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# COMMUNICATION IN LARGE CARNIVORE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT - WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

**16TH TO 18TH APRIL 2018 IN LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA**

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**LIFE**  
Lynx



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- 7) **Bojana Lavrič**, Slovenia Forest Service
- 8) **Brigita Požegar Mulej**, svobodna umetnica
- 9) **Bruce Pearson**, Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF)
- 10) **Calderola Sonia**, Regione del Veneto - LIFE Dinalp Bear
- 11) **Carlo Maiolini**, MUSE - Museo delle Scienze
- 12) **Djuro Huber**, Veterinary Faculty
- 13) **Elisa Belotti**, Šumava National Park Administration
- 14) **Frowin Feurstein**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
- 15) **Irena Kavčič**, University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical faculty
- 16) **Irma Poopović Dujmović**, WWF Adria
- 17) **Ivana Selanec**, BIOM
- 18) **Jan Klavora**, GoodPlace
- 19) **Jasna Mulej**, Zavod republike Slovenije za varstvo narave
- 20) **Kai Elmayer**, Elmayer Institute, Managing Consensus
- 21) **Karmen Bajec**, MA Artist
- 22) **Leon Kebe**, WWF Adria
- 23) **Magda Sindčić**, Medicine University of Zagreb
- 24) **Maja Sever**, Slovenia Forest Service
- 25) **Marta Gandolfi**, MUSE and PAT-SFF
- 26) **Matej Bartol**, Slovenia Forest Service
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- 30) **Nina Šivec Novak**
- 31) **Nives Pagon**, Slovenia Forest Service
- 32) **Paolo Molinary**, PLI
- 33) **Patricia Graf**, Biotechnical faculty, University of Ljubljana
- 34) **Petra Draškovič Pelc**, ARS NATURAE Petra Draškovič Pelc sp
- 35) **Pinija Poljaković**, WWF Adria
- 36) **Rok Černe**, Slovenia Forest Service
- 37) **Seth Wilson**, Slovenia Forest Service, LIFE Lynx Project
- 38) **Slaven Reljic**, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Zagreb
- 39) **Judita Malovrh**, Zavod republike Slovenije za varstvo narave
- 40) **Tomaž Berce**, Slovenia Forest Service
- 41) **Urša Fležar**, University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical faculty
- 42) **Urška Marinko**, Biotechnical faculty
- 43) **Vedran Slijepčević**, Karlovac University of Applied Sciences
- 44) **Vesna Oranžem**, Slovenia Forest Service
- 45) **Ysbrand Brouwers**, Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF)
- 46) **Zeljka Rajkovic**, Association Biom
- 47) **Diego Lonardom**, Lessinia Regional Park, Italy

# 2 INTRODUCTION

Both LIFE Lynx and LIFE DINALP BEAR projects are focused nature conservation projects with a strong stakeholder dialogue and collaboration component. In the frames of the two projects we develop campaigns to gain public interest, understanding and support for the long-term conservation of brown bears and Eurasian lynx in Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Slovakia and Romania. Learning from experiences of others and sharing our experiences is crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of our activities as well as for ensuring the transferability and enabling the replicability of best practices.

The purpose of this report is to convey the results of an expert workshop organized by LIFE Lynx and LIFE DINALP BEAR with the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Union in April 2018 in Ljubljana to share experiences in communicating on large carnivores related topics from different projects and initiatives across Europe and from North America as well as to discuss key challenges and opportunities for communicating with main target groups.

The goals of the workshop were to provide an opportunity for a selection of large carnivore conservation practitioners to summarize and highlight lessons learned from the stories shared during the first two days of the workshop and to explore some of the issues in greater detail using break-out group discussions. The main hope here was to identify the common best practice approaches and avenues for constructive communication activities.

The workshop was attended by 47 participants from different countries, representing communication experts and practitioners, as well as experts in specific techniques and fields that contribute towards large carnivore and wider nature conservation through planning and implementing communication and stakeholder dialogue activities.

# 3 AGENDA

This section gives a brief overview of the information presented to the participants. The speakers were chosen by the organizers with the aim of giving a balanced overview of a range of viewpoints.

## Monday, April 16, 2018

- 10<sup>00</sup> – 10<sup>15</sup>** Registration and Welcome
- 10<sup>15</sup> – 10<sup>55</sup>** **Kai Elmauer**, Elmauer Institute: Overview of current best practices and known shortfalls of historic communication efforts in large carnivore management
- 10<sup>55</sup> – 11<sup>20</sup>** Carlo Maiolini, MUSE, Communicating the return of the wolf in the Alps, LIFE WOLFALPS project
- 11<sup>20</sup> – 11<sup>35</sup>** Discussion
- 11<sup>35</sup> – 12<sup>05</sup>** Break
- 12<sup>05</sup> – 12<sup>30</sup>** **Urša Marinko** and **Aleksandra Majič Skrbinšek**, University of Ljubljana: Building and implementing communication plan for LIFE DINALP BEAR project
- 12<sup>30</sup> – 12<sup>55</sup>** **Marta Gandolfi**, Province of Trento: Trentino brown bear communication strategy
- 12<sup>55</sup> – 13<sup>20</sup>** **Elisa Belotti**, Interreg 3Lynx: Challenges and approaches to communicate conservation and management of a large carnivore species at transnational level
- 13<sup>20</sup> – 13<sup>35</sup>** Discussion
- 13<sup>35</sup> – 14<sup>35</sup>** Lunch break
- 14<sup>35</sup> – 15<sup>00</sup>** **Pinija Poljaković** and **Petra Boić Petrač**, WWF Adria, LIFE EULC: Key characteristics of a successful nature conservation awareness raising campaign
- 15<sup>00</sup> – 15<sup>25</sup>** **Aleksandra Majič Skrbinšek**, University of Ljubljana, LIFE DINALP BEAR, LIFE Lynx, LIFE WOLFALPS: Using social media to communicate large carnivore conservation – an overview
- 15<sup>25</sup> – 15<sup>40</sup>** Discussion
- 15<sup>40</sup> – 16<sup>10</sup>** Break
- 16<sup>10</sup> – 16<sup>35</sup>** **Sonia Calderola** and **Diego Lonardoni**, Veneto Region, Lessinia Park: Managing well documented return of the wolves – case of Slavo
- 16<sup>35</sup> – 17<sup>00</sup>** **Paolo Molinari**, Progetto Lince Italia, LIFE Lynx: Communicating translocation of lynx with hunters – Italian experience
- 17<sup>00</sup> – 17<sup>20</sup>** Discussion

## Tuesday, April 17, 2018

- 8<sup>50</sup> – 9<sup>00</sup>** Introduction to the day
- 9<sup>00</sup> – 9<sup>40</sup>** **Ysbrand Brouwers** and **Bruce Pearson**, Artists for Nature Foundation, Society of Wildlife Artists: Communicating nature conservation through visual arts
- 9<sup>40</sup> – 10<sup>05</sup>** **Petra Draškovič Pelc**, Ars Naturae: How photography contributes to nature conservation
- 10<sup>05</sup> – 10<sup>35</sup>** **Irena Kavčič** and **Jan Klavora**, University of Ljubljana (LIFE DINALP BEAR, LIFE Lynx), GoodPlace Institute: Maximizing benefits for local communities through ecotourism - key elements of a successful dialogue
- 10<sup>35</sup> – 11<sup>00</sup>** Discussion
- 11<sup>00</sup> – 12<sup>00</sup>** Brunch
- 12<sup>15</sup> – 12<sup>45</sup>** **Seth Wilson**, Interreg 3Lynx: Communication strategies to build community-based conservation actions
- 12<sup>45</sup> – 13<sup>10</sup>** **Tomaž Berce**, Slovenia Forest Service, LIFE DINALP BEAR, LIFE Lynx: Working with farmers and beekeepers to prevent large carnivore caused damages in agriculture
- 13<sup>10</sup> – 13<sup>35</sup>** **Mauro Belardi**, Eliante, Project Pasturs: Working with farmers and volunteers to improve large carnivore – human coexistence
- 13<sup>35</sup> – 14<sup>00</sup>** **Matija Stergar** and **Matej Bartol**, Slovenia Forest Service, LIFE DINALP BEAR: Working with communities to decrease occurrence of garbage bears – experiences from LIFE DINALP BEAR project
- 14<sup>00</sup> – 14<sup>20</sup>** Discussion
- 16<sup>00</sup> – 18<sup>00</sup>** Guided tour of Ljubljana, we meet at 1545 at Prešeren Square in downtown Ljubljana

