



LIFE
Lynx



LIFE Lynx

PROJECT Bulletin – 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 **Message from the Editor:**
MAJA SEVER
- 3 **Message from Coordinator:**
ROK ČERNE
- 4 **In-Focus: SLOVAKIA**
- 6 **In-Focus: ROMANIA**
- 8 **Translocated lynx identity cards**
- 11 **Art workshops**
- 12 **In-Focus: CROATIA**
- 14 **In-Focus: ITALY**
- 16 **Young Lynx Guardians -**
Cooperation with local schools
- 17 **LIFE Lynx project HIGHLIGHTS**
from 2017 to 2020
- 18 **In-Focus: SLOVENIA**

Message from the Editor: **MAJA SEVER**

DEAR READER, in the year 2020 the LIFE Lynx project reached a halfway point and we are reflecting on our achievements, especially those we are most proud of. In Focus, you will discover how the teams from each of the five project countries are working towards our common objectives, each in its own unique way. Our main goal is to include 14 lynxes in the Dinarides and SE-Alps, but there are many other activities that contribute to the project's success. We are presenting some of them in this bulletin. The project's celebrities are the translocated lynxes and inside this bulletin you can find their ID cards with basic information about where they come from, where and when they were translocated to, whether they established a territory and other important details.

The project team wishes you a pleasant reading in discovering the world of lynx and the LIFE Lynx project.



For the students involved in the Life Lynx project, keeping a lynx in an area where it has already lived is extremely important. Although I personally will probably never see him live, I would do anything to protect him from extinction. That is why I support education and workshops about lynx we had at school.

LEJA MIKULIČ, student at
Gymnasium and secondary
school Kočevje,
Slovenia

Message from Coordinator: **ROK ČERNE**

THE LIFE LYNX PROJECT is approaching it's half, and we are achieving the first set goal, to prevent the extinction of the lynx in the Dinarides. We have already moved seven lynxes to the Slovenian and Croatian part of the Dinarides and are actively monitoring their integration into the new environment. Some of them have already successfully included into the population, and we are already monitoring their off-spring.

We are also very pleased with the active participation of hunters in the LIFE Lynx project as they help the project at practically every step, both in releasing new animals and in monitoring the inclusion of lynx in our forests and informing the public about the importance of this species in Slovenia, Croatia and Italy. Without their active participation, I cannot imagine the implementation of such a large-scale project.

2021 will probably be the most challenging for us, because of the lynx translocation to the Alps. We depend mainly on the successful capture of lynx, especially females, in the Carpathians. Partners from Romania and Slovakia have already shown that they know how to catch lynx successfully, and I believe they will continue to succeed. In

this way, we will contribute importantly to the long-term goal of the project - connecting the Dinaric and Alpine lynx populations. Only cross-border populations can maintain sufficient genetic diversity and thus the long-term conservation of lynx in Europe.



Franc Bešter



It may sound cliché, but for me the lynx is a symbol of preserved nature. Nature that needs to be admired, protected, and safeguarded for future generations. We are not aware enough of how invaluable it is that lynxes, bears, wolves and, more recently, jackals coexist in our forests. I consider it a special honor to have the opportunity to observe everything in their natural environment and I hope that my students and their descendants will experience something like this one day.

NINA RAŽEN, biology teacher
at the France Prešeren
Gymnasium Kranj,
Slovenia

From Slovakian forests – Vepor, Vtáčnik, and Volovec Mountains

In-Focus: SLOVAKIA

Jakub Kubala

SLOVAKIA REPRESENTS THE CORE of the Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) population in the Western Carpathians, and therefore the fate and status of lynx in all neighboring countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine and Hungary) as well as most reintroduced populations in Europe (including the Dinaric-SE Alpine population) depend on the fate of the population in the Slovak Carpathians. Therefore, Slovakia has a special responsibility for the international cooperation, management and conservation of this species in the Carpathians and Europe. In September 2017, the Slovak LIFE Lynx team started the implementation of opportunistic (year-round) lynx monitoring in three project areas – the Vepor, Vtáčnik, and Volovec Mountains in close collaboration with representatives of the State Nature Conservation of the Slovak Republic, Forests of the Slovak Republic, Hunting Associations and the public. Based on the results from opportunistic monitoring, we carried out the systematic camera trapping in the Vepor Mts. (from November 2018 to January 2019) and in the Vtáčnik Mts. The results of both monitoring showed that local lynx populations are in a favorable state (according to the Habitats Directive) and can be considered as sources for the reinforcement of the Dinaric-SE Alpine population. The translocations are in line

with the Slovak lynx population Management plan, Habitats Directive, Key actions for large carnivores in Europe, Recommendations for the reintroductions and other translocations of species for the conservation purpose, and Recommendations for the conservation of Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) in Europe.



