

General Directorate for Environmental Protection

**Information on the Implementation of Recommendation no. 137
(2008) on on population level management of large carnivore
populations**

Warsaw 2011

The report was prepared pursuant to the requirements of Recommendation no. 137 (2008) of Standing Committee to the *Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention)*. Ratified on 17 November 2008, this Recommendation commits the Parties to the Convention to re-enforce co-operation with neighbouring states in view of adopting harmonized policies towards management of shared population of large carnivores and report to the Standing Committee on the implementation status of this Recommendation and Recommendation no. 115 (2005) on the conservation and management of transboundary populations of large carnivores. Recommendation no. 115 (2005) covers, inter alia: the population of bear, wolf and lynx inhabiting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Carpathian population of these species.

Conservation of large carnivores in Poland

Poland is home to three species of large carnivores: wolf, lynx and brown bear. All the species are under protection provided by the Polish legal system – the brown bear since 1952, lynx since 1995 and wolf since 1998 (throughout the country). Currently there are two legal acts regulating the conservation of these species:

- ❑ The Nature Conservation Act of 16 April 2004 (Journal of Laws of 2009 no. 151 item 1220, as amended)
- ❑ Regulation of the Minister of the Environment of 12 October 2011 on wildlife animal species under protection (Journal of Laws of 2011 no. 237 item 1419)

All tree species are listed in the appendix 1 of the a.m. Regulation as a strictly protected species and appendix 5 as wild species for which protected areas (500 metres around breeding places) are placed.

The implementation of the project *Preparation of the Management Plans for Selected Endangered and Conflict Species in Poland* is underway. The project is managed by Warsaw University of Life Sciences and financed from the funds coming from Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment and the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management.

The aim of the project is to prepare national strategies for the management of six selected animal species, among others: wolf, lynx and brown bear for which the need of such measures is particularly urgent. These species represent different groups of problems in the fields of conservation and population management. Such projects are prepared during special workshops with active participation of scientists, representatives of local and central administration, NGOs, foresters, land owners, environmental protection services and other entities having positive or negative experiences with a particular species. The workshops were also attended by representatives of the countries which share populations of large carnivores with Poland.

The project should result in obtaining information on the populations of lynx, wolf and bear, preparing code of conduct to ensure conservation of national population of these carnivores, identification of solutions to prevent conflicts and facilitating reintroduction of wolves into the western parts of the country.

The implementation of the project is to take place in 2009-2011.

International co-operation on large carnivores conservation in Poland

Poland develops close co-operation with Slovakia and Ukraine within the framework of International Biosphere Reserve “Eastern Carpathians” founded in 1992 concerning the improvement of nature conservation methods in this part of Carpathians. This co-operation is largely facilitated by the works of international conference “Conservation of Natural Resources of International Biosphere Reserve – Eastern Carpathians” which is annually organized in Scientific-educational Centre of Bieszczady National Park in Ustrzyki Dolne. The conference enables full exchange of information and experiences. To promote the scientific knowledge on this topic Bieszczady NP issues “Roczniki Bieszczadzkie” which, among other things, contains materials from the conference. The last conference was held on 23-25 September 2010 and was devoted to the following topic: “Influence of current management methods on preserving natural resources in Carpathians”.

Additionally, conferences and seminars on the conservation of large carnivores were organized:

1. “Management of large carnivore populations in transboundary region of Małopolska” seminar was organized on 7-8 December 2007 in Nowy Targ by Małopolskie Province Governor and the Institute of Nature Conservation of Polish Academy of Sciences, Cracow.

The seminar’s aim was to present the situation of large carnivores in transboundary region of Małopolska and to set the rules of their populations management in particular countries as well as whole Carpathians. Aside from representatives of the Polish and Slovakian side, the seminar was attended by representatives of the Czech Republic.

