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## SCALP News

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**The project *Status and Conservation of the Alpine Lynx Population* (SCALP) is an ongoing programme aimed to co-ordinate the lynx monitoring and the conservation activities in the Alps.**

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### History of the SCALP

Anja Molinari-Jobin

The lynx (*Lynx lynx*) has been eradicated throughout the Alps during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nowadays, the lynx and its habitat are protected by international treaties and by national laws in all Alpine countries. However, legal protection alone was not able to bring back the lynx to the Alps. Re-introduction programmes in the 1970s have resulted in two populations, one in the north-western Alps (Switzerland, stretching into France and Italy) and one in the eastern Alps (Slovenia, stretching into Austria and Italy). These programmes were not coordinated and no monitoring system was set up. Today, the two populations are still small and isolated.

The SCALP (*Status and Conservation of the Alpine Lynx Population*) was established in the early 1990s in the recognition that no Alpine country alone can host a viable lynx population and that international co-operation is essential for the conservation of this species. Therefore, scientists from all Alpine countries formed an expert group to survey the status of the lynx in the Alps and to propose and co-ordinate further actions.

**Activities:** The SCALP promotes an Alps-wide view of the phenomena lynx in the Alps. The joint monitoring system is a crucial part of the SCALP. The first country-based status reports reviewed the development of lynx from re-introductions until 1995 and was published in *Hystrix* (1998). This was the first time that an Alps-wide map of the lynx distribution was presented. From this map it became obvious that a monitoring strategy with common data interpretation throughout the Alps was needed. The Expert Group has therefore defined common standards for the interpretation of monitoring data, and general recommendations on how to assemble them. The second country-based status reports from 1995-1999 were published in *Hystrix* (2001). The status reports of the next pentad (2000-2004) are in preparation. To evaluate the conservation success 25 years after the first re-introduction, the first SCALP conference was held in 1995 in Engelberg, Swiss Alps (The re-introduction of the lynx into the Alps, Environmental encounters, No. 38, 1998, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg). Besides dealing with monitoring, the SCALP has proposed a Pan-Alpine Conservation Strategy for the Lynx (PACS) to the Standing Committee of the Bern

Convention. The PACS aims to secure the survival of the lynx in the Alps through the merging of the extant populations by means of a network of local populations and has been adopted in 2001. In order to advance the conservation strategy, present progress and identify problems, and to improve international co-

operation a second SCALP conference was held in Amden, Swiss Alps in 2003.

Status reports and conference proceedings can be downloaded from <http://www.kora.unibe.ch/en/proj/scalp/index.html>.

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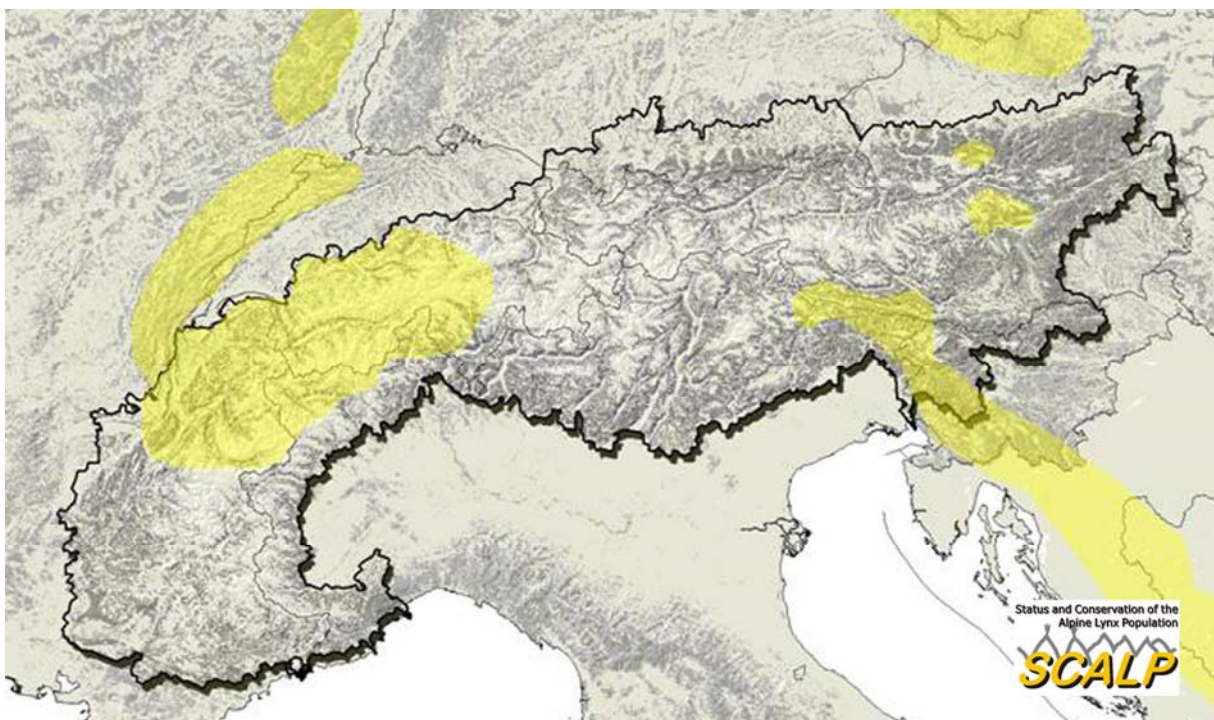
## Current lynx distribution