Two lynx kittens photographed during the systematic camera trapping in Vtáčnik Mountains.

After implementing systematic camera trapping in both areas, we built in suitable sites the box traps intended for live lynx captures. We captured the first two lynx on March 13, 2020 and March 25, 2020. Because of his adolescent age, we marked one of the animals with a telemetry collar and released back into nature to monitor his spatial behavior and diet. The telemetry collar will allow the project team to recapture him if needed.



Adult lynx male Pino captured in the Vtáčnik Mts.

Prior to the translocation to the Dinaric Mts., the adult male was quarantined in a specialized facility of the National Zoological Garden Bojnice intended for the rehabilitation of lynx and other large carnivores. Subsequently, on July 14, 2020, we released the male into the forests of Štirovača in the border area between the Northern Velebit National Park and the Velebit Nature Park, Croatia. The second translocated lynx to the Dinaric Mountains was an adult rehabilitated male Maks from Polana Protected Landscape Area. In excellent health, he was transported to the quarantine station in Snežnik, from which we released him on June 23, 2020.



Adult lynx male Maks from the Polana Protected Landscape Area rehabilitated in the National Zoo Bojnice.



Lynx's presence, together with wolves and bears, other two large carnivores in the Dinaric forests, gives an important biological diversity and serves as an indicator of a healthy ecosystem. I support the LIFE Lynx initiative because of its goal to preserve the lynx population and give us valuable data on the population's trends. I hope that by the end of the project we will have science-based management tools for strategic planning to ensure long-term viability of lynx in Croatia.

IVICA MEDARIĆ,
hunter and forester,
Croatia

A typical LIFE Lynx fieldwork day in Romania

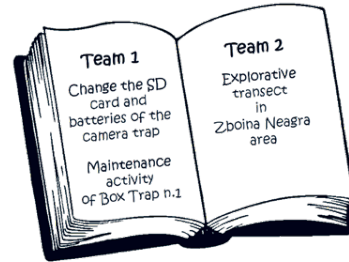
In-Focus: ROMANIA

Andrea Gazzola

The day begins at the cabin with a meeting to schedule the field work



Plan of the day



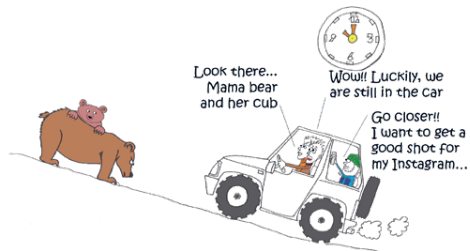
The teams are going to their transect starting points



Team 1 at the starting point of the transect



Team 2 was approaching the transect when it had an unexpected encounter



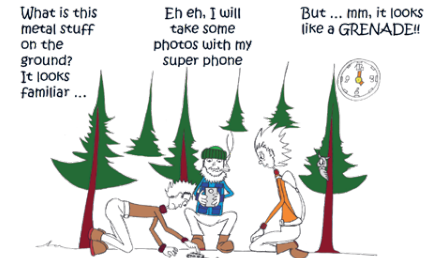
Team 1 had to change its plan because it intercepted a fresh lynx trail on the snow and decided to follow



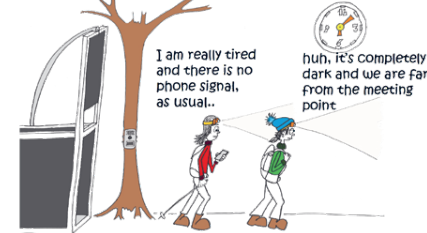
Meanwhile, on the second team's transect...



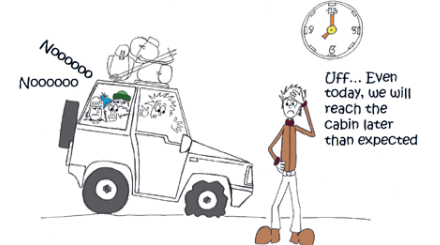
... things start to get weird



After a long day of snow tracking, Team 1 reached the box trap, changed the camera trap batteries and were on their way back to meet Team 2



Team 1 and Team 2 finally met, but the day was far from being over...



