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Abstract: Any sound implementation of management measures must be based on precise knowledge of the distribution, status and trend of each population. This is particularly important for conflict species such as the lynx. Yet, the monitoring of large carnivores in forest and mountain habitats still poses great methodological problems. The Alps are a heterogeneous region with different cultures and administrations, where GOs and NGOs as well as scientists are involved in the monitoring. This requires a high level of communication between organisations, regions and countries.

## Monitoring of the Alpine lynx population

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Any sound implementation of management measures must be based on precise knowledge of the distribution, status and trend of each population. This is particularly important for conflict species such as the lynx. Yet, the monitoring of large carnivores in forest and mountain habitats still poses great methodological problems. The Alps are a heterogeneous region with different cultures and administrations, where GOs and NGOs as well as scientists are involved in the monitoring. This requires a high level of communication between organisations, regions and countries.

Even though all Alpine countries are obliged to monitor the lynx population through international treaties, there still exist great differences in the quality of the monitoring from one country to another. Due to financial constraints, habitat features and the size of the Alps it is impossible to work with the same intensity all-over. Therefore the monitoring system can differ regionally according to the local situation. Nevertheless, lynx experts of all Alpine countries recognised the need for a common strategy to monitor the Alpine lynx population in order to assure the same level of data quality: as the smallest common denominator the SCALP experts agreed to interpret the basic monitoring data with the same standard.

Three sources of information on the presence of lynx are available throughout the Alps: (1) reports of lynx killed or found dead or young orphaned lynx caught and put into captivity; (2) records of livestock killed by lynx; and (3) records of wild prey remains, tracks, scats, sightings, and vocalisations. All records are categorised by distinguishing three different levels of reliability (Molinari-Jobin *et al.* 2003):

- Quality 1 represent the “hard facts”, e.g. all reports of lynx killed or found dead, photographs of lynx as well as young orphaned lynx caught in the wild and put into captivity.
- Quality 2 incorporate all records of livestock killed, wild prey remains, tracks and scats reported by people who attended special courses. These records are mostly an objective proof of lynx presence.
- Quality 3 include all wild prey remains, scats and tracks reported by the general public as well as all sightings and vocalisations, e.g. signs that cannot be verified.

In the first country-based status reports the data from the reintroductions up to 1994 have been presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> SCALP conference in 1995 and subsequently published (Breitenmoser *et al.* 1998, Cop and Frkovic 1998, Huber and Kaczensky 1998, Kaczensky 1998, Molinari 1998, Ragni *et al.* 1998, Stahl and Vandel 1998). Five years later, the second status reports with the data from 1995 to 1999 were published where for the first time all lynx signs of presence have been categorised according to the common standard (Fasel 2001, Huber *et al.* 2001, Molinari *et al.* 2001, Molinari-Jobin *et al.* 2001, Stahl and Vandel 2001, Stanisa *et al.* 2001, Wölfl and Kaczensky 2001). The SCALP expert group will continue to

report about the lynx development in the Alps in five-year intervals. A mid-term update was produced for the 2<sup>nd</sup> SCALP conference in 2003. The summaries are presented in the following status reports.

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