

PROTECTED AREAS COMPONENT WITHIN THE FRAME OF THE BALKAN LYNX RECOVERY PROGRAMME IN ALBANIA

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Habitat and site conservation is one of the most important factors in species conservation. One of the main threats to the survival of the Lynx in Albania is habitat destruction. The Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme, besides lynx conservation, aims at a better site protection through the proclamation of new protected areas in the country. The three areas of main interest are Prokletije Mountains (Albanian Alps) bordering with Montenegro and Kosovo, Shebenik-Jabllanica Mountains bordering with Macedonia, and Korabi mountain range bordering with Macedonia and Kosovo. The three regions span within the territory of the European Green Belt initiative and will be part of future trans-boundary protected areas between Albania and neighboring countries.

Activities conducted within the Protected Areas component of the Balkan Lynx Programme consist in visiting and evaluating the sites, meetings with local people and raising awareness about the importance of protected areas. For Shebenik-Jabllanica region, the natural and socio-economic assessments have been made and in the near future, local actions consisting of values promotion and raising awareness are expected to start. For the Albanian Alps and

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Korabi regions, reports in regard to natural values and socio-economical aspects will be produced and will serve as a basis for the future steps in the proclamation of these areas as protected.