



## Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme

### NEWSLETTER

02/2011

#### First picture of a Balkan lynx in Albania

#### Results from the camera-trapping surveys in 2011

The Balkan lynx team managed to picture the first lynx in Albania during the last camera-trapping season (lasting from November 2010 till May 2011), thus proving that the species is still present in the country. The animal was photographed on 26 March 2011 in the mountainous region of north Albania. This represents a great achievement for the survival of the Balkan lynx, particularly because all the field research conducted so far in Albania, had failed to prove the presence of any live lynx in the country. A previous extensive camera-trapping session held in 2009 in Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park did not result in any lynx picture.



**Fig. 1: Vagrant individual or part of an established population? The first Balkan lynx pictured in Albania.**

A total of 42 cameras were set in various regions of Albania; 32 of them in Shebenik-

Jabllanica National Park and 10 more cameras were spread in various locations in north Albania. Throughout the session, 13 different mammal species were photographed: brown bear (20 photos), wolf (12), lynx (1), wildcat (9), badger (69), marten (55), red fox (136), weasel (1), hedgehog (4), red squirrel (2), wild boar (2), brown hare (155) and roe deer (22). Three of the cameras were stolen, but two of them were re-found subsequently.

Besides proving that the lynx still survives in Albania, a positive result was the number of roe deer and brown hare pictures - potential prey species for the Balkan lynx - which the team managed to get. Prey availability gives hope for the presence of more lynx in the country and their future recovery.

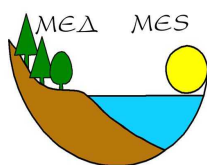
In spite of the success achieved the only one picture of lynx taken from the whole survey makes it difficult to tell if there is an established population in Albania or if it was just a vagrant individual. The Albanian team will continue with the camera-trapping activities throughout winter 2011-2012 by conducting an intensive session in the area where the first lynx was pictured, in order to find out whether a remnant lynx population still survives.

*Aleksandër Trajçe*

#### Training of students in Albania

#### Practice in wildlife conservation

PPNEA organized a training workshop on "Wildlife Conservation Practice" as part of the BLRP and SCOPES objectives and long term



**euRONATUR**

vision to build capacity for wildlife conservation and management in the country. It was mainly oriented to students of natural and environmental sciences as well as other wildlife conservation enthusiasts. The training workshop was organised as a two-parter; (i) theoretical lectures on wildlife conservation and monitoring and (ii) practical fieldwork in one of the PPNEA study areas. The theoretical component was held on 21 December 2010 in Tirana and the practical one on 16 March 2011 in the Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park. In total 25 students took part at the theoretical training and 11 at the practical one.

The training sessions introduced the participants with the principles of wildlife conservation, building upon PPNEA's experience in the field. The participants were provided with relevant literature from the Balkan lynx project library, as well as given a copy of the Balkan Lynx Field Handbook.



**Fig. 2: Camera-traps are an important tool for wildlife monitoring. Here: Bledi Hoxha (PPNEA) demonstrating their use.**

The field session was an opportunity to show some of the techniques on wildlife monitoring that PPNEA was implementing in the field such as track transects and camera-trapping. The students were introduced to the camera-trapping session PPNEA was conducting in

Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park and they were given the duty to control and handle some cameras already set in the field. In addition there was the opportunity for the students to learn on site on track identification by using the Balkan Lynx Field Handbook as well as the method of track documentation through forms and GPS devices.

Following the finalization of the training, the feedback received from the participants was very positive and they expressed the desire to be integrated more with the fieldwork of the project. Subsequently, we provided certificates to all students that had attended both components of the training.

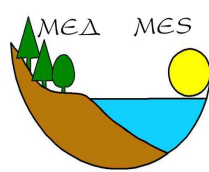
*Aleksandër Trajçe*

## “Karadzica 2011”

### Balkan lynx summer training camp

Also this year the Macedonian Ecological Society continued the close cooperation with the Biology Students' Research Society (BSRS) in organising the summer training camp. The camp took place in the Karadzica Mountain, close to the protected area “Jasen” where recently strong evidence for lynx presence was found. This is of particular interest as Jasen lies not too far away from the Balkan lynx core area in NP Mavrovo.

MES invited young researchers and nature enthusiasts from Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro (range countries where Balkan lynx is supposed to be present) in order to establish contacts with potential future collaborators and partner organisations. Interested participants were trained in the most important monitoring techniques applied in the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme. All the participants MES invited and several students from BSRS (around 17 people) were members of the mammalogy section (one of



**euRONATUR**

many sections in BSRS). The summer camp lasted for 15 days from 10 to 25 July 2011. In the first days, the participants were introduced in lynx biology and ecology but also in former and current Balkan lynx conservation projects (BLRP I & II, SCOPES) through lectures, presentations and debates. After the theoretical part, an on-field demonstration of transect tracking, camera-trapping, footsnare-trapping and radio-telemetry took place. All participants showed great interest in the methods. Highlights were searching for the hidden “phantom” lynx with the radio-telemetry antenna and checking the camera-traps for any new wildlife pictures. During the camera-trapping exercise, pictures of several species were taken, e.g. hedgehog, stone marten, wild boar, badger and wild cat. Also, some domestic animals like cows and dogs as well as a few people were pictured. Along the track transects tracks of bear, wolf, roe deer and a few other animals were discovered by the team. Obviously, lynx presence could not be confirmed, which does not mean that it was not in the area though!



