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Conservation status of large carnivores in Hungary

Botond Bakó

Ministry of Rural Development
Department of Nature Conservation

VISEGRAD GROUP – Nature conservation workshop
Budapest, 27 May 2014





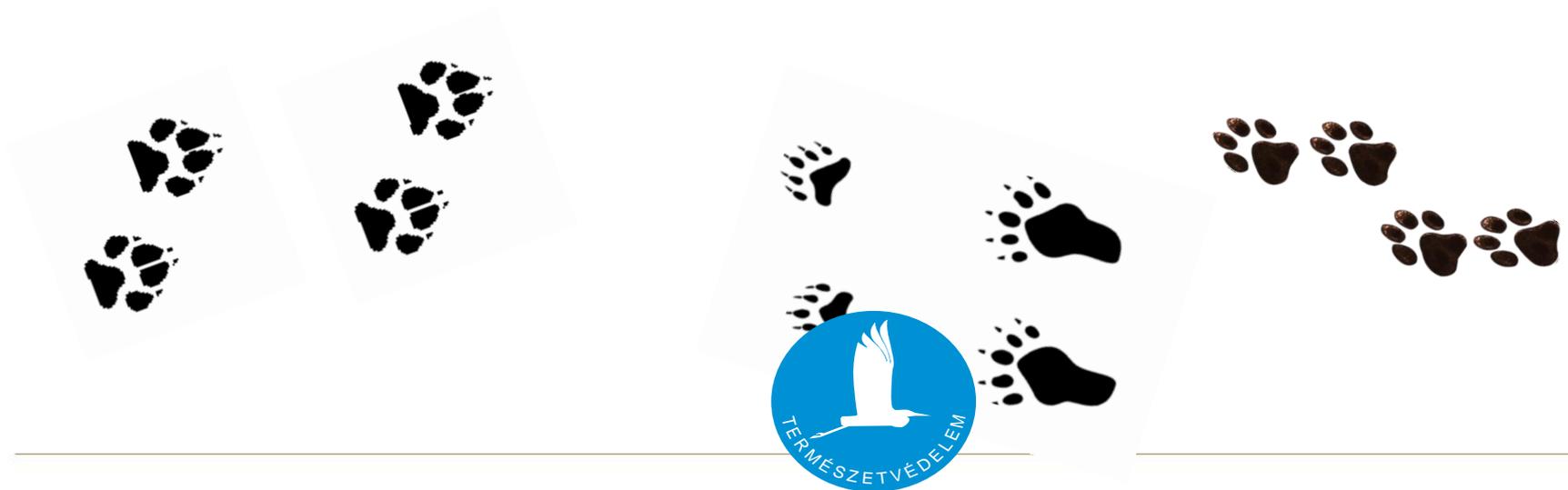
Current situation



Two permanently present species: wolf and lynx (only a few specimens)

