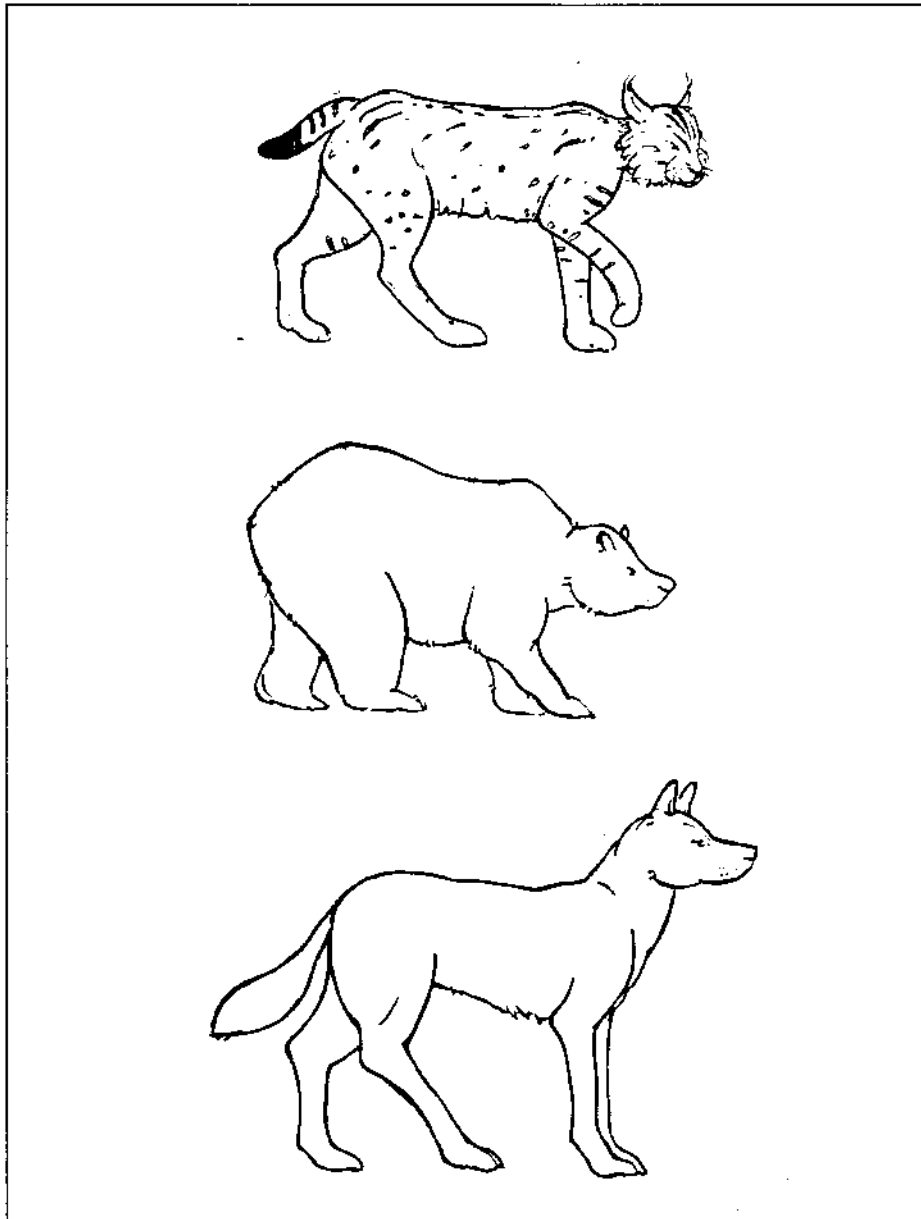


# Large Carnivores on the Balkan

**A LARGE  
CARNIVORE  
INITIATIVE  
FOR EUROPE**

edited by  
Christoph Promberger



Proceedings of a workshop  
June 1997

funded by



# **Large Carnivores on the Balkan**

Proceedings of a workshop on April 30th, 1997

Vienna, Austria

**edited by**

Christoph Promberger  
Munich Wildlife Society  
Linderhof 2  
D-82488 Ettal  
Germany  
Tel. 0049-8822-9212-0  
Fax 0049-8822-9212-12  
email: WGM.eV@t-online.de

**on behalf of**

WWF International  
Avenue du Mont-Blanc  
CH-1196 Gland  
Switzerland  
Tel. 0041-22-364 9227  
Fax 0041-22-364 3239

**as part of the**

Large Carnivore Conservation Initiative

Layout:

Regine Zimmermann

Graphics:

Harriet Homm

## Background

Throughout most of Europe, large carnivores live in highly fragmented and human dominated landscapes. Their predatory behaviour often creates conflicts with local economic activities and their current distribution is, to a great extent, confined to border areas.