Anja Molinari-Jobin

Today, the Alpine lynx population consists of several sub-populations and occurrences, all originating from re-introductions into Switzerland, Slovenia and Austria effectuated in the 1970s. Although single lynx immigrated into neighbouring countries (France, Italy), the thirty years since the first releases have not allowed establishing a continuous population throughout the Alps. Currently, there are two core areas of lynx distribution, one in the western Alps (Switzerland and France), and one in the Slovenian Alps, expanding into Italy and Austria. There is no permanent lynx presence with reproduction in-between, and even single confirmed observations are not very numerous. **The present lynx distribution does not reflect the potential range of the species in the Alpine countries.** At present, 18'100 km<sup>2</sup> (less than 10% of the 190'912 km<sup>2</sup> of the entire Alpine arc according to the ALPINE CONVENTION) are permanently occupied.

The overall population trend has been ambivalent in recent years. There was a local increase in numbers (density) in the north-western Swiss Alps and in the Tarvisiano, the Italian part of the triangle population of Slovenia, Italy and Austria, but no clear expansion.

The area of observations has however increased in the French Alps (maybe also due to immigration from the Jura population), and recently, new observations were reported from the Kalkalpen in Austria. The origin of this occurrence is not clear. It is most likely neither an immigration from other parts of the Alps nor from the Bavarian-Bohemian population north of the Danube river but rather due to clandestine releases. On the other hand, local occurrences such as in the Trentino (eastern Italian Alps) have vanished, and the tendency in the Slovenian Alps is clearly decreasing. Considering the colonisation capacity of the species in the 30 years since the re-introductions, the observed trend in the past five years will not allow for a natural fusion of the eastern with the western population within the next 30 years. In Switzerland, nine lynx from the north-western Alps and the Jura Mountains were translocated to the eastern Swiss Alps in 2001 and 2003 ([www.luno.ch](http://www.luno.ch)). This was a first step to bridge the gap between the two subpopulations, but yet the distance is still about 300 km. Applying the IUCN Red List assessment, the Alpine lynx population still has to be considered endangered.



Present distribution of lynx in the Alps and adjoining ranges.

## Recently held meetings

### Report on the SCALP Meeting in Tarvisio / Malborghetto (Italy) 13-16 October 2004

Anja Molinari-Jobin & Paolo Molinari

During this first regional meeting of the SCALP held in the southeastern Alps, on 13 October an Italian only session was held to address management and monitoring problems of the lynx. More than 50 people attended the meeting. The status of the lynx in the Italian Alps was presented for 7 specific areas by the Progetto Lince Italia, the University of Udine, the provinces of Trento and Alto Adige, the Comunità Montana Parco Alto Garda Bresciano and the Universities of Calabria and Torino. While in the eastern Alps only confirmed signs of presence were included to demonstrate the distribution of lynx, in the western Alps (Piemonte region) mainly direct observations were used, i.e. signs that cannot be verified. This led to a very optimistic lynx distribution from Val d'Aosta southwards to Liguria. The need for a uniform data interpretation was evident. Almost unanimously the SCALP standard for data interpretation was adopted and new synergies for future collaborations established. With a *Road Map* the *Progetto Lince Italia* also aimed to facilitate communication and data flow within the Italian research groups. The group agreed to meet again in the Stelvio NP to discuss the Italian status report due within the SCALP by end of 2005 and to propose a common monitoring project to GOs concerned.

On 14 October the Slovenian colleagues were invited to present and discuss the situation of lynx in Slovenia in order to improve cross-border collaboration between Slovenia and Italy. Invited were the Slovenian Forest Service who is in charge of the lynx monitoring, GO representatives as well as hunting and

sheep breeding associations. First a group of researchers from the University of Ljubljana presented models on suitable lynx habitat and the population dynamics of the reintroduced lynx in Slovenia. Other topics addressed were aspects of lynx predation and the assessment of lynx status in Slovenia and neighbouring Friuli VG. Slovenia has made huge progress in regard to the SCALP process: the SCALP standard for data interpretation is fully implemented, SCALP recommendations have led to the closure of hunting in the border region of Italy-Slovenia, and a young group of researchers contributes to improve the scientific background. The meeting helped establish cross-border contact between hunting associations and the possibilities of common monitoring were explored. However, it was decided to await the implementation of three new laws in Slovenia, as competencies regarding lynx management will change. The next southeastern Alps meeting is scheduled this winter in Tolmin (Slovenian Alps).