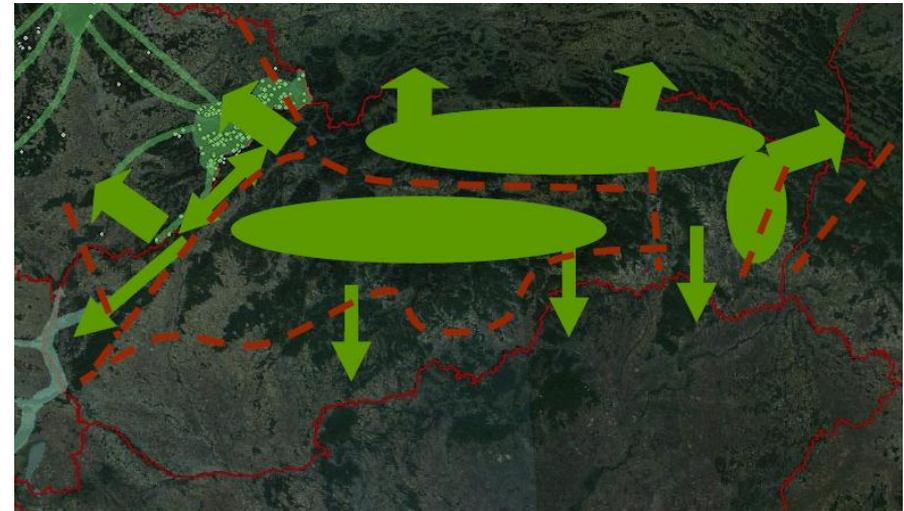
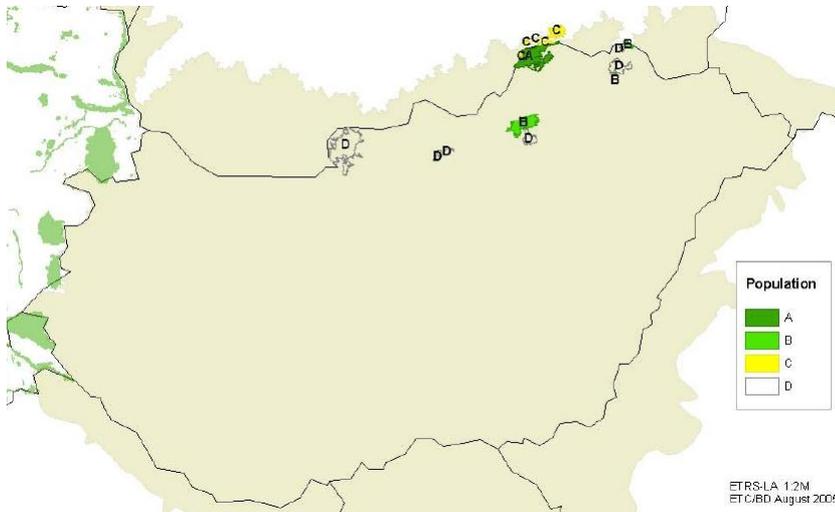
(Brown bear occurs only occasionally, as migrant species.)

All species are present as marginal, transboundary population, mostly in the Northern Mountain Range.





Lynx appears in Börzsöny, Mátra, Bükk and Zemplén Mountains and the Aggtelek Karst Range, with a few reproducing couples.



Transboundary Lynx population between Slovakia and North Hungary

Designated Natura 2000 sites for Lynx lynx





- Wolves are permanently present in Aggtelek Karst, one family regularly raising cubs. Young animals usually return to Slovakia.
- Comparative genetic studies show that Hungarian population is more closely related to Slovakian and Polish packs than to Ukrainian or Transsylvanian populations.



Designated Natura 2000 sites for *Canis lupus*

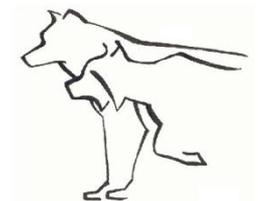


Monitoring and conservation:

We had a LIFE project between 1992-1996: „Funding the base of long-term large carnivore conservation in Hungary”. Recipient of grant was Szent István University.

The „After-LIFE Conservation Programme for LIFE project” was coordinated by Ministry, involving also national park directorates. A working group dedicated to large carnivores works on the issue.

We also have Actions Plans of the Large Carnivores edited by the Ministry.



A nagyragadozók hosszútávú
védelmének megalapozása
Magyarországon

Main activities of the „After Life” Programme

- **Field monitoring**

Methodology:

With slight methodological changes, the relevant national park directorates: Duna-Ipoly NP , Bükki NP and Aggteleki NP will continue the monitoring started in the LIFE project by way of their rangers and supervisors were trained and qualified in the frame of the project.