## Wednesday, April 18, 2018

- 9<sup>00</sup> – 9<sup>10</sup>** Introduction to the day
- 9<sup>10</sup> – 13<sup>30</sup>** Facilitated workshop assessing main challenges and opportunities of communicating large carnivores, as well as specific scenarios – details will be circulated before hand
- 13<sup>30</sup> – 14<sup>30</sup>** Lunch, end of workshop

# 4 ABSTRACTS OF PRESENTATIONS

## 4.1 LIFE EUROLARGE CARNIVORES - BUILDING ON LESSONS LEARNED IN LARGE CARNIVORE (LC) COMMUNICATIONS

### 4.1.1 OVERVIEW OF CURRENT BEST PRACTICES AND KNOWN SHORTFALLS OF HISTORIC COMMUNICATION EFFORTS IN LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT

**Kai Elmauer, Eva-Maria Cattoen**

eimc2 GmbH -elmauer institute managing consensus 2

The presentation looked first at common flaws in LC communication approaches: An overly simplistic categorizing of attitudes and behaviours of target groups in dual systems (e.g. right/wrong); ignoring the substantial variance in attitudes and behaviour within groups, and blindly assuming those variations resemble a statistical normal distribution curve are basic mistakes. Another issue is bias in LC projects, we discussed briefly Fundamental Attribution Error, Confirmation Bias, and In-Group bias. We also challenged that the obsession with attitudes is likely to achieve little in behaviour change of target groups, due to the weak link between attitudes and behaviour. And finally we asked why LC communication strategies and project designs ignore questions of randomness and complexity, and suggested to use tools such as the Cynefin framework.

#### DISCUSSION

##### **How to approach hunters?**

*Through peer groups. Direct way to communicate with peer groups – finding poacher through them. Peer groups can change the poacher's behavior. But poacher can also isolate himself from the group.*

##### **What is the source of conflict of hunters toward bears in AUT?**

*Partly for not involving them. Presence of large carnivores affects image of themselves. Suggested literature: Who cares about wildlife? Michael J. Manfredo*



**Figure 1:**  
Kai Elmauer from LIFE EuroLargeCarnivores.  
(photo: Maja Sever)

## 4.2 COMMUNICATING THE RETURN OF THE WOLF IN THE ALPS, LIFE WOLFALPS PROJECT

**Carlo Maiolini and Aleksandra Majić Skrbinišek**

Authors: Giorgio Bernardi, Irene Borgna, Samuela Caliarì, Antonia Caola, Fabio Copiatti, Nadia Faure, Massimo Favaron, Aleksandra Majić, Tina Markun, Carlo Maiolini, Cristina Movalli, Elisabetta Maria Rossi, Luciano Sammarone, Giovanni Villani, Michela Zalunardo

*"People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive." (Blaise Pascal, 1660)*

### "We need to communicate the return of the wolf in the Alps!"

This was the first, naive, primal, brief when the LIFE WOLFALPS communication team gathered for the first time in Entracque (CN, Italy) in the late 2013. Fortunately, the team proved to have the necessary skills, expertise, and wisdom not to jump headfirst into the communication activities.

For at least 6 months, our second, more reasoned thought was: "Communicate the wolf... Why?", "To whom?" In which way?" "With which messages?" It was immediately clear that the team hadn't all the answers to these important questions. Also because at that time the recolonization process of the Alpine arc was at an early stage, and for many of us the wolf was still a distant image of a rare species seen only in pictures. The situation would have changed from the following year, with the wolf rapidly recolonizing the eastern Alps, but in 2013 we had the opportunity to take our time to organize the communication strategy without the urgency to react to the huge media upheaval that would have accompanied our work from 2014 to the project closure. We took the opportunity and used the first project months to gather and analyse cardinal elements for a successful conservation communication through quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups) research techniques.

Through this baseline work, we collected elements to provide ourselves with answers to the communication fundamental questions "who are we talking to?", "which messages are important and effective towards our audiences?", "which issues?", "which facts?", "through which media?" The answers that we gave ourselves provided the flesh and bones of the project communication strategy, delivered to the LIFE WOLFALPS consortium not (only) in the form of a piece of paper, but as a live, useful (and usable) tool upon which we could build all the forthcoming communication actions that the LIFE WOLFALPS deployed on the Alpine Arcs in the following four years. The most characterizing element of our strategy was to give a substantial priority on the listening phase over the emitting actions. In one claim: "Listening before speaking". So the first "communication action" was a mute one: setting up a system of "antennas" able to perceive attitudes of the general public and of the key stakeholders towards the return of the wolf on the Alps. The first important parts of this "antenna" system has been the daily press review analysis, the



**Figure 2:**  
Project LIFE WOLFALPS has carefully assessed important target groups.  
(photo: Maja Sever)

project social media channels (the Facebook project page, not initially planned, exceeds the 6400 followers), the "signal a wolf" form on the project website, and the local stakeholders dialogue platforms. But almost all the LIFE WOLFALPS communication action ended up including a two way communication pattern in which the public was actively asked to take a central part with their thoughts and opinions. The LIFE WOLFALPS communication plan has thus been set up to provide citizens with a structured path of engagement and information that became necessarily multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary and multi-platform. The outcomes were four years packed with activities that ranged from the "ordinary" information evenings with the public, to dialogue platforms with stakeholders; from the publication of information media, to the formation of a transalpine "wolf press office" which monitored and responded to the multiplication of news - true and false - on the species. Web and social channels have been activated for online dialogue, an interactive three-year exhibition on the Alpine arc has been produced. One photography and two drawing contests have been promoted. For schools we designed specific educational workshops. Dedicated refresher courses and summer schools were offered to teachers and educators. On the educational side we also realised an innovative board game that promotes the dispersion of wolves in the Alps, challenging players in the management difficulties inherent in human-wolf coexistence. We were cheeky enough to bring the wolf on stage: a theatrical show has been produced that played a dozen of times in various Alpine venues. We published an illustrated book for children, available in your local favourite Italian bookstore. We organized a contemporary art exhibition on the wolf in the street of Trento during 2017 Christmas market. Finally, we organized the final project conference in Trento on 18th, 19th and 20th March 2018, with international wolf experts from all over Europe to discuss the human-wolf coexistence in the Alps and in Europe.

To sum up, the recursive *leitmotif* of the project communication was something that we - again - *heard* from an expert at the beginning of the project "the wolf can live in the Alps only if people think it is ok" (L. Boitani). So we have focused the project communication around what people think about the wolf, not the wolf.

The lessons learned in these five years can be summarized in seven suggestions that we share in hope that our experiences can be of help to all those who struggle to communicate a sensitive nature conservation issue. Because the project is over but the wolf is here to stay.

1. Press review: mass media play an important role in great carnivore management (Fernández-Gil et al., 2016) being up to date with media debates is a time consuming chore but is definitely worth it.
2. Separate careers: good research and good conservation actions require good communication to be efficient. Use personnel with the appropriate set of skills and expertise.
3. Local dialogue platforms: in communication nothing pays more than meeting stakeholder face to face in a small group. The platforms should have a clear purpose, function in a transparent way and address the

stakeholders' expectations. In that way they can be used as a basis to pursue a shared and reachable goal for the entire group.

4. Avoid top down communication actions: sometimes it is necessary to inform people, but the wolf conservation in human-dominated landscapes needs long term people involvement and education based on dialogue, and not one shot, top down, brochure delivered, information.
5. Be prepared for success: if you engage people in a significant dialogue they will ask for more (more info, more events, more engagement).
6. Nevertheless, don't feed the troll.
7. Always listen before speaking!