2. “Natura 2000 Network – implementation and management in transboundary areas of Poland and Slovakia” conference was organized on 11-12 December 2008 in Niedzica by Regional Director for Environmental Protection from Cracow and the Institute of Nature Conservation of Polish Academy of Sciences.

An important and essential for the conservation of large carnivores issue discussed during the conference concerned preserving ecological connections between Natura 2000 sites located on both sides of the border in order to keep wildlife corridors passable. Such measures will improve cohesion of Natura 2000 network.

Different protection statuses of bear, lynx and wolf in Poland’s neighbouring countries are a slight obstruction in the development of the co-operation. In Slovakia bear and lynx are under protection, yet wolf is a species which can be hunted between 1 October and 31 January. In Ukraine and Belarus wolf is treated like a vermin and can be hunted during the whole year.

In December 2010 Poland put forward a proposal for co-operation on large carnivore transboundary populations management, especially populations of wolf and bear, to the Minister of Environment of the Republic of Slovakia.

On 14-15 March 2011 in Cracow General Directorate for Environmental Protection together with Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection organized Polish-Slovakian conference which aimed at working out a statement and directions of works development in the field of wolf and bear populations management rules in the transboundary area. The conference was attended by representatives of Polish and Slovakian governmental administration and environmental organizations. The conclusions of the conference were

presented on XVII meeting of Polish-Slovakian Intergovernmental Commission for Cross-Border Cooperation. The conference was held on 7-8 April 2011 in Warsaw. During the meeting the working group for nature conservation and forest economy presented an initiative to form an Experts Team for species protection of large carnivores which will start works on the improvement of large carnivore transboundary populations conservation in the key transboundary areas. The Commission accepted the proposal to form Experts Team for species protection of large carnivores.

The Czech Republic also put forward a proposal for trilateral meeting with Poland and Slovakia on the issue of large carnivores which was to be held at the end of 2010. Currently, there is no information on the precise date of the meeting.

Wolf population management plan prepared last year in Belarus is also a cause of anxiety. The plan was drawn up in the respect of the EC decision to withhold bringing in of wolf hunting trophies from Belarus to EU zone. Since wolf is listed in II Annex of *the Convention on international trade of endangered wild animal and plant species* of 3 March 1973 (CITES), distribution of specimens of this species requires special CITES certification. On 18 May 2011 the project was presented to the EC which recommended sending it to neighbouring countries on the account of its potential transboundary impact. The project of wolf population management plan assumes reduction of 60% of wolf packs in Belarus, using methods commonly perceived as inhumane, e.g., trained groups tracking wolf dens to kill the litter, killing with the use of cars, snow scooters, helicopters, strong light sources or night-vision devices. Moreover, since north-eastern Poland is the main source of specimens migrating westwards (thanks to functionality of wildlife corridors in this region), the implementation of the aforementioned plans will have significant negative impacts on wolf population in Poland. In this respect, Poland issued a negative opinion concerning wolf population management plan in Belarus.

Bear

Existing since many years, the co-operation between Polish and Slovakian Tatra National Park is very important for the conservation of large carnivores in the transboundary area of Poland and Slovakia. It concerns mainly the conservation of preying and wintering sites of bears (*Ursus arctos*) and animals count as well as the boiling issue of synantropization of Tatra bears.

It has to be also mentioned that Regional Directorates for Environmental Protection on whose territories bears live, the Institute of Nature Conservation of Polish Academy of Sciences, other institutions and bodies interested in the topic are planning to form Bear Intervention Team. The team would act in such cases as: finding an injured or dead bear, bear appearance in the vicinity of human residences and other. With reference to this topic, two meetings were held in Cracow (one of them attended by Croatian specialists). The proposal to form such a team is also included in the project of the strategy for bear population management in Poland.

One of the motion put forward by meeting participants concerned the necessity of starting a close co-operation with neighbouring countries on taking intervention actions.

