Report on the Training, Friday, March 16 – Sunday, March 18

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Activities

Field training was an important part of the Lynx monitoring training held in Switzerland on 13-21 March 2007. It included practical aspects of camera-trapping and finding kills of radio-collared lynx through GSM-GPS systems. Participants of this training were Dime Melovski, Aleksandar Stojanov and George Ivanov, from Macedonian Ecological Society, Olsi Qazimi, Erjola Keçi and Aleksandër Trajçe, from the Society for Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment in Albania and Anil Soyumert from the University of Ankara, Turkey. Fridolin Zimmermann was the supervisor and facilitator during fieldwork. The training took place in the Jura Mountains in western Switzerland where an intensive camera-trapping session has been going on during the winter.

The participants were familiar with camera-trapping techniques through an earlier training held in Simmental valley, Swiss Alps, on January 2006 (Melovski et. al. 2006). Nevertheless most of the knowledge gained was refreshed and digital camera-traps were introduced as an option for carrying intensive and extensive camera-trapping sessions in Albania and Macedonia.

Setting of camera trap

Fridolin Zimmermann explained the practical aspects of setting and configuring cameras. A total of 11 camera-trapping stations located in forest roads, wildlife paths and walking routes were visited during the training period. Cameras were checked for functionality and when it was needed batteries and films were changed. In the case of digital cameras a handy multimedia reader was used to view pictures at place from the internal memory card of the cameras. All trainees had the possibility to check, set and program a camera-trap. For every camera the respective form was filled out with the proper notes and remarks.

Another component of the field training was to find lynx kills through means of GPS devices. In Switzerland several lynx have been captured and collared with GPS-GSM collars. These collars periodically send via sms the coordinates of the lynx in different periods of the day. If the lynx has a fresh kill, it will stay in its vicinity for a longer period or turn back at the prey several times during the day. This means that the density of locations sent via sms will be higher near the kill. Coordinates derived from collared lynx with GPS-GSM collars were used to search for the prey in forest areas.

Roe Deer killed by lynx

Two roe deer killed by lynx were found. The carcasses were examined at the spot and in both cases they were almost entirely consumed. The surroundings near the kill were searched for lynx scats and other prey remains. Near the second killed roe deer, two lynx scats were found and collected for further analysis.

Other important observations during the field training, like tracks of different animals found in mud fields, scats of other animals (roe deer, capercaillie), etc., were photographed and recorded.