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## DISCUSSION

### ***Were public more aware of wolf conservation also less supportive?***

*We don't know yet additional analysis has to be done.*

### ***What are the next steps of the LIFE WOLFALPS project?***

*LIFE WOLFALPS website can be used as a source of information for journalists after the end of the project. In LIFE SloWolf part of the continuation was dealt by LIFE WOLFALPS project.*

### ***Myth vs. fake – how to address this?***

*Repeat the message until it is accepted.*



**Figure 3: Carlo Maiolini from MUSE explaining the challenges of communicating the return of the wolf to the Italian Alps. (photo: Maja Sever)**

### 4.3 BUILDING, IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING COMMUNICATION PLAN IN LIFE DINALP BEAR PROJECT

**Urška Marinko, Aleksandra Majić Skrbinšek**

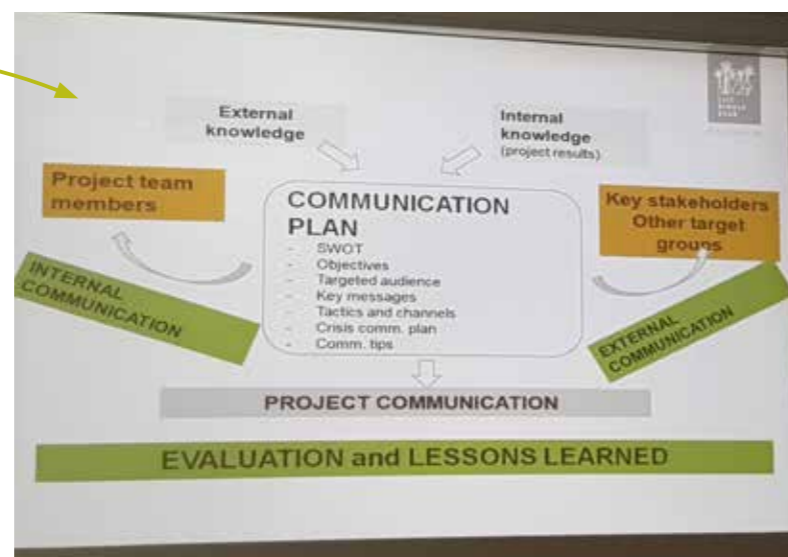
Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana

International project about bear and bear management - LIFE DINALP BEAR addresses complex and diverse challenges of brown bear conservation in the human-dominated landscapes of northern Dinaric Mts. and the Alps. In the start of the project, communication plan as a proactive measure was prepared in order to get stakeholders and decision-makers to understand the project purpose, outputs and results as part of the external communication (1). However, communication team was aware that internal communication (2) among project partners is important as well. Since there are nine beneficiaries from four neighbouring countries collaborating in the project, general communication tips and ground rules needed to be set up. Open and consistent communication toward identified target groups makes the project team trustworthy and professional. Communication team has drafted the plan on the basis of the project application – key objectives, target groups, what they need to know and how they will tackle them, afterwards the whole project team make their inputs based on activities they are responsible for.

Public awareness campaign and actions targeting bear conflict prevention and mitigation were used to improve human attitudes toward bear and bear management decisions. One of the main expected results of this project is improved public acceptance of bears and bear coexistence with humans. However, evaluation of the effectiveness (3) of such actions requires detailed previous assessment of public attitudes and knowledge, media coverage of the project and bear management topics, and yearly evaluations of the communication plan following new results and experience gained in the project. Therefore, development of the communication plan by balancing the interests of target groups and project partners and evaluating its success is an ongoing project task. It produces a "living" internal document build on "lessons learned" and demonstration of the importance in the tight project team collaboration for synchronization of conservation actions.

*Comment: It is more effective if electric fences are only partly payed by the state or if they are donated entirely.*

*Comment: Blue fences should be more effective than the orange ones. Wolves and bears better see blue color.*



**Figure 4:**  
LIFE DINALP BEAR project has carefully outlined its communication plan.  
(photo: Maja Sever)

### 4.4 COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR HUMAN-BEAR COEXISTENCE: THE CHALLENGING EXPERIENCE OF TRENTO

**Marta Gandolfi**

Autonomous Province of Trento, Forestry and wildlife Department

Communication about large carnivores is a great issue, essential for their conservation worldwide, especially because they interact with humans and human activities.

Incorrect information shows a biased framework of reality, bringing to false beliefs, non-sense fear and alarmisms which are unproductive and harmful for people and wildlife. The way in which we communicate about large carnivores is relevant and can make the difference for their conservation worldwide.

Brown bears were reintroduced in Trentino 20 years ago. From that moment, the population has grown up to about 60 individuals, mostly concentrated in the west side of Trentino. At first, the public attitude towards the bears seemed to be positive, but during the years the tendency has switched to the opposite side. This, from the results of three opinion polls carried out in 1997 (before the reintroduction project), in 2003 (just after the reintroduction) and in 2011. Another opinion poll is foreseen soon.

Communication has been implemented during these 20 years through three phases: the first phase (2002-2009), after the bear reintroduction, with the purpose to continuously inform the population about the presence of the species in the territory. The second phase (2010-2015), after the publication of the PACOBACE (the main document on brown bear conservation in the central-eastern Alps), with the objective to inform particularly about the management aspects of the brown bear presence in Trentino and the third phase (2016-2018), the current one, based on a new Brown bear Communication Plan and aiming at a wider scale global and more effective information strategy, to be implemented at many different levels.

*Comment: In the start of the presentations the images about bears were more dramatic, now more technical. Now we have more information about large carnivores.*



**Figure 5:** Marta Gandolfi presented the communication approaches used in the Trentino brown bear population management.  
(photo: Maja Sever)

## 4.5 CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF A LARGE CARNIVORE SPECIES AT TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL

**Elisa Belotti and Sybille Woelfl**

National Park Šumava Administration (3Lynx project); Lynxproject Bavaria (3lynx project)

The distribution of the Bohemian-Bavarian-Austrian (BBA) lynx population lies across the national borders between the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria. Here, transboundary cooperation started in the early 1990s, soon after lynx reintroduction with focus on ecological research. The Trans-Lynx (2013-2015) and the 3lynx (2017-2020) projects for the first time aimed at targeting the entire BBA lynx population and involved several institutions in transboundary cooperation in lynx monitoring, conservation and management. In such projects, communication is fundamental (1) to have harmonized, coordinated activities throughout transnational partnerships, and (2) to involve all key stakeholders into these activities. Furthermore, both aspects of communication clearly must be interconnected, as non-coordinated communication of important information to stakeholders (e.g., usage of different estimates of population size by different partner organizations) leads to confusion and even loss of credibility by all organizations. Generally, we maintain internal communication through: -personal meetings for harmonizing data collection, storage, and communication with stakeholders; -(occasional) common field work, that also helps tightening relationships between colleagues; -hundreds of emails and phone (skype) calls. These activities are perceived as fundamental, however, they are extremely time-consuming, and challenges are represented e.g. by the need to take local/national peculiarities into consideration, which often hinders the possibility to adopt exactly the same solutions throughout the entire area. Regarding „external communication“, the main focus is on communication with key stakeholders. The participative monitoring approach is an effective approach for improving communication between stakeholders, e.g. when camera-trapping sites are chosen in cooperation with local hunters/foresters and information about recorded species is being spread regularly. In this context, the main challenges are again related to the time needed to obtain and maintain trust between stakeholders, as communication seems to work best when it is maintained in small groups, needs to be „refreshed“ often and can be easily worsened back by single wrong sentences reported by media.

### DISCUSSION

#### **How to contact a poacher?**

*Better not to put pressure on them, pressure has to come from "his" group.*

#### **Incentives of lynx presence?**

*In Bavaria they don't have a good experience with it. Instead they have a reward for cooperation.*



**Figure 6:**  
Elisa Belotti from the Interreg 3Lynx presenting.  
(photo: Maja Sever)

## 4.6 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL NATURE CONSERVATION AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN

**Pinija Poljaković and Petra Boić Petrač**

WWF Adria, LIFE EULC

Communication plays a central role in understanding the nature and the role of humans in it. If we want to influence people's behavior, then we should give our best to "translate" scientific data to the wider audience. In other words: fact proves – story moves. Communication is a strong side of WWF and when we, public institutions, government institutions as well as NGO's are linking and working together then we can be more visible, stronger, and more successful.

The introduction to WWF mission, vision and area of work, as well as regional focuses in the scope of WWF Adria office was followed by the short presenting of the new project and its challenges - The LIFE Euro Large Carnivores. Since inspiration and new ideas we can always gain from successful stories, several examples of successful campaigns around the world were presented, through storytelling and videos.

In conclusion, the key characteristics of a successful nature conservation campaign should include: knowing the goal, knowing the budget, keeping it simple, having credibility, being original and giving positive messages. Also, there should always be clear who is the target audience, which will guide us to the tool to reach them, whether is through celebrities, provocation, "cool stuff" for youth, a moment of surprises or "crying for help". With a clear goal and the good tool, you can get people's attention and emotion. And then...the change is possible.

