

In case of seen live or killed lynx, lynx tracks  
or other signs, please contact:

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# The Lynx

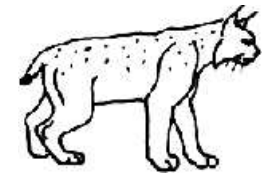
## The forest legend of the Balkans



This booklet is prepared by the Environmental Education and Research Centre / Sofia Zoo  
text and graphic design - Hilda Jager and Diana Zlatanova  
Front cover drawing - Velizar Simeonovski.

### Who actually is he?

BAE 94



## Introduction

Being exterminated from the Bulgarian forests some 60 years ago, the lynx is officially considered as an extinct species. Since then many researchers were hoping to find and prove that this cat had probably survived the persecution, following hundreds of allegations from hunters, shepherds or villagers claiming they face the beast. None of the efforts were fruitless. The lynx is a very shy and silent animal, so not many people are able to see it in nature. Slowly, this mysterious cat with short tail and ear tufts turned into a legend.

In the last 10-15 years more and more signs are showing that probably individual lynxes are coming into the country through the west borders with FR Yugoslavia since their numbers in this neighboring country are increasing. More data is necessary to prove if the lynx is back in Bulgaria.

This booklet is not intended to be a scientific study but more a guide for everyone who is interested and wants to learn more about this mystical animal.

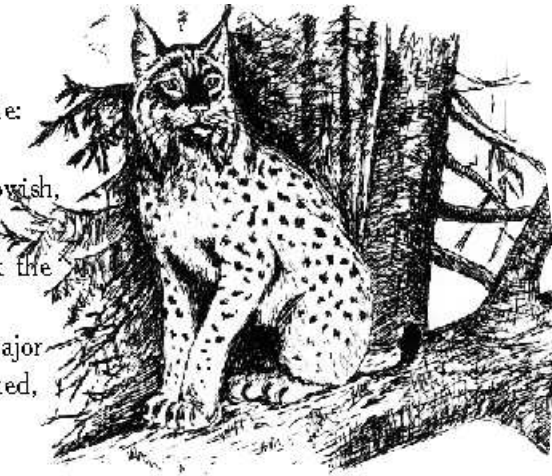
## Lynx Facts:

The Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) is the largest of the European cat-species and the third large predator in Europe after the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and the wolf (*Canis lupus*).

**Body:** Length 70-130 cm (males are larger than females)  
Height at shoulders 65 cm  
Weight 12-35 kg

**Specific characteristics:**  
Flared facial ruff, triangular ears with black tufts and a short black-tipped tail.

**Pelt:**  
colour very variable: basic greyish with various tints (yellowish, rusty or reddish), creamy to white at the belly.  
There are three major coat patterns: spotted, 'striped' and unspotted.



**Way of life:**  
Solitary animals except for females with offspring of the year.  
Activity peaks in the evening and early morning.  
Shy animal, avoiding people.

**Prey:** Roe deer, chamois, hares, game birds and rodents,  
**Habitat:** Large deciduous, mixed and coniferous forests, with ungulate populations

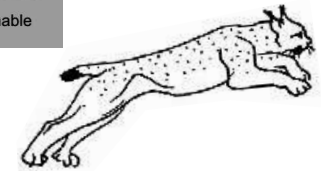
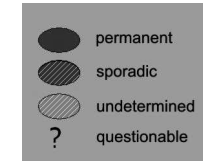
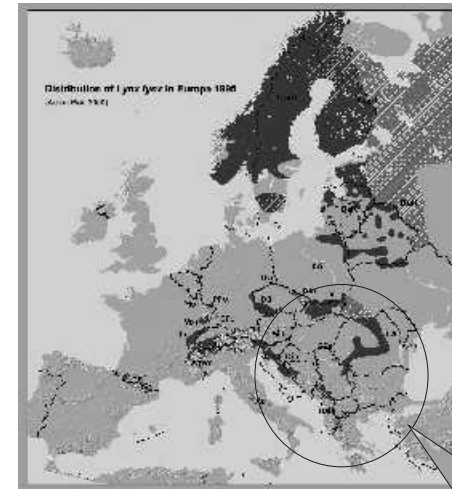
**Reproduction:** Mating takes place from February to mid-April. Two-three kittens are born usually in late May, after 67-74 days pregnancy. The cubs leave their mother at age of 10 months.