The political development in Europe, particularly within the European Union, with the partial disintegration of national borders and more unified legal and planning requirements, creates new and promising opportunities which did not exist before for the management of large carnivore populations. Due to the combination of their important role in maintaining natural ecological systems and their large-scale habitat requirements, the conservation of large carnivores has been seen as essential for the work of maintaining and restoring nature, both in Europe and North America and for the promotion of ecological networks.

Recognising the need to build strong partnerships with researcher, land managers, universities, citizens, government officials at all levels and supra-national organisations and Conventions, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has decided to get to grips with the problem so that the prognosis for large carnivores (brown bear, Eurasian lynx, Iberian lynx, wolf, and wolverine) can be substantially improved, while the opportunity still exists. And together with partner organisations and experts in 17 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland) WWF took the first steps towards the development of a "Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe" at a meeting in Abruzzo National Park, Italy in June 1995. Based on input from two subsequent workshops in Neuchatel, Switzerland (September 1995) and Oberammergau, Germany (January 1996), a programme plan has been developed building a network of interested parties and activities.

The aim of this Large Carnivore Initiative, in collaboration with the many different players that exist in the field of large carnivore conservation, is to support and build on existing initiatives/projects in the region and thus create a synergy of actions in order to both avoid duplication and also to make the most efficient use of the available resources. In order to implement this, and build the network, a "Large Carnivore Co-ordination Group" has been set up that includes representatives from governments, international and national NGO's and scientists/researchers.

Pilot projects will be developed, using already existing and promising initiatives in the following six habitat regions: the Alps, Carpathians, Iberi-

an Peninsula, Northern and Central Scandinavia, Pyrenees and the Balkans.

This workshop was joined by biologists from Croatia (HR), Macedonia (MK), and Bulgaria (BG). During workshop discussions it became obvious that rather speaking about a Balkan population of large carnivores it should be split in a Dinaric population (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia) and a true Balkan population (Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece). Also for political reasons, Slovenia and Croatia do not want to be considered as being part of the Balkan.



Fig.1. Distribution and numbers of lynx in the Dinarids/Balkan

## The lynx

The lynx was gone from the whole northern part of the Dinaric mountains and restricted only to the southwestern part of the Balkan. In the 1970's, six individuals from the Slovakian Carpathians were captured and reintroduced in the Kocevje area in Slovenia. The species prospered and spread again over large areas of Slovenia and Croatia. Today, this northern population is considered a viable population [REDACTED]. The range of the remaining original Balkan lynx has further decreased: It is restricted to Albania, Macedonia, and the south of Yugoslavia. It seems, that the population is already scattered into isolated populations and only few dozens of individuals are left. The southeastern part of the Balkan has completely lost the species: since 1940, there is no data which proves the existence of the species in this area. Very little information, however, is available and the existing data about numbers and distribution are often not more than rough estimates.

### Most important problems for lynx conservation on the Balkan

1. Lack of suitable habitat/prey
  - ◆ lack of appropriate area management (especially protected areas) and monitoring (●MK<sup>1</sup>, ●BG)
  - ◆ lack of permanent food supply (MK)
2. Negative attitude of hunters
  - ◆ illegal hunting (HR, MK)
  - ◆ no acceptance for protection or quota system (●HR)
  - ◆ complains about reintroduction of Carpathian lynx (HR)
3. Lack of transboundary co-operation
  - ◆ low level of co-operation with between neighbouring countries (BG)

An additional problem in Macedonia is the insufficient knowledge about lynx ecology by hunters, scientists, and managers.

Remarks: The situation for the lynx is very different in the northern part of the Dinarids and the Balkan. The northern population suffers mainly from a lack of acceptance by hunters whereas the southern population seems to have more a habitat/food problem.

<sup>1</sup> ● This sign means that according to the participating biologists, it is the most important problem for the species in this country



Fig. 2. Distribution and numbers of wolves in the Dinarids/Balkan

## **The Wolf**

Wolves still have a stronghold in the Dinarids/Balkan region. In the central part of its actual range, the species has increased again in numbers and distribution in the recent years. This is probably due to decreasing control efforts after the breakdown of the old systems. In Macedonia and Bulgaria, this population trend was the most obvious: Both countries have today each around 1,000 wolves after a population low the late seventies, when in Bulgaria wolves were even set on the red list.