Final report of the field activity



The story and incidents portrayed in this comics are based on real events.

Any resemblance of the characters to real persons is intentional.

No animals were harmed in these activities.

TRANSLOCATED LYNX IDENTITY CARDS



Name | **GORU**
 Age | 5 YEARS (2019)
 Sex | MALE
 Weight | 22 KG (2019)
 Origin country | ROMANIA
 Date of translocation | 26.4.2019
 Country of release | SLOVENIA
 Date and location of release | 14.5.2019, LOŠKI POTOK
 Territory | MALA GORA (Slovenia)



Name | **CATALIN**
 Age | 4-5 YEARS (2020)
 Sex | MALE
 Weight | 24 KG (2020)
 Origin country | ROMANIA
 Date of translocation | 7.3.2020
 Country of release | SLOVENIA
 Date and location of release | 31.3.2020, SNEŽNIK
 Territory | MENIŠIJA and RAKITNA (Slovenia)



Name | **BORIS**
 Age | 1-2 YEARS (2020)
 Sex | MALE
 Weight | 15+ KG (MARCH 2020)
 Origin country | ROMANIA
 Date of translocation | 30.4.2020
 Country of release | SLOVENIA
 Date and location of release | 28.5.2020, LOŠKI POTOK
 Territory | NOT YET ESTABLISHED



Name | **PINO**
 Age | 5 YEARS (2020)
 Sex | MALE
 Weight | 20 KG (2020)
 Origin country | SLOVAKIA
 Date of translocation | 30.5.2020
 Country of release | CROATIA
 Date and location of release | 30.5.2020, NORT. VELEBIT
 Territory | * because of the collar failure we do not have the data



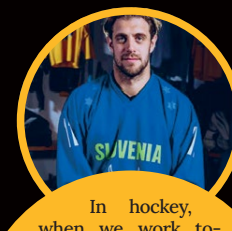
Name | **DORU**
 Age | 4 YEARS (2019)
 Sex | MALE
 Weight | 20 KG (2019)
 Origin country | ROMANIA
 Date of translocation | 4.5.2019
 Country of release | CROATIA
 Date and location of release | 4.5.2019, RISNJAK NP
 Territory | JAVORNIKI (Slovenia);
 until January 2020



Name | **ALOJZIJE**
 Age | 3-4 YEARS (2020)
 Sex | MALE
 Weight | 20 KG (2020)
 Origin country | ROMANIA
 Date of translocation | 13.3.2020
 Country of release | CROATIA
 Date and location of release | 13.3.2020, PAKLENICA NP
 Territory | SVETI ROK (Croatia)



Name | **MAKS**
 Age | 2 YEARS (2020)
 Sex | MALE
 Weight | 16 KG (2020)
 Origin country | SLOVAKIA
 Date of translocation | 3.6.2020
 Country of release | SLOVENIA
 Date and location of release | 23.6.2020, SNEŽNIK
 Territory | NOT YET ESTABLISHED



In hockey, when we work together, we win. I'm hoping you will join me in supporting efforts to save the Eurasian lynx from extinction. Let's win one for nature, let's win one for our lynx.

ANŽE KOPITAR,
 Ice-hockey player for
 Slovenia hockey team
 and LA Kings

TRANSLOCATED LYNX IDENTITY MAPS

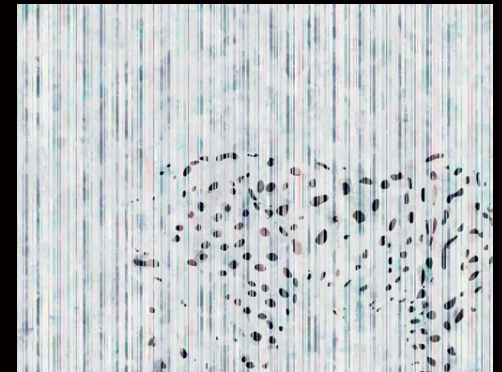


ART WORKSHOPS

Artwork presented in this bulletin is the work of professional and amateur painters, whose creative process was inspired by lynx. Art primarily addresses and explores the emotional side of the story of rescuing and protecting an endangered species, so we convey a message about the importance of lynx conservation through artists and their creations. Four art workshops were already done in the scope of the project and more will be done in the future for the development of creative tourism based on lynx and other large carnivores.



