International lynx conservation conference

HUNTERS AND LYNX CONSERVATION IN EUROPE

Book of abstracts



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LIFE Lynx LIFE 16 NAT/SI/000634









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



Project partners:



ZRSVN







Univerza v Ljubljani











REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA MINISTRSTVO ZA NARAVNE VIRE IN PROSTOR







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Hunters and Lynx conservation in Europe







LIFE Lynx project

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Prior to the start of the LIFE Lynx project in 2017, the Dinaric-SE Alpine lynx population was at risk of extinction. The Alpine region had no reproduction, and the Dinaric part of the population was experiencing a significant decline. However, a collaborative international effort from Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, Romania, and Slovakia saved the population by introducing new genes into the Dinaric part of the population and creating a stepping stone unit in the Alpine region of Slovenia.

The effectiveness of the LIFE Lynx project is largely based on the strong involvement of stakeholders and the international collaboration. The achievements are mainly a result of close collaboration among the forest institutions, universities, hunters associations, local hunting clubs, national parks, local communities, NGOs, and responsible ministries.

It is essential to recognize that this project's success extends beyond just saving the Dinaric-SE Alpine lynx population. The project set a precedent for successful conservation efforts that prioritize practical involvement and close collaboration among different parties locally, nationally and internationally. By emphasizing these key factors, the project demonstrated that successful conservation efforts can be achieved when different institutions, stakeholders, and countries work together towards a common goal.

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Hunter involvement in lynx population monitoring in the Dinaric mountains and SE Alps

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Hunters were historically strongly involved in monitoring the Dinaric SE-Alpine Eurasian lynx (Lynx lynx, hereafter: lynx) population. After the reintroduction of lynx to the Dinaric Mountains in 1973, hunters, foresters and naturalists regularly collected opportunistic records about lynx presence. Moreover, mortality records were systematically collected during legal hunting of lynx (1978-2003) as hunters needed to deliver all dead animals to the responsible institutions. These data enabled regular assessment of the expansion of the lynx in the region, which was first showing a positive trend, but was followed by a clear decline, which was later explained as a consequence of inbreeding depression. In 2014, structured questionnaires about lynx presence were sent to all hunting grounds within suitable habitat for lynx in Slovenia and in 2018, also in Croatia. With hunters' responses, an overview of the distribution of the Dinaric SE-Alpine lynx population in the two countries was evaluated at the beginning of the population reinforcement project, LIFE Lynx (www.lifelynx.eu).

To obtain a reliable measure of the lynx population size, a coordinated camera trapping survey in Croatia, Slovenia and Italy was organized since 2018 coordinated by the LIFE Lynx project. All hunting grounds reporting lynx presence opportunistically or through their responses in questionnaires were invited to participate in the survey. In Slovenia, all but one of the contacted hunting grounds responded to the invitation in the first survey year, resulting in camera trapping engaging hunters from the entire lynx distribution in the country. Moreover, the extent of the collaborating hunting grounds grew over the years, following the detected change in lynx distribution (from 36 in 2018-2019 to 63 in 2022-2023). Similarly, the collaboration with hunters and the extent of the survey improved over the years in Croatia. In each collaborating hunting ground, at least one hunter

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expressed his/her willingness to operate the camera traps during the entire survey period (September to April) on a voluntary basis. In total, more than 100 hunters participated in camera trapping during the 5-year monitoring program in Slovenia, with almost a double number of collaborators within the entire surveyed area including Croatia and Italy. With their help, between 330 and 440 camera trapping sites were operated annually, effectively covering an area more than 10.000 km². The LIFE Lynx project personnel trained the hunters to operate the cameras and joined them for camera set up at the start of each survey year. The hunters suggested the optimal sites, checked the cameras on a monthly basis and retrieved the SD cards, and the LIFE Lynx personnel processed the recordings, extracted and identified the lynx and assessed the status of the lynx population on an international level. Even though lynx records represent less than 1% of all camera-trapping pictures collected, they provided the most accurate data about the Dinaric SE-Alpine lynx population collected so far. It has been used to describe population expansion, calculate lynx densities, detect reproductions and evaluate the success of the reinforcement process.

