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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
21st meeting

Strasbourg, 26-30 November 2001

Document for information

**Wolf (*Canis lupus*) management
in Norway**

Report by the NGOs

*Document prepared by
The Swedish Carnivore Association, WWF-Norway and WWF-Sweden*

Request to the Bern Convention

We would like to express our concern for the Fennoscandian wolf population (*Canis lupus*) which is critically endangered (CR according to IUCN nomenclature). In addition, the wolf is listed in Annex 2 of the Bern Convention, which guarantees strict protection of the species.

Because of a number of recent and planned legal procedures, mainly in Norway, we now deem the situation acutely severe.

In addition, we would also like to express concern about the rapid decline of the Fennoscandian wolverine population, as a consequence of legal hunting (in Norway) and illegal hunting in all three countries (Sweden, Norway and Finland). At a later point in time we plan to highlight the negative status of the wolverine population to the Commission.

The status of wolves in Norway

Since May last year Norwegian authorities have granted hunting permits for a total of 14 wolves out of a total population of an estimated 30 wolves. In addition, Norwegian authorities are planning to issue hunting licences for wolves as of next winter.

Recently Norway has changed its national wildlife legislation in order to facilitate hunting of wolves. This has been done by changing the legal policies applicable to wolves in such a way that wolves can now be shot in order to prevent damage. The previous writing allowed that wolves could be shot when having already caused damage. Further, Norway has adopted a wolf-management policy called "the principle of differentiated management", the basis of which is the assignment of a geographically limited area, a "wolf zone", inside which "wolves in a controlled manner and to a limited degree are allowed to settle in pairs and packs", i.e. to live and reproduce.

The idea is that wolves residing inside the zone should be subject to stronger protection than those outside the zone. However, even inside the zone alpha pairs claiming territories and even entire packs may be killed, if deemed necessary by Norwegian authorities.

This zone is situated in the south-eastern part of the country and comprises only some 15% of Norway. One essential feature of the zone is the fact that it did not include two of the three packs of wolves that, at the time, were the only packs established in Norway. Moreover, while the zone excludes the sparsely populated areas in which the packs were established, it covers densely populated areas where serious conflicts between people and wolves are occurring, including well documented attempts at illegal killing of wolves.

The status of wolves in Finland

This year according to Finnish authorities a total of 27-28 wolves were killed in the northern parts of the country, i.e. within the reindeer herding areas. Another 7 wolves were killed elsewhere in Finland. Official records indicate that the Finnish wolf population comprised some 110-130 individuals. This figure thus means that almost a fourth of the wolf population was killed. On top of that there are instances of illegal hunting and wolves killed in traffic accidents.

Although a member of the EU, Finland enjoys an exception from the Habitat Directive (92/43/EEG) in such a way that legal wolf hunting is allowed during roughly half the year in the northern part of the country, which is the reindeer-herding area. Also in the southern parts of the country a number of wolves are killed legally each year. In spite of the exemption from the EU Directive Finland has not been granted any such exemption from the Bern Convention.

The Finnish policy more or less precludes migration of wolves from Finland into Sweden and Norway, thus making interaction between the sub-populations extremely difficult.

The status of wolves in Sweden

Recently the Swedish Parliament has adopted guidelines for a coherent large carnivore management policy, which includes the wolf. The policy concerning the wolf states that the species should principally be allowed to settle outside of the entire reindeer-herding area, but also states that single cases of reproduction could be tolerated inside this area. However, the occasional reproductions should only be allowed in the winter grazing areas and not in the year-round grazing areas. It should be pointed out that the reindeer-herding area in Sweden comprises approximately 40% of the total Swedish territory and occupies the entire northern part of the country.

This policy threatens to exclude resident wolves from most of northern Sweden, thus again making it extremely difficult for the Swedish and Finnish wolf populations to interact.

No hunting permits have been issued in Sweden in recent years.

As a result of this situation we hereby request that the Bern Convention include an evaluation of the status of the Fennoscandian wolf population(s) in Finland, Norway and Sweden on the agenda of the Convention's next meeting, in November this year (2001).

We further urge that those three countries reconsider their present wolf management schemes and policies in order to secure a viable wolf population in northern Europe.

We also submit a draft Recommendation for adoption at the next Standing Committee Meeting in Strasbourg (App. 1).

For further information on this issue, please contact Ann Dahlerus, Swedish Carnivore Association, E-mail: ann.dahlerus@telia.com , Phone: +46-8-34 31 25, 073-614 62 45.

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Signatures/organisations

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Appendix 1

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Recommendation (2001) on the conservation of the Fennoscandian wolf population

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild fauna and their natural habitats;

Referring to Recommendation No. 82 (2000) of the Standing Committee on urgent measures concerning the implementation of action plans for large carnivores in Europe;

Taking note of the information presented at the 21st meeting of the Standing Committee;

Noting the need for joint conservation measures of the wolf population in the Fennoscandian region among the three countries concerned;

Further noting the significant number of wolves killed in the region according to the derogation system;

Observing the administrative regulations that restrict the distribution of the wolf population in the three countries;

Expressing its concern over the long-term viability of the Fennoscandian wolf population,

Recommends that **Norway** and **Finland** considerably reduce the present extent of wolf killing according to Article 9 of the Convention;

Recommends that **Norway** enlarge the present geographical area in which the establishment of permanent territories of wolf are allowed;

Recommends that **Sweden** allows permanent wolf territories to be established in the year-round reindeer grazing area;

Recommends that **Norway, Finland** and **Sweden** further develop methods to minimise conflicts with sheep farming and reindeer herding, in particular, and to fully compensate for losses caused by wolves.