



Tourism & Carnivores

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

A WWF-UK REPORT • MAY 2000



The WWF
Campaign
for Europe's
Carnivores



THE WWF-UK CAMPAIGN FOR EUROPE'S CARNIVORES

The plight of Europe's large carnivores has become an issue of increasing conservation concern. They continue to be persecuted by humans, and in many cases their habitats are under threat. While the precarious status of Asia's tigers is widely known, some of Europe's own top predators, such as the Iberian lynx, are in danger of quietly disappearing. Others, such as the wolf, brown bear and Eurasian lynx, face an upsurge in conflict with people as they attempt to reclaim parts of their former ranges. The WWF-UK Campaign for Europe's Carnivores aims to raise funds and awareness to support selected carnivores and ensure they have a viable future in our continent.

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Contents

PREFACE	3
WWF'S VISION	4
THE BENEFITS	6
CASE STUDIES FROM EUROPE	8
ROMANIA	9
POLAND	12
ITALY	14
SPAIN	16
FRANCE	18
THE WWF CODE OF CONDUCT	20
EUROPE'S CARNIVORES	22
CONTACTS	24
FURTHER INFORMATION	24

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Preface

Wolves, brown bears and lynx are Europe's largest and most impressive carnivores. They are also threatened across much of their range. But why should we care about these animals when there are so many other endangered species across Europe?

The Iberian lynx, found only in pockets of Spain and Portugal, is a matter of grave conservation concern: as the world's most endangered cat, its tiny population faces possible extinction as a result of habitat loss. In contrast, other species, such as wolves, are beginning to expand their ranges, but unless the public starts to accept their presence, there will be conflict and wolves will be the losers. In Europe, wolves, bears and lynx play a special role in our landscapes and they also represent a healthy environment.

Europe's carnivores, exalted in the past as prized hunting trophies, circus attractions, symbols of power and potency, and as creatures of myth, are an important part of our culture. Legends about their ferocity, cunning and intelligence abound: Little Red Riding Hood, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Peter and the Wolf, and stories of werewolves, are all testament to our fascination with these impressive beasts.

But in some instances this fascination has led to the downfall of carnivores which have often been hunted or demonised to death – so there is an urgent need to support their conservation. Can we harness our interest and make it a positive force for the good? WWF believes that we can. One way is through responsible tourism.

WWF is calling on the tourism industry to look at the business opportunities offered by carnivore tourism – opportunities which could help to ensure the survival of these extraordinary animals in Europe.

Vivid images of carnivores can be used to communicate a real sense of remote wilderness. A single image of a wolf, bear or lynx can express in one brochure photograph what many landscape shots or a hundred words cannot.

The attraction of carnivores is sometimes more to do with what they represent – untamed wilderness and the call of the wild – rather than the animals themselves. Large carnivores are already used as powerful symbols to promote conservation and to attract visitors, but there is great scope for expansion.

One of WWF's top conservation priorities is to raise awareness and to educate people about large carnivores. The communities living close to carnivores are particularly important in this respect, and WWF is working to promote the benefits of carnivore tourism to local people.

This report looks at tourism and large carnivore conservation in five countries – France, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain – where WWF has been working with local scientists, conservationists and communities to ensure that Europe's threatened carnivores survive in this new millennium. In one sense, these animals are Europe's pandas, tigers and rhinos: we must value and protect them.

WWF is challenging conservationists, park managers, communities, tourists and the tourism industry to work together for the survival of Europe's large carnivores. Shared interests need to be explored. Take up that challenge today!



ROBERT NAPIER

Chief Executive, WWF-UK

WWF's Vision

FOR CARNIVORE TOURISM

WWF recognises that successful conservation largely depends upon comprehensive land use planning, good agricultural practice and effective natural resource management, and that, in some cases, tourism may be inappropriate. However, where it is controlled and well-managed, there is a strong supporting role for tourism. In these situations, WWF believes that tourism can play an important part in protecting the environment both for people and for nature.

The presence of carnivores can be a valuable asset to the tourism industry: it can, for example, be used as an income generator, a symbol of wilderness, a source of local and national pride, or as an educational resource. Responsible tourism, therefore, has the potential to provide unique opportunities for awareness raising, contribute to the economic development of local communities and the conservation of habitats and species, and enhance cultural and historical traditions.

But these opportunities are mostly unexplored. The tourism industry, local communities and conservationists need to find ways in which tourism, based around large carnivores, can be harnessed for conservation, community development and the provision of exciting new holidays. Crucially, responsible tourism can encourage and maintain harmonious co-existence between people and wildlife.

For carnivore tourism, this means establishing partnerships between communities, park managers and tour operators as well as local

governments and conservationists. Through partnerships, joint tourism and conservation initiatives can be developed. WWF believes that these initiatives should:

- develop joint marketing strategies for particular areas;
- promote conservation practices as tourist attractions;
- encourage cultural tourism activities associated with large carnivores;
- mitigate potential conflicts between communities and carnivores; and
- extend conservation and tourism beyond the boundaries of National Parks.

For conservation and carnivore tourism to be successful, local communities should feel that tourism and carnivores are part of their future and that they will benefit from both. In return, tourism

should support local accommodation, shops, restaurants, bars, transport and guiding. Above all, it should also respect the natural, social and cultural diversity of destinations, and the capacity of local communities, wildlife and habitats to support a certain number of tourists.

Within these broad guidelines, large carnivore tourism offers a new and exciting European product for both the tourism industry and for tourists. For tour operators, it is a way of diversifying an existing product or marketing a new one, as well as a means of being a carnivore and conservation-friendly company. For tourists, it is an opportunity to enjoy the habitat of carnivores, to learn about them and perhaps to participate in carnivore research. The lucky few will even see a bear, a wolf or a lynx.