### DISCUSSION

#### **Would you present yourself as an environmentalist who follows your values in the project?**

*Not all WWF offices have the same values. It is not important to be always neutral, it is more important to be honest, trustworthy.*

#### **How you decide to choose ambassadors?**

*Based on the number of people they can reach.*



**Figure 7:**  
Key characteristics of a successful campaign were outlined by Pinija Poljaković from WWF Adria.  
(photo: Maja Sever)



## 4.7 USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE LARGE CARNIVORE CONSERVATION – AN OVERVIEW

**Aleksandra Majić Skrbinišek**

University of Ljubljana, LIFE DINALP BEAR, LIFE Lynx, LIFE WOLFALPS

Websites and online applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking are increasingly becoming a part of everyday life for majority of people. As such they offer new opportunities and pose new challenges for nature conservation initiatives. We have been using social media in communicating conservation messages to various publics within the scopes of several conservation projects. We wish to discuss considerable advantages that make these tools incredibly important, but also new challenges that must be taken into account when we use them. While nature conservation initiatives can be set up in a form of different "business models", one component seems to be in all of them – dissemination of information to various publics. On the other hand, different publics are becoming increasingly involved in decision-making processes related to nature conservation policy, and there seems to be a general agreement that participation of a wide range of stakeholders in decision making is key to developing better environmental policies. Fauschmayer et al. (2009) have described three major shifts which have contributed to the development of participatory decision-making: (1) change of approaches from a top-down, administration-centred approach to a bottom-up approach with greater participation of local stakeholders and public, (2) from basing decisions mainly on scientific knowledge to assessing all types of knowledge, and (3) widening focus from narrow conservation issues to inclusion of sustainable use of ecosystems.

These changes are adding another overarching objective to the communication and dissemination in nature conservation – preparing the public to engage efficiently and constructively in decision making processes. Using social media for this purposes has a series of potential advantages such as improved networking with target publics, reduced costs, real-time dissemination, opportunity to get immediate feedback, increased traffic to websites offering other contents and outputs, and more. At the same time nature conservation professionals need to get a new set of communication skills, and they need to invest time and resources almost on a daily basis to actively manage social media presence. This greater exposure also has the potential to attract unwanted and damaging behaviour by the visitors. Global and fast information sharing promoting nature conservation solutions that are often depending on the local context is both a challenge and an opportunity. For large carnivore populations that are shared among different countries, communicating through social media provides an opportunity to raise awareness about a need for transboundary collaboration and about the common goals. Experiences we've obtained through implementing both national (LIFE SloWolf) and population-level based (LIFE DINALP BEAR, LIFE WOLFALPS, LIFE Lynx) projects show that whatever are the specific goals of a communication initiative, when investing into using social media it is crucial to develop beforehand a social media strategy that specifies the main approaches to using social media, and pre-agreed procedures to help manage the risks.

**Figure 8:** Social media have become a mainstream tool in communicating conservation projects. (photo: Maja Sever)



## 4.8 MANAGING WELL DOCUMENTED RETURN OF THE WOLVES: CASE OF SLAVC

**Sonia Calderola<sup>1</sup>, Diego Lonardon<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Veneto Region - Agro-environment, Hunting and Fishing Service, <sup>2</sup>Lessinia regional Park

Lessinia is a territory of the Veneto pre-Alps, 30 Km north of the city of Verona, where since 1990 the Lessinia regional Park (around 10.000 Km<sup>2</sup>) has been established. In this area, hundreds of kilometers far from the nearest territories of stable presence of the wolf, in 2012 a stochastic event, the meeting between a male wolf in dispersion from Slovenia and a female wolf in dispersion from the western Alps, led to the first wolf pack of the central eastern Alps and to the connection, after more than a century, between Apennine and Balkan wolf populations. The peculiarity of the event, almost a fairytale (first the "adventurous" dispersion of the male Slavc from Slovenia to the gates of Verona, documented day by day thanks to the data of the GPS collar; then the "romantic" meeting with the female Giulietta and the establishment of the couple), and the importance of this event for the Wolf conservation, both from ecological and historical point of view, have aroused a great media interest at national and international level: in the first year of the couple's presence in Lessinia, scientific documentaries, popular television programs and countless press articles, both by national and foreign prestigious channels and newspapers, have appeared on the "Slavc and Giulietta" story. At local level, the Lessinia Regional Park has immediately adopted a policy of high transparency in communication regarding monitoring and predations data, and management initiatives undertaken, both towards the general public and the various stakeholders, first of all farmers. After a first time of positive interest by the local community and administrations, also fueled by the sudden fame of which the Lessinia territory has consequently enjoyed, a progressive diffidence and opposition of farmers, local administrators and also local ordinary people has followed, resulted also in episodes of open hostility, partly persisting also today after 5 years. On the one hand, this attitude was fueled by increasing depredation cases on domestic livestock, but on the other by the false belief, despite scientific data, that the settlement of wolves in Lessinia was the result of artificial reintroduction intervention. The formation of this conviction, amplified also by media and press articles with sensationalist intentions, was paradoxically helped by the fact that, in 2013, the Veneto Region joined the LIFE WOLFALPS Project, aimed to support the conservation of the Wolf in its natural expansion process on the Alps. The combination of both contemporary events (wolf coming in Lessinia and the LIFE Wolfalps Project starting) has made too easy to spread the prejudice that "the Wolfalps Project reintroduced the wolf in Lessinia" and that "the wolf was brought to Lessinia with the aim to join the Project and receive the EU funding", making the communication initiatives, put in place by the Project in order to facilitate the coexistence with the wolf in the newly expanding territories, vain, when not even counterproductive in this particular area. To date, the Lessinia pack is probably the most famous and discussed, for better or for worse, wolf pack of the Alps.

*Comment:* Other close to Verona provinces have better acceptance of wolf. Wolf came there after the Lessinia. But it helped Lessinia regarding better acceptations.

*Comment:* Seth and Kai propose relation building as a starting solution.

**Figure 9:** Communicating well documented wolf dispersal and recolonization. (photo: Maja Sever)



## 4.9 COMMUNICATING TRANSLOCATION OF LYNX WITH HUNTERS – ITALIAN EXPERIENCE FROM ULYCA PROJECT

**Paolo Molinari, Anja Molinari**

Progetto Lince Italia, LIFE Lynx

Communication and dialogue are fundamental in wildlife management and conservation projects. The approach to adapt depends on the cultural background, the traditions and previous experiences that people had with the species concerned, as well as the law and management systems that are in force. In the case of large carnivores, it depends on whether we speak of bear, lynx or wolf. If only one, two or all three of these species are present. It depends if these species have always been present, if they are returning, increasing/declining or if they have been reintroduced.

The experience of the project we present, and the analysis of the results is based on our decades of international and local experience. Locally we have had and we currently have the privilege and disadvantage of having dealt with - and dealing with - all these components together. We have faced this reality in Italy - but in a border area influenced by cross-border dynamics.

The bear has always been present, albeit at low density. The wolf is returning rapidly by natural immigration (even if it is not perceived as such) - and is still only sporadically present. The lynx who immigrated in the early 1980s from neighbouring Slovenia and whose presence was stable - on low numbers - for almost three decades has now dramatically decreased. To save this occurrence from extinction two lynx were translocated to Tarvisio in the frame of ULYCA (Urgent Lynx Conservation Action). ULYCA was also clearly intended as an introductory action to "LIFE Lynx", as the desperate local status of the occurrence required an immediate intervention.

The project was well prepared not only technically, but also administratively and socially. All the authorizations of responsible authorities and a communication program, which concerned the information of the interest groups in a wide range around the area of intervention (provinces and regions bordering also outside the national border) was carried out. Particular attention was paid to hunters, the only skeptical category, receiving their full official support.

The whole process lasted over a year. Finally, in April 2014 the first two lynx were released. In the meantime, however, the positions of some hunting leaders had changed because of new elections. The newly established Director in the local hunting ground, unable to solve the problems concerning management and harvest plans for red deer, chamois and roe deer (the most important and delicate topics for hunters), has "wisely" moved them on two external themes: 1) environmentalists, animal rights activists and 2) large carnivores. Regarding the environmentalists, even if everyone agreed about the problem, there was a lack of a strategy and no idea for how to deal with it. Regarding the large carnivores, instead, the target of anger and the common enemy were soon identified: the lynx and the ULYCA project!

In a few months - based on lies and misinformation, the "terrorism" against the project was exported to other hunting grounds - the "hunting world" joined against the common enemy and started to put pressure on politicians. All attempts to dialogue failed because either there was no willingness to listen or simply because the hunters disattended the meetings. The authorities tried to wait for a local solution of the problem, which was not there. Also the involvement of international experts was not useful, the positions of the hunters remained rigid and contrary.

What to say? We are all aware that consensus is important. We are also aware that in this case the opinion of the hunters is important - but in the face of an obvious campaign of defamation of the project based on lies and disinformation, the political and governmental authority should have reacted differently. A few local hunters were enough to raise their voices and make confusion to block the project.

### 4.9.1 BRIEF ANALYSIS OF OUR EXPERIENCE

Although a conservation project is prepared respecting all the technical and scientific traits, communication has been made as required and according to the best common sense a random element has blown everything up. One person, a single director of the hunting ground has set in motion an entire process with the "snowball" effect. How can you foresee a stochastic element and how to prevent it? In our opinion it was impossible - but from this event we must learn for the future. Think of a strategy that allows you to face the improbabilities and randomness! The only possible strategy proposed and advised to us has been to instigate environmental associations against hunters. But it would mean an escalation of the conflict and we were against it.

