

CONSERVATION STATUS OF THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED BALKAN LYNX IN ALBANIA AND MACEDONIA

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The ecology, status and conservation needs of the critically endangered Balkan lynx are not well understood. Thus, there was a need to perform a baseline survey in the potential lynx range in Albania and Macedonia. The aim of the baseline survey was to assess the distribution and relative abundance of lynx and other large carnivores as well as of potential prey species (roe deer and other wild ungulates, lagomorphs and tetraonids) by means of interview techniques.

Questionnaires were conducted in previously selected villages in western Macedonia and in the north-eastern and eastern parts of Albania. The set-up of the questionnaire, study areas and target profiles of interviewees were defined during a meeting in Peshtani, Macedonia in June 2006. Study areas were designated using 10x10 grid maps of both countries. 64 grid cells were selected for Macedonia and 67 grid cells for Albania. In each cell, one village was randomly selected to be visited.

In Macedonia, a total of 154 villages were visited and 553 persons were interviewed. According to the results of the questionnaire survey, lynx presence was confirmed for the area of Mavrovo NP and Stogovo-Karaorman Mts. Moreover, certain indications for lynx presence appear in the areas of Shar Planina Mt, Ilinska-Plakenska Mts and Jablanica Mt. In Albania, 320 questionnaires were conducted in 91 villages. Lynx presence was confirmed for the area of Eastern Albanian Alps (Prokletije Mountains) and Shebenik-Jabllanica region.