ground for long term conservation. In parallel to the field work which will involve questionnaires, radio-tracking of individual animals and training of field workers to detect the tracks and signs of wolf and lynx, a proposal for a Hungarian management plan and a system for damage compensation should be developed. Luckily the Ministry of Environment, as a partner of the project, has committed itself to apply the results of the management plan including a compensation scheme.

The main occurrence of lynxes and wolves are restricted to the large forested areas of the northern hill ranges (e.g. Aggtelek mountains) along the borders to Slovakia. The management of the forest in this area was recently handed over to large private companies. With the transformation of Hungary into a western market economy the touristic pressure in this areas is rising as well. These new developments and the ongoing construction of roads and highways (often with European financial support) bring new threats to the already fragile population of predators. ■

Fototraps in Italy

A quite successful method for detecting large carnivores was realized in the Italian region of Friuli-Venetia

In the scope of an Italian-Slovenian Interegg-Project the University of Udine, Scientific Department of Animal Production, set up some photo-traps in the province of Friuli-Venetia close to the boarder to Slovenia. The set up was quiet succesful so far. The scientist managed to take 5 pictures of brown bears and 12 pictures of lynx in 12 weeks. Ursus arctos has always been present in the province of Friaul in varying numbers. From the Slovenian



A brown bear from Friuli-Venetia inspecting a hairtrap. The Foto was taken by a fototrap installed by the University of Udine. (Foto: University of Udine)

core area in the South bears expand to the North and sometimes arrive in the North-Western province of Friaul. The Italian side of the border is scarely populated but at the Slovenian side farmers often have to face dammagages caused by bears. Although Slovenian bears outside the core area can not be hunted regularly, it is possible to obtain a special culling permission for problematic bears. As a consequence these exceptional culls are limiting the number of bears arriving in Northern Italy or Southern

Austria. So far there there has not been a solution to this. Although the Slovenian Forest Service works hard to keep the conflicts between bears and humans low, every bear shot is a lost chance of a coloniser to Friaul. Since several years the University of Udine together with Forestry Service, hunters and students from other Italian universities is organising a monitoring network consisting of snow tracking, hair traps and direct reporting in order to find out more about the number of bears and their behaviour. ■

ELOIS?

Ever heard of it?



The European Lynx Online Information System (ELOIS) went online a few weeks ago. Since then it provides a detailed picture about the current and historic situation of the lynx in Europe. For the conservation of a species, updating information on the status and distribution of the populations all over its range, is essential and should be done regularly, using standardised methods. ELOIS followed the "Action Plan for the Conservation of the Eurasian Lynx in Europe" (Breitenmoser et al. 2000) providing an online information tool freely accessible for everybody interested in the conservation of lynx.

Besides general biological descriptions about the lynx and its subspecies a great variety of maps can be found on the website either based on the distribution of a population or on the political country boundaries.

The great work was done by representatives of KORA an organisation for "Coordinated Research Projects for the Conservation and Management of Carnivores in Switzerland" and financially supported by WWF Switzerland. It will be a challenging task to keep this information up to date and expand the idea to the other European large carnivores like bears, wolves and wolverines.

Further Information on:

www.kora.unibe.ch/en/proj/elois/online/index.html ■

Imprint:

WWF Austria, Ottakringer Straße 114-116, 1160 Vienna, Austria
editorialstaff: Beate Striebel, Norbert Gerstl
text and layout: Michael Proschek
www.wwf.at/bearlife



umweltbundesamt^U

lebensministerium.at

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