Some elements have polluted the process. The role of politics and institutions that have not been coherent - who have preferred an "exit strategy" from the conservation project rather than face the discussion with the hunters. We critically analyzed the situation and wondered where we were wrong. We followed all the directives and rules for projects like this, but it did not help. The problem remained the hunters who, suffering on many fronts and unable to find solutions, found a common enemy - the only one capable of unifying a large majority - though based on misinformation. The only common enemy against which they were able to elaborate a common strategy remained the large carnivores.

### 4.9.2 TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Be aware of random and stochastic elements. They are difficult to predict and prevent, but they can determine the acceptance and outcome of a project. Processes like these are - at the level of human dimension - acrobatic actions made of sensitivity, will, objectives and different needs and the goal is to find a meeting point.

This case should teach us that it is difficult to predict the element that changes the balance - and often just a small element can unbalance everything!

It is difficult to dialogue with someone who does not want to do it. Large carnivores have often become the one and last topic in which hunters are of the same idea. For the rest they argue with each other and can't face their problems with society. It is essential to prevent and combat targeted misinformation. The convinced support of politics and administrations is crucial.

In dialogue, both sides often tend to disregard the perceptions of others (problem of confirmation bias), do not take the legitimate concerns of others serious. For a dialogue to work, both sides need to be willing.

In the meantime, the hunting ground at the release site has a new president who is more positive towards lynx, more open to dialogue and therefore the situation changes again. In an actual western consumer society, at the mercy of frenetic communication through social media, opinions and feelings can change very quickly. In medium-long term environmental projects such as those we are dealing with, this is an element to be considered.

## 4.10 CREATIVE RESPONSES TO THE NATURAL WORLD AND CONSERVATION OF SPECIES AND WILD PLACES - A WORK IN PROGRESS

**Ysbrand Brouwers, ANF founder / director**  
**Bruce Pearson, artist / ANF vice-president**

Artists for Nature Foundation, Society of Wildlife Artists

The natural world has inspired the creation of a vast body of work by artists throughout our common cultural history. From the simple profound renderings of wild beasts drawn on cave walls many thousands of years ago, to a modern day sporting wildlife artist who paints only not only mirror our evolving sophistication and cultural development, but also reflects our often complex, changeable and contradictory attitude to wildlife and nature.

However, with increasing pressure on habitats and species from tourism, development, agriculture, climate change and industrialization the natural world that so many artists have turned to for inspiration for so long is under threat. Consequently, many artists are being drawn into addressing difficult issues like the climate crisis, species loss and habitat destruction creating work that engages with scientists and economists, conservation NGOs and politicians, and a wider cultural world of musicians, poets and writers. Rather than forever portraying a sentimental view of the natural world, by creatively exploring more difficult issues the genre of contemporary 'wildlife art' is increasingly engaging the wider public and decision makers in important conservation issues.

The Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF) is an informal grouping of artists established in 1990 that gathers artists from all over the world to produce work inspired and largely created in a specific project location. They cooperate closely with international NGOs like World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Crossbill Foundation, the Wildlife Trusts in the UK, Birdlife International and others to producing bodies of work for exhibition and publication. Over the past 25 years ANF has managed 12 projects involving 130 artists on four continents. Working with biologists, ecologists, planners, sponsors and many others it has been successful in drawing the attention of policy-formulators and decision-makers, communities and the wider public to the wonder, beauty, significance and importance of the natural world.

### DISCUSSION

**Has art ever served you as a tool for mediation - »putting« closer the opposite parties' / interest groups?**  
 Not exactly but art can present a sticking point of two groups that originally cause of their interest don't share the same opinions.

**Figure 10: Bruce Pearson offered an inspiring talk on how arts can contribute to nature conservation.**  
 (photo: Maja Sever)



## 4.11 HOW PHOTOGRAPHY CONTRIBUTES TO NATURE CONSERVATION

**Petra Draškovič Pelc**

Petra Draškovič Pelc Ars Naturae

Abstract was not provided.

**Comment:** It is a pity that the goal of wildlife photographers is to catch an animal from really close distance.

**Answer:** Also bear photography is changing for the better.

**Figure 11: Importance of ethics in nature photography was emphasised by Petra Draškovič.**  
 (photo: Maja Sever)



## 4.12 MAXIMIZING BENEFITS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH ECOTOURISM - KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL DIALOGUE

**Irena Kavčič, Jan Klavora**

University of Ljubljana (LIFE DINALP BEAR, LIFE Lynx), GoodPlace Institute

Authors: Irena Kavčič, Aleksandra Majič, Skrbinešek, Djuro Huber, Slaven Reljić, Jan Klavora, Jana Apih

Due to their opportunistic omnivorous food habits, bears often cause conflicts with human activities and interests. Costs of living with bears rarely offset material benefits. Therefore it is important for local residents to understand that bears can be a valuable natural resource and living in the bear areas provides opportunity to develop various bear related ecotourism products that benefit local communities, economically and socially.

Within LIFE DINALP BEAR project, we have identified ecotourism as one of the measures positively affecting attitudes of local residents toward bears. We have designed the bear friendly label to award practices that promote coexistence between bears and humans, through (i) effective protection of livestock, beehives or orchards, (ii) active promotion of bear conservation in the local area or (iii) development of responsible guided nature trips. Together with external experts for tourism, we defined key features of the best practice bear tourism programs that follow the standards defined in the Guidelines for non-consumptive use of bears in tourism, include interpretation of bear friendly practices and directly contribute to nature conservation. To maximize benefit of ecotourism for local communities, we have set sales and marketing channels through social media, specialized fairs and study tours. Moreover, we have developed Discover Dinarics portal – a platform designed to market responsible wildlife tourism programs and bear friendly offer. One of the key elements of the successful dialogue with local communities involved in creation of sustainable bear tourism programs and bear friendly scheme is personal approach. Moreover, searching for joint solutions and providing opportunities to learn about and move toward bear friendly practices, also played a key role in a successful dialogue.



**Figure 12: Developing opportunities for local communities to benefit from coexisting with large carnivores is part of LIFE DINALP BEAR project. (photo: Maja Sever)**

## 4.13 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO BUILD COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION ACTIONS

**Seth Wilson**

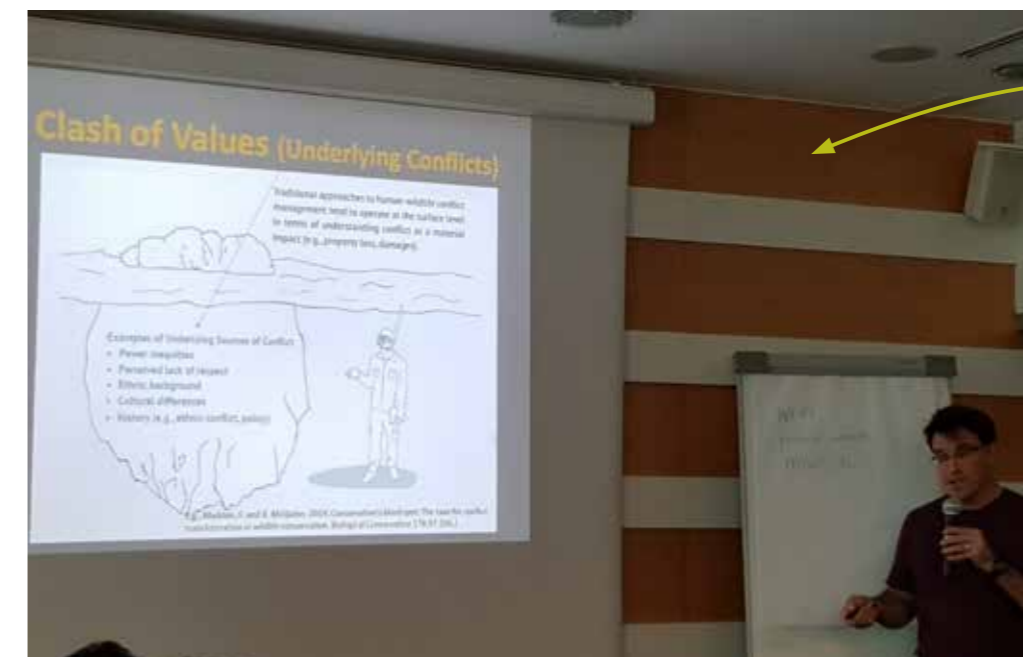
Interreg 3Lynx

Effective communication is arguably one of the most important facets of large carnivore conservation and management. Furthermore, effective communication can lead to the development of positive working relationship among wildlife managers, local communities, and other stakeholders whose collaborations are fundamental for addressing, reducing, and preventing human-carnivore conflict in a meaningful way. Communication strategies should acknowledge that for some contexts, a clash of rural and urban values often underly tensions regarding carnivores and can result in a refusal by rural inhabitants to adopt coexistence practices despite proven benefits. This presentation focuses on communication strategies based on the premise that building narratives of coexistence through place-based efforts is a meaningful way to encourage participation and adoption of coexistence tools. Ideally, some type of coordinated decision-making forum should foster regular communication among stakeholders and should be characterized by being inclusive, transparent, and pragmatic. Care should be taken to listen to local participants to understand how "the problem" of large carnivores is conceived contextually and to use neutral language choices when discussing issues. Small-scaled projects that are successes can be a good beginning places for livestock breeders or landowners to be communication messengers that help legitimate the narrative through peer-to-peer communication channels.