- **Designation of monitoring areas**

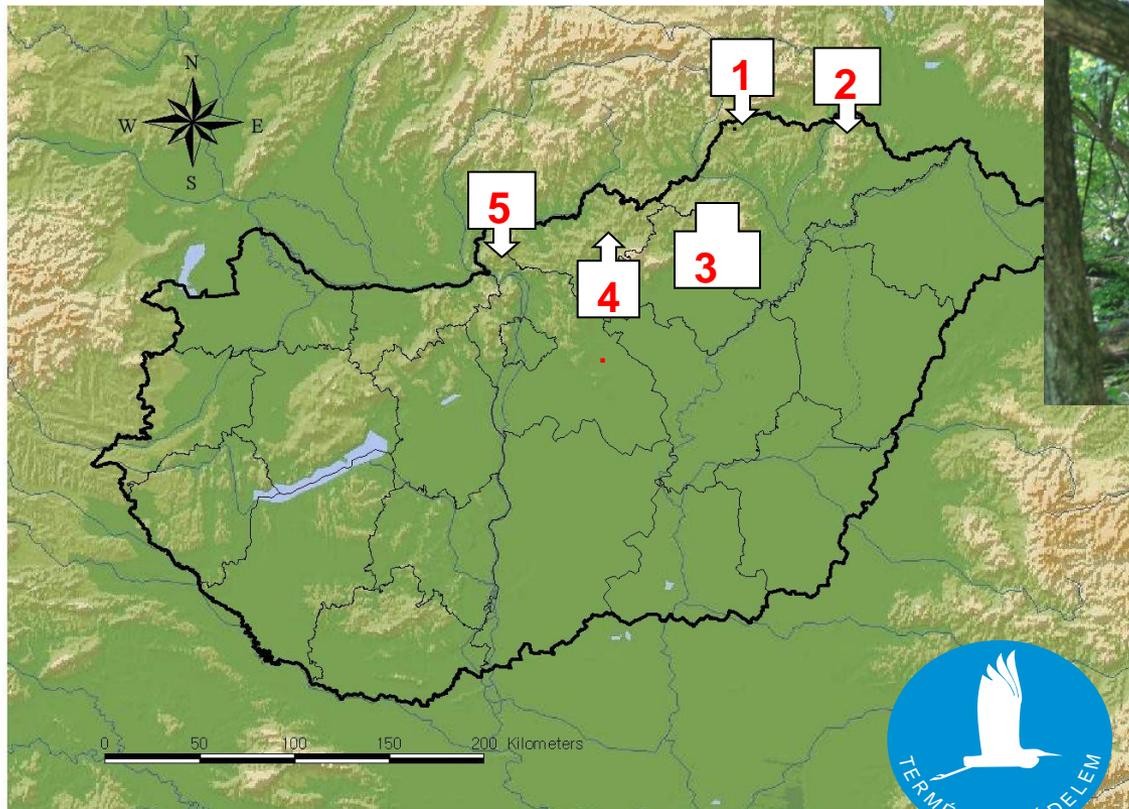
Priority importance monitoring areas: the actual presence (within the last year) of at least one of the two large carnivore species is confirmed

- Weekly field visits from November to April
- Monthly field visits from May to November



Wolf tracks in Aggtelek Karst.

Priority importance monitoring areas



Wolf in Aggtelek Karst.

Legend:

1. Aggtelek Karst
2. Zempléni Hills
3. Bükk Hills
4. Mátra Hills
5. Börzsöny Hills

Main activities of the „After Life” Programme 1.

- **Secondary importance monitoring areas:** either of the two large carnivore species has occurred in the last two years
- **Monthly field visits** (If the appearance of the Wolf or the Lynx is confirmed anywhere in the country, the site is automatically qualified as a priority monitoring area.)
- **Flexible monitoring:**
- **Synchronousness** is only binding for the given week or month. The monitoring route is not fixed, either, in order to increase the chance of success.
- The field visits aim to find and record tracks and signs that unambiguously show the presence of large carnivores.



Lynx tracks in Börzsöny Hills.



Wolf tracks in Aggtelek Karst.



Tracks and signs 2.

Carcasses and Droppings (faeces):

- **Food analysis:** based on the study of hair and bone remains.
- **Genetic analysis:** degree of relatedness (e.g. affinities with Slovakian families, relations between Hungarian families and individuals), individual identification (to facilitate population assessment, home range mapping and habitat use analysis, territory overlap between neighbouring packs, turnover of individuals).



Roe Deer killed by a Lynx



Wolf droppings



Lynx tracks in Börzsöny Hills.





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Hair traps:

Animals are attracted by feromon-like bait/stool and are identified by hair samples collected with help of brushes or velcro.



Large Carnivores Hair Traps in
Bükk Mountains





Photo and video traps

Used in confirmed sites of large carnivore appearance



Lynx on the photo traps in Zemplén-
and the Börzsöny Mountains

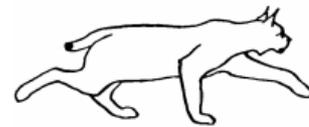


Data gathering, analysis and data base

Faunistic and population data must be stored electronically. All data are mapped through the Geographical Information System (GIS).

Data collected from tracks and signs must be stored in the Protected Natural Assets DataBase of the Nature Conservation Information System (CIS). This system is operated by the Ministry of Rural Development, thus, data management is centralised.

This database is the basis of management prescriptions (forest, game and nature management plans).