TOURISM IN THE BALANCE

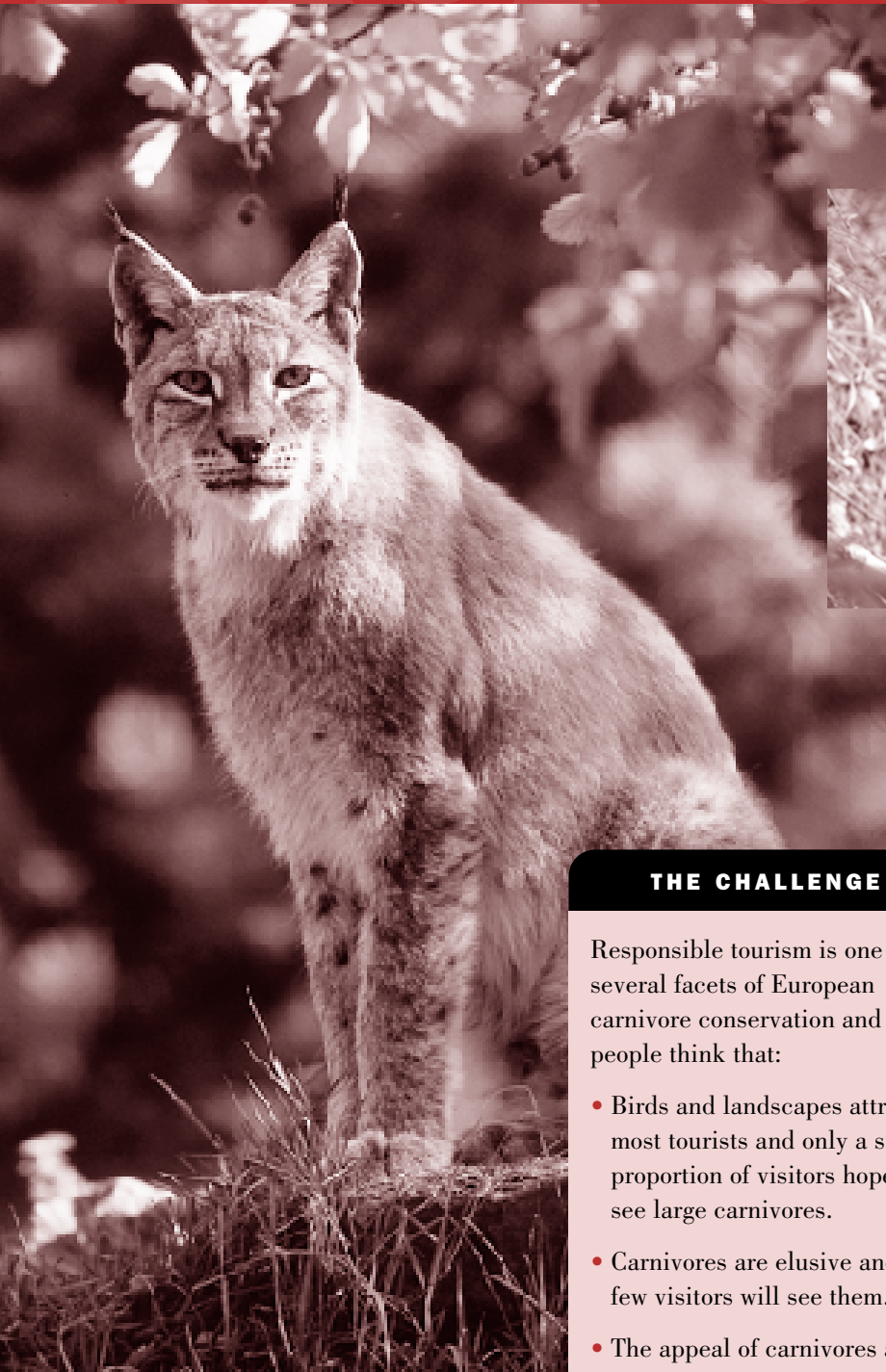
WWF recognises the potential positive role that responsible tourism can play in carnivore conservation. There is, however, a paradox. Tourism can bring great benefits but, if mismanaged, it can damage the natural environment upon which it depends.

WWF believes that if it is well planned and if it is managed sustainably, tourism can bring benefits to protected areas and local communities alike. Responsible tourism should be based on appreciating nature and culture, and it should be informative and cause minimal

damage, disturbance or pollution.

To achieve these objectives, WWF is encouraging the tourism industry to market the full range of a destination's wildlife and culture. Tourists should be enabled and encouraged to experience local cultures, as well as the wildlife and its habitat, in ways that are enjoyable and do not have negative impacts. Local guides can play an invaluable role in enabling visitors to explore and understand local cultures, and to see as much as possible of the wildlife without causing unnecessary disturbance.

on for Carniv



CHRISTOPH PROMBERGER

D. LAWSON, WWF.UK

THE CHALLENGE

Responsible tourism is one of several facets of European carnivore conservation and many people think that:

- Birds and landscapes attract the most tourists and only a small proportion of visitors hope to see large carnivores.
- Carnivores are elusive and few visitors will see them.
- The appeal of carnivores as an unseen presence, where only droppings and tracks are visible, is only enjoyed by a minority.
- Tourism and research do not mix and tourist components need to be built into research programmes from the beginning in order to be successful.

- Tourism can play only a minor role in the conservation of large carnivores – land use policies, natural resource management and agricultural practices are all far more significant.

However, all conservationists agree that raising awareness and educating people about large carnivores is a priority. This is especially important amongst the communities in which they live. By generating benefits for communities through the promotion of carnivores and their habitat, responsible tourism can make a real and unique contribution to carnivore conservation.

The Benefits

THE BENEFITS FOR TOURISM

Marketing

- Large carnivores are a powerful symbol of the wild and remote parts of Europe. The Iberian lynx, for example, is the world's most endangered cat. Used as the core of a marketing strategy that also embraces other key species, protected areas and cultural aspects of the region, carnivores can provide a strong holiday marketing tool.

Education

- As the centrepiece of an information package, carnivores offer an exciting educational opportunity through which tourists can learn about conservation and wilderness habitats.
- Carnivore visitor centres, information boards and leaflets with species information, can all heighten the tourism experience.

Added Value

- Carnivores can add value to holidays by offering more than sun, sea and sand, and they can form the basis of new products. New ways of experiencing these elusive animals can be developed – for example, through walking safaris, on-foot tracking, infra-red and real-time closed circuit television, visiting observation points and meeting local wildlife experts.

THE BENEFITS FOR CARNIVORES

Awareness

- Tourism can increase a local community's sense of pride in, and value placed on, large carnivores as a visitor attraction. A community's sense of ownership and involvement can open the way for discussion about conservation measures or development plans, which may directly improve their livelihoods.
- Tourism can raise awareness of the threats facing Europe's remaining large carnivores, indirectly helping to protect carnivores from hunting and poaching.

Research

- Tourists can become actively involved in carnivore research – for example, as volunteer wolf trackers in the Carpathian Mountains, Romania.
- Tourists can help improve research facilities. In Bialowieza, Poland, for example, unused hunting cabins have been converted into bear-watching hides, which are used by tourists and researchers.

Finance

- Loyalty schemes can help finance conservation efforts. By becoming a "Friend of the park" or "Buying a fruit tree to save a bear" as in Abruzzo National Park, Italy, visitors can contribute directly to the conservation efforts they have seen in the field.
- Tourists and operators can make direct donations to carnivore conservation.