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Besides meeting with the hunters to set up the camera traps and exchange the SD cards, regular feedback from the LIFE Lynx personnel was ensured via publications for hunting magazines, social media, special events and personal communication. Over the years of collaboration, we have established a trustful relationship with hunters over most of the lynx distribution in the Dinaric Mountains and SE Alps. With their involvement, hunters have maintained their proactive role in lynx research and conservation, an essential aspect for safeguarding the persistence of the Dinaric SE-Alpine lynx population in the long term.





Lovska zveza *Slovenije*



Hunter's view – experiences from the field

1. Triglav National Park, Slovenia

Miha Marolt¹

In the presentation Miha Marolt shares his deep involvement in the project of reintroducing lynx to the Julian Alps from the perspective of a hunter with over 20 years of experience and employee of Triglav National Park. He was president of the Regional Association of Game Managers of Gorenjska Hunting Management Area where he first encountered the idea of lynx reintroduction in 2017 before the start of the LIFE Lynx project.

Despite initial concerns among hunters about the impact of reintroduction on existing game populations (roe deer, chamois, mouflon), presenter decided to support the project, seeing it as an important conservation activity. In his role as president Regional Association of Game Managers of Gorenjska Hunting Management Area, he called on hunters to join the project, but there was initially no response. Despite the initial silence and fear at the meetings among local hunters, he actively started participating in LIFE Lynx project activities in the Triglav National Park, where reintroduction of almost extinct endemic species is one of the key roles in protecting biodiversity loss.

After the micro location of the lynx enclosure was determined and the enclosure was built, all the preparations were made for the arrival of the first lynxes in Triglav National Park. Marolt recalls the incredible feeling when the first lynx, named Tris (named after highest Slovenian mountain Triglav and 'ris', which means lynx in Slovenian), was brought into the enclosure. In the meantime, the local Hunting Club Nomenj-Gorjuše decided to join the project and became a key partner for successful reintroduction. Zois and Aida were the first two lynxes released into the wild from the Nomenj-Gorjuše Hunting Club enclosure. Lenka and Julija joined Tris in the national park enclosure and were later released into the wild.

Marolt then, as a hunter, embarked on learning about the life of lynxes in the wild and participated in monitoring with camera traps. When some GPS collars failed, he actively joined in lynx capture activities, which was unsuccessful in the first season. In the winter of 2022/2023, monitoring,







tracking, and capture continued, proving to be more successful than a year before, where 4 kittens were captured and equipped with GPS collars.

Marolt emphasizes that the impact of lynxes on game species (roe deer and chamois) was noticeable, but it is crucial to understand that hunters contributed to the conservation of this vulnerable species. Despite challenges and adjustments in game management, hunters feel proud to be part of a project that is a bright spot amid the global crisis of biodiversity loss. Marolt acknowledges that much work remains, especially in educating young hunters about the importance of such efforts. Nevertheless, initial results of lynx reintroduction are very promising because the introduced lynx stayed in the area and successfully bred.

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Hunter's role in practical lynx research and conservation

