

Molinari, P., De Martin, P., Rodolfi, M., Colloredo, R., Vuerich, C., Catello, M., Ramires, L., Bionda, R., and Rotelli, L. Status of the lynx in the Italian Alps: update 2000-2003. Environmental encounters 58, 21-22. 2003. Council of Europe Publishing. 7-5-2003.

Keywords: 8IT/Alps/lynx/Lynx lynx/Malme/status/reliability/region/record

Abstract: From 2000 to April 2003, a total of 235 signs of lynx presence were recorded, of which 115 were included in the Q2 (confirmed) and 118 in the Q3 (unconfirmed) reliability category. After a longer period of absence, it was possible to confirm the lynx presence also by 2 Q1 (hard fact) data. The data of the quality 1 and 2 were confined to four different regions, while the Q3 data spreads over all the Italian Alps. Apart from the north-eastern Italian Alps (Tarvisiano), the signs of presence collected showed a declining trend. During the past two years only in the Tarvisiano it was possible to collect confirmed records.

Status of the lynx in the Italian Alps: update 2000-2003

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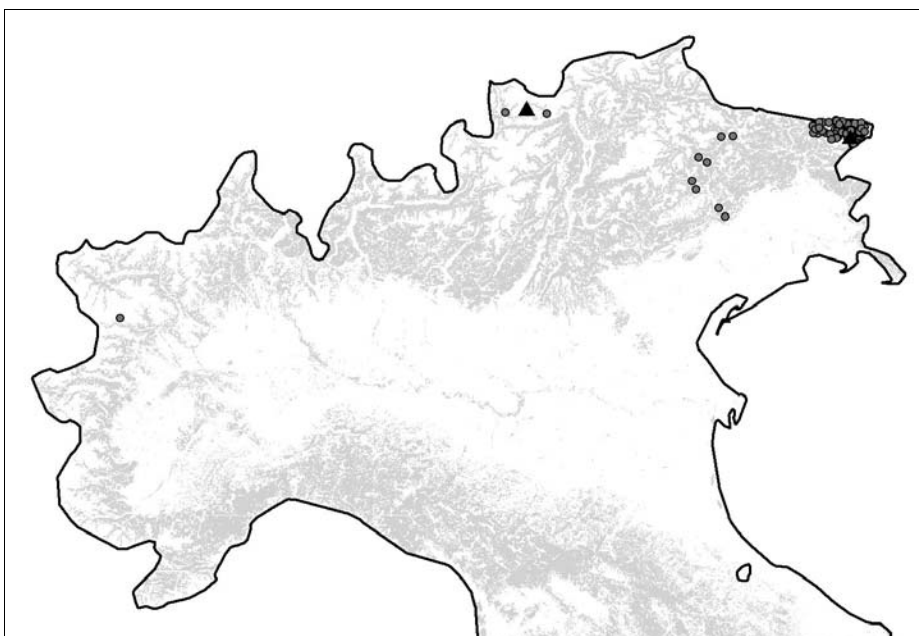
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To analyse the status and distribution of lynx in the Italian Alps, all signs of lynx presence found were pooled, evaluated and interpreted according to the SCALP guidelines (Molinari-Jobin *et al.* 2003, Molinari-Jobin, this volume). From 2000 to April 2003, a total of 235 signs of lynx presence were recorded, of which 115 were included in the Q2 (confirmed) and 118 in the Q3 (unconfirmed) reliability category. After a longer period of absence, it was possible to confirm the lynx presence also by 2 Q1 (hard fact) data. The data of the quality 1 and 2 were confined to four different regions, while the Q3 data spreads over all the Italian Alps. Apart from the north-eastern Italian Alps (Tarvisiano), the signs of presence collected showed a declining trend. During the past two years only in the Tarvisiano it was possible to collect confirmed records.



Distribution of signs of lynx presence of Q1 (hard facts, black triangles) and Q2 (confirmed records, grey dots) in the Italian Alps from 2000-2003. (Forest cover in gray, data base CORINE Landcover.)

The dynamics in the Italian Alps during this period was characterised by four main events (Fig. 1): (1) the positive trend observed in the north-east in Friuli V.G. up until 1995, declined during the next pentad, re-increased clearly to the highest level ever observed. For the first time it was possible to collect reliable information about reproduction. (2) The new occurrence from the Province of Belluno, documented during the previous pentad, has disappeared. The area occupied by lynx in the eastern Italian Alps seems again confined to the Carnic and Julian Alps. (3) The lynx occurrence of unknown origin in the Trentino still results extinct, but in the South Tyrol appeared 3 confirmed data one of which even Q1, a lynx photographed. But rumours confirm our hypothesis that this presence does not originate from natural spread. Instead, it is unclear whether the animal escaped from an enclosure or whether it was reintroduced clandestinely. (4) With the exception of 1 Q2 data, in the Val d'Aosta and Val d'Ossola only Q3 data were collected during the past 3 years.

In Italy the scattered lynx presence is still confined to border areas and subject to fluctuations, most probably due to single individuals. The exception being the Tarvisiano, which represents the only area with continuous confirmed data since 1986. Even though Italy is important for the future of the lynx in the Alps, as its territory connects the Swiss and Slovenian populations, responsible GOs disregard the necessity to support politically and financially the research and monitoring, the base of any kind of management and conservation. Up to date the monitoring is still based on volunteer work. The management of lynx in Italy remains illegal, with clandestine reintroductions on the one side, and illegal killings on the other.

References

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