

# Nature Conservation in Europe: Approaches and Lessons

## Annex PL.2. Large Carnivore Conservation in Poland

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Poland has permanently hosted robust populations of large carnivores: [Grey] Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) and Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*). These never disappeared in the eastern and southern (mountainous) parts of the country, despite intensive hunting and attempts to eradicate them in historical times. More recently, the Polish conservation approach has adopted the strict protection of these species (since 1952 for the Brown Bear, 1995 for the Eurasian Lynx and 1998 for the Wolf), even though some livestock losses occur. Such damage is compensated from the state budget.

For the Eurasian Lynx and Brown Bear, strict protection is rather indisputable, commonly accepted and in fact required by the Habitats Directive. Their populations are slowly increasing, and also seem to be very slowly expanding. Nevertheless, the Brown Bear (c. 120 individuals) only inhabits the eastern part of the Polish Carpathians. The innovative species action plan (Selva *et al.*, 2012) has focussed on protection of roadless areas as high quality bear habitats, protecting and enhancing ecological corridors, and rapid intervention in case of conflicts with humans.

The Eurasian Lynx (c. 200 individuals) only occurs in eastern and southern Poland, although habitats in the northern and western Poland seems also suitable (Huck *et al.*, 2010). To increase its range, the lynx was also reintroduced into Kampinos forest (central Poland, near the capital city Warsaw) in 1993, and a new reintroduction project<sup>1</sup> started in 2017 in north-western Poland.

The Wolf in Poland is formally excluded from Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, so strict protection is only through domestic legislation, and is therefore much more disputable. After a severe crisis in the species' Polish population in the mid-twentieth century, the establishment of its strict protection and the total cancellation of hunting was a big success for Polish nature conservation in the 1990s. This was followed by a substantial population recovery and expansion over Poland (Huck *et al.*, 2010; Nowak and Mysłajek, 2016).

Presently the Wolf population (c. 2 000 individuals) once again inhabits the whole country and is an important source for the recolonisation of populations in Germany and other western countries. Although the pressure from some hunters and politicians for the reinstatement of Wolf hunting is strong and increasing (Figura and Mysłajek, 2019), Polish society seems to still support the strict protection of the Wolf and other large carnivores.

### References

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<sup>1</sup> [www.rysie.org/](http://www.rysie.org/)

**Recommended citation**

Pawlaczyk, P. (2023) Large Carnivore Conservation in Poland. In *Nature Conservation in Europe: Approaches and Lessons*, ed. G. Tucker, online Annex PL.2. Cambridge, UK / New York: Cambridge University Press.  
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