Vedran Slijepčević¹

1. Karlovac University of Applied Sciences, Croatia

Although hunting in 21st century is not by itself challenging due to high densities of most game species, especially with the help of modern technology, it still faces certain challenges as control of invasive species or embracing large carnivores as a normal part of hunter's surroundings. There is a long history of conflict between large carnivores and hunters since, not long ago, high bounties were given for wolf culling. Today, the same group of people is being instructed that large carnivores are a normal and beneficial part of habitat. This requires an evolution of thinking about hunter's role in nature. Along with special position of large carnivores in hunter's mind, large carnivore researchers are also sometimes classified as "peculiar" due to different aspects on large carnivores. These two groups, after putting a few differences and prejudice aside, with mutual acknowledgement, can cooperate efficiently to mutual satisfaction since they have a lot more in common as they are all nature loving outdoor types interested in sustainable use of natural resources. In Croatia, due to official lack of interest in hunter involvement in LIFE Lynx project, strategy was to build from bottom to the top - to connect and cooperate with local hunters interested in knowledge about large carnivores and including hunting clubs as well as county hunting alliances. Two years after the beginning of LIFE Lynx project, the Croatian hunting alliance recognized the positive hunter involvement in project and publicly supported it. This step gave hunters more motivation for further engagement and promoted public acceptance of hunters in Croatia. Hunters are now more often recognized and promoted as good field specialists for lynx research as they often contribute with crucial information for research. It is important to note that in every single case of lynx orphan rescue in Croatia, there was at least one hunter involved as the key person for a successful orphan capture and transport. Further efforts will be made that this cooperation that gave strength both to researchers and hunters doesn't end with the LIFE Lynx project, but grows with time and paves the way for wildlife and habitat conservation in the future.







Lynx in Europe; Threats and pressures

1. European Federation for Hunting and Conservation, Belguim

Article 17 reporting under the EU Habitats Directive

Every 6 years, EU Member States (MS) must report on the conservation status of the species and habitats listed under the Habitats Directive. Along with this, a list of pressures and/or threats should be provided and a ranking of the impact on the conservation status of species is also required. Pressures have acted within the current reporting period, and they have an impact on the long-term viability of the species or its habitats. Threats are future/foreseeable impacts that are likely to affect the long-term viability of the species and/or its habitats.

Based on these reports, FACE analysed all the high-ranking pressures reported by the MS for the lynx:



High ranking pressures reported for lynx assessments

Transport

Transport was the most often reported high-ranking pressure reported by EU member states. Especially wide linear infrastructure such as highways or railroads lead to direct mortality but also contribute the fragmentation of suitable habitat for lynx. Highly fragmented landscapes dominated by human land use contribute to many isolated lynx populations in Europe.

Sabrina Dietz¹





Illegal killing/ shooting

Illegal killing is another major threat to the survival and recovery of lynx in Europe. While the motives for illegal killing are often very complex and dependent on the economic-political-social context, illegal killing is often an indicator that social tolerance towards large carnivores has reached its limit or is decreasing. Poor dialogue with stakeholders and poor enforcement of legislation are further drivers of illegal killing.

Natural processes

A consequence of fragmented populations is low genetic diversity and small population sizes which are more prone to diseases. Inbreeding depression can lead to decreased individual fitness resulting in lowered fertility and survival of the species.

Take home messages

Through monitoring, education and awareness raising, hunters make an important contribution to lynx conservation and management all over Europe. Compared to other large carnivores, conflicts with lynx are in general less intense. However, locally and regionally, lynx can have a severe impact on ungulates and livestock. These conflicts need to be taken seriously and adequately addressed in an open dialogue with relevant stakeholders. When it comes to reintroduction projects, stakeholders feel their interests and values have been considered in decision-making processes, they are less likely to obstruct the implementation of decisions or reverse them as soon as possible. Successful examples of good stakeholder involvement can be found for instance in the LIFE Lynx project, LIFE Luchs project or the lynx reintroduction project in the Harz National Park.







Plans for lynx reintroductions in Italy

Paolo Molinari¹, Cristiano Manni², Raffaele Pio Manicone², Anja Molinari-Jobin¹ 1. Progetto Lince Italia – Torino University, Italy

2. Carabinieri Biodiversity Group, Italy

The lynx population in the Dinaric Mountains and South-eastern Alps had declined since the beginning of the millennium, was isolated and genetically impoverished. It was threatened with extinction, which is why an EU LIFE project "Preventing the Extinction of the Dinaric-SE Alpine Lynx Population Through Reinforcement and Long-term Conservation" has been underway since 2017 to increase the population by relocating lynx. From 2019 to 2023 a total of 12 lynx have been translocated from the Carpathians to the Dinarics for genetic rehabilitation of the Dinaric lynx. A sub-goal of this project was also the establishment of a stepping-stone population in the Eastern Alps.

