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Safari of the week **Balkan lynx population declining – probably less than 100**

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Balkan lynx caught in a camera trap. Credit Dime Melovski, MES.

In 2002, KORA (Coordinated Research Projects for the Conservation and Management of Carnivores in Switzerland) carried out a Pan-European survey on the status of the Eurasian lynx in Europe. This survey revealed a population estimate of approx. 80-100 lynx for the Balkan lynx population. This number was based on guesses of local experts as scientifically collected data was not available. It was however clear that the population of the Balkan lynx, considered a subspecies of the Eurasian lynx, is Critically Endangered according to the [IUCN Red List criteria](#). So in 2006, the "Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme" was initiated



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In 2008 a 2-month intensive camera-trapping survey was run in the Mavrovo National Park, Macedonia. Mavrovo NP and its surroundings is considered to be the core area of the population according to the results of a baseline survey carried out by the The Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme (BLRP) in 2007 in Albania and Macedonia (see map).

Camera trapping

The capture-recapture analysis of the camera-trapping data resulted in an estimate of 7 ± 1.82 lynx in the 436 km² study area in Mavrovo NP - which gives a density of 0.84 ± 0.24 lynx/100 km². If we extrapolate this number to the number of grid cells indicated with probable lynx presence during the baseline survey (=37, each grid cell is 10x10 km, Fig.) we get to an estimate of around 32 lynx. If we also consider the grid cells with possible presence, the estimate goes up to 83 lynx. However, the density in the grid cells of possible presence will not be as high as in the Mavrovo NP and the 83 lynx estimate is therefore too high.

Montenegro and Kosovo

In addition to Macedonia and Albania, the Balkan lynx might still occur in Montenegro and Kosovo. We lack reliable information but the numbers are not expected to be high. To conclude: The Balkan lynx population size could be lower than the 80-100 individuals estimated previously, however we need further scientific investigations outside the core areas in order to have a better picture of the whole situation.



Balkan lynx habitat. Credit Dime Melovski, MES.

Illegal persecution seems as to be a considerable threat to the Balkan lynx even though the species is protected by law in Macedonia and Albania. Many people are neither aware about the critical status of the Balkan lynx nor its legal protection. Therefore, activities in terms of education and raising awareness of the local inhabitants, especially hunters, must be intensified.

It goes without saying that better law enforcement must be part of a conservation strategy. Legal protection is meaningless if violations are not persecuted. However, in the long run, co-existence between large carnivores and people can only be achieved and secured if the local people and land users are willing to tolerate animals such as the Balkan lynx in their vicinity. We therefore think that the Balkan lynx does not only need the sympathy and support from the government and state agencies in Macedonia and Albania, but also from the local people living in the lynx areas. The BLRP therefore has a strong component in working with local people and trying to involve them into the conservation activities.

The Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme (BLRP) is a partnership project between the Macedonian Ecological



Society (MES), the Society for Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA), KORA, the European Nature Heritage Fund (EuroNatur), and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA) and is assisted by the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group (see www.catsg.org/balkanlynx)

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