

Tuesday, March 21, 2006 – Tresonče, Alilica cave

On the first day, we went on a field trip to the village Tresonče, following the forest road that leads to the Alilica cave (Fig. 3). Snow conditions were bad. There was no snowfall for about 6-7 days, and because of the warmer weather the snow was wet. Therefore, most of the tracks were melted and difficult to recognize/identify. Along the trip we met different habitat types. In lower parts there were meadows and agricultural land. Most of the tracks found in these habitats were from hares and fox. In the upper parts, beech forest and riparian habitats were predominant. There we met less but different tracks (hare, wild boar, badger, etc.). No roe deer or chamois tracks were encountered, but sighting of a chamois in the high altitude rocks of Brzovec (2000 m). Along the trail to the cave, we noticed some potential sites for camera trapping.

On our way back, we visited the border police station in the village Žirovnica. The chief policemen told us about their activities for the lynx monitoring, and showed interest for further cooperation. Route and GPS track from the first day are given in the map below.

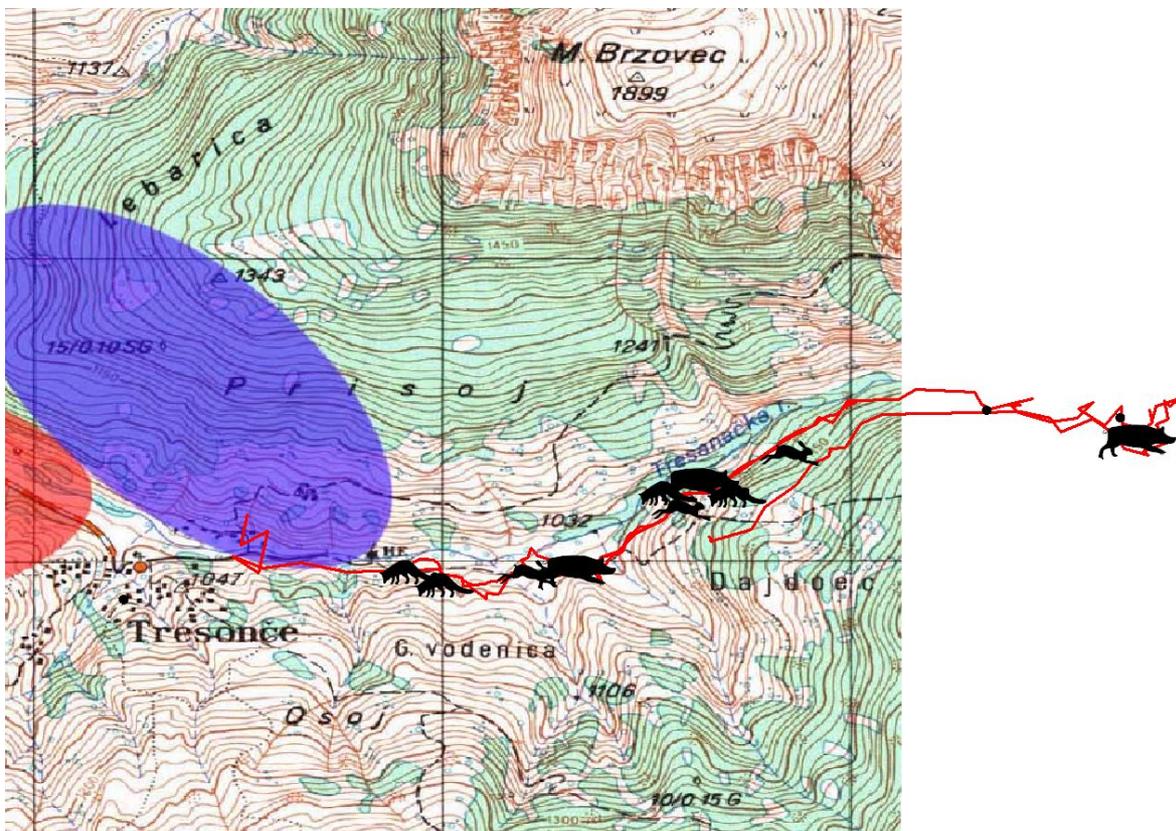


Fig. 3: Transect (red line) and tracks (symbol of the species) encountered on March, 21. The red and blue patches indicate locations of recent and less recent (>10 years old) lynx observations. Not all of the hare tracks have been recorded.

Wednesday, March 22, 2006 – Šuntevsi Rid, Vlainica, Leunovo

On the second day, we made a field trip into the beech forest and open forest habitats that stretches along the localities Šuntevsi Rid and Vlainica on the southern shores of Mavrovo Lake, and we finished in village Leunovo (Fig. 4). There was still about 1m of (old and wet) snow laying in those forests, and we hardly encountered any tracks apart from a few hare and fox tracks, and a badger track following a forest trail. The weather was cloudy and rainy that day.



Fig. 4: Transect (red line) and tracks (symbol of the species) encountered on March, 22. Not of all of the hare and fox tracks have been recorded.