**Home range:** Males - 180 -2800 km<sup>2</sup>, females - 98-760 km<sup>2</sup>. Both sexes occupy individual territories. Females tend to use the central part of their home ranges more extensively. Males regularly visit the periphery, avoiding females core areas and controlling the zone around the female and their kittens, thus decreasing the competition for prey and keeping away other male competitors.

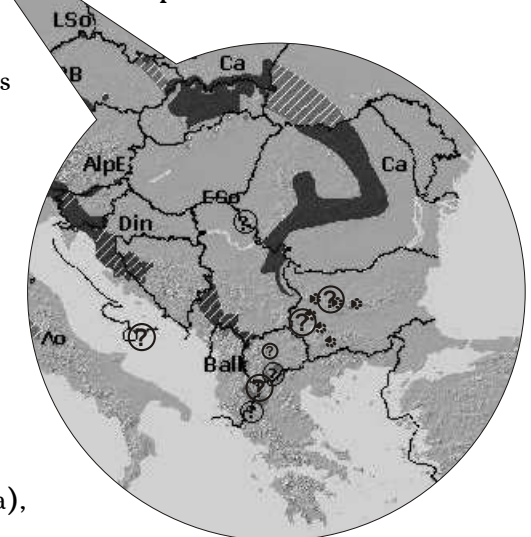
## The distribution of the lynx in Europe

In historical times, the lynx existed throughout Europe with the exception of the Iberian Peninsula. As a consequence of human activities, it had disappeared from most of its European range, due to habitat loss (deforestation and expansion of agriculture) and decreasing of prey numbers.



Status, distribution and number of lynx on the Balkan peninsula are unclear.

There are three different populations (subspecies) on the Balkans - **Carpathian** (in Romania, Eastern Serbia and probably Bulgaria), **Balkan** (in Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, province of Kosovo - Serbia and probably Greece), **Dinaric** (in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and probably North Montenegro and West Serbia),

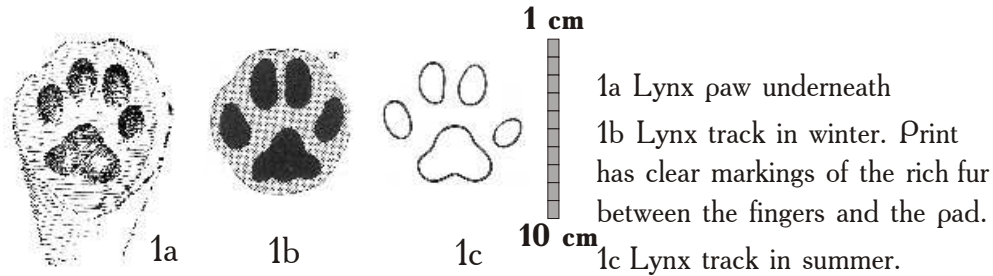


So far there is only some unofficial data for the lynx presence in Bulgaria

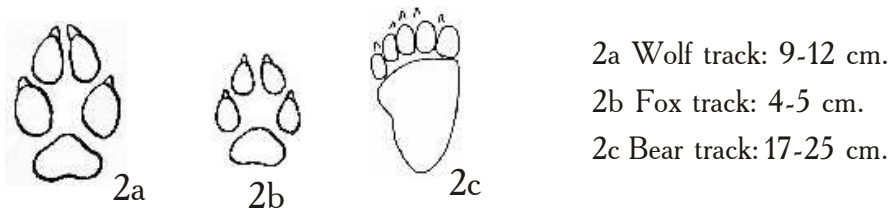
## Tracks and Trail

Tracks are the most obvious signs of presence and movement of a lynx in an area. To identify a lynx from its tracks you must observe both the shape of the print and the trail.