Alenka Stante



Brut Carniollus



Edith Kopač



Andreja Srna

Collaboration and diversity, keys to success

In-Focus: CROATIA

Ira Topličanec, Magda Sindičić, Ivana Selanec

THE CROATIAN LIFE LYNX team is proud of their female members that bring a different perspective on the relationship between humans and the environment. Traditionally in Croatia, women were rarely seen in the company of hunters and foresters, discussing research and conservation of large carnivores, but nowadays things have changed; more than half of our team members are women, who have proven to be more than reliable field personnel, showing flexibility and honest communication with other partners.

Fieldwork is never a boring activity and we all love to close our laptops and escape into the nature, to retrieve interesting lynx data. Because of the equipment and the tools needed while setting camera traps, collecting non-invasive genetic samples, or mounting hair traps, we are all depend-



It is always a good moment to teach the young generation how work should be done.



No matter the age, color or gender, collaboration is always key to success.

ent on our „field“ cars and that is where most of our adventures have started.

The key for our success is good cooperation with our Croatian partners – foresters, hunters, rangers and military workers – who welcomed us with warm hospitality (sometimes offering great local rakija) and made our working days on the field pleasant and productive.



Partners from the Croatian Army and Ira Topličanec from the LIFE Lynx team after fieldwork.

Each of the team members has his or her role and together we find best solutions for the project. From extreme conditions in the field to managing the project activities in the office, our team's diversity helps us overcome any obstacle and achieve our goals together, leveraging our mutual resources.



When a stronger car was needed, then the military helped the team.



There is a saying that there is no bad weather, just bad quality clothing and equipment. Croatian team agrees!



Iconic golden Renault Twingo always ready to shine in the forest and bring valuable data from camera traps back to the office – at least when in order.



We are proud that those involved in guarding and protecting the game species in Romania were able to contribute to the reinforcement of the Dinaric-SE Alpine lynx population. Once again, it turns out that hunting as a whole is truly wildlife management.

ADRIAN TITIANU, Bacău
Forest Management
Unit, Romania

Important results and side benefits

of field work and monitoring

In-Focus: ITALY

Paolo Molinari

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT prerequisites for the conservation work of the Eurasian lynx is to have good information on the status of the species and the new dynamics caused by the reinforcement measures done within LIFE Lynx. So let's talk about field work and monitoring. In the Italian forests of the project area where the researchers of the Progetto Lince Italia and the Carabinieri Forestali work - in collaboration with volunteer hunters and naturalists, the results of the intense monitoring work revealed a very worrying situation, which shows a rapid worsening of the status. This result is important to make the correct management measures, in a very strategic area for the conservation of the species in the Alps, since the "Tarvisio Forest" represents one of the most important "stepping stones" (see first LIFE Lynx project bulletin for details).

In the last year of work, unfortunately, the signs of lynx presence collected are very few and none of our 50 camera traps in the field has detected lynx. Although disappointing, this result is of great

importance for the reasons explained above. As side effects, we technically define them as "bycatch", the presence of other important species has been detected, subjects of other research and conservation projects, including other LIFE projects. Together we can thus paint a picture on a wide variety of animals and often provide useful information for other projects.

Among these species, we detected, for example, the brown bear, the golden jackal, the river otter and above all the wolf. The accurate monitoring work for the lynx was able to document step by step the whole dynamics of the recolonization of this predator in the extreme south-eastern Alps of Italy, where it was not yet present. These additional results of strategic value for conservation and management measures therefore underline how the efforts carried out in this project and the results achieved produce benefits that go beyond the objectives and therefore represent a very important naturalistic added value for the conservation of biodiversity.



Three interesting images collected with photo traps. Top to bottom: a wild cat, a river otter, and a wolf. All three species have recently and spontaneously recolonized the „Tarvisio Forest“- the extreme edge of the North-Eastern Italian Alps. Interesting - both the wolf and the wild cat feed on a red deer carcass.



