

Status of the lynx (*Lynx lynx*) in the German Alps from 2005–2009

Status risa (*Lynx lynx*) v nemških Alpah v obdobju 2005–2009

Sybille Wölfl^a* and Manfred Wölfl^b*

^aLynx Project Bavaria, Traillling 1a, D – 93462 Lam

^bBavarian Conservation Agency, Referat 56 – Landschaftspflege und Wildtiermanagement,
Hans-Högn-Straße 12, 95030 Hof/Saale

*correspondence: info@luchs.bayern.de

Abstract: We give a short overview of the monitoring results of lynx in the 5-year period 1995–2009. There is no confirmed evidence that there are lynx in the German Alps. Single individuals might have visited the area but signs occur only sporadically. In 2008 Large Carnivore Network has been established to identify and document signs of lynx, wolf and bear. It is the first step to systemize the lynx monitoring. A natural recolonization of the German Alps is not expected in the near future.

Keywords: *Lynx lynx*, status, monitoring, German Alps

Izvleček: Podan je kratek pregled spremeljanja stanja risa v petih letih (1995–2009). V tem času ni potrjenih znakov prisotnosti risa v Nemških alpah. Posamezni primerki verjetno obiskujejo območje, vendar se znaki pojavljajo zelo razpršeno. Leta 2008 je bila vzpostavljena »Mreža velikih zveri« za identifikacijo znakov risa, volka in medveda. To je prvi korak k sistemskemu pristopu spremeljanja stanja risa. V bližnji prihodnosti ne pričakujemo naravne rekolonizacije risa v Nemških alpah.

Ključne besede: *Lynx lynx*, status, monitoring, nemške Alpe

Introduction

Germany shares an area of around 5.000 km² with the Alpine arc which extends to 190.000 km² in total. The nearest lynx (*Lynx lynx*) sub-populations to the Germans Alps are found in north-eastern Switzerland (distance 70 km) and in Slovenia (distance 180 km). An evaluation of a possible natural recolonisation of the German Alps concluded a very low probability for establishing a viable population in the next decades (Molinari-Jobin et al. 2010). Even though single dispersers manage to migrate long distances and reach the German Alps it will need a constant flow of lynx dispersing

from other sub-populations. A recolonisation of the German Alps will be dependent on expanding sub-populations of Switzerland, Slovenia or Austria or on re-introduction efforts.

Methods

Since 2008 a so called Large Carnivore Network (LCN) is established to identify possible signs of lynx, wolf (*Canis lupus*) and bear (*Ursus arctos*) in the Bavarian Alps. The main focus of the training lies on a thorough documentation to allow verification of signs by experts with long-

term experience. Data which cannot be verified (C3: sightings, all undocumented reports of tracks, kills, calls) are checked for plausibility and then included in or excluded from the data base and classified according to the SCALP categories (Molinari-Jobin et al. in press). To ensure a consistent validation, the data verification in Bavaria is done by two lynx experts who independently evaluate the signs. Thus the data are checked twice and the probability of a misclassification is reduced.

Results and Discussion

The report comprised three 5-year periods of lynx monitoring in the German Alps: 1995–1999, 2000–2004 and 2005–2009 (Kaczensky 1998, Wölfl & Kaczensky 2001, Wölfl 2006, this issue). In the last two periods very few possible lynx signs could be gathered and none of them could be verified or confirmed. Even an assignment to the SCALP category C3 seemed daring because of their very imprecise nature.

During the 2005–2009 period we could only collect very few data as well ($n=5$, Table 1),

all of them were sightings. Four of the chance observations occurred in the western part of the German Alps, Oberallgäu, in the years 2008 and 2009 (Fig. 1). They were accompanied by rumours end of 2009 that a lynx had been shot in that area. One observation stems from the eastern part of the German Alps, Berchtesgadener Land, and occurred in February 2009.

Categories	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009
C1	0	0	0
C2	0	0	0
C3	6	1	5 (all sightings)
Total	6	1	5

Table 1: Number of lynx records collected per period per category (C3: sightings, all undocumented reports of tracks, kills, calls).

Tabela 1: Število zbranih podatkov o znakih prisotnosti risa po obdobjih in po kategorijah (C3: videnja, nedokumentirana opažanja znakov, klicanje).