Current challenges and tasks



Very good transboundary cooperation with Slovakian hunting and nature conservation organisations

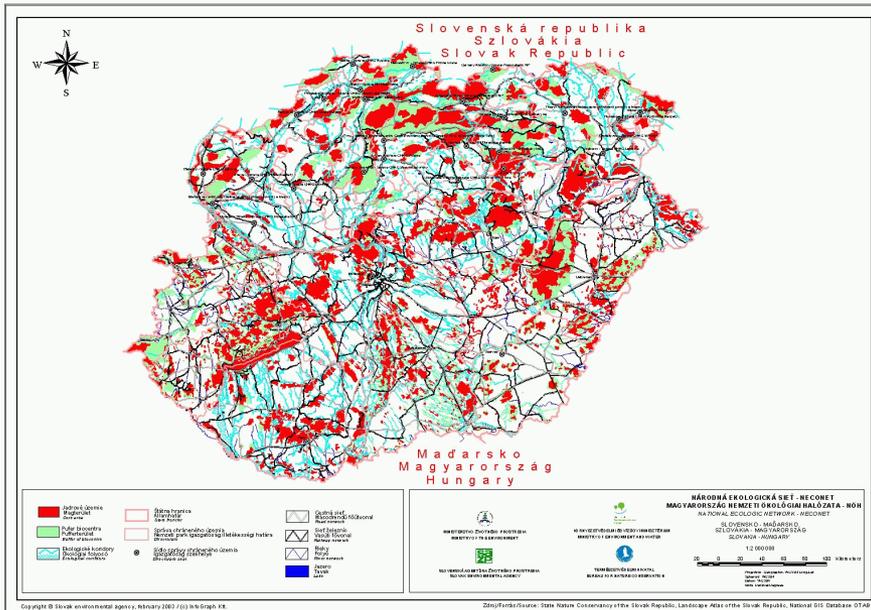
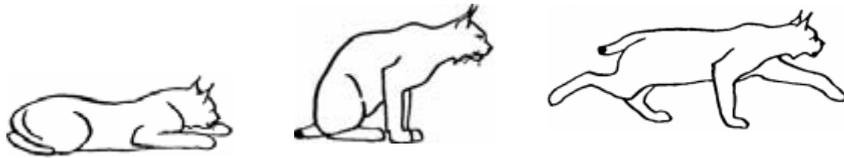
The national ecological network, incorporated into the National Land Use Policy Plan in 2003, has been discussed in the Slovak – Hungarian Landscape and Nature Protection Working Group in order to consult the neighbouring country about those elements that are adjacent to the border.

The relevant national park directorates, state forestries and hunting authorities and organisations jointly elaborate the forest and game management plans that can ensure the necessary conditions for the survival of our strictly protected large carnivores.

Along the border, hunting ban for wolf is in force in Slovakia, in order to assist conservation of Hungarian wolf population.



Slovak-Hungarian Ecological Network



Környezetvédelmi és Vízügyi Minisztérium

Magyar - Szlovák Környezet- és Természetvédelmi Együttműködési Vegyes Bizottság

Slovensko-Maďarská komisia pre ochranu životného prostredia a prírody

Hungarian-Slovak Joint Committee on Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation

Ministerstvo životného prostredia Slovenskej republiky



In 2012-2014 years we have a Slovakian-Hungarian transboundary (conservation) programme for large carnivores



Hungary-Slovakia
Cross-border Co-operation
Programme 2007-2013

Building Partnership

- „Compilation of common register based on the habitat survey and physiological study of large carnivores (wolf, lynx) (HUSK/1101/2.2.1/0036” – total cost: 469 940 EUR
- Partners: Aggtelek National Park Directories and the Východoslovenské múzeum v Košiciach





Conflicts

Conflict with farmers is mostly non-existent as extensive animal husbandry is hardly present in areas where large carnivores occur.

Some conflicts with hunting authority/organisations on the field of game management.

Illegal killing is infrequent.



Illegally hunted bear in Northern Hungary in 2014.



Possible problem with Czech Wolfdogs

In Hungary we have some Czech Wolfdogs.

Possible problems:

In Hungary, hybrids whose parents include a protected/strictly protected species possess the legal status of the parent species with a higher conservation status.

Hybridisation (Wolf and Czech Wolfdog) is considered a potential threat to Wolf populations.

Czech Wolfdogs may be dangerous to humans when escaped.



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Thank you for your attention!