The lynx sub-population in the South-eastern Alps plays an important role in connecting the Dinaric and Western Alps populations. However, since 2000, the number of lynx in the South-eastern Alps has steadily declined. The save this subpopulation from extinction and help the lynx in the South-eastern Alps to recover, urgent conservation actions were necessary. The aim of the project ULyCA (Urgent Lynx Conservation Action) is to create a nucleus of lynx in the Italian Alps that will merge with the stepping-stone population that was created in the Slovenian Alps in the frame of the LIFE Lynx project and eventually allow this subpopulation to be reunited with the Dinaric population.

From 2021 to 2023 six lynx (3 females and 3 males) originating from Romania and Slovakia have been released in the Slovenian Julian Alps. The three females have so far produced four litters. In the Italian Julian Alps three females (two from the Swiss Jura Mountains and one from Romanian Carpathians) and two males (from Romania and the other from Croatia) have been released, resulting in a total of eleven lynx released in the Julian Alps. Prior to translocations, all lynx were thoroughly checked for health and fitted with a radio collar. In addition, their genetic profile was tested to avoid translocations of related lynx. The release site in Italy is located in a remote valley of the Tarvisio Forest on the border with Slovenia, about 30 km west of the reintroduced stepping-stone population in the Slovenian Alps. Three llynx have already moved between the two nuclei.







Lynx translocations are a complex international operation from the organizational and technical point of view, which required and still requires broad sharing and participation. ULvCA is a project of the Carabinieri Forestali (Italian Forest Police), and Progetto Lince Italia of the University of Turin oversees the technical and logistical aspects. Important support was received from WWF Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, as well as through the collaboration of the "Hunting and Lynx Working Group", which brings together regional hunting associations. The realization of this project was only possible thanks to the active collaboration of the Biodiversity Service Department of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Regional Veterinary Authority (ASUFC), the Regional Forest Corps, the team of the Federal Office for the Environment (BAFU) in Switzerland, the Jura Canton, KORA, which is responsible for lynx captures in Switzerland, the Institute for Fish and Wildlife Health of the University of Bern, and the two quarantine stations of the Goldau and Dählhölzli zoos (both in Switzerland). In Romania, the Biodiversity Office of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, Romsilva (State Agency for Forest and Hunting Management) and ACDB, an organization of biologists active in the field of conservation, were key. Finally, in Croatia the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning as well as the Universities of Zagreb and Karlovac, and in Slovakia the Ministry of Environment and Bojnice Zoo, which have been professionally involved with the rehabilitation of the Croatian orphan lynx.







Conservation and management of lynx in Switzerland

Anja Jobin Molinari¹

1. KORA - Carnivore ecology and wildlife management, Switzerland

Lynx were successfully reintroduced to Switzerland in the 1970s to the Alps and the Jura Mountains. After a swift expansion of the population range, the population in the Alps stagnated although there was still suitable habitat available in the east and in the south. The reasons for this are unclear, but most likely it was due to the natural and artificial barriers that hindered individual lynx dispersal, and, maybe more importantly, illegal killings destroyed the population pressure needed for an expansion. Not only hunters and sheep breeders, but also the authorities of the cantons in the western Swiss Alps have demanded that the lynx population in this region be reduced. To respond to this situation, the Swiss Ministry of Environment implemented the Swiss Lynx Concept in 2000. This management plan guides the damage prevention, damage compensation and removal of stock-raiders. But most importantly, it bases on the idea to trade lynx abundance for further distribution, foreseeing that in a first phase lynx are translocated from high density areas to areas yet uncolonised. In a second phase, the Swiss lynx management plan foresees also quota hunting. Conditions for quota hunting are among others:

- The whole management unit needs to be colonised by lynx.
- Damage on livestock is high.
- Browsing damages are low.
- Lynx density is 1.5 individuals / 100 km2 or higher and at least three reproductions are confirmed in the previous year in the management unit.