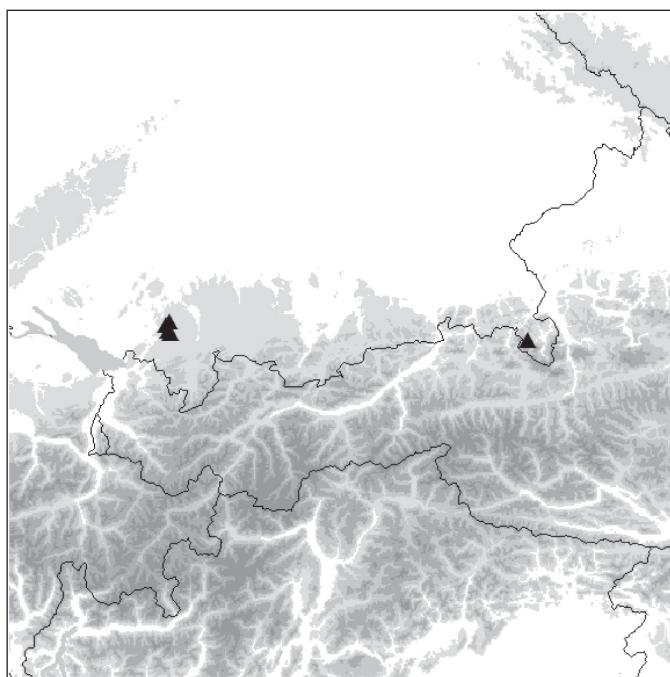


Figure 1: Distribution of lynx signs of presence in the German Alps for the period 2005–2009.

Slika 1: Razporeditev znakov prisotnosti risa v nemških Alpah v obdobju 2005–2009.

It is noticeable that signs in all three periods occurred either in the western part (Allgäu) or in the eastern part (Berchtesgadener Land) of the German Alps. It is therefore possible that there are single dispersers coming from Switzerland or Austria/Slovenia.

With the establishment and training of the LCN in 2008 we have a network of 25 persons in the Bavarian Alps whose awareness is focused on large carnivore signs. This means much better conditions to take notice of signs by checking with local people or even actively looking for signs. Thus the probability of detecting even single lynx should be improved. This assumption is supported by the fact that all lynx signs in the 2005–2009 period had been collected by members of the LCN.

However we have to keep in mind that the presence of observers and a general raise of awareness for large carnivores by the public

(due to the presence of a wolf in 2009–2010) could be related to the »increase« of lynx signs. Either this increase is only a function of raised awareness or is substantial, will be confirmed in the future.

Acknowledgements

The Lynx Project Bavaria is supported by the Bavarian Ministry of Environment, Bund Naturschutz in Bayern e.V. (Bavarian society for the protection of nature), Landesbund für Vogelschutz in Bayern e.V. (Bavarian Society for the protection of birds) and the Wildland Trust of the Bavarian Hunting Association. We thank all members of the large carnivore network (LCN) who have reported lynx observations for the monitoring program. The manuscript benefited from a review by A. Molinari-Jobin.

References

- Kaczensky, P., 1998. Present status and distribution of the lynx in the German Alps. *Hystrix* 10 (1), 39–42.
- Molinari-Jobin, A., Kos, I., Marboutin, E., Molinari P., Wölfl, S., Fasel, M., Breitenmoser-Würsten, C., Fuxjäger, C., Huber, T., Koren, I., Schmidt, K., Kusak, J., Valdmann, H., Zimmermann, F., Wölfl, M., Breitenmoser, U., 2010. Expansion of the lynx in the Alps. *KORA Report No. 50*, 17 pp.
- Molinari-Jobin, A., Kéry, M., Marboutin, E., Molinari, P., Koren, I., Fuxjäger, C., Breitenmoser-Würsten, Ch., Wölfl, S., Fasel, M., Kos, I., Wölfl, M. and Breitenmoser, U. (in press). Monitoring in the presence of species misidentification: the case of the Eurasian lynx in the Alps. *Animal Conservation*.
- Wölfl, M., Kaczensky, P., 2001. Present status and distribution of the lynx in the German Alps. *Hystrix* 12(2), 39–41.
- Wölfl, M., 2006. Present status and distribution of the lynx in the German Alps 2000–2004. *Acta Biologica Slovenica* 49(1), 51–52.