### DISCUSSION

***Does hunting really buys social acceptance of large carnivore?***

***How it was with farmers that accepted the damage prevention measures and those that refuse them. Sometimes you have to invest in practices important for local community to get local communities collaborations.***



**Figure 13: Underlying conflicts are often not obvious. (photo: Maja Sever)**

## 4.14 WORKING WITH FARMERS AND BEEKEEPERS TO PREVENT LARGE CARNIVORE CAUSED DAMAGES IN AGRICULTURE

**Tomaž Berce**<sup>1,2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Slovenia Forest Service, <sup>2</sup>LIFE DINALP BEAR, <sup>3</sup>LIFE Lynx

One of the goals of the LIFE DINALP BEAR project is to prevent damages on human property caused by brown bears. In Slovenia, we donated more than 50 sets of fences to small livestock breeders and beekeepers. Moreover, we subsidize young livestock guarding dogs to interested farmers. Farmers and beekeepers are two groups, which experience most of the damages caused by bears in Slovenia. When we released the call of interest for donating the equipment, we immediately found out that we are facing two different groups with different backgrounds. We also noticed that the perception of using preventive measures is region-specific and it differs between the Alpine and Dinaric region. This is mostly due to the absence or rare occurrence of large carnivores in the Alps in last decades. Taking into account those specifics, we are successfully collaborating with both groups on long-term perspective to prevent damages from brown bears and other large carnivores. The main message of the presentation is that just donating protection equipment or just subsidizing guarding dogs is not enough to decrease the number of damage cases. Controlling the use of preventive measures in the field is crucial for success. With regular visits of farmers, we also receive their feedback and discuss potential improvements. Good results come with the correct implementation of measures, and with positive results, we have numerous good practice examples to share with other farmers.

### DISCUSSION

**Did you donate any fences to farmers from Gorenjska region?**

*Yes, to 3 beekeepers, and none to livestock owners.*

**How to communicate with farmers when have an unannounced check visit and prevention measures are not used in a proper way?**

*Farmers are informed with a contract that they will be checked for the proper use of fences. They are used on this practices from the agricultural subsidies.*

## 4.15 WORKING WITH FARMERS AND VOLUNTEERS TO IMPROVE LARGE CARNIVORE – HUMAN COEXISTENCE

**Mauro Belardi**

Eliante, Project Pasturs

Pasturs is a project involving young volunteers to help shepherds in preventing damage from large carnivores. In the period 2015-2018, around 150 volunteers worked in 9 alpine pastures in the Orobie Alps (Bergamo, Italy), contributing to the protection of about 7,700 sheep. The volunteers helped the shepherds in the arrangement of electrified fences and in the management of guardian dogs, ensuring, when necessary, also direct surveillance at night. In addition to the contribution to prevention, Pasturs has allowed to put in touch the world of pastoralism with young university students, creating a supportive community. The project has had considerable space on the Media and has been reported as good practice by the European Commission website. Eliante is working for exporting the project format in other areas in Italy and Europe.

### DISCUSSION

**Were there any damages during the day? How many times they move the fences?**

*Mostly during the night.*

**Did you try to involve park as a collaboration?**

*Yes. In Piemonte were involved.*

**Did you had any difficulties to convince shepherds to participate?**

*Not really. But now they are asking for more.*



**Figure 14:**  
Managing livestock depredation is one of the biggest challenges in large carnivore conservation.  
(photo: Maja Sever)

# 5 FACILITATED WORKSHOP SUMMARY AND RESULTS

## 4.16 WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO DECREASE OCCURRENCE OF GARBAGE BEARS – EXPERIENCES FROM LIFE DINALP BEAR PROJECT

Matija Stergar<sup>1,2</sup>, Matej Bartol<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Slovenia Forest Service, <sup>2</sup>LIFE DINALP BEAR

Since bears are opportunistic omnivores they can be easily attracted to anthropogenic food sources, e.g. garbage, which often triggers food-conditioned behaviour. With proper protection of garbage, it is therefore possible to reduce the occurrence of problem bears. One of the goals of the LIFE DINALP BEAR project was to implement bear-resistant garbage containers (100 pcs.) and compost bins (100 pcs.) in Slovenia through close cooperation with communities. The plan was to create "best practice examples" in few selected hot-spots, which will further promote the idea. After initial meetings with communities' representatives, we decided to implement containers and compost bins in five hot-spots located in the area of permanent bear presence (Loška dolina, Rakitna, Ig, Sodražica and Kostel municipalities), and another one in Alpine region (Vojsko community). In all cases, we first established connections with municipal representatives, local communities, and regional waste management companies. We found out that each case needed specific approach to get to the key decision makers and successfully implement selected measures. The best way was to find and establish cooperation with those stakeholders, which showed most interest in the topic. During our work, we learned that it is important to: I) approach every community from the beginning and not exclude anyone in advance; II) be responsive and give feedback as regularly as possible; III) be adaptive and search for the most suitable solutions in specific environment; IV) try to earn trust in the communities; V) be honest in communication and admit potential mistakes you made and VI) use several communication channels to effectively inform communities about your work.

### DISCUSSION

#### **LIFE after LIFE – how about sanitations, how will you fund this after the end of the project?**

We'll try to influence the ministry to fund this. In Loška dolina tourism office would like to donate in nature conservation by buying bear – proof containers. It is important for local community that the bear proof containers are visually attractive.

Figure 15: Management of garbage bears in Slovenia is an important part of ensuring coexistence. (photo: Maja Sever)



The second part of the workshop was run as a facilitated discussion and had two specific goals:

- To provide an opportunity for a selection of large carnivore conservation practitioners to summarize and highlight lessons learned from the stories shared during the first two days.
- To explore some of the issues in greater detail using break-out group discussions. The main hope here is to identify the common best practice approaches and avenues for constructive communication activities.

## 5.1 KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS FOR LARGE CARNIVORE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT IN EUROPE

Participants were divided into groups and each group was asked to name the key stakeholder groups involved in large carnivore conservation and management in Europe with the main attributes to describe each one of them.

- Hunters (nature-loving, adventures, stewardship, recreational, forest users, competition, power (guns, policies), knowledge, passionate, self-confident, good knowledge about territory),
- Farmers (dependent on land, conservative, connected, livelihood, traditional, exposed, land dependent, directly affected by LC, influential, hobby, opposition, collateral damage, landscape user management),
- Media (interested in sensationalism, unprofessional, not independent, fake news, influential)
- Authorities - ministries, politicians, decision makers (framework driven, outsiders, populist, exploitation of LC for their issues, not competent, key players, can be easily influenced by loud groups),
- Environmentalists (outsiders, emotionally driven, idealists, passion, network (communication, funding), stubborn),
- Researchers (science based, objective, outsiders, factual, curious, propose scenarios),
- Local communities (traditional, neglected, cooperative, afraid of LC, feel ignored, acceptance needed)
- General public (pro LC, not influenced, not interested, very powerful/influential)
- Foresters (economically driven, pragmatic, insiders, planning, protectors).

Participants then had to think about the main challenges in working/communicating with certain groups, how to overcome them and what opportunities are there in working with this group.



Figure 16 (photo: Maja Sever)

### 5.1.1 HUNTERS

The main challenge participants saw in working with hunters is that they are prejudiced against/dislike biologists, NGOs and environmentalists. They are all labelled as "the green ones" (although it may be different locally) which makes it very hard to initialize conversations. To overcome that, all sides should work on trust building. It is important to listen to hunters while being polite, positive and patient (the 3ps!) and be aware there may be some provocation "testing" in the beginning as the group consists mainly of males (conservative values). Keeping an open mind, being non-judgmental and using neutral language are also important. Collaboration with hunters on scientific projects allows biologists to demonstrate credibility via ecological/field knowledge while at the same time it allows hunters to meet biologists on their own territory, making them feel less threatened. It is important to ask hunters about their experiences to create listening space.