THE BENEFITS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Business

- Carnivore tourism can generate commercial opportunities for local entrepreneurs and provide additional income through meeting increased or new demands for accommodation, restaurants, local transport, crafts and local produce, tour operating and guiding. Where the industry is already established, carnivore tourism presents an opportunity to diversify – an example being "Following the tracks of the wolf" tour in Mercantour National Park, France.

Culture

- Cultural heritage links may be strengthened through the promotion of traditions such as story-telling, traditional shepherding techniques and local crafts for tourists, and by promoting a village's image as being "carnivore-friendly" – both of which occur in Italy and Romania.

Partnerships

- Partnerships between communities, tour operators, local governments and conservationists can benefit all parties. In Italy, WWF is promoting the breeding of Abruzzo mastiffs, the traditional guard dogs of Italian shepherds, and the Doñana 21 Foundation in Spain involves all parties in discussions about sustainable development. Such initiatives not only reduce conflicts between farmers and carnivores but also engage local communities in thinking positively about carnivore conservation and tourism.



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Case Studies from Europe

THE GROWTH OF TOURISM

Tourism is the world's largest industry. In 1999, international tourist arrivals topped 657 million and tourism receipts totalled US\$455 billion. Globally, this accounted for 8 per cent of total export earnings, over 200 million jobs, and 8 per cent of total employment. Nature tourism is thought to generate around 7 per cent of all international travel expenditure. In Europe, ecotourism probably accounts for around 2 per cent of the market. But while tourism overall has been growing by over 3 per cent annually, nature tourism is increasing at a faster rate. Although nature tourism is not necessarily sustainable and cannot be classified automatically as true ecotourism, this growing demand should be seen as the basis on which to build real ecotourism and more responsible mainstream tourism.

CASE STUDIES FROM EUROPE

In the following five case studies the current tourism scene is reviewed and the cases “for” and “against” carnivore tourism are explored. WWF’s aim is to alert the tourism industry, local communities and conservationists to the possible opportunities, benefits and disadvantages of carnivore tourism. WWF believes that, in specific European locations, tourism can help support the conservation of large carnivores and the sustainable development of the communities amongst which they live.

Romania

CARPATHIAN LARGE CARNIVORE PROJECT

In many respects, the Large Carnivore Project in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania presents a model example of how responsible tourism can help carnivore conservation. As Christoph Promberger, the project manager, states, “animal lovers are as much of a problem as hunters – we place great emphasis upon demonstrating to our visitors what the problems are and what possible solutions exist.”

TOURISM OVERVIEW

Tourist attractions in the region revolve around winter skiing, the scenic beauty of the area, and Bran Castle, the home of Vlad Tepes, inspiration for the Count Dracula novel. Dracula has been the key marketing image for Bran in the central part of this study area. Recently, however, carnivores – in particular, wolves – have been used to market the area. Promotion has been greatly enhanced by the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project which has generated magazine and newspaper coverage about carnivore research and the opportunities to the travel industry. The “Wolves, Bears and lynx in Transylvania” programme, initiated by the Large Carnivore Project, has developed a tourist infrastructure through local small-scale family businesses and by designing and marketing programmes that are attractive to national and foreign tourists. The tourism experience on offer reflects the importance of local people in the conservation of large carnivores, and tourists are encouraged to meet local people and to be actively involved in the project. Current research work is presented and explained, and the importance of a collaborative approach to carnivore conservation is stressed to hosts and guests alike.



Zarnesti is the main focus of the large carnivore tourism development programme where there is a tourism bureau, four pensions, a local tour operator, bicycle rental and horse-riding enterprises, horse-and-cart taxis and a bear observation hide (a converted hunting hut). A tourism association promotes and coordinates tourism and ensures that it is managed to minimise adverse impacts. The project field

CURRENT SITUATION

Tourism Base

- Winter skiing, summer trekking, Bran (Dracula) Castle, wolves

Carnivore Tourism

- The “Wolves, Bears and lynx in Transylvania” programme initiated by the Large Carnivore Project
- An educational approach means tourists meet local people and are actively involved in the project

Tourism Infrastructure

- Tourism association and bureau
- 4 pensions
- Local operator
- Bicycle rental
- Horse-riding
- Bear observation hide
- Project field station with two wolves

Visitors

- 40 groups expected in 2000
- 289 visitors so far involved in the programme, mainly from Austria, Britain, Germany and Switzerland

Tourist Revenue

- 1999: \$130,570, of which 53 per cent went to the local community through local tour operator, catering and transport services

Romania

station, with two wolves in an enclosure, creates an additional attraction. Wild wolves are rarely sighted, although bear sightings are common. There are few tourist facilities within the National Park where walking and trekking are the most popular activities in the summer – particularly for domestic tourists.

The number of groups visiting the area has increased from 8 to 22 between 1997 and 1999, with 40 groups expected in 2000. A total of 289 visitors have been involved in the programme, mainly from Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The tourism revenue in 1999 totalled \$130,570, of which 53 per cent went to the local community through the services of local tour operators, catering and transport.

Since the closure of two factories, Zarnesti has been experiencing an economic decline and tourism is seen as a way to help regenerate the city. The Carpathian Large Carnivore Project is addressing regeneration by working closely with Zarnesti Council, which has the resources to engage the whole community in a comprehensive consultation and community development process.

Developed tourism is currently small-scale with limited, but enthusiastic, local involvement. The tourist facilities in the area are all locally-owned and, significantly, local game wardens from the Romanian State Forest Administration, the National Park Administration, and the local mayor



CHRISTOPH PROMBERGER

and council, are all involved in the project. Recently, Zarnesti Council adopted a vision for the city that recognised the importance of large carnivores and community-based tourism, and it has since invested in a tourism bureau.

The Large Carnivore Project provides advice for local people interested in setting up tourism businesses. The community of Zarnesti recently rejected large-scale tourism development proposals in favour of the continued growth of small-scale locally-based tourism, with the conservation of large carnivores as an essential priority.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Romanian Carpathian Mountains are one of the last strongholds of large carnivores in Europe. lynx have been protected since 1934, and wolves and bears received complete protection in 1996. Controlled hunting of all three species is permitted where significant damage to livestock is reported.