If the criteria are met, the quota is as high as the confirmed reproduction of the previous year and 50% of the quota must be juveniles.

However, quota hunting has never been realized up to now as according to the phase l of the management plan. Twelve lynx were translocated in 2001-2008 from the North-western Swiss Alps and the Jura Mountains to North-eastern Switzerland. This action has contributed to a considerable expansion of the lynx range in the Swiss Alps as well as the colonisation





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of neighbouring Austria. Swiss lynx have also been used as a source for reintroduction and reinforcement projects in the south-eastern Alps, in the northern Alps of Austria and in the Palatinate Forest.

Although the two Swiss populations are with 180 individual lynx in the Alps and 70 in the Swiss part of the Jura Mountains (with 2/3 of the population in France) the largest reintroduced populations in Europe, the future prospect is uncertain. The relatedness of individuals within the two populations is increasing, reaching high levels especially in the Alps. Therefore, the natural immigration or the active translocation of individuals from other populations will be crucial to prevent further genetic deterioration of the two populations. In the meantime, lynx have colonised the Swiss Plateau, and

are about to connect the Jura and the Alpine population, evidence of the adaptability of lynx to human modified landscape.







LIFE Luchs – lynx in Palatinate Forest

1. Foundation Nature and Environment Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany

Jochen Krebühl¹

A sub-population of lynx has been re-established in the German part of the transboundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Palatinate Forest - Vosges du Nord. The Stiftung Natur und Umwelt Rheinland-Pfalz (Foundation for Nature and the Environment Rhineland-Palatinate) conducts the reintroduction program with the support of LIFE funding and together with the state forest administration Landesforsten Rheinland-Pfalz, the French administration of the Biosphere Reserve SYCOPARC and WWF Germany.

Lynxes were captured in the source populations in Switzerland and Slovakia. A total number of 20 lynx have been released and will further grow by natural reproduction. The feasibility study states the available habitat could sustain up to 45 individuals in the cross border frenchgerman biosphere reserve "Pfälzerwald/Vosges du Nord".

The grass-root participation with local livestock keepers and hunters has been conducted many years prior to the first release by a local NGO and with the backing of Friends of the Earth/BUND Rheinland-Pfalz. This preparation allowed the hunting and animal keepers associations to support the re-introduction later on. The stakeholder processes were structured through the lynx parliament during the project. The "parliament" met in two chambers, one chamber each in the project area in France and in Germany.

The state of Rhineland-Palatinate published a management plan on lynx before the release of the first animals. In the overlap of nature conservation and hunting law the management plan addresses among other topics prevention and compensation measures for livestock and hunting dogs as well as measures on illegal releases and illegal killings.

The hunting association "Landesjagdverband Rheinland-Pfalz" hosted a conference, published online, and printed material to inform its members and integrated the topic in the local education and exams to obtain the hunting licence.





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The NGO "Luchs-Projekt Pfälzerwald / Vosges du Nord e.V." started to establish a network of volunteers to support livestock keepers to protect their livestock. Next to the qualification and coordination of the volunteers to provide manpower, necessary machinery is at the disposal of livestock keepers and volunteers.

The reintroduction fosters research Landesforsten Rheinland-Pfalz scientifically addressed changes in the roe deer population, its behavior and the use of habitats after the return of the predator. Research on tourism shows a willingness to spend more time and money in the Palatinate Forest due to the presence of lynx (Sigmund, 2016) and in a survey 70% of the respondents evaluate the return of the lynx positive (Schraml et.al. 2016).

After the LIFE project was closed, coordination of the Lynx parliament was taken over by the regional hunting association Landesjagdverband Rheinland-Pfalz and the forest administration established the Coordination Centre Lynx and Wolves. The coordination Centre takes on all management tasks on monitoring (demographic, genetic, health), communication to the interest groups and prevention and compensation measures. In the monitoring season winter 2022/2023 systematic camera trapping in Palatinate Forest is conducted.