### 5.1.2 FARMERS

The main challenges highlighted by the participants are trust and credibility. Farmers are reluctant to trust experts as they equate them to large carnivore lobbyists. How to convince them that we are not just lobbying for large carnivores? How to explain the value of large carnivores, why we need them back and opportunities of prevention measures? How to communicate, especially in areas where large carnivores are expanding or returning, that they are autochthonous species and not aliens. To build a relationship it is important to listen more and talk less. Talking on the same level is more effective than acting superior as does using personal experience to convince them instead of using general/simplified stories or too deep scientific arguments. Be straight in telling them that we are not lobbyist – be objective and always use (not too deep) scientific arguments to support your claims. Be careful to show respect for their group while keep in mind that there are different stakeholders, perceptions and views of landscape use. To explain the value and opportunities of large carnivores, we have to give them a wider picture of nature, wildlife and landscape use. We need to show them that like ungulates, birds..., both farmers and large carnivores (LC) are part of this picture. Benefits of LC are best shown through examples (ex. LC regulate high densities of ungulates who would otherwise cause damages on agriculture or they can be an added value for rural activities – bear watching). Informing farmers that using prevention measures offers different benefits like increased level and quality of production as well as increased economy of the farm through certified products (ex. "bear friendly").

### 5.1.3 POLICY-MAKERS

We should involve this group from the beginning of the project, try to present all data in an interesting and simplified way and using facts to deal with superstitions. For solutions concrete recommendations or action plans should be prepared. As the personal in lower positions experiences high turnover rate, energy needs to be invested in personnel that experiences lower turnover. Choosing the right messenger is important as expert are often not experienced in "lobbying". We should all strive to be well prepared in other issues as well and have good arguments. Often LC problematics are used as a mask for other political problems so it helps to invest more time and resources to their problems and offering help to solve them. Large carnivore report by Trento province should serve as a good example of good work with this group.

### 5.1.4 ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Participants pointed out the problem of oversimplification of scientific information. We need to establish communication channels between environmentalists and scientists.

### 5.1.5 MEDIA

The main challenge seen in working with media is getting them to write/publish correct information (correct and interesting headlines). Journalist wages are low which can result in superficial articles. Often working with specialized media within different groups (ex. agriculture journals) is hard as editors are not interested in conservation topics. Fake news are sensational and increase readings but don't offer correct information. To improve that more time needs to be invested in finding serious media and journalists and building relationship with them, inviting and including them to the project area. This allows them to get information straight from the experts. We need to learn when and how to react to fake news. One way to avoid them is to be proactive, build the base on solid information and require authorization before publication. In working with media we are able to reach wider public/target groups, influence decision makers, promote our work and goals of projects as well as results.

## 5.2 SCENARIOS – WORLD CAFÉ

Workshop participants were offered a list of scenarios outlining theoretical challenging situations. They were asked to choose the scenarios that would be of their interest to discuss and based on the prioritization of the scenarios, five scenarios were chosen and discussed.

Smaller groups worked on specific scenarios and tried to outline the response from the communication point of view. The scenarios were further discussed in a plenary session.

### 5.2.1 SCENARIO NO. 1

*"Media and main stakeholders have been informed that we expect first lynx to be transported from Romania to Slovenia in April. Everyone is excited about this important event and are asking to be informed. However, lynx dies during the capture (transport) due to difficulties with anesthesia."*

It is important to keep an open line of communication with media and main stakeholder groups before the transport/capture of the lynxes and explain the risks in anesthesia for animals. Project partners involved in the transport must agree on/be aware of the internal plan/protocol – what to do in case of problems so they know how to react and/or who to contact.

### 5.2.2 SCENARIO NO. 2

*"Farmers' or livestock breeders' association that is not part of the project group disseminates erroneous information/fake news about the lynx and project activities to the media."*

Example of fake news: Reintroduced (aggressive) lynx will be devastated for sheep breeding. The response should be immediate. The responsible needs to issue a "Demanti", a correction of the incorrect information. They need to present the facts about lynx diet so far, including the actual numbers for sheep killed by lynx (very few!). They need to explain the prevention measure and reassure the public that there is compensation system in place for potential damages. This should be sent to media that reported fake news as well as to other media and posted on different webpages. Speak with the journalist! People should also go to the field and talk with farmers. Tell them about the project, about the opportunities within the project for them.

### 5.2.3 SCENARIO NO. 3

*"Hunters are observing intensive predation on the local mouflon colony by reintroduced lynx and argue that mouflons will be completely extinct soon and that lynx should be removed or moved to a different area."*

Member/s of Slovenian forester service (ZGS) who has the most contact with hunters, should meet with them and carefully listen to their worries and propositions. The best way to continue is to explain how the lynx is native to the area and mouflon is not. Having not evolved with lynx makes them not adapted to their way of predation and making them easy targets. As additional measure, plans could be set in motion for a change of management plans for other native ungulates that can take mouflons place.

### 5.2.4 SCENARIO NO. 4

*"Project team attempts to recapture one of the translocated lynx. during capture lynx breaks its leg."*

First news about the incident should be released through press release, personal communication. It is best if only one person from a chosen/agreed upon institution reports the facts. News should not be released immediately, but rather after checking all the facts. Internal communication between involved partners should be the first response after which facts should be objectively reported through press release, official report and communication through social media and dedicated web sites. It is important that media, project finances, hunters, NGOs, other close project collaborators and involved or partner institutions, authorities and politicians should be aware of the incident.

When reporting the news, we must be honest if lynx death is the result of human error. Media and all involved partners need to be aware of all dangers beforehand. Message needs to include:

- the capture, translocation protocols have been respected,
- describing precise circumstances,
- objective of the project is not threatened,
- we will continue with the project.

### 5.2.5 SCENARIO NO. 5

*Bear kills/injuries to human*

Prompt responses to bear attacks are important. Outcome of the events (kill or injury) makes a difference for general public. We need to show sympathy and not blame anyone involved. Only facts should be reported (not stories!) and information needs to be updated regularly to local authorities, regional authorities, state and experts. Message we wish to convey is that such events are rare and not common, give more information on bear behavior as a reassurance and offer information about the bear responsible (problem bear?) as well as how to avoid such incidents and the procedure that will be followed after the event.



# 6 EVENT EVALUATION REPORT

At the end of the workshop all participants were asked to complete an online survey. We received 32 responses.

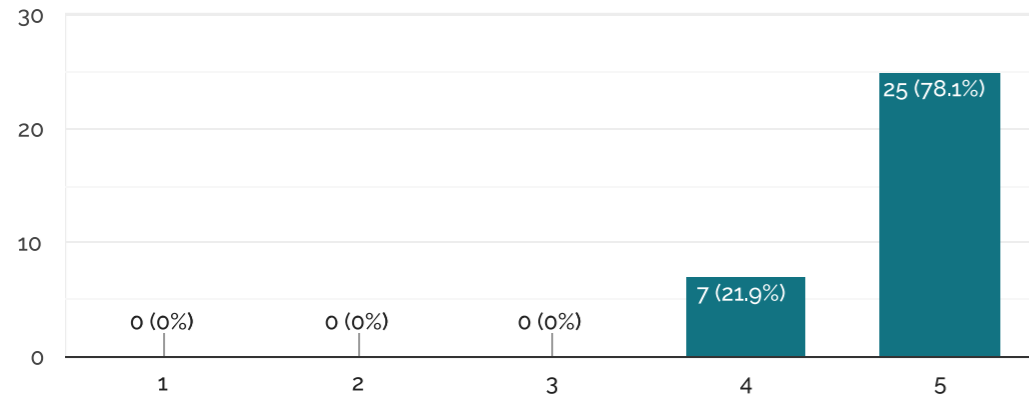


Figure 17: Responses to question "How satisfied were you with the event".

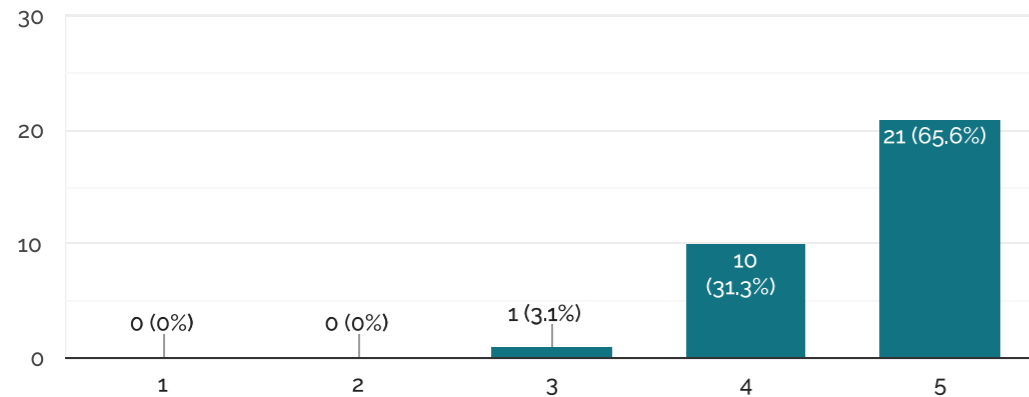


Figure 18: Responses to question "How relevant and helpful do you think this workshop was for your job".