The Carpathian Large Carnivore Project was established in 1995 by the Munich Wildlife Society in cooperation with the Romanian State Forest Administration. Its objective is to conserve large carnivores and their habitats through an integrated management approach. The project uses ecotourism as the main tool to assist

Romania

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR DEBATE

Opportunities

- Continued and steady long-term growth in large carnivore and nature-based tourism to the region
- Successful marketing and agreements with nature-based tour operators in tourist originating countries
- Increased significance of large carnivore tourism to the local economy and identity of the region
- Local communities playing a leading role in the management and conservation of large carnivores and their habitats – independent management by 2003

Obstacles

- Pressure for more rapid economic development
- Only a small proportion of the community benefiting from large carnivore tourism
- Conflicting aspirations of local farmers and hunters with the emerging tourism industry
- Wild wolves rarely sighted, although bear sightings common
- Few tourist facilities offered within the National Park



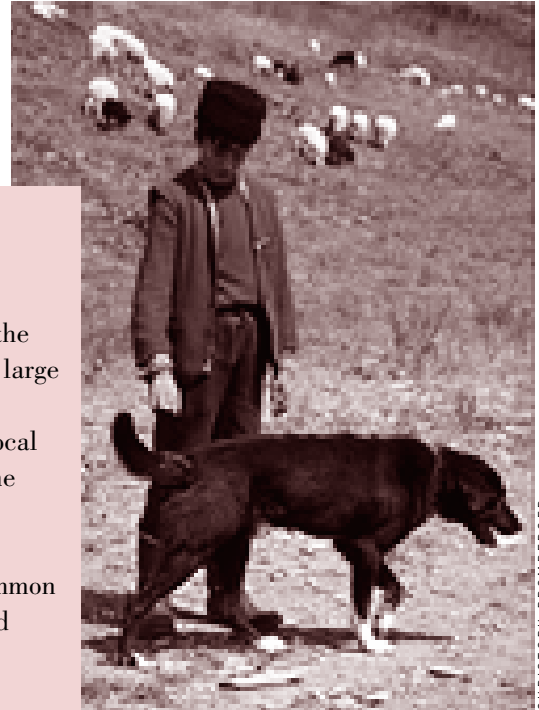
in the rural development of the area, by combining conservation of large carnivores with community-based tourism initiatives. A valuable model for the development of large carnivore tourism in and around protected areas in Europe has emerged from this project.

Included in the project area are the Piatra Craiului National Park and two mountain ranges, Cuiacas and Bucegi. The project area thus contains all types of forest, from beech at the lower altitudes, mixed forest between 900m and 1,500m, and spruce forest below the 1,800m timberline. An impressive range of European mammals can be found in

the region, including brown bear, wolf, lynx and their prey species – red deer, roe deer, wild boar and chamois.

Threats to carnivores include habitat destruction, poaching in response to livestock losses and increased hunting of both carnivore prey and carnivores themselves.

The forest is an important economic resource in this area, providing jobs in the state forest as well as in local saw and pulp mills. The forest also provides food and supplementary income for gypsy communities through wild berry and mushroom picking.



Away from the cities, agriculture is the main economic activity and shepherds with dogs guard herds of up to 1,000 sheep. Traditional shepherding methods are used to guard flocks against wolves, involving pens and mountain dogs, and are being actively encouraged and supported by the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project. Sheep are used to produce cheese, meat and wool products.

SUMMARY

The Carpathian Large Carnivore Project is a valuable example of the role that carnivore tourism can play in:

- supporting conservation;
- generating income for the local community; and
- raising awareness about carnivores among tourists.

Poland

BIALOWIEZA NATIONAL PARK

CURRENT SITUATION

Tourism Base

- Birding, bison and elk
- Walking, cart (summer) and sled (winter) rides

Carnivore Tourism

- Snow-tracking wolves and research activity

Tourism Infrastructure

- Tourist paths
- Guided walks
- Youth hostel
- Hotel accommodation
- Campsites
- 1999: 30 B&Bs

Visitors

- 1999: 30-40,000 (doubled since 1996)

Tourist Revenue

- \$61,000 in 1999



JOEP VAN DE VLASAKKER

Bialowieza National Park could easily become another model project for carnivore tourism if it incorporates best practice elements from the Romanian Large Carnivore Project, such as increased community involvement. Apart from large carnivores, the National Park has other attractions including a rich diversity of bird life and a ready-made tourist infrastructure, and it is the only surviving example of the once extensive primeval wildwood in Europe.

TOURISM OVERVIEW

The Polish National Tourist Office uses The Natural Choice and Wonders of Nature as core themes in its promotion of the country. Rich in bird life and with large herds of European bison, deer and elk, Poland has much to attract the tourist interested in nature. Bears are limited to the Carpathian Mountains in the south-east, whilst wolves and lynx generally occur only in the large forested areas in northern and eastern Poland. A small population of lynx has been successfully reintroduced to Kampinoski National Park, near Warsaw.

The state-owned Bialowieza National Park, on the border with Belorussia, is a designated World Heritage Site, and a Man and the Biosphere Reserve. Established in 1921, Bialowieza is Poland's oldest National Park and is Europe's last primeval lowland forest. Bialowieza has 56 species of mammal including bison, wolf, Eurasian lynx, otter and beaver, and 232 bird species, 120 of which breed within the boundaries including the black stork, pygmy and eagle owls, spotted and booted eagles, white-backed woodpecker, nutcracker and red-breasted flycatcher.



JOEP VAN DE VLASAKKER

The 4km of tourist paths enable visitors to see much of the bird life, and the bison breeding station – part of the successful re-introduction programme – gives visitors an opportunity to see these large mammals close up. Sightings of large carnivores are rare, but evidence of their presence, such as paw prints, can be identified for visitors. For those wanting to see carnivores in the wild, their best chance is to visit at the end of winter and in early spring when the trees are bare and carnivores are more easily spotted against the snow.

Visitor numbers have almost doubled since 1996: up to 40,000 people visited the park in 1999, and an estimated \$61,000 was generated for the park through tourism. The local community is involved in forestry and tourism in and around Bialowieza, with close to 20 local community-based tourism activities, such as guided walks, offered in the park. The majority of the park's visitors are nature lovers from Poland and the rest of Europe.

The main tourist facilities are in the village of Bialowieza, although Hajnowka and other villages around the park offer accommodation for tourists. Facilities include a youth hostel, campsites, restaurants and hotels.

There is concern about the relatively large proportion of day visitors to the park and the associated road traffic. Overnight visitors contribute more to the local economy, and the local authority is increasingly supporting tourism development and encouraging local people to set up tourism enterprises such as B&B accommodation. Since 1992 the number of B&Bs in Bialowieza has increased from 2 to 30.

Valuable additional funds and resources have been raised through the development of nature tours to Bialowieza Primeval Forest. The Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences is radio tracking wolves and studying their behaviour and a percentage of the fee is donated, either in cash or in equipment, to research. Tourists help with radio tracking, wildlife surveys, snow tracking and debriefing sessions to discuss observations recorded during the day. Spending a considerable time in the forest dramatically increases a visitor's chance of seeing carnivores. With training and guiding, the data collected by the tourists is reliable and valuable and is used to aid the conservation of wolves in Bialowieza.