In the northern part of the Dinarids, however, wolves have decreased to very low numbers in the recent decades. Now there is only a few packs left and there is a danger of disappearing. The governments of Slovenia and Croatia have reacted and gave full legal protection to wolves. Especially in Croatia, hunters oppose this protection and poaching still seems to be a big problem.

### **Most important problems for wolf conservation on the Balkan**

#### **1. Poaching**

- ◆ illegal shooting and poisoning of wolves (•HR, •MK, BG)
- ◆ decreasing natural food resources for wolves due to poaching (BG)

#### **2. Damage problems**

- ◆ insufficient protection of livestock (HR, BG)
- ◆ insufficient damage compensation system for livestock losses (HR)
- ◆ hunters consider ungulate losses to wolves as damage and complain about it (HR)

#### **3. Lack of consistent policy**

- ◆ lack of a clear, persistent official policy (BG)
- ◆ no period of protection (MK)
- ◆ bounty system (MK)

#### **4. Negative public attitude**

- ◆ negative attitude of public, locals, and decision makers (•BG)
- ◆ shepherds are intolerant (MK)

#### **5. Lack of knowledge**

- ◆ poor data about distribution and population size (HR)





Fig. 3. Distribution and numbers of bears in the Dinarids/Balkan

## The Bear

During the past decades, bears were considered valuable for trophy hunting reasons. This is why the species hasn't gone through such high population fluctuations as have the other two large carnivore species. Bears have two strongholds in the area: One in the northern part along the Slovenian/Croatian border, one in the western Rhodopes. Very little information exists about their status in Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania.

### Most important problems for bear conservation on the Balkan

1. Human intrusion in bear habitats
  - ◆ loss of suitable habitat, e.g. forests which are rich in mast production (•MK, HR)
  - ◆ road construction in bear areas and traffic kills (MK, HR)
  - ◆ habituation to garbage - "fed bear = dead bear" (•HR)
  - ◆ disturbance of maternal dens (HR)
  - ◆ inappropriate management of protected areas (MK)
2. Inconsistent policy
  - ◆ lack of consistent bear management (•BG)
  - ◆ no policy towards livestock protection (BG)
  - ◆ no overall policy, management on a local scale (HR)
3. Poaching
  - ◆ illegal killing of bears (BG, MK)
4. Lack of knowledge
  - ◆ no sufficient research (HR)
  - ◆ lack of public education (MK)
5. Cultural problems with dancing bears (BG)
6. Danger for the wild population through bear farming and dancing bears (BG)

## **Model Project Principles**

Remark: These principles are based upon a list of criteria for model projects set up by WWF International.

### **1. Preamble**

Model projects serve as example of how to reach certain goals under given conditions. Nature conservation is always the overall goal. Every project is unique and has to a certain degree model character. Selected and defined model projects, however, have to fulfill each of the following criteria.

### **2. Framework**

- ◆ A model project has to fit into the context of the programmes of all participating partners. For WWF this means, that model projects have to fit in its priority biomes.
- ◆ A model project has to plan for and budget policy change.

### **3. Conditions**

- ◆ A model project has to tackle practical conservation problems (to understand the symptoms and roots) and to transform recommendation into actions.
- ◆ A model project has to have clear goals and targets and a monitoring/assessment of the achieved change.
- ◆ A model project has to link field activities and policy in both directions.
- ◆ A model project has to have sustainable financial and collaborative partnerships between the actors of the project and the target groups.
- ◆ A model project has to be well communicated.

## **Species Networks on the Balkan**

### **Tasks**

- ◆ Information exchange
- ◆ Exchange of expertise
- ◆ Close transboundary cooperation
- ◆ Lobby for common goal
- ◆ Preparation of common projects
- ◆ Motivation through regular meetings
- ◆ Teambuilding

Remark: In order to fulfill the requirements of a network, a mission statement is needed.

