



Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme

NEWSLETTER

02/2012

More evidence from camera-traps in Albania

Balkan lynx presence proved in Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park

PPNEA, in the frame of the SCOPES project, has continued with the wildlife monitoring sessions by means of camera trapping methodology. During June-November 2012 the monitored areas were Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park, Puka-Mirdita mountain region and Valbona valley in the Eastern Albanian Alps with a total of 24 cameras set in the field.



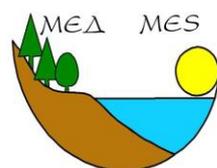
Fig. 1: First Balkan lynx pictured in Shebenik-Jabllanica on 7 August 2012.

The most important achievements during this monitoring period was the first evidence of Balkan lynx (*Lynx lynx balcanicus*) being present in Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park. Two pictures of lynx were taken by the camera-traps within the territory of the park on 7 August and 9 November 2012 respectively. These findings are of extreme importance as two previous semi-intensive sessions con-

ducted by PPNEA in the park in 2009 and 2011 had failed to prove the presence of Balkan lynx. This discovery provides strong data on new territories being occupied by Balkan lynx.

In addition to the lynx in Shebenik-Jabllanica, further photographs were taken in the Puka-Mirdita mountainous region – the area of the first Balkan lynx evidence in Albania (see Newsletters 02/2011 & 01/2012). Two different individuals were photographed on the same site on 27 September and 22 October 2012 respectively. This latest information further supports the hypothesis that a remaining sub-population might be surviving in this area. In addition these photographs call for urgent measures to be taken for the protection of remaining individuals and the area they are found in.

In addition to Balkan lynx, the monitoring session continues to provide valuable information on the presence of other species in our country. A special positive achievement is the amount of chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) pictures collected from Valbona valley (22 photos) – where also pictures of chamois kids were taken, proving active ongoing reproduction and further evidencing a stable and abundant prey base for lynx in the area. From June to November 2012 the PPNEA research team has managed to retrieve the following number of photographs per species: brown bear (71 photos), wolf (8), lynx (4), wildcat (27), badger (34), marten (86 – of which 4 photos are easily distinguishable to be *Martes martes*), red fox (256), hedgehog (4), wild boar (2), brown hare (69) and roe deer (6).



euRONATUR

The new pictures of lynx taken continue to evidence a possible remaining sub-population in the country and in addition to this, the number of prey species photographed (roe deer, chamois, hare, red fox) is also an equally positive sign, as good prey populations might help foster the quick recovery of Balkan lynx in Albania.

Aleksandër Trajçe & Bledi Hoxha

The camera trapping and radio-telemetry studies (next article) are possible thanks to financial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in the frame of SCOPES.

After Marko and Riste, Martin came on board

Third lynx captured and radio-collared

Martin is the name of the third male lynx captured in Macedonia as part of the radio-telemetry study. 24 kg of weight and almost a meter long, Martin was captured on 31 October 2012 on the hunting ground Dusegubica, owned by the public enterprise Macedonian Forests. Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) started a very solid cooperation with the hunters of this ground and this already resulted in capturing 2 lynx individuals and confirming the presence of at least one more. The box-trap which was reactivated this autumn was the only box-trap functioning in the area. The capture site is only 1 km away from where Riste, the second radio-tagged lynx, was captured. Panajot Chorovski, a hunter and one of the most prominent members of the Balkan lynx monitoring network was first in the field checking the trap. He immediately called us and it was a matter of a couple of hours until Martin fell asleep. We've attached

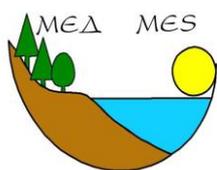
a GPS/GSM collar to the animal's neck and took body dimensions and blood for genetic and health analysis. During the procedure, we constantly checked his temperature and respiratory rate. The relatively young and healthy male already started sending valuable data on its home-range and land-tenure system (Fig. 3). We managed to find the first prey, a roe deer, indicating that after the capture Martin is still in a good condition.



Fig. 2: Martin is waking up after the capture.

Subsequent to the first failed attempt and exactly 6 days after Martin's capture, Riste was recaptured - 8 months after its first capture. For this capture we used foot-snares on a fresh red fox killed by Riste. The snares were placed around 4 o'clock in the afternoon and the lynx returned to feed on the kill 1,5 hours later. We were very close to the kill and after the alarm went off, we immediately approached and handled the lynx. The procedure of replacing the collar and taking new blood samples and body measurements took us around 45 minutes after which we've released the lynx. The members of the monitoring network found 2 more kills after the recapture.

According to the fresh GPS data from the field, we can conclude that the three so far caught male lynx are sharing neighboring



euRONATUR

area. Their home-ranges are until now not overlapping, indicating and confirming the territorial ecology of the Eurasian lynx (Fig. 3).