Tours employ local people and guides. For example, local horsemen take tourists on cart

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR DEBATE

Opportunities

- Increased prominence and importance of large carnivores in promoting Bialowieza
- Increased importance of tourism in the economic development of Bialowieza
- Increased visitor awareness of large carnivores in Bialowieza
- Resources to fund research, management and protection of large carnivores in Bialowieza
- Local communities valuing large carnivores as a natural asset to their community
- Local communities playing a key role in the conservation and management of large carnivores

Obstacles

- Development pressures on Bialowieza detrimental to large carnivore conservation
- Increased tourism vehicle traffic and large carnivore road deaths
- Unrealistic visitor expectations and demands to see large carnivores
- Disturbance of large carnivore den sites and displacement of populations
- Conflicts of interest between visitors' expectations and local community lifestyles

or sled rides through the park. Musicians, bee keepers, craftsman and bicycle owners are also involved and all groups stay in local accommodation.

The elusiveness of large carnivores is promoted as part of their allure: seeing tracks and calling for wolves are very much the attraction. The growth of interest in specialist tourism in the park is offering local communities the opportunity to benefit directly from tourism, and provides tangible economic incentives to conserve the wildlife in Bialowieza. Engaging tourists in large carnivore research in the park not only assists with the research itself, but also draws together the interests of the community, park management and local authorities.



JOEP VAN DE VLAASAKER

SUMMARY

Increasing interest in nature tourism and the tourism revenue generated in Bialowieza National Park provides a strong foundation for the development of a viable large carnivore tourism programme.

Italy

ABRUZZO NATIONAL PARK & REGION

Abruzzo, the “green heart of Italy”, contains stable populations of bear, wolf and lynx. A third of the region is protected by three National Parks as well as several regional parks and 20 protected areas. Because of its proximity to Rome, the region is popular in all seasons with coastal and mountain tourism, including winter skiing. Beyond marketing, carnivore tourism is undeveloped.

TOURISM OVERVIEW

Abruzzo National Park provides free access for up to 2.5 million visitors a year and there are a number of visitor centres within the park itself. The main centre for the park is the village of Pescasseroli. The seven visitor centres receive ±400,000 visitors each year. There are 10 information offices and a “Museo del lupo appenninico” (wolf museum). There are nature trails, marked tourist paths and over 50km of road. Most visitors are Italians – many are day-trippers from Rome or Pescara – although the region is starting to attract foreign tourists.

There are five villages within the National Park and 17 adjacent to the park boundaries. The main economy for local people is tourism, with skiing in winter and nature tourism in summer. There is also a vibrant livestock farming community with a strong shepherding tradition. The Acropolis, Curino and Necropolis at Alfedena are the main cultural sites but, throughout the area, hermitages and churches are scattered in the rock faces and on sites of previous pagan temples, sanctuaries and Roman towns.

The National Park provides 50 permanent and 50 temporary jobs and it is estimated that each job produces five or six indirect employment opportunities in related fields such as lodgings, catering and transport. The villages within the park are heavily involved in tourism and are thriving with the increased numbers of visitors to the area. Local communities provide accommodation, restaurants and other tourist facilities, as well as selling traditional crafts. The average visitor spends an estimated \$28 a day in a 1-3 day stay, yielding \$28 million to the local economy. There are 33 hotels and pensions in the park, providing some 1,600 beds.

CURRENT SITUATION

Tourism Base

- “Green heart of Italy”
- Archaeological sites
- World Heritage Site
- Carnivore Tourism marketing purposes only

Tourism Infrastructure

- 7 visitor centres
- 10 information offices
- Wolf museum
- Extensive tourist paths
- 33 hotels and pensions within the park

Visitors

- 2-2.5 million annually (400,000 to visitor centres)

Tourist Revenue

- \$28 million annually



The wolf and bear have been used very successfully to market Abruzzo National Park, with the Marsican brown bear adopted as its logo. Images of both wolf and bear are used on marketing materials, sticker production, creation of motifs and logos, production of brochures, leaflets, postcards, booklets and research publications. However, sighting of these species is not the primary attraction, as emphasis is placed on the beauty of the landscape and scenery, which is the habitat of large carnivores.

The success of tourism has brought considerable economic benefits to local people and there is growing evidence that large carnivore populations are at least stable and may be increasing. This helps to preserve the traditional lifestyles of local livestock farmers with traditional shepherding practices, such as the use of Abruzzo mastiffs to guard sheep.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Abruzzo National Park, established in 1923, has a variety of habitats and landscapes including mixed forests of beech and oak, pastureland, alpine meadows and rocky terrain. The climate is cold-temperate with snow from December to March but with hot summers. Part of the central Apennine range, 150 km south-east of Rome, is a World Heritage Site. It is largely privately owned. There are 40 species of mammal in the park including brown bear, wolf, Eurasian lynx, wildcat, otter, stone marten, badger and polecat. There are over 300 species of bird including golden eagle, goshawk, buzzard, eagle owl and the rare white-backed woodpecker. The park's wolf population is estimated to be 50 (12 per cent of the Italian population) together with around 80 brown bears and 10 lynx. These populations are reported to be increasing. The Eurasian lynx was



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thought to be extinct in the park as long ago as the 1920s but, in 1993, it re-emerged although populations are still extremely low.

The park functions as a focus for conservation and protection of species that range well beyond its border. In 1994, in response to cases of bears being killed outside the park either by cars or through poaching, WWF-Italy and the National Park Authorities launched a campaign to plant 3,000 apple trees. This successful campaign involved private landowners and villages within the park, thus increasing its food supply for bears and encouraging them to remain within the park boundaries.



SUMMARY

Tourism is the main economic activity in Abruzzo which uses the bear as the key marketing icon for the National Park. Although there are opportunities to expand tourism activities, a careful balance between tourism and conservation in Abruzzo needs to be maintained.

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR DEBATE

Opportunities

- To diversify and promote tourism that actively engages tourists in conservation
- Additional resources and support from the tourism industry for large carnivore conservation
- Marketing of traditional community lifestyles alongside the natural values of the region
- Increasing awareness of the conservation issues and significance of large carnivores to the region

Obstacles

- Predominance of mainstream tourism with increasing impact and little benefit for large carnivore conservation
- Disenfranchisement of traditional communities not directly involved in tourism
- Little incentive to protect large carnivores and habitats outside the National Park

Spain

DOÑANA NATIONAL PARK

Doñana National Park presents a challenging opportunity for carnivore tourism. Adjacent to mass tourism resorts on the Costa de la Luz, the park needs careful protection from uncontrolled tourism development. Increasing tourist traffic and an expanding road system mean the park is in danger of becoming an isolated island of wilderness. However, strong cultural and community ties to the park already exist, and the Iberian lynx is a powerful marketing symbol. Low-level responsible tourism directly focused upon the conservation of the Iberian lynx and its plight, could be developed and would be preferable to increased industrial and agricultural development.