### **Possibilities for organisational structure**

- ◆ Contact interested persons
- ◆ Mailing list
- ◆ Telecommunication (e-mail, fax)
- ◆ Seminars

### **Responsible persons for species networks**

(Remark: due to the different situation of the populations of large carnivores in the northern part and the southern part of the Dinarids/Balkan, it was suggested to share the responsibilities for each species by a person from the northern population and the southern population)

#### ◆ Bears:

Djuro Huber, Veterinary Faculty, University of Zagreb (Bosnia-Hecegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and link to the Alps)

Kiril Georgiev, Wilderness Fund, Sofia (Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania)

#### ◆ Wolves:

Djuro Huber or a person selected by him, Veterinary Faculty, University of Zagreb (Bosnia-Hecegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and link to the Alps)

Elena Tsingarska, Green Balkans, Sofia (Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania)

◆ Lynx:

Djuro Huber or a person selected by him, Veterinary Faculty, University of Zagreb (Bosnia-Hecegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and link to the Alps)

Branko Micevski, University of Skopje (Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania)

**Procedure of setting up networks:**

- ◆ outline a concept and a working plan
- ◆ formulate it as a proposal
- ◆ submit the proposal to potential funders (see 'Funding Possibilities')
- ◆ WWF International and the Core Group of the LCI will assist

## Large Carnivore Projects on the Balkan

Organisation	Project title	Country	Keywords	deals with problem no.		
				bear	wolf	lynx
ARCTUROS	Conservation of bears and its habitat	GR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public awareness</li> <li>• dancing bears</li> <li>• habitat evaluation and improvement</li> <li>• research</li> <li>• damage problems</li> </ul>	1 2 3	4	-
Green Balkans	Wolf-Man co-existence	BG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• livestock protection</li> <li>• public awareness</li> <li>• policy and legal status</li> <li>• compensation of damage</li> <li>• managment plans</li> </ul>	3	1 2 3 4	2 3
Wilderness Fund	Long-Term Preservation of the Bulgarian Bear Population	BG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compensation of damage</li> <li>• captive bred bears</li> <li>• public awareness</li> </ul>	1 2 3	1 3 4	1 3
Wilderness Fund	Balkan Bear Conservation Network	GR, Al, BG, MK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creation of network</li> </ul>	-	-	-
Univ. of Zagreb	Large Carnivores in Croatia	HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bears: research on ecology</li> <li>• wolf: public attitude and awareness</li> <li>• lynx mortality and distribution</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	2 3
Univ. of Ljubljana Univ. of Vienna WGM	Brown Bear Telemetry Project	SLO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• road impact</li> <li>• landuse and its influence on bears</li> <li>• dispersal</li> </ul>	1 2 4	-	3
WGM EURONATUR	Karstpark	HR, SLO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• network of protected areas</li> </ul>	1 2	-	-
Bird Study and Protection Society of Macedonia	Participation in Balkan Bear Conservation Network	MK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public awareness</li> <li>• create a network</li> <li>• inventory of bear damage</li> </ul>	2 3	-	-

## Funding possibilities

Name and Address of Organisation	Tasks of Funding	Restrictions
WWF "Across the Waters" c/o Miquel Rafa Fax 0034 - 1 - 308 32 93	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Capacity building in public awareness and publ. education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ application must come from a Mediterranean country</li> <li>◆ upper funding limit 10,000 CHF</li> <li>◆ deadline December '97</li> </ul>
Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe Ady Endre ut 9-11 2000 Szentendre Hungary Fax 0036 - 26 311 294	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ promote cooperation among environmental groups</li> <li>◆ develop solutions to regional environmental problems</li> <li>◆ promote the development of a civil society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ only indigenous NGO's</li> <li>◆ only regional projects</li> <li>◆ upper funding limit 25.000 ECU</li> <li>◆ no research</li> <li>◆ maximum two years</li> <li>◆ equipment purchase, travel, and conferences only under special circumstances</li> </ul>
EURONATUR Konstanzer Str. 22 78315 Radolfzell Germany Fax 0049 - 7732 - 927222	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ nature conservation</li> <li>◆ special programmes about wolves, bears, lynx, and protected areas</li> </ul>	-
Institute for sustainable communities (ISC) 56 College Street Montpelier, VT 05602 USA Fax 001-802-229 2919	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ assist in the development of sustainable communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ environmental agencies and nongovernmental organisations as partners</li> </ul>
Environmental Know-How-Fund (UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ transfer of UK skills and expertise to central and eastern European countries</li> </ul>	
SOROS-Foundation (HU)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ have their focus on social sciences</li> </ul>
National Geographic Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ support of research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 50.000 \$US per Project per year</li> </ul>