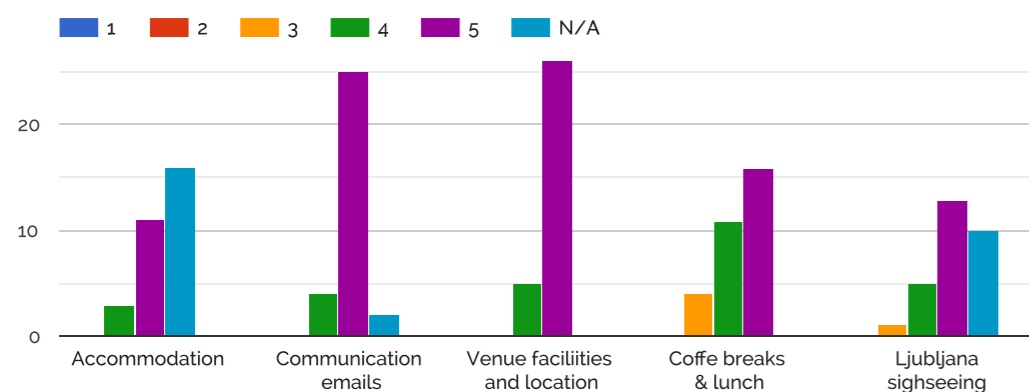


Figure 19: Responses to question "How satisfied were you with the logistics".

## Additional comments on the logistics:

*"The venue was not practical, it was full and if you sat in the back, you could not see properly due to the walls that separate two rooms".*

*"It may be helpful to give all, especially in the front, who ask a question a microphone, to make sure all can hear the question and answer".*

Participants were also asked what they think could be improved for future workshops and most suggested that:

- Time limit for talks should be respected.
- More time should be allocated for group discussion.
- Different table position that allows for easier discussion between participants.

## Key takeaways from the event:

*"Trust building is a long process, honest and transparent internal and external communication is key to long term conservation success, feedback for stakeholders is crucial."*

*"Everything in LC management takes a lot of time, knowing how to communicate is extremely important, sometimes stochastic events can still destroy your strategy."*

*"Need for conflict management experts to facilitate communication between stakeholders (particularly scientists and hunters)."*

*"Communication with and raising awareness among stakeholders take time and it is a long term process, but necessary base for any conservation activities to be implemented."*

*"Listen! Provide facts and stories. Meet people where they are."*

*"I learned about new (to me) projects and approaches, and about how much outcomes can vary in different regions. Also, that successful communication really takes a lot of time, and often needs many years of efforts."*

*"There are no easy solutions and most in cases request specific approach."*

*"That the European media has tremendous power to negatively influence public and political opinion regarding large carnivores. More importantly, it is clear that sensational and fake news can result in poor outcomes for large carnivores and the practitioners who are working to conserve them. E.g., loss of local and regional political support of policies beneficial to carnivores, reduced funding for carnivores, and the symbolic politicization of carnivores for political means (e.g., equating wolf recolonization with anti-immigration positions). Another key take-away was that the density of people in carnivore habitat is both a challenge and perhaps an opportunity in terms of how well messages and targeted communications might be useful in changing behaviors and practices of inhabitants that live with carnivores."*

*"More understanding of the processes going on during our work with different stakeholders."*

*"Networking, getting to know about best practices and different experiences."*

We received very positive feedback from all participants. Most reported all sessions were interesting but pointed out that those relevant to their work were of more interest to them, especially sharing experiences from different projects. All 32 were very pleased with the workshop, especially with the scenarios on the last day of the

workshop. When asked for suggestions or ideas regarding future networking topics of outreach and stakeholder dialogue in large carnivore conservation, they suggested:

- Information exchange among different groups/projects (including fund raising),
- More regular events like this one,
- An operative meeting about communication on LC and human dimensions, focusing in innovative communication proposals to realize in the near future (actions, ideas and tools),
- Another meeting where all participants would address their internal bias and test new approaches.

**Some of the feedback we received for the event:**

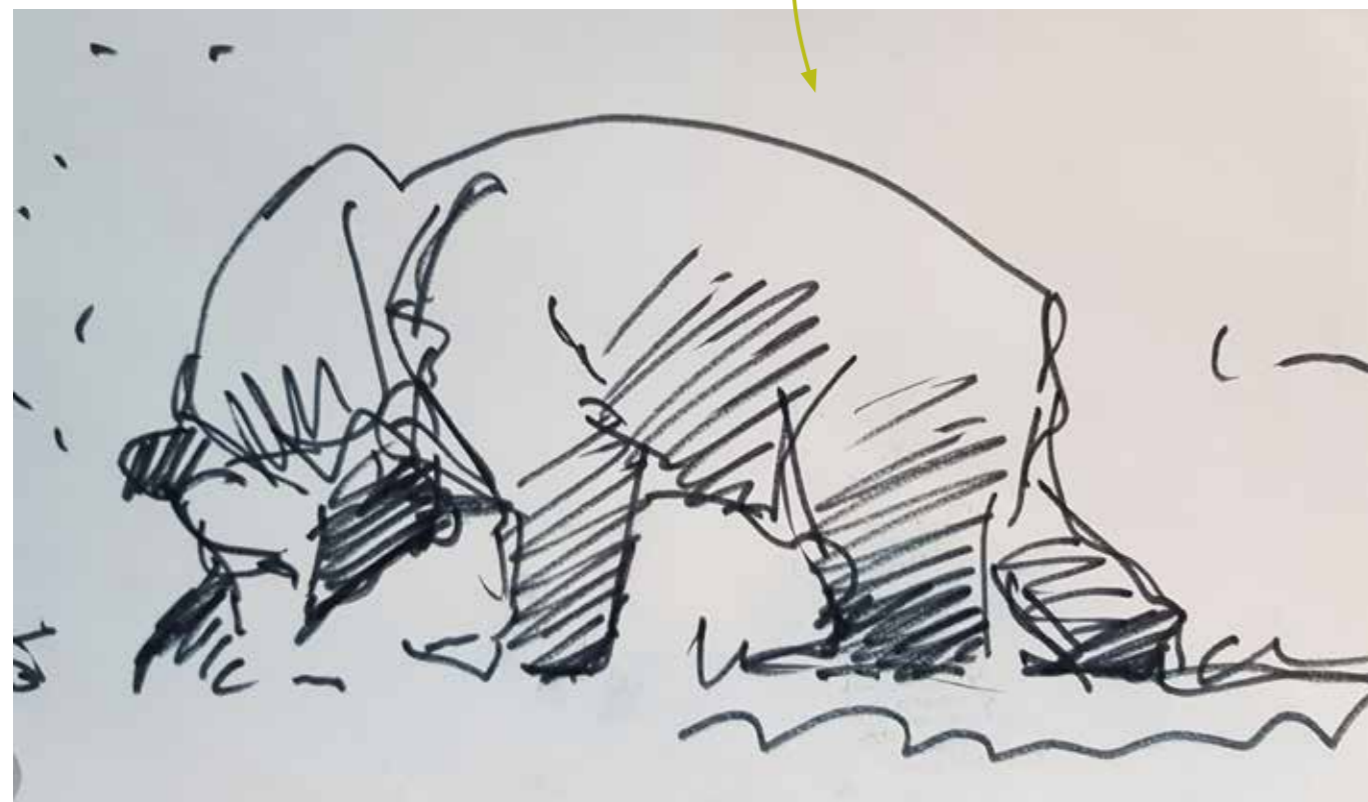
*"Experience in communication of projects involving large carnivores was presented and this met my expectations. However, I hoped also for a higher – conceptual level of approaching in the subject, which was done only by a few presenters".*

*"There was an opportunity for the artist and biologist and the nature preservatives to meet at one place which doesn't happen very often. In such a way we've reached the communication and that can bond us and share a valuable information among us all. Thank you for this opportunity and sincere effort that project of Large carnivores succeeds positively in the future".*

*"Didn't know what to expect, but very interesting over all".*

*"It was great! Thank you for everything".*

○ **Figure 20:**  
**Drawing by Bruce Pearson.**



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