



Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme

NEWSLETTER

01/2011

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Who we are and what we do

We are happy to present you the first edition of the Balkan Lynx Newsletter. With this newsletter – planned to be published twice a year – we intend to inform interested parties about the project progress and latest news from the Balkan lynx.

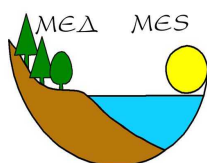
From October 2006 to June 2010, the four NGOs EuroNatur, KORA, Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) and Society for the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) successfully implemented the first phase of the “Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme”.

Main achievement of the first phase of the BLRP was that within short time it was possible to considerably raise awareness about lynx as well as protected area related issues in Albania and Macedonia. News was spread about the critical status of the Balkan lynx as well as about the need to protect its habitat and prey. Several successes were achieved. The presence of Balkan lynx in Macedonia was confirmed by a camera-trapping session conducted in winter 2007/2008 and ever since, further proofs of lynx in Macedonia were gathered. Nevertheless, the abundance of lynx outside its core area (Mavrovo National Park and surroundings) seems very weak and until today, no proof of a free-living lynx in Albania was possible. In this context, the work for the protection of lynx habitat is especially important. Therefore, the proclamation of protected areas, mainly in the border regions

of Albania and Macedonia along the Balkan Green Belt was initiated and resulted in the proclamation of the Shebenik-Jablanica National Park in Albania in May 2008. Further areas, especially the adjacent Jablanica mountain range on the Macedonian side of the border, are in discussion to become national park, but unfortunately, the decision on behalf of the Macedonian government is still pending.

In July 2010, the second phase of the BLRP was started, again conducted by the same project partners and financially supported by the Swiss MAVA Foundation. Main focus of the second phase will be put on the preservation of the last remaining habitats of the Balkan lynx and its prey in the border areas of Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo as well as on awareness raising among important stakeholder groups such as hunters and farmers. Other aspects are environmental education of school children in Balkan lynx areas as well as the extension of the activities towards Kosovo and Montenegro. Within the SCOPES project “Status, ecology and land tenure system of the critically endangered Balkan lynx in Macedonia and Albania” (financially supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation SNF), running in parallel to the BLRP Phase II, main focus is scientific research to increase the knowledge about the biology of the Balkan lynx.

All partners involved hope to be able to continue with the good work and great successes achieved so far also in Phase II of the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme!



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Results from the camera-trapping surveys 2010

Several lynx photographed

An intensive camera-trapping survey was carried out from 23 February to 5 May 2010 in the Mavrovo National Park and adjacent areas of the Stogovo, Karaorman and Jablanica Mountains, Macedonia. 40 sites were equipped with a set of two opposing camera-traps: there were thus 80 camera-traps out in the field. During the whole session, Albanian team members were present in order to support the Macedonian team. 24 lynx pictures resulted from 10 locations out of the 40. The other species pictured were: brown bear (22 photos), wolf (38), fox (88), wildcat (17), roe deer (36), chamois (17), wild boar (66), badger (149), marten (98), and brown hare (190). Unfortunately, 9 camera-traps were stolen.



Fig. 1: A chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) photo-trapped.

The data analysis yield the following results: There are 9 ± 3.24 independent (adult and subadult) lynx and a density of 0.82 ± 0.29 independent lynx/100 km² estimated in the study area. These results are similar to those of the survey carried out in 2008: Thus, in its core area, the Balkan lynx population seems to have been stable in the past few years.



Fig. 2: One of the lynx pictures (Bibaj, MK).

Further camera-trap surveys in 2010 in Galichica and Pelister National Parks, Macedonia did not result in any lynx picture, however in December a lynx was pictured for the first time in the area of the “Public Enterprise for Managing and Protection of the Multipurpose Area Jasen”.

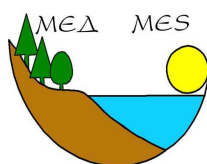
At the moment, the Albanian team is conducting an intensive camera-trapping survey in Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park.

