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Abstract: To establish a new population of Eurasian lynx (Lynx lynx) in eastern Switzerland, we caught 12 free ranging lynx in western Switzerland and translocated them to the eastern Swiss Alps from 2001-2008. The animals underwent veterinary checkups and were brought to a quarantine station for 2-4 weeks before being released. We followed all animals closely by means of radio-telemetry. Post release monitoring included post-release migration, home-range establishment, hunting and prey choice, social behaviour and reproduction, observed by means of radio-telemetry, camera trapping and snow tracking. Four lynx showed far ranging movements before eventually establishing homeranges near the release sites. In one case, a male lynx leaving the Alps was recaptured and brought back into the release area, where he has remained since. Two lynx were found dead (road kill and heart disease, respectively); the contact to five animals was lost for unknown reasons. Of 13 kittens born (2002-2007), at least five reached independency at the age of one year. One subadult dispersed 200 km to the southern edge of the Alps. All lynx fed on the expected main prey: roe deer (Capreolus capreolus) and chamois (Rupicapra rupicapra). The population is still small and it is too early to assess the success of the reintroduction project. Some aspects can however be addressed as positive or negative points already now. The decision about the translocation was based on a broad political consultation between the Federal institutions and several cantons and involved stakeholders. While this consultation was indispensable for the acceptance of the project, it resulted in some political compromises, such as limiting the number of animals to be released to 12 lynx. The project was however planned as an adaptive process, allowing reacting with further releases over several years according to the monitoring results. Animals from two source populations (north-western Alps and Jura) were brought together to enhance genetic diversity. Protocols for captures, transport, quarantine and veterinary supervision were developed in close cooperation between wildlife biologists, veterinarians and wildlife management staff, and proved to be effective. Monitoring of the released animals was intensive, but due to financial and political constraints, offspring could not be radio-tagged. The further monitoring of the developing population is done by means of camera-trapping, a method with limited validity in such a small nucleus. Information of stakeholders and the broad public was comprehensive, what however also boosted the continued and often controversial discussion about the return of this large predator.
Translocation and post-release monitoring in Eurasian lynx reintroduction

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