Karmen Bajec



As a professional hunter, I find it very important to be involved in lynx monitoring, as well as in other monitoring of wildlife, including game species. In the LIFE Lynx project, I learned more about the life of the lynx, and its ecological importance in the natural environment. I am glad that the lynx is also present in my hunting ground, despite the increased pressure of people who are recreating more in nature, riding quad bikes and motocross bikes, thus causing unrest for prey species and the lynx. I hope that with the lynx, as well as with the other two species of large carnivores (bear and wolf), we will be able to establish coexistence between man and wildlife, which have fewer natural habitat. In all projects, we must not forget the rest of the game species, which is very important as a food source to preserve the large carnivores.

IGOR GRAŠAK, professional hunter
in the State Managed Hunting
Ground Medved,
Slovenia

YOUNG LYNX GUARDIANS - Cooperation with local schools

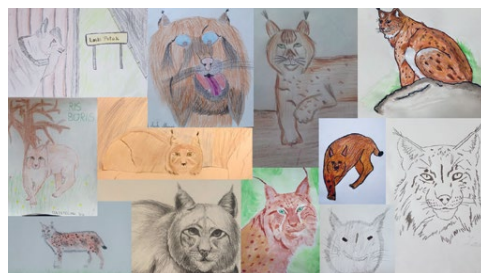
Manca Velkavrh

THE YOUNG LYNX GUARDIANS program enables nine schools from Slovenia to include lynx content within their lessons. The program has a specific framework, but it is adapted to each school by connecting the implementation of school activities with current project activities, while Young Lynx Guardians also monitor events from the life of a particular lynx, equipped with a telemetry collar.

Within each program, we will conduct a lecture and workshop about lynx and a field trip day at each school. In addition, we are looking together for ideas for other activities that the school could include in the lessons. At the Dragotin Kette Primary School, students will take care of a local automatic camera as part of the optional school subject "Television" and make a short film from animal footages. In Kranjska Gora and Mojstrana, pupils will make gypsum castings of large carnivore's footprints. Students of the Kranj secondary school will create an interactive map of landscape structures important to lynx after the science day field trip, and at the Secondary school in Kočevje, the students themselves prepared and designed invitations to the lecture, which we then conducted.

A special opportunity was offered to the students of the Sodražica Primary

School before the release of the lynx from Romania in Loški Potok. We asked the students to name the lynx, and we got 58 suggestions. After scoring the names by the expert commission, the lynx was named Boris (bor-pine, ris-lynx). The children also greeted the lynx's arrival with very diverse and unique drawings – from sympathetic depictions to artistic creations. 20 students also got a chance to see lynx Boris in the enclosure before his release.



Pupils made some very nice lynx drawings for lynx Boris.

Connecting findings and innovations from the project with young people at the local level enables the transfer of professional, up-to-date knowledge, especially to those who grow up in the lynx area. At the workshop in Kočevje, we also prepared a role playing activity with students, where they played the role of a hunter, breeder, nature conservationist, and provider of ecotourism services. Some of them found themselves well with the assigned roles, with which we wanted to present to them the multifaceted coexistence with the lynx and other large carnivores.



DORU – the first lynx released in the Dinarides after 46 years.
May 2019



Confirmation of the first reproduction of translocated lynx. GORU is the father of lynx MALA. January 2020



MIHEC – the oldest documented lynx in the Dinarides. He was first captured and collared in 2010, and after 10 years we recaptured him.



Setting up cameras with more than 48 hunting clubs in Slovenia.



Lynx MAKŠ – Slovenian team saved him and gave him another chance in Slovenia. June 2020



PAČO from Northern Velebit, Croatia really likes taking photos! Since March 2018 we photographed him 51 times.



Documentary film PATH OF THE LYNX. Premiere on first International Lynx Day, June 11, 2018



Capturing the first lynx – GORU in Romania. February 2019



Establishment of four Local consultative groups in Slovenia and two in Croatia



Press conference at Hunters Association of Slovenia – preventing illegal killing of wildlife. May 2019

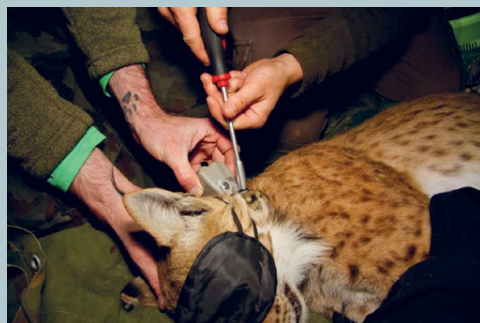
From Slovenian forests:

Identifying and checking lynx kill sites

In-Focus: SLOVENIA

Lan Hočevár

ONE OF THE MOST important actions of LIFE Lynx project is the translocation of lynxes into Dinaric Mountains of Slovenia and Croatia from the Carpathians. To see how successfully lynxes will integrate into our population, they are equipped with GPS telemetry collars. The collars give us a tiny insight into mysterious lives of the largest cat in Europe. One of the information that collars can provide is identifying lynx kill sites.