TOURISM OVERVIEW

More than 350,000 visitors a year visit the park and its five visitor centres. Facilities include information centres in El Rocio and Puebla del Rio. Other planned centres include a theme park and large coastal museum to be opened in Matalascanas in 2001. The more central areas can be reached only in escorted groups run by recognised, mostly local, commercial operators, either on land (4WD, horse, bike or walking) or by boat. Visitors are limited to 250 a day in these restricted areas. Between 1987 and 1996 only 51.3 per cent of the visitor quota was used, largely owing to seasonal fluctuations in visitor numbers. Most tourists are from Spain and Germany. Special interest groups include hikers (predominantly Spanish and British) and nature lovers (Spanish, British, German and Portuguese) who usually come specifically to see birds.

Since the 18th century, an annual pilgrimage, La Romeria en honor de la Virgen del Rocio, has been one of the most popular in Spain. More than a million pilgrims gather in the village of El Rocio on the northern boundary on the day before Whit Sunday and over 20,000 pass through the park

during this period. Their passage is free of charge and involves a number of nights' rough camping. Other traditional activities within the park include horse breeding (the horses are set loose to live in the wild all year round), river crab fishing, bulrush cutting and salt extraction. These traditional activities are carefully monitored but there are concerns that the influx of pilgrims through the park impacts on the solitary, elusive habits of the Iberian lynx. Increased traffic on the roads is a further serious threat to the lynx, even though tunnels have been constructed for their safe passage.

Some 15,000 people live around (though not in) the park and a number of large tourist developments exist in the immediate area. The park creates 57 full-time jobs.

The Doñana 21 Foundation represents the interests of business, the park, regional government and the community and has been established to examine sustainable development. The Foundation has developed a "green" quality-labelling scheme for tourism operators and businesses in and around the park. The scheme

CURRENT SITUATION

Tourism Base

- World Heritage Site, Biosphere Reserve
- Birding
- Pilgrimage
- Hiking
- Adjacent mass tourism

Carnivore Tourism

- Negligible

Tourism Infrastructure

- 5 visitor centres
- 10 hotels, 15 pensions, 4 campsites around park

Visitors

- 350,000 annually

Tourist Revenue

- Unknown



involves auditing tourism operators and businesses and aims to inform tourists about which operators are offering responsible tourism experiences in the park.

The major mass tourism development is Matalascanas, which dominates Doñana. The resort occupies 5km of coastline in front of Doñana and contains hotels, restaurants and nightclubs.

No accommodation is offered in the park but there are 10 hotels, 15 pensions and 4 campsites dotted around its boundaries. The fishing village of Mazagon further up the coast is also a popular tourist destination, and both Marzago and Matalascañas attract sun, sea and sand tourists indicative of the Costa de la Luz.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Found only in parts of Spain and Portugal, the Iberian lynx is the world's most endangered cat, and Doñana National Park is one of its last refuges. Limited research suggests that there are around 600 remaining in 48 fragmented habitat pockets across Spain. Brown bears and wolves inhabit parts of Spain, mainly in the north-west's more mountainous regions rather than the flat wetlands around Doñana. There are thought to be around 80 brown bears in Spain, mainly in the Cantabrian Mountains, in Somiedo National Park, and as many as 2,000 wolves. Other carnivores include polecats, wildcats, European badgers, pine and beech martens, otters, European and American minks, stoats, weasels, foxes and Egyptian mongooses.

Doñana National Park was established in 1969, and was previously a private hunting ground for a wealthy estate owner. It comprises a coastal strip dominated by salt marshes, lagoons and sand dunes, and a forested area with stone pines and marsh lakes. It is a World Heritage Site and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, with a third of the area in private

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR DEBATE

Opportunities

- Marketing of Doñana as a haven for the Iberian lynx – “Doñana is the Iberian lynx”
- Promotion of Iberian lynx tourism through community-owned and accredited tours
- Involvement and shared responsibility from mainstream tourism in the conservation of the Iberian lynx



ownership. Most famous for its bird life, Doñana is an important habitat for the Iberian lynx.

Around 50, or 5-10 per cent, of the Spanish population live in the park. In 1951 Doñana's last wolf was shot, leaving the Iberian lynx as the only large carnivore in the park. Fallow and red deer, polecat, badger, weasel, fox, genet, stone marten, otter, wild cat, wild boar and Egyptian mongoose also live there. Its rich bird life includes the Imperial eagle, grey heron, egret, squacco heron, spoonbill and stork, as well as huge flocks of wintering geese.

Doñana National Park is surrounded by residential, agricultural and industrial land, and the isolation of the park as an island of wild habitat poses the biggest threat to the lynx. Illegal poaching and heavy road traffic are also

Obstacles

- Promotion of activities that conserve and protect the Iberian lynx and habitat
- Promotion of Doñana and region as a sun, sea and sand destination only
- Reduced interest in specialist tours in the park
- Conflicts between environmental agencies and the tourism industry
- Doñana being “loved to death” through destructive tourism practices

serious threats. Indirectly, the poaching of prey species and accidental catches and habitat loss through urbanisation outside the park all affect the survival of the lynx.

SUMMARY

Doñana National Park is of natural and cultural significance to the people from this region and throughout Spain. Conservation and protection of the Iberian lynx is testament to the importance placed on natural and cultural traditions and lifestyles, yet there is no direct link between tourism and conservation at this time. In fact the growing infrastructure associated with adjacent mass tourism is a major threat.

France

MERCANTOUR NATIONAL PARK

Mercantour National Park and the surrounding region presents one of the most challenging opportunities in Europe for the successful conservation of large carnivores. Associated responsible tourism may, however, offer a positive way forward.

TOURISM OVERVIEW

Mercantour National Park, north of Nice and the Côte D'Azur, was established in 1979 in the mountainous Alpes-Maritime region. The region is very popular and receives 8.3 million tourists a year. Of these about 700,000 visit the park, double the 1979 number. It is estimated that one in two jobs is related to tourism in the Alpes-Maritime, with skiing the most popular activity in winter. The National Park is promoted through the Riviera and Côte D'Azur Tourism Committee, but large carnivores do not feature in any of their marketing material. Most visitors are from the Côte D'Azur or day-trippers, but about a third are international tourists, mainly from Belgium, Italy and the UK. They tend to stay in hotels in Vallée de la Roya, between Breil and Tende, or in refuges in and around the park. The central area of the park is not accessible by car and access to unrestricted areas is on foot with over 600 km of sign-posted paths. Cultural dimensions include a baroque chapel, rural mountain barns and the Maginot Line fortifications along the Italian border.