Lynx in Harz National Park and the importance of stakeholder dialogue

Ole Anders¹

1. Harz National Park, Germany

Between 2000 and 2006, 24 (9 malse, 15 females) ZOO born lynxes have been released into the Harz Mountains (HM) in central Germany. The Ministries for Agriculture and Conservation of Lower Saxony accompanied by the Hunting Association of Lower Saxony were executors of the reintroduction project. The practical work was carried out by the Harz National Park.

Until the monitoring year 2009/10, all cells of the EU monitoring grid occupied by lynx within the range of the Harz Lynx Population (HLP), were located inside the HM In the following monitoring year 2010/11, five out of 25 grid cells were outside the HM. Until the monitoring year 2018/19, the number of cells of the EU monitoring grid occupied by the HLP has increased to 84. 48 (57 %) of them do not touch the HM. Most of the latter are located west and south of HM. This represents an average annual increase of 7.4 grid cells. The results of a systematic camera trap monitoring in different study areas inside the HM analyzed with non-spatial capture-recapture models ranged between 2.1 and 2.9 independent lynx/100 km². From this, a mean density of 2.5 independent individuals can be derived and an abundance of 55 independent individuals which form the source population from which dispersers emerge to settle the foreland of the HM or to migrate over long distances.

Inside the HM, the first evidence of lynx reproduction has been detected in 2002. In each of the following years, lynx offspring were recorded. In the monitoring year 2010/11, camera trap pictures showed lynx kittens in northern Hesse (Kaufunger Forest) around 100 km from the population center (the former reintroduction enclosure in the Harz National Park). Since then, reproduction has taken place in four more areas outside the HM in distances of 30 to 70 km from the population center although the HM are surrounded by major roads and landscapes with low forest cover (Hils and surrounding forests: 2013ff, Solling: 2016 ff, Hainberg, 2018ff and Westerhoefer Forest 2018 ff). However, after 2015, the reproduction area in the Kaufunger Forest collapsed. At least two females died of sarcoptic mange.







Between 2008 and 2023, 36 (23 males, 13 females) lynxes were fitted with VHF (2) or GPS collars (34) to track their routes through the HM and surrounding landscapes. Lynx dispersal has also been determined by repeated photo or genetic evidence.

Single male dispersers can be found in distances of up to 309 km from the source population in the HM, whereas reproducing females have not been proven further than 100 km away from the population center and a female without cubs has been reported in a maximum distance of 143 km.

According to a study published in 2018, the acceptance of the lynx in the vicinity of the HM is relatively high. The opinion is more heterogeneous among hunters than in the rest of the human population, but still expresses a solid acceptance of the lynx. The animal species today plays an important role in tourist advertising for the region.





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Preventing the potential illegal killing of lynxes in Slovenia

Tilen Hvala¹, Uršula Belaj² Hunters Association of Slovenia, Slovenia
Slovenian Police, Slovenia

Illegal killing of wildlife is a complex issue determined by different driving factors. It is influenced by various social mechanisms that contribute to the behaviour and negative attitudes of individuals towards wild animals that can in worst cases lead to illegal killing. In the case of lynxes (and other large carnivores) there are two main drivers; competition for the same resources (i. e. prey species such as wild ungulates) and the fear of livestock predation which poses a potential economic loss for livestock breeders.

To ensure the long-term survival of lynxes, we addressed these issues within the framework of LIFE Lynx project (LIFE 16 NAT/SI/000634) and implemented essential conservation measures, including key stakeholder engagement and education of law enforcement to mitigate the potential illegal killing of lynxes. We connected with the Ministry of Interior and between the years 2019 and 2022, and conducted the first professional training sessions for police officers with the goal of educating them about the importance of detecting, prosecuting, and sanctioning the illegal killing of lynxes, as each illegally killed lynx presents a threat to the viability of the population. Moreover, we conducted educational seminars for field personnel (foresters, game wardens and professional hunters), who are most likely to be first to detect and report a suspected illegal killing of wild animals to the police. Finally, we produced a handbook on the investigation of illegal killing of wild animals, which was sent to all Slovenian hunters via national hunting magazine Lovec.

