

What can be done to protect large carnivores from poaching?

- Improve enforcement of legislation to properly sanction poaching, which is considered a crime.
- Implementation of preventive measures to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, which can lead to poaching.
- Tighten customs controls to detect and sanction trafficking in goods from protected species.
- Better surveillance of game and forest areas where large carnivores are present.
- Improve the management of large carnivore populations through better cooperation between the Carpathian countries.
- Improve communication between authorities and other stakeholders for better prevention and coordination of anti-poaching efforts.
- Develop a tool (e.g. app) for the general public to report traps found in the field or concrete cases of poaching.
- Addressing the problem of human-wildlife conflict in a holistic manner - better implementation of prevention measures, awareness raising campaigns; as for compensation measures for losses suffered by farmers, these will only work in the long term if the other measures are implemented in parallel, otherwise they will only address the effects, not the causes of the conflicts.

Did you know?

In 2012, the first bear monitored by WWF in a cross-border project was shot dead on a hunting ground in Maramures County. The bear was a 6-8 year old male, 2 metres long and weighing 150 kg. Bearing the WWF code number 11621, it was to provide information on preferred feeding, breeding and travel routes in an area where such information is missing or incomplete. This new data would therefore have been extremely valuable for the formulation and implementation of appropriate management measures for the bear population in the area. Although WWF representatives promptly informed the management of the hunting unit of the bear's death, the latter did not notify the police immediately, even if they have a legal obligation to do this. WWF and partners have provided all technical and scientific information and data to support the investigation, but legislative gaps have prevented concrete results and the case unfortunately remained unsolved.

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The project is implemented by WWF-Romania Maramures Branch in partnership with RakhivEcoTour Organization from Ukraine, Aggtelek National Park from Hungary and SOS BirdLife from Slovakia.

www.huskroua-cbc.net

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2014-2020



PARTNERSHIP
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LARGE CARNIVORES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE ENVIRONMENT



www.openbordersforbears.com

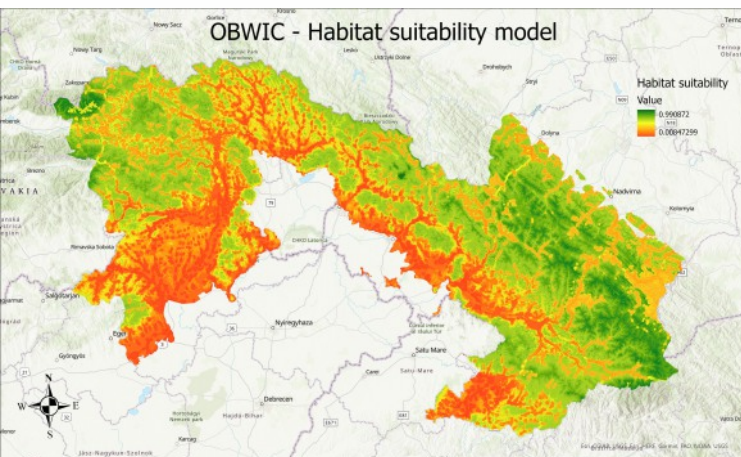
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The Carpathian region is home to more than a third of the approximately 12,000 wolves, 17,000 bears and 9,500 lynxes that live in Europe, excluding Russia. These **ecologically critical, strictly protected and culturally significant mammals are threatened, not only by poaching, but also by habitat fragmentation and shrinkage caused by chaotic infrastructure planning and development.**

Project partners from four countries (WWF Romania – Maramureș Branch, Romania, Slovak Ornithological Society/BirdLife Slovakia, NGO RachivEcoTur Ukraine, Aggtelek National Park Directorate Hungary) embarked in a dynamic journey called **“Open borders for wildlife in the Carpathians”** www.openbordersforbears.com to design and secure transboundary ecological connectivity between habitats. The project, funded under Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine, ENI Cross border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 (<https://huskroua-cbc.eu/>) aims to **improve connectivity in four countries and support integrated habitat management for wolves, brown bears and the Eurasian lynx.**



Large carnivores play an important role in the environment. We are just beginning to learn how they positively impact the environment. For example, bears play a role in fertilizing forests by dragging carcasses throughout forests and depositing scat on the forest floor. In eating fruit and nuts, they disperse seeds. Each seed is deposited on the forest floor with a little ‘fertilizer’ to get it started. Bears also help to clean up carcasses and, as predators, they help keep populations such as deer in balance.

Did you know?

In Europe, large carnivores are strictly protected, therefore they are not the object of trophy hunting. Nevertheless, some European countries with a stable level of large carnivores populations put in place some extraction schemes to prevent human – animal conflicts and also livestock damages (only when no other option is available). But this management tool is under debates between conservationists and hunters or even a fragment of civil society which consider the bear as a threat for their life. Therefore, some questions remain: can the top predators regulate their population in a natural way, limited by the available space and resources OR humans should actively intervene through extractions to limit the number of bears? For an answer, further studies should be performed in a sustained manner.

POACHING

Poaching of large carnivores is widespread across Europe. Methods vary from poison to shooting, trapping, snaring, or simply driving over animals with cars or snowmobiles. In some cases it is the result of the spontaneous action of an individual. In other cases, well organized groups plan their actions carefully.

Poaching usually takes place in deep forests or in distant mountains, far away from human settlements. The crime often tends to happen at night, when nobody is watching.

The use of traps to capture and kill animals has a long history, but since 1992, with the introduction of the Habitats Directive, it has been illegal in EU Member States. The European approach to poaching is very clearly defined in the Habitats Directive: any means of trapping protected species of animals for the purpose of killing them is prohibited. However, the true extent of poaching is not known and therefore decisions to effectively address this problem are difficult to take.

The reason for poaching is very diverse, sometimes fuelled by socio-economic hardships; some bears are killed for meat, other for trophies. In some cases, large carnivores are perceived as a threat for humans or livestock and thus are illegally killed. Sometimes cubs are kept as pets. Poaching can be combated through sustained awareness-raising actions together with initiatives to compensate losses or increase incomes for local communities, e.g. development of ecotourism based on wildlife watching.



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