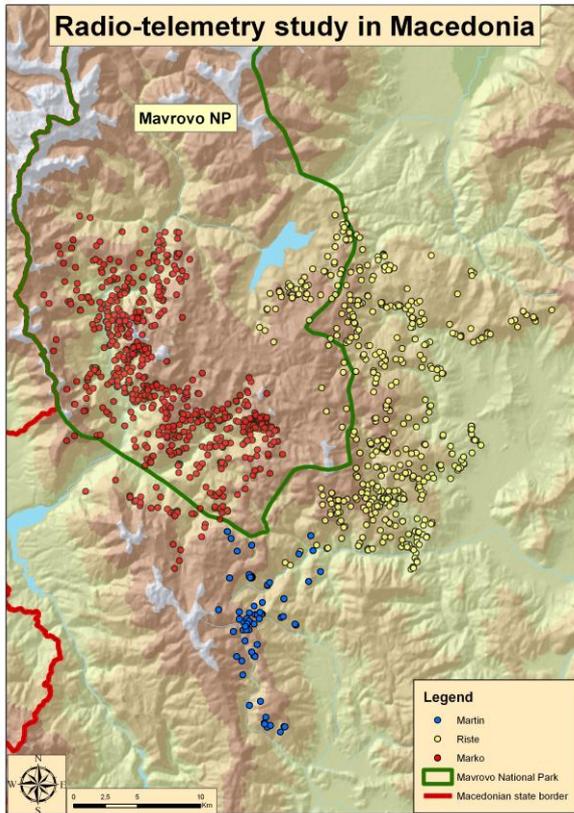


Fig. 3: GPS locations of Marko (red), Riste (yellow) and Martin (blue).

Dime Melovski

Balkan lynx range-wide meeting

Participants from four countries met in Vevčani

On 1 October 2012 a Balkan lynx range-wide meeting took place in Vevčani, MK. 21 Participants from Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania, together with project members from KORA and EuroNatur gathered to re-view the Balkan lynx project, the situation of the lynx in the range countries as well as its conservation.

The meeting was followed by a workshop on 2 October where the monitoring of lynx and prey and the establishment of monitoring networks were presented. The principles and possibilities of baseline surveys in Kosovo and Montenegro were discussed – taking the surveys undertaken in Albania and Macedonia in Phase I of the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme as examples.



Fig. 4: Participants of the range-wide meeting.

All presentations are available as PDFs on http://www.catsg.org/balkanlynx/01_recovery-programme/1_6_meetings/range-wide-meeting-oct-2012/range-wide-meeting-oct-2012.htm

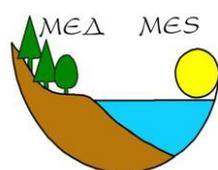
Manuela von Arx

Travelling exhibition

8 panels on Balkan lynx status and conservation

The English version of the Balkan lynx travelling exhibition is now available. 8 panels inform about Balkan lynx and its prey, display relevant topics concerning their conservation and introduce the activities of the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme:

1. The Balkan lynx
2. Status and distribution of the Balkan lynx
3. Biology and ecology of the Balkan lynx



4. Prey species of the Balkan lynx
5. Threats to the Balkan lynx
6. Protected areas
7. The Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme
8. Lynx & humans

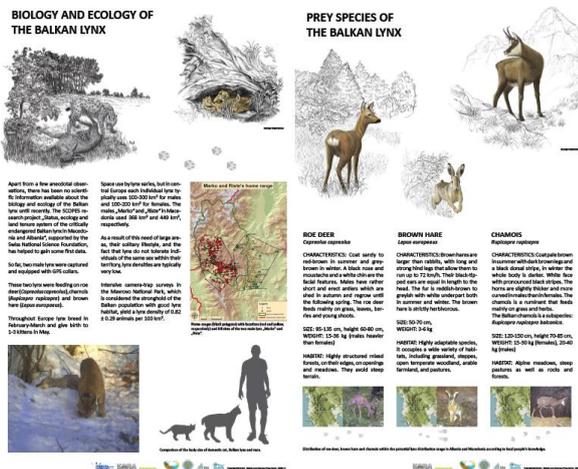


Fig. 5: Panels 3 and 4 of the Balkan lynx travelling exhibition.

The exhibition has so far been displayed at the range-wide meeting in Vevčani, MK (see previous article), the Congress of Ecologists in Ohrid, MK (see page 5) and at the Dinaric Arc Parks Conference in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are currently working on translations into Albanian and Macedonian in order to also display the exhibition in the rural areas of the Balkan lynx range countries.

Manuela von Arx

Capacity building workshop

Young nature conservationists from Kosovo and Montenegro met at the Balkan Green Belt in Jablanica-Shebenik

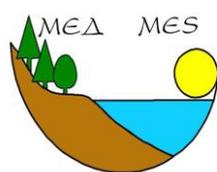
From 1-10 October 2012 a capacity building workshop was held for young conservationists from the Western Balkans in Vevčani,

Macedonia and Librazhd, Albania, situated at the foothills of the Jablanica-Shebenik mountain range. Altogether, ten participants – five from Kosovo, four from Montenegro and one from Albania attended this workshop representing small and start-up NGOs from their home countries. The workshop was organized jointly by EuroNatur, the Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) and Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA). The main goal was to train young conservationists in survey methods for large carnivores, e.g. conduction of structured interviews, operation principles of camera-traps and foot snares, but also to familiarize them with current concepts and trends in nature conservation in general. Another objective was to establish closer ties across borders and strengthen co-operation between local NGOs along this precious part of the European Green Belt. The fact that partners from Macedonian and Albanian NGOs shared their experiences from the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme and many other projects with their Kosovar and Montenegrin colleagues and that we discussed together a common strategy for cross-border nature conservation highlights the participatory approach of this training programme.