Wolf

Many years of works performed by Polish scientific institutions and NGOs resulted in publishing in 2000 "Strategy for wolf population management in Poland" and a guide

“Analysis of types and dimensions of damage caused by wolves and applying solution methods in conflict situations” (2005).

Poland acts together with Germany in the field of transboundary protection of wolf (*Canis lupus*). During the bilateral meeting which was held on 13 July 2009 in Dresden the Minister of Environment showed his support to form Polish-German working group for wolf protection.

According to *Guidelines on Large Carnivore Initiative Europe* a shared, transboundary wolf population exists and both countries are responsible for its preservation and conservation. Wolves in Germany and Poland exert similar influence on prey and farm animals, thus in order to solve the existing issues it is necessary for both countries to keep register and manage wolf population in transboundary context. The aim of the working group for wolf protection works is to examine the possibility of future co-operation, using the experiences collected by both countries. Close monitoring supported by scientific research (genetic research, perhaps radiotelemetry) is essential in this case.

The first meeting of the working group for wolf protection took place on 19 January 2010 in Berlin, and the next on 11 October 2011 in Szczecin.

During the second meeting the methods of sheep flocks protection against wolves in Poland were discussed, the criteria of monitoring in Poland and Germany were compared, and the management plans of wolf population in Mecklenburg and Saxony were touched upon. Furthermore, the discussion focused on the impact of wolf population management plan in Belarus on Polish and German population of the species.

On the last meeting of the group which was held on 25 March 2011, the participant discussed, among other things, the study “Review of wolf population management methods in Poland and Germany and recommendations for future transboundary co-operation in this field” which is to be developed. The aim of this project is to review the wolf population management methods in Poland and Germany and evaluate the possibility of shared management of the transboundary population of the species. The financial study will be prepared from the funds of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). The execution of the project will be performed by “Biuro Lopus” from Germany and the subcontractor (the part of study concerning Poland) – Association for Nature WILK. The study is due to be finished until the end of 2011. It will be presented during the next meeting of the group in March 2012.

The next meeting of Polish-German working group for wolf protection is to be held in March 2012.

Within the framework of the working group activities, co-operation on genetic research is considered in order to unify the methods of analysis. Comparability of both countries’ genetic research will contribute to use uniform interpretations of received results.

Poland is also involved in the project “Wolves – no boundaries. Transboundary concept for priority species on Natura 2000 sites in Pomerania Euroregion”, within the framework of INTERREG IVA. The project’s goal is to prepare and implement a common concept for wolf population management in Pomerania Euroregion basing on EU Habitat Directive requirements. Wolf protection sets an example for a number of other species in the Euroregion which carry conflict potential connected with possible economic damage and

whose protection and management should be coordinated in an integrated way. Moreover, as a native species of wide migration potential, wolf exhibits the need for transboundary and coordinated approach to the Euroregion environment and its elements. The projects involves the following bodies: WWF Germany (leading partner), WWF Poland, EuroNatur Foundation (Germany), Brandenburg Environment Office (LUA) – Lower Odra National Park Department (Germany), Mecklenburg Environment, Nature Conservation and Geology Office – Protected Sites Department (Germany), Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in Szczecin (Poland), Kliniska Forest District Office (Poland). The project has the following objectives: preparation of transboundary concept for the Euroregion protection (the project intends sharing the research on wolf population, wildlife corridors, integrated assessment of habitats situation and combining appropriate geologic data), preparation of a plan for the improvement of wolf population institutional management suitable in the transboundary context, taking into account legal regulation concerning wolf protection and promotion of information on the species. The project is planned for 2009-2011.

The project will make possible for the environmental protection institutions from Pomerania Euroregion to work out their own methods of action in the field of protected species conservation and management on the basis of a selected species, i.e., wolf.

The actions taken during the implementation of the project do not intend to support the increase wolf distribution in the Euroregion, but they aim at encouraging the natural development of the species population so as to reduce the problems accompanying this phenomenon.