**Fig. 3: Participants of the summer camp listening to presentations.**

*“Being there was a great experience for all of us. It was marvellous being part of the biology students society: we did not only learn by them, but we shared ideas about problems regarding biodiversity such as mushrooms,*

*butterflies and other common species. Talking with other members was a benefit, because it gave me the chance to improve the language, exchange cultural facts and share ideas about different themes. Walking in the hills and mountains was a great chance to see new places and to feel the presence of nature, and also to learn more about the habitats and species living in those areas.”*  
Mevis Struga, Albania, Karadzica training camp participant

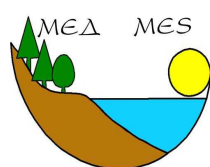
*Gjorge Ivanov*

## New project launched on Shar Planina Mountain

### Promoting natural values

Shar Planina Mt. is one of the largest mountain ranges shared by Macedonia and Kosovo. It stretches from southwest to northeast direction with its main ridge being 80 km in length and more than 2000 meters above sea level without interruptions. Its diverse natural resources, geological forms, glacial lakes and mountainous watercourses are numerous. Its exceptionally high biological diversity is represented by different habitats and species, including a large number of endemic, rare and relict plants (about 2000 species with 200 endemics), animals and fungi. Apart from this, there is valuable cultural heritage reflected in the specific landscape formed within centuries by traditional livestock breeding and forest exploitation.

In order to work for the protection of the mountain range, in July, the Macedonian Ecological Society together with EuroNatur started a joined project called “Promotion of the natural values of Shar Planina Mountain through environmental education and stakeholder involvement”. The project is financed by DBU (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt) foundation and will last for two years until July



**euRONATUR**

2013. The main goal of the project is the conservation of the natural values of Shar Planina Mt. through environmental education based on direct local stakeholder involvement. The two objectives on how to reach this goal are:

1. To raise awareness among local people about the natural values of Shar Planina and
2. To educate the local population in the sustainable use of the natural values as source of income by active involvement in the implementation of small projects.

The activities in the project are organized according to the above mentioned objectives. Main activity is the organisation and implementation of a small grant scheme in which the local people in the Shara region are to develop their own project ideas within a certain frame defined by the project partners. The projects will be focused mainly on sustainable development, nature protection and environmental education. Furthermore, education through best practices learned from Macedonia and neighbouring countries will be presented within an organized study tour together with the stakeholders from the region. The educational and public awareness activities are foreseen in the project as a part of a drawing contest in primary schools on Shara Mt., organization of training workshops for the local NGOs working in the educational sector as well as media work throughout the project implementation.

We hope that with this project it will be possible to promote the idea of a trans-boundary protected area in the region and to support the proclamation of the Macedonian part of Shara Mt. as a National Park in the near future.

*Dime Melovski*



© Ljubomir Stefanov / apoloimages, 2009

**Fig. 4: Impressive nature and high peaks: the Shar Planina Mountains.**

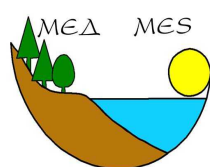
## Micro projects in Shebenik-Jabllanica mountain range

### In support of an ecologically sound development

The entire activities of the current Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme Phase II (2010-2012) are defined according to the experiences gained so far. Also, they are consistent with the activities proposed in the range-wide “Strategy for the Conservation of the Balkan Lynx in Macedonia and Albania”. Thus, one of the current activities is strengthening local capacities in the area of the National Park Shebenik Jabllanica by supporting various micro projects of local NGOs. Main intention of the projects is to contribute to the conservation of nature in the mountain range and at the same time to create possibilities for the generation of income.

By the mid of 2011, the programme had decided to finance 6 different micro projects out of 24 proposals. The selection committee was following the specific rules that had previously been announced in national and local media.

Considering the current state of the protected area and hunting issues, support was granted



**euRONATUR**

to a project that aims at the protection of lynx and other endangered species in Albania by limiting illegal hunting through increasing the level of wildlife law enforcement both on national level and especially within the territory of Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park. The main aim is to deter potential lynx hunters and traders from illegal hunting and trapping of lynx and other wildlife.

The viability of beekeeping as a mean for income generation and nature conservation was considered in the selection as well. One of the micro projects aims to establish 12 hives on the land of the local bee keepers in the area of Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park. These hives and the initial training of 10 members of the local Society will be used as a platform for the training and support of up to 30 local people per year who are interested in beekeeping. Main goal of this project is to provide a new stream of income for the community, and to alleviate poverty through the training and support of local people in the practice of beekeeping. Already in September, the first activity of the project was implemented: the new bee hives were produced and donated to new beekeepers in the area of Stebleva.



Fig. 5: With the establishment of new bee hives in the Shebenik-Jabllanica mountain, new sources of income are created for local people.

The sustainable production of a medicinal plant, namely the black elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), is the topic of another selected project. The project which is conducted by a local NGO based in Librazhd aims to find a balance between socio-economic requirements of the local population and the integrity of the Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park. The planned activities are working towards creating favorable conditions for economic prosperity of the local population living in the National Park and its surroundings, as well as the conservation of ecological values of the area, the environment and functions of the National Park. Additionally, three other micro projects dedicated to education and local society empowerment were selected. The goals of these micro projects are orientated to environmental education programmes in order to raise awareness on environmental and biodiversity conservation within the local population, school children, and the parents in schools and villages in the surroundings of National Park Shebenik-Jabllanica. The promotion of National Park values and tourism are targeted as well.

Spase Shumka

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.