Thursday, March 23, 2006 – Sence

At breakfast, we met some foresters who showed interest in helping us out during our field trips, pointing out some good localities. They were provided with the field handbook and monitoring guidelines.

The weather conditions were bad again; it was pouring all day long. First, we visited the border police station in the village Žirovnica, in order to organize our trip above the village Bituše, but since it was still raining we decided to make this trip the following day. On our way back, we decided to pass by the village Sence. There we talked with local people, asking them about possible lynx presence in the area. One of the villagers, an old hunter, claimed that he saw a lynx about one year ago crossing the bridge that turns from the road in the Radika valley to the village.

From the conversation with the hunter, we gained information about the game present in the area of Sence, and according to this information, we decided to make a survey into the nearest fir forest (Korija, Fig. 5). This field trip turned indeed out to be very productive for us. Before we entered into the forest, we had already found some tracks and scats from ungulates (roe deer and chamois) and fox. Between the village and the small stream, the area is rocky with a lot of small caves. When we were climbing around there, we encountered old bear tracks. The trail that leads over the stream into the forest would be perfect for camera trapping as animals are almost forced to go along it, especially next to the stream - the bear at least did exactly this. Fir and mixed forest seems to be a good habitat for the game (probably due to the less deep snow and better food availability than e.g. in the beech forest). Here we saw chamois (one individual of chamois rushed just 10 meters in front of us), and found a lot of chamois scat and tracks, but also fresh bear and wolf tracks.

Soaking wet but happy we went back and spent the evening downloading the pictures from the cameras, and the GIS data from the GPS into the Arc View program.

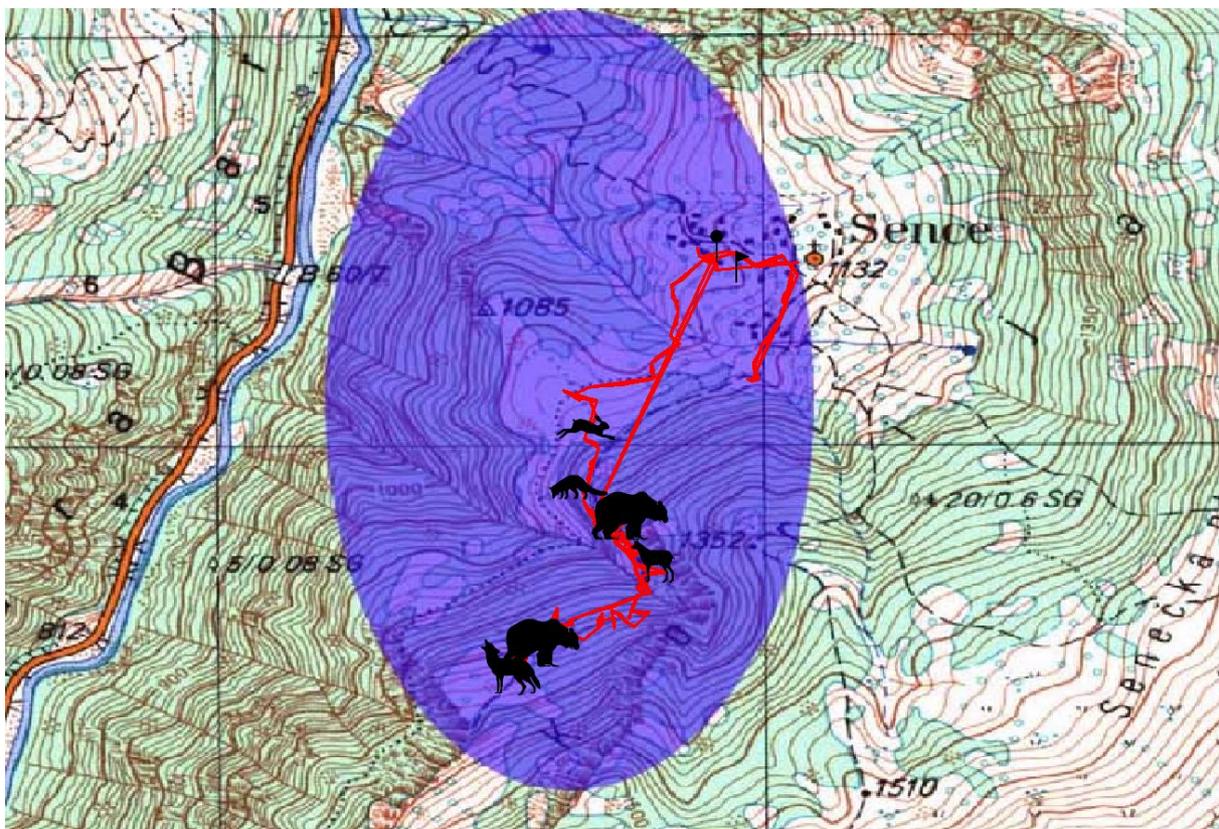


Fig. 5: Transect (red line) and tracks (symbol of the species) encountered on March, 23. The blue patch indicates the location of a less recent (>10 years old) lynx observation. The different bear tracks found most probably belong to the same individual.