CURRENT SITUATION

Tourism Base

- Trekking
- Cultural attractions
- Skiing
- Mountain and outdoor activities

Carnivore Tourism

- Embryonic
- Potential for sheep flock guarding

Tourism Infrastructure

- 600km of footpaths
- 4 major ski resorts
- New wolf centre

Visitors

- 700,000 annually

Tourist Revenue

- Unknown



Some people involved in tourism value the wolf as an important economic asset and local guides are offering conducted tours – “Following the tracks of the wolf.” Although these products have great tourism appeal, they have tended to be individual initiatives. A wolf centre including a wolf enclosure and a museum has just been opened in the district of St Martin-Vésubie. It is expected to receive about 100,000 visitors in its first year.

The capacity to develop large carnivore tourism is severely hampered by conflicts between local farmers and large carnivores. Without the support of local farming communities for the long-term conservation of wolves in the park, large carnivore tourism will be difficult to sustain.



CHRISTOPH PROMBERGER

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Of the countries featured in this report, France has the smallest population of large carnivores. It is estimated that there are up to 50 wolves in France, but research indicates that this small population is growing and breeding successfully. The main stronghold is in the Alpes-Maritime region where the Mercantour National Park is located.

Mercantour has an exceptional diversity of flora including olive trees in the south and edelweiss in the north. There are also chamois, wild sheep, ibex, wild boar, deer and royal eagles. Wolves were thought to be extinct in the region but were sighted again in 1992. After the first snowfalls in December, wolf tracks can be more easily observed and estimates

suggest that there are between 15 and 20 wolves in the Mercantour area plus a pack which lives mainly on the Italian side of the Alps. It is believed that this Mercantour population is stable and successfully reproducing.

In the park 17,000 people live in 28 villages. The park employs about 56 permanent staff and 90 temporary and seasonal workers. Four international ski resorts offer local employment, while livestock farming is the significant economic activity in the rural communities.

It is estimated that there are over 120,000 sheep in the park. Local farmers are increasingly attributing sheep kills to the activities of wolves and they are viewed negatively by many farmers and local political leaders who are putting significant pressure on the park authorities to remove wolves from Mercantour. There is a compensation scheme which pays farmers for loss of livestock, and the French Ministry of the Environment,

Mercantour National Parks, and WWF have also financed various sheep protection systems. These include building shepherd huts for overnight stays in the mountains, penning areas using electric fencing and also flock-guarding schemes using volunteers and livestock guard dogs. Farmers, government officials and environmental agencies meet regularly to try to find solutions to these problems.

SUMMARY

As the number of wolves increases and stabilises in Mercantour, the region could emerge as a destination for large carnivore tourism. However, promotion of wolves in the area must be underpinned by careful management of local community concerns and mitigation of carnivore-livestock conflicts.

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR DEBATE

Opportunities

- An economically viable large carnivore tourism industry
- Innovative measures to mitigate conflicts between farmers and large carnivores
- Support for local farming communities and the promotion of rural livelihoods and traditions
- A coordinating and inclusive approach to large carnivore conservation and management

Obstacles

- Continued conflict of interest between environmentalists, rural communities and large carnivore tourism
- Displacement and reduction of viable populations of large carnivores

The WWF Code of Conduct

FOR RESPONSIBLE CARNIVORE TOURISM

For many tourists or tour operators travelling to, or promoting, these National Parks and regions, making the right choice can be difficult without prior knowledge of some of the relevant issues. To help inform decision-making, WWF has produced a Code of Conduct for large carnivore tourism which can be used by tourists and tour operators. It outlines the types of activities, information and questions that tourists and tour operators should consider.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Choose locations with good conservation practices

Choose destinations that promote, and legally protect, large carnivores and have continuing research and monitoring programmes, as well as a carnivore conservation strategy.

Support conservation

Adopt the WWF Code of Conduct as company policy and create links to WWF country offices to raise awareness of current carnivore research and issues.

Visit conservation projects

Include large carnivore conservation projects in itineraries and include conservation awareness as a component of tours through lectures or briefings from researchers and National Park staff.

Use flagship species for regional marketing

Use regional flagship species in marketing material or work with National Parks and local tour operators to identify and promote an appropriate species for tours. Promote large carnivores as a symbol of a natural and healthy environment, and as a cultural asset to Europe.

Get involved in local conservation

Meet the people running large carnivore research and monitoring projects and try to link activities with conservation projects. Report sightings.

Highlight the value of National Parks and protected areas

Establish National Parks as destinations. Create links to National Parks and promote tours around National Parks where large carnivore populations are protected.

Demonstrate commitment to local communities

Establish and promote links to local communities and remember their importance to large carnivore conservation and tourism. Create links with local tourism associations and use local accommodation, catering, tour operators, guides, facilities and transport wherever possible to encourage local commitment to tourism and conservation. Encourage local people to develop local products that can be promoted and sold through tours.



JOEP VAN DE VLA SAKKER

Involve local communities in tourism associations

Work with the national tourism agency to encourage new and emerging local tourism operators to set up a tourism association for the area which can extend the conservation ethos and practices more broadly and develop a unique marketing strategy for the destination. Participate in the marketing strategy.

Highlight sustainable development guidelines

Encourage local tour operators to follow sustainable development guidelines and promote this in marketing materials.

Set an example to clients and brief guides on responsible tourism

Train guides to be responsible, to respect wildlife, and to be aware of the WWF Code of Conduct.

Be aware of the current debate on responsible carnivore tourism

Tour operators should ensure that their clients do not disturb active wolf or carnivore den sites, nor should they use unapproved bear feeding stations.

Manage expectations

Do not guarantee observations of large carnivores. Promote the experience of large carnivores through the understanding of their habitat, their prey, tracks, sounds and smells – elusiveness is part of their attraction.

TOURISTS

Choose operators who are committed to large carnivore conservation

Choose an operator that promotes conservation and supports or helps fund large carnivore conservation projects.

Be responsible

Choose an operator that has adopted the WWF Code of Conduct or is part of a carnivore tourism partnership or accredited green labelling scheme. Be a responsible tourist and respect the environmental quality of rural areas.