Fig. 6: Participants at a glacial lake in Jablanica Mts.

Three more workshops are planned for 2013 within this capacity training programme which



is financially supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). The main focus of the upcoming workshops will be put on the designation and management of large-scale protected areas with a special emphasis on a transboundary setting in the border zones of Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro.

Thies Geertz

4th Congress of Ecologists of Macedonia with International Participation

Several presentations on the BLRP and SCOPES projects

Macedonian Ecological Society organized the 4th Congress of the Ecologists of the Republic of Macedonia in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia in October 2012. The main aim was to follow the achievements of ecology in Macedonia and the other countries in the region, as well as to exchange an experience and knowledge appropriate to the research conditions of scientists and experts in the region but also the general public interest in better, cleaner and healthier environment. At the Congress the knowledge of the modern basic ecology and environmental science accumulated recently was presented. The representatives from different countries of the Balkan Peninsula – Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Slovenia and Kosovo –, further European countries like Germany, Norway, Switzerland, France as well as Turkey were part of this scientific event. About 155 papers were presented through the following thematic sessions:

1. Populations, communities and ecological modeling
2. Structure and function of terrestrial ecosystems
3. Aquatic ecosystems - under threat
4. Biodiversity and protected areas across Balkans
5. Agro-ecological and Silvicultural Systems
6. Environment, pollution and climate change
7. Landscape ecology for sustainable environment
8. Urban and Human Ecology
9. Multi-level Ecological education

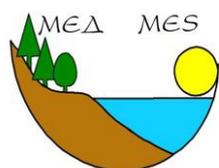


Fig. 7: Participants of the 4th Congress of Ecologists of Macedonia with International Participation.

Plenary lectures were prepared by two eminent ecologists from Macedonia and one from Bulgaria who presented the achievements of modern ecology.

The most numbered and visited session was Biodiversity and protected areas across the Balkans, where the number of presented papers was the highest. Special part of this session was dedicated to the issues related to investigation and conservation of the large carnivores with special attention to the Balkan lynx (*Lynx lynx balcanicus*). In the frame of this specific part, the results from the several-years scientific research realized in the Balkans were presented and specific directions for future activities were proposed.

During the Congress, a Symposium of biology students was organized by the Biology Students' Research Society, Skopje.



euRONATUR

The most interesting part of the Congress for the youngest ecologists was the drawing exhibition organized with the specific theme: Forests – nature guardians! A total of 289 drawings arrived and the most successful 40 art works were presented at the Congress. During the Congress, ornithologists from Macedonia and wider European region took active part in the Adriatic Flyway partner meeting, organized by EuroNatur.

*Svetlana Pejovic,
PR of the MK Lynx team*

Workshop with foresters and livestock breeders

Demir Hisar, 20 November 2012

One of the last activities in the second phase of the BLRP in Macedonia was organizing a workshop for two important target groups for the Balkan lynx recovery: foresters and livestock breeders. Having in mind the three proposed protected areas in the western part of Macedonia, we decided to invite people from those areas and thus to run the workshop in the small town of Demir Hisar at the foothills of Plakenska Mt. In total 27 participants were present at this workshop. The mayors from the municipalities of Demir Hisar and Vecvani attended the workshop, as well as several directors of Forestry districts in the regions. The other participants were mostly private owners of livestock breeding companies, forest clerks and few hunters and people working on rural tourism.

The workshop was opened with a presentation on the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme. We wanted to acquaint the participants with the general aspects of our project and present the results and achievements during the past 6 years. Professor Vladimir Dzabirski from the Faculty of Agriculture Sciences and Food gave then a presentation on

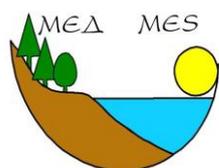
the agricultural diversity of Macedonia and the relations between the domestic and wildlife diversity with a special focus on the Balkan lynx and the conflicts between the breeders and the lynx. The last presentation was given by the professor Nikolcho Velkovski from the Forestry Faculty in Skopje. This presentation encompassed aspects of sustainability in forest management and the role of the foresters in Balkan lynx protection.



Fig. 8: Participants attentive listening to the presentation on agricultural diversity.

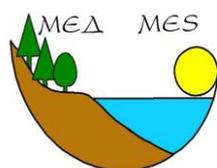
After the presentations a general discussion was opened where most of the participants shared their ideas on forestry and livestock breeding concepts in Macedonia. The general problem that the foresters pointed out was that despite their efforts for protection of the forest at the local level, they receive the orders from the headquarters for management of certain areas which entail actions that are not sustainable but devastating. This concern was brought to the public and will help us targeting future activities in the frame of the BLRP. Almost all of the societies and private entities who were present at this workshop were pleased with our project and offered their help in the realization of the future activities.

Dime Melovski



euRONATUR

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.



euRONATUR