The actions carried out within the project represent an important foundation for more efficient and more effective detecting, prosecuting, and sanctioning of wildlife crime in the future in Slovenia. With cooperation with the police, stakeholder involvement and education of hunters, we have created a snowball effect in the field of illegal killing of wild animals (lynxes) to ensure a better future and long-term survival of the Dinaric-SE Alpine lynx population.







Successful prosecution of illegal killing of two lynxes in Austria

1. Environmental Crime Service, Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, Austria

Karl Frauenberger¹

Nationalpark Kalkalpen

The place of the crime was in the Nationalpark Kalkalpen. This park is in the Federal State of Oberösterreich – Upper Austria – and founded 1997. Because of the rather big size of 20.850 hectares and the form of ownership – 88% Austrian Republic, 11% Private, 1% Local Community – the park is theoretically perfect for endangered species. Even for big predators like lynxes. The park is Natura 2000 approved; however, illegal hunting is still a latent problem.

Lynx in the National Park Kalkalpen

Scientific monitoring of lynx within the National Park Kalkalpen began in 1998. In 2010, when only one lynx was confirmed to be present in the area, it was decided to support the population with lynx translocations. 2011 three lynxes were released: Juro (male), Freia and Kora (females). The population developed so that by 2023 there are three females and three males.

Case

In February 2014 the National Park Kalkalpen Administration contacted the Environmental Crime Unit of Upper Austria. Unexpected disappearance of Lynx Juro raised the suspicion of illegal hunting and killing. Juro had a collar transmitter. Data of the moves of Juro in 2013 gave a clear picture of his home range. He regularly moved out of the National Park heading to the east and south-east. The data of Juro's movement since his release showed that he often stayed close to a certain hunting hut. ALBERHÜTTE. Even on 7.06.2013, the day before his presumed shooting. The leaseholders of the hunting hut were the final investigated perpetrators (a couple: H.W. and I.W.).

Investigative approaches

During the investigation possible suspects were identified and observed. In order to get information of the hunting allowances, hunters and hunting areas, the local administrative authorities were contacted. It was also







important to identify possible taxidermists for the necessary preparation. The focus was on taxidermists who ordered taxidermy 'moulds' for lynx. Another angle of the investigation was to identify witnesses and gather hints, like in any crime investigation.

Several hints

A promising hint was the report of a veterinarian concerning a possible frozen lynx in the house of a hunter. One of the identified suspects, the leaseholder of the hunting hut, H.W., was supposed to show photos of lynx trophies. H.W. was additionally accused by an ex-girlfriend of having shot a few lynxes and sold them.

House search at taxidermist E.R.

The investigators investigated and questioned to taxidermist (E.R.) about the acquisition of the lynx 'moulds'. During the house search, a frozen lynx was found. At first E.R. denied it but afterwards he admitted having received the Lynx from H.W. It was surprisingly proved by the Veterinarian University Vienna that the dead Lynx was B7. An offspring of Juro.

Results

Further questioning of H.W., I.W. and E.R. proved that I.W. illegally shot Lynx B7. I.W. was prosecuted and sentenced for committing that crime. H.W. was prosecuted and sentenced for complicity, R.E. was prosecuted and sentenced for false statement of evidence.

After further investigation, H.W. was proven to have also shot lynx Juro illegally. The testimonies of his ex-girlfriend and photographs on his mobile phone made a significant contribution to this.

H.W. was prosecuted and sentenced for committing the crime according to article 138 and 181 of the Penal Law – illegal hunting and killing of endangered species. However, Juro's carcass was never found.



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