Attaching telemetry collar on a lynx.

Lynx mainly hunt roe deer on which they feed around 4 days. In this period, they mostly stay around the prey remains in a 100-meter radius. On the map, kill sites can easily be found as clusters of GSP locations. Clusters usually look like this:



Cluster of locations, which indicate a kill site, where lynx managed to kill a large prey and stayed around for several days to eat it.

After we check the cluster on the map, we upload the locations on the GPS device, so we can later find the prey remains in the field. Primary prey species of the lynx is roe deer. It represents around 80% of all biomass consumed by a lynx. Other lynx prey species are red deer, chamois, fox, and rodents, such as dormouse. Lynx is an expert killer that kills its prey with a bite in the neck region, most often in the neck artery, nerve or throat, which causes reflex death or suffocation.



Lynx bite marks on the neck.

When we approach the kill, we try to be as quiet as possible, because lynx might still be around and we do not want to disturb him too much. If disturbed by people, some lynx may abandon their prey. When we find the prey remains, we take notes about prey species, sex, age, and habitat features at the kill site. We also collect the left lower jaw of ungulates, which we give to hunters. Thus, the killed animal will be included into their hunting quota. If the lynx kill is not yet fully consumed, we set up the night-vision cameras.

After a few days' time, we go back in the field to pick up the cameras. As lynx primary prey, roe deer, weighs around 20 kg, lynx cannot consume it in one feeding sequence, therefore it returns to the kill site to feed for several nights. With videos from the cameras, we can observe lynx feeding behavior, which includes eating, covering prey with leaves, snow or soil, cleaning, and resting.



Lynx Goru returned to the kill site after we set up the cameras.

Beside lynx feeding on the prey, we often detect many scavenger species at the kill site. Foxes, bears, ravens, buzzards, and

wild boars are the most common species that we record at the kill sites, but also insects, and various microorganisms are feeding with the prey remains. This demonstrates that lynx is an important species in the forest ecosystems, as many other organisms benefit from this predator.



Red fox scavenging on the lynx prey.



The lynx used to be present in our hunting ground, which is why we decided to cooperate with the LIFE lynx project. In the last decade or so we had some signs of lynx presence in this area; the last firm proof was in 2014, when a lynx was killed in a car accident. We have to consider also that we - the hunters are also environmentalists, and that we brought the lynx to Slovenia in 1973, and now we have another chance to help him. And by doing this, we will also gain new knowledge about the species. There is fear among hunters what will happen to the prey species (roe deer, chamois, mouflon), but I think that we humans have a bigger impact on these species than the lynx.

PETER BENEDIK, president of
Nomenj Gorjuše Hunting
Club, Slovenia

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Name:

Preventing the extinction of the Dinaric-SE Alpine lynx population through reinforcement and long-term conservation

Acronym

LIFE Lynx

Reference

LIFE16 NAT/SI/000634

Time Frame

1/7/2017 – 31/3/2024

ABOUT THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

Editor: Maja Sever

Publisher: Slovenia Forest Service

Cover photo credit: Gabriele Retez

Graphic design: Mito Gegić

Photo credits:

Petra Drašković Pelc, Andrea Gazzola, Lan Hočevar, Jernej Javornik, Peter Kováč, Marko Matešić, Aleš Pičulin, Gabriele Retez, Maja Sever, Branislav Tām, Janez Tarman and archives of Progetto Lince Italia, Carabinieri Forestali, Technical University in Zvolen, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Zagreb, and BIOM.

ISSN: 2738-6139

Ljubljana, February 2021

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SLOVENIJE

Slovenia Forest Service

WITH SUPPORT OF EU LIFE FINANCING



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GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
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FOND ZA ZAŠTITU OKOLIŠA I
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LYNX

WALK GUIDE

step into the world of lynx
in Slovenia and Croatia

Electronic guide, you can take with you on the exploration trip in the heart of lynx habitat of Mt. Snežnik area and Risnjak National Park – available on:

www.lifelynx.eu/lynx-walk-guide