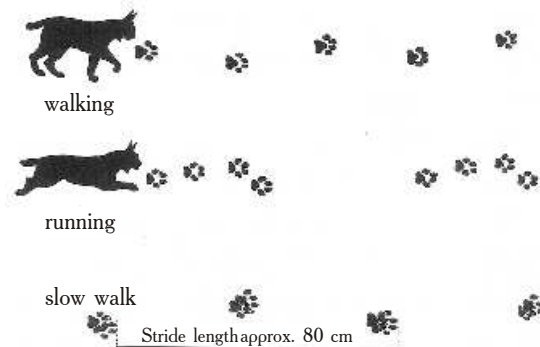
The lynx walks on its fingers, the front feet have five fingers (the fifth does not touch the ground). The hind feet have only four fingers. The claws are sharp but retractile, so they don't leave marks on the print.



**Adult lynx track is full circle 7-8 cm. It could be confused with a wild cat track which looks like lynx summer track but only smaller: 3-3,5 cm**



The lynx moves mainly by walking or at slow gallop. In both cases the hind foot is normally placed in the fore print, and the straddle is so small that the tracks are almost in a line with little oscillation.



4 The best places to look for lynx tracks are near a kill or along water sources.

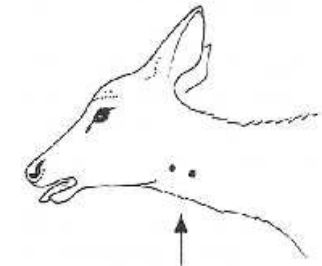
## Feeding signs:

Most of the prey is hunted during the night. When a lynx has a fresh kill it can stay in proximity for several days. It often covers the kill just like bears.

The lynx feeds mainly on small ungulates, particularly roe deer and chamois as alternative if roe deer is not present. Larger prey is favoured in winter because of its vulnerability in deep snow.



The lynx jumps on his prey's back and kill it with a precise bite to the throat.



**The distance between the canines is 25-35 mm.**

If the lynx is unable to reach the throat, it will on occasion use a neck-bite, but never leaves bites down the back. The lynx seems to begin eating from the shoulder and thighs. It will peel the skin of and eats the meat around the organs.



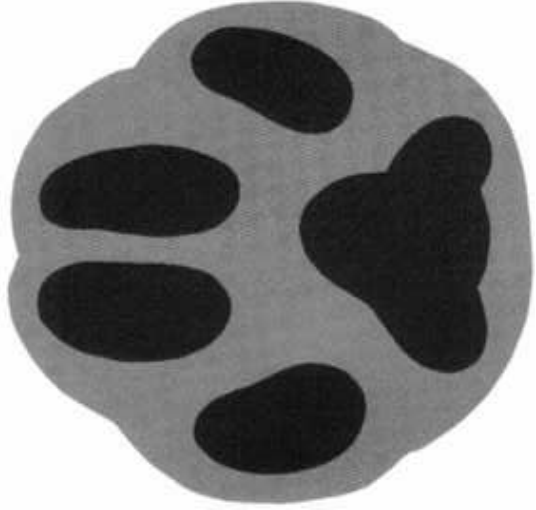
To be sure that it's a lynx kill search the area for tracks, feces and other signs.

*The forest legend*



*Lynx (Lynx lynx)*

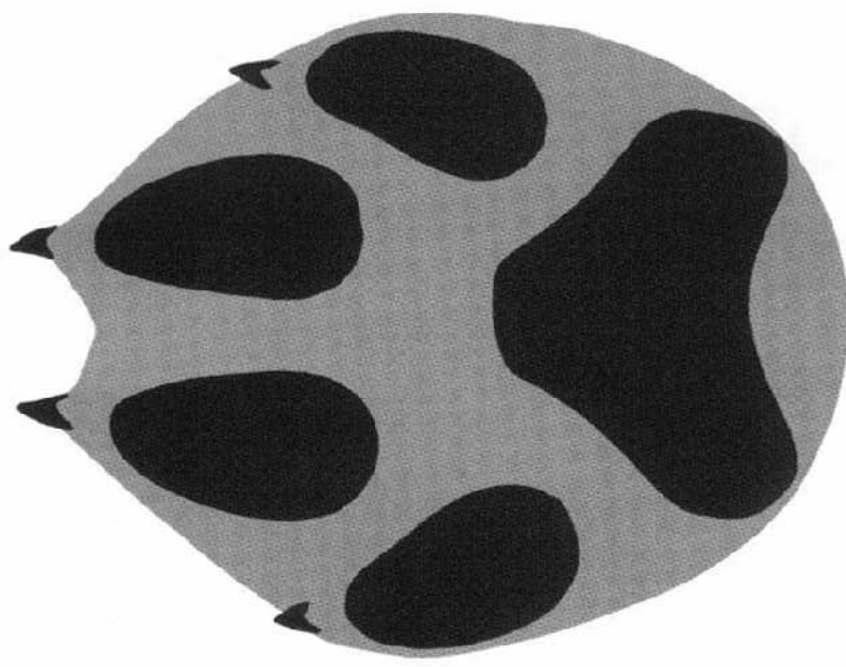
# Actual size tracks of some native carnivores