Enjoy local cultural traditions

Choose tour operators and destinations that promote local cultures and conservation. Make contact with, and respect, local people wherever possible: tourism is often a recent development for many rural communities.

Purchase local goods and services

Wherever possible, purchase local produce and use local transport, stay in local accommodation and get to know the local people.

Use local guides

Local guides will have good knowledge of the area and an understanding of the culture and wildlife viewing opportunities. By employing a local guide you will get more from your visit.

Eat in local restaurants

Use local restaurants and cafés to support local tourism development and the use of local produce. Eating locally will help you learn and understand more about the local culture and customs.

Report sightings

Choose an operator that has links with large carnivore researchers and participates in conservation projects.

Tell your friends

Word of mouth marketing for many local tourism operators is one of the best ways to attract more visitors.



JOEP VAN DE VLA SAKKER

Don't purchase products made from protected species

It is illegal to purchase or trade products produced from illegal hunting practices.

Be aware of your impact on the local community and wildlife

Your actions can have a profound effect on local people and their attitude to tourism and local wildlife. Your respect conveys an important message.

Countryside visiting codes

Respect the countryside visiting code for the area in which you are travelling. It can be obtained through the National Parks office and website.

Do not disturb active den sites

Disturbance of active wolf dens can lead to the abandonment of the den and high pup mortality. Bears should only be observed from established hides or blinds, and only approved bear feeding stations should be visited.

Have realistic expectations

Large carnivore tourism is not just about watching large carnivores which are often nervous and will avoid human contact. In addition, experience their habitat, the local people with whom they coexist, and their importance in local stories, culture and traditions.

Europe's Carnivores

While the precarious status of Asia's tigers is widely known, some of Europe's own top predators are in danger of quietly disappearing. Others face an upsurge in conflict with people as they attempt to reclaim parts of their former ranges.

The status of the Iberian lynx, found only in pockets of Spain and Portugal, is a matter of grave conservation concern. It is now recognised as the world's most endangered cat species with its tiny population facing a real threat of extinction. Other species, such as wolves, are beginning to expand their ranges, but unless public acceptance of their presence is quickly secured, conflict with people will inevitably result in carnivores being the certain losers.

The political developments in Europe, particularly within the European Union, with the partial disintegration of national borders and more unified legal and planning requirements, are creating new and promising opportunities for managing large carnivore populations.

In 1995, in recognition of the many complex challenges surrounding the conservation of carnivores, WWF and partner organisations in 17 European countries established a Large Carnivore

Initiative for Europe (LCIE). Focusing on five species – the European brown bear, Iberian lynx, Eurasian lynx, wolverine and the wolf – the LCIE's mission is to “maintain and restore, in coexistence with people, viable populations of large carnivores as an integral part of ecosystems and landscapes across Europe.” A Large Carnivore Group has also been established and includes representatives from governments, national and international conservation organisations and leading scientists and other experts.

The LCIE is working on four main levels:

- protecting large carnivores and their habitats;
- integrating large carnivores with local developments;
- supporting large carnivores through legislation, policies and economic instruments;
- gaining public acceptance for the existence of large carnivores.



GREY WOLF

The grey wolf was once one of the world's most widely distributed mammals, found throughout the Northern Hemisphere from the Arctic almost to the Equator. When man was a hunter/gatherer, this animal was respected and revered in mythology and religion. But once humans started herding, sheep and livestock fell prey to the wolf and it became the villain.

Habitat loss, human encroachment into its territory and persecution due to the often exaggerated threat towards livestock have all taken their toll. Today, there are only about 17,000 wolves, all of which are to be found in remote areas of Europe.

Wolves live in family-structured packs, and only the leading animals breed. Their cubs are then cared for by the rest of the pack. In contrast to the popular image of the “big bad wolf,” wolves are in fact intelligent and shy – and they would rather avoid humans than confront them.

The human perception of wolves as a threat needs to be addressed or the result could be the loss of all wolves in Europe.

ESTIMATES OF CARNIVORE POPULATIONS

	Bears	Wolves	Eurasian lynx	Iberian lynx
Romania	6,600	2,500	1,500	–
Poland	100	600-700	185	–
Italy	43-84	400-500	12	–
Spain	51-87	2,000	–	525-660
France	3-9	50	–	–

SOURCE: LCIE

Carnivores



BROWN BEAR

The brown bear is an honorary carnivore because it is actually an omnivore – it will eat almost anything. The bear's range is now greatly reduced and there are only small and fragmented populations in western Europe – in the Pyrenees, the Cantabrian Mountains, the Trentino Alps and the Appenines in Italy. Only in northern Scandinavia and Russia is it found over a wide and continuous area.

Bears generally hibernate in late autumn for between three and seven months in dens dug in the ground or under rocks. They are active during day and night, although human persecution has led to nocturnal behaviour in some areas. They have huge home ranges, living in deciduous and coniferous forests as well as steppes and tundra.



EURASIAN LYNX

There are only about 8,000 of these secretive animals left in Europe. The Eurasian lynx used to live in the wooded mountainous regions of central and northern Europe until the end of the 19th century. But the causes of this animal's near-extinction are familiar: being hunted for its fur and the destruction of its habitat, as well as a decrease in the deer population which is the lynx's main prey. A nocturnal animal, it is said you can live your life in lynx country yet never set eyes on one.

Because of its typical cat behaviour, the lynx has a reputation for being a merciless killer, but there is not even anecdotal evidence that it has ever attacked humans. The lynx rarely attacks sheep, preferring rabbits, roe deer and birds. Its large paws have fur between the pads to act as snowshoes during the winter.



IBERIAN LYNX

The Iberian lynx is now the most threatened cat species in the world, with fewer than 800 animals left in isolated pockets in Spain and Portugal. These cats are much smaller and more heavily spotted than the Eurasian lynx, which is a different species.

Rapid economic development in Spain has devastated the natural environment, with large areas replaced by roads and agriculture. Hunting for the Iberian lynx's fur has also added to its plight. One of the main elements of its diet is rabbit – and this is an additional factor in its demise because the number of rabbits has severely decreased as a result of myxomatosis and, more recently, Rabbit Viral Disease.



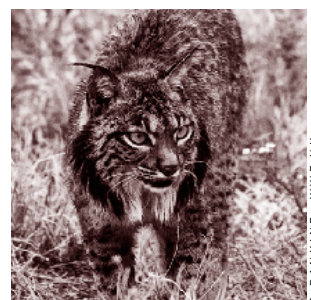
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FURTHER INFORMATION

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Sustainable Tourism, Moving from Theory to Practice

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Suggestions on how tourism can support the conservation of nature

WWF conserves wildlife and the natural environment for present and future generations.

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