On 15 October we held the SCALP expert group meeting and as one day was not enough, we cancelled the excursion in order to continue on the 16 October. First, country updates were presented regarding lynx status, current research projects and the political situation: After the translocation project in eastern Switzerland, the SCALP and the lynx itself are of very low priority for Switzerland. In Germany, the SCALP acts as a model for the CELTIC, a network connecting the Bavarian/Bohemian lynx population with the Carpathians. For Liechtenstein, the cross-border approach is obviously very important. As in Italy the monitoring is still based mainly on voluntary work, the SCALP should help to find sponsorships. In Austria, the SCALP is needed to build up the monitoring system. Slovenian representatives stressed the importance of the political independence of SCALP and that SCALP helped to objectivate the lynx management in Slovenia. France has not yet made use of SCALP products.

On the second day of the SCALP meeting in Malborghetto, the Slovenian Forest Service who is in charge of the lynx monitoring, GO representatives as well as hunting and sheep breeding associations were invited to discuss the situation of lynx in the Julian Alps.



In the subsequent discussion, we agreed to produce draft status reports per country to be discussed at the Kalkalpen meeting in March. Provided that funding is available, we will then assess the status of lynx in the Alps within biologically relevant units. In a second step, the monitoring needs to be assessed in every country and region in order to check for inconsistencies. It is not enough to use the same data interpretation if the monitoring systems are incompatible. Therefore, we need to develop a method to divide apart the impact of habitat and climate, monitoring effort and lynx density on the possibility to find lynx signs of

presence. With this method in hand, we will re-evaluate the data interpretation presently proposed by SCALP. Third, we will check out the feasibility of producing Alps-wide prey layers in order to improve the habitat models and management recommendations. The group agreed to proceed according to this working-plan and felt that everybody profited from the SCALP expert group meetings as common problems and new ideas are discussed. With regional significant research projects we aim to further the understanding in lynx biology on Alps-wide level.

## Report on the Lynx Meeting in Windischgarsten/Kalkalpen NP 16-17 March 2005

Anja Molinari-Jobin

Lynx in Austria: Where? How many? How to deal with them? – This was the title of the first public SCALP meeting held in Austria. The meeting was organized in Windischgarsten/ National Park OÖ. Kalkalpen by Jens Laass, University of Applied Life Sciences Vienna, one of the Austrian SCALP experts and financially supported by WWF Austria, SCALP and the National Park. The meeting was furthermore supported by the hunter's association of Upper Austria, the Austrian Federal Forestry Company and the önj – Natur ohne Grenzen, a local environmental NGO.

On the first day, an open symposium was organized

to review the situation of the lynx in Austria and adjoining occurrences in all the Alps and the Bohemian/Bavarian forest, to show the legal frame and space requirements of the lynx and to illustrate the hunter's viewpoint. 150 participants demonstrated a great interest in the topic. The status reports revealed that lynx occurrences in Austria have different trends: while from the Bohemian/Bavarian population in the northern part of the country occurrence a high number of lynx signs of presence indicate an established situation across the borders to Germany and the Czech Republic, the few Alpine reports seem to derive from only single individuals of unknown origin. It is merely in the Kalkalpen National Park that a systematic monitoring is organized. Even though Austria is obliged by the EU Fauna- Flora- Habitat Directive to monitor the distribution and trend of both lynx occurrences, the status of lynx in the Alpine region is largely unknown. However it was generally agreed that there is no reproducing population.

More than 120 participants attended the Kalkalpen-meeting.



In the subsequent discussion, hunters associations stated they have no problem with the lynx. However, they clearly argue that lynx is welcome only as long as it arrives by itself. On the other hand, illegal killings were often mentioned as one of the major problems for lynx in Austria and nature conservationists argued that lynx will be extirpated a second time if no further re-introductions are effectuated.

On the second day the future of the lynx in Austria was dealt with within a workshop limited to 40 participants. Four groups were formed to discuss (1) responsibilities regarding lynx and the best organization to include interest groups into the decision process, (2) increase the acceptance towards lynx mainly by hunters, (3) what information is needed for a sound management of lynx and how is it communicated to the public and (4) how can the space requirements of lynx be dealt with within the small scale hunting management.

Despite legal protection, the central issue that needs to be addressed to improve the situation for lynx in Austria is the acceptance by hunters, as the major reason for the failure of the 1970s reintroduction was illegal killings. It was decided to establish a group of GO and NGO representatives, hunters and scientists similar to the one existing for brown bear. This group will formulate clear aims and perspectives in order to reduce frustration by all interest groups involved. Lynx management in Slovenia and Switzerland has shown a possible way to maintain lynx and at the same time improve the acceptance by hunters through the possibility of lynx removals (quota hunting, translocations). In a first step, the interest in lynx created by the meeting will be used to instruct new local experts and to advance the current monitoring scheme. The development of a monitoring-system that will allow clear conclusions on the status of the Austrian Alpine Population remains one of the major aims.