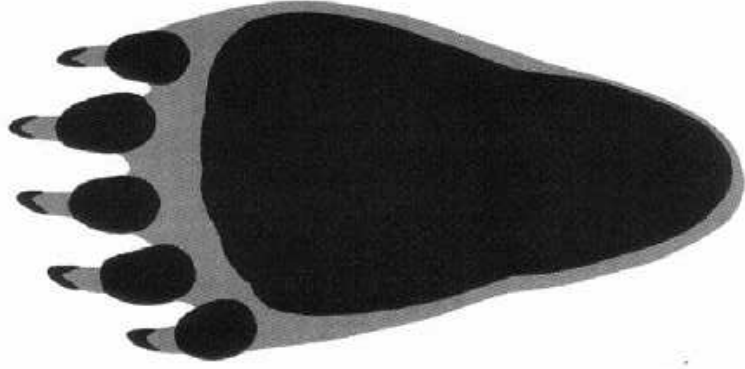
Lynx (*Lynx lynx*)



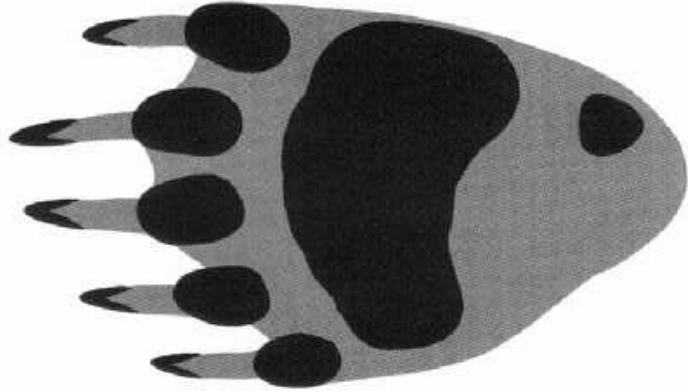
Wildcat  
(*Felis silvestris*)



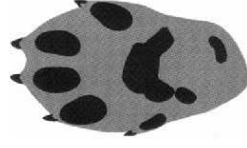
Wolf (*Canis lupus*)



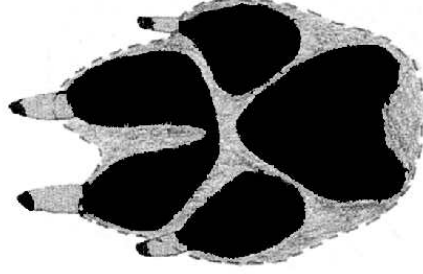
Brown bear  
(*Ursus arctos*)  
Approx. 1/2 size.



Golden jackal  
(*Canis aureus*)



Marten (*Martes sp.*)

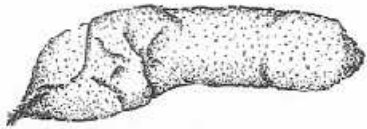


Red fox  
(*Vulpes vulpes*)

**In grey - real shape of the foot, in black - the prints that usually are left over**

## Droppings

Around the kill you often can find droppings from the aggressor. Lynx droppings can be recognized immediately. They are large sausages shaped and black due to their meat in the diet. The lynx often covers its droppings with earth or snow.



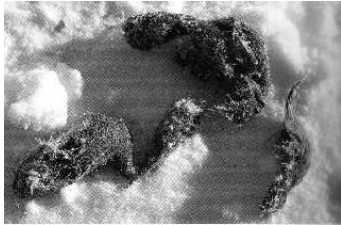
lynx



wild cat

If found droppings, please put it in a plastic bag with a note of date, place, nearest village, description of the area and your name/address and contact the address or telephone numbers on the last page.