The camera-trapping work as well as the capture and telemetry of lynx (see next article) are part of the SCOPES project, financially supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Re-capture of “Marko”

“Marko” got a new radio-collar

“Marko”, the first Balkan lynx ever captured and radio-collared (on 14 March 2010, see www.catsg.org/balkanlynx) had to be recaptured due to battery exhaustion of its GPS collar.



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On 22 October, an adult chamois killed by Marko was found. Although the kill was already almost entirely consumed, foot snares were set. Only short time later, Marko stepped into the snares. He was narcotised, fitted with a new collar and released again. So far, Marko used an area of around 360 km².



Fig. 3: “Marko” during its re-capture.

We aim to capture and radio-tag more lynx this winter. They will help to close some of the gaps that we have concerning the ecology of the Balkan lynx.

Monitoring workshops in Albania and Macedonia

Enhancing the monitoring network

Three training workshops were organized in order to improve the monitoring network in Albania and to establish focal contacts to the Directorates of Forestry Services in different regions of interest to lynx conservation: 1.) on 19 November at Elbasan’s Directorate of Forestry, 2.) on 2 December at the Directorate of Forestry Services in Kukes, and 3.) on 9 December at the Directorate of

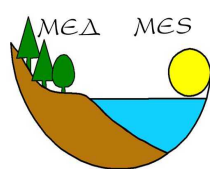
Forestry Services in Peshkopi. The good will and cooperation possibilities of the Directorates with the BLRP were expressed by the authorities, and the participants appreciated the idea of a consolidated monitoring network and the sharing of information related to the Balkan lynx.

In Macedonia a first workshop was held on 18 January 2011 in Kichevo. Invited were people who were involved in and helped the BLRP during the past few years (e.g. as monitoring network member) and who are willing to continue doing so in the future. Most participants were representatives of National Parks but there were also hunters and other local people present.

Monitoring workshops for forestry directorates and hunting associations as well as field trainings for students and other interested parties will in both countries be continued in 2011.



Fig. 4: Workshop with the DFS Peshkopi, AL.



Further lynx habitat along the European Green Belt to be protected soon?

New national parks in close prospect

Two further areas - both potential habitat of the Balkan lynx and located on the Balkan Green Belt in Macedonia - are likely to be designated national parks. These two areas, the Shar Planina Mountains in the north of the country on the Kosovo border, and the Jablanica Mountains along the border between Macedonia and Albania, have one thing in common: they host an unequalled diversity of plant and animal species in Europe, among them also most likely Balkan lynx.

On occasion of their meeting with the Macedonian minister for environment, Dr. Nexhati Jakupi, EuroNatur director Gabriel Schwaderer and project leader Annette Spangenberg, as well as professor Ljupcho Melovski and Dr. Slavcho Hristovski of the Macedonian partner organization MES and Uwe Riecken of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, all stressed the ecological significance of both these natural treasures. Environment minister Jakupi shares this view and assured to speed up the designation of the Jablanica mountains as a national park. On Albanian territory, this mountain range is a nature reserve already since 2008. Now, the aim is to establish the nature reserve on Macedonian territory as well, in order to create a large-sized protected area of 500 km² on the Green Belt.

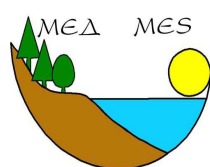
According to environment minister Jakupi, the Shar Planina Mountains in the north of Macedonia will be declared a national park very soon.



Fig. 5: Dr. Slavcho Hristovski (MES), Gabriel Schwaderer, Dr. Nexhati Jakupi, Prof. Dr. Ljupcho Melovski (MES), Dr. Uwe Riecken (BfN), Annette Spangenberg after their meeting on 16 February 2011 in Skopje.

With the designation of both areas as national park, the size of protected lynx habitat would increase significantly.

The „Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme“ is jointly implemented by EuroNatur Foundation, KORA (Coordinated research projects for the conservation and management of carnivores in Switzerland), MES (Macedonian Ecological Society), PPNEA (Society for the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania) and financially supported by MAVA Foundation for Nature Conservation.



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