

Standing Committee, Bern Convention - December 2022

Assessment of the conservation status of the Wolf in Europe



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LCIE, an IUCN/SSC group on the European Large Carnivores