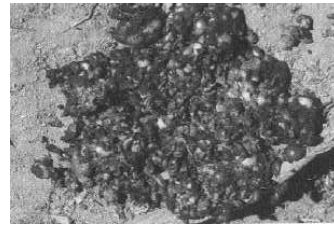
The lynx droppings are far more bigger than the droppings of the wildcat. The droppings of the wolf and the bear differ too much of the lynx.



Wolf droppings contain fur from the prey

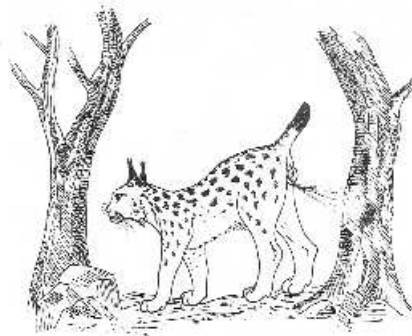


Bear faeces usually contain fruit seeds



## Other signs of lynx presence

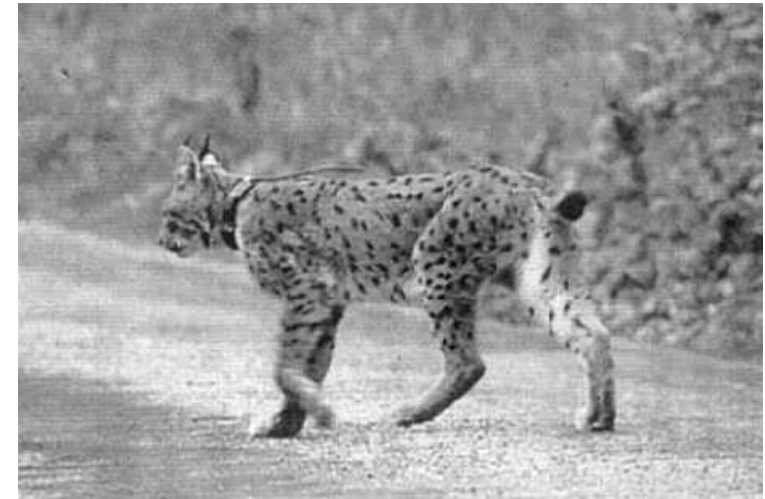
Lynxes often mark their territories with tree scratching or urine



## The importance of the lynx as a carnivore

The lynx, as the other carnivores feeds on herbivores. It is not a pest but a needed part of the trophic web. It catch mainly the weak and sick animals thus playing an important role in controlling the population of the ungulates. If there were no carnivores the population of the herbivores will increase rapidly and they will destroy the forest. The overpopulation of deers would provoke an outbreak of diseases and finally they will disappear.

The lynx will eat mainly the wild ungulates and will not attack livestock when there is enough food. When on occasion a lynx killed livestock please contact address or phone us.



A radio collared lynx in the Alps

To get a better understanding for the role of the lynx as an important predator in the European ecosystems, researchers use many methods to study this secret species, including radio telemetry.

## Conservation

The lynx is fully protected by Biodiversity Law of Bulgaria. It is also protected in the rest of the Balkans. There are high penalties for killed or captured lynx.

It is listed under Appendix II of CITES (Convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora) and Appendix III of the Bern Convention (Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats).

*Although the lynx is protected all over the Balkan peninsula and in Bulgaria, it is illegally killed throughout the whole range. Please, do not help in destroying this beautiful part of Bulgarian Nature.*



### Main threats causing the lynx decline in Europe:

Decreasing of the prey because of the competition with the wolf and the man.  
Direct kill by poaching or overhunting  
Destruction of the habitat, the old forests, which can support deer population  
Diseases, demographic and genetic factors  
Negative human attitude



Dear reader,

**This booklet was created to support a study gathering more data about the current and possible distribution of the lynx in Bulgaria.**

**This beautiful animal is often persecuted or misunderstood, hunted for its fur or killed just for fun.**

**The lynx is not posing any danger to people. The people are the real danger to it.**

**The situation with the lynx in Bulgaria is not clear and we need your help in gathering more information.**

**In case you see any lynx or find lynx tracks, feces or kill please contact us immediately. Thus you will aid us to conserve this legend and to allow it to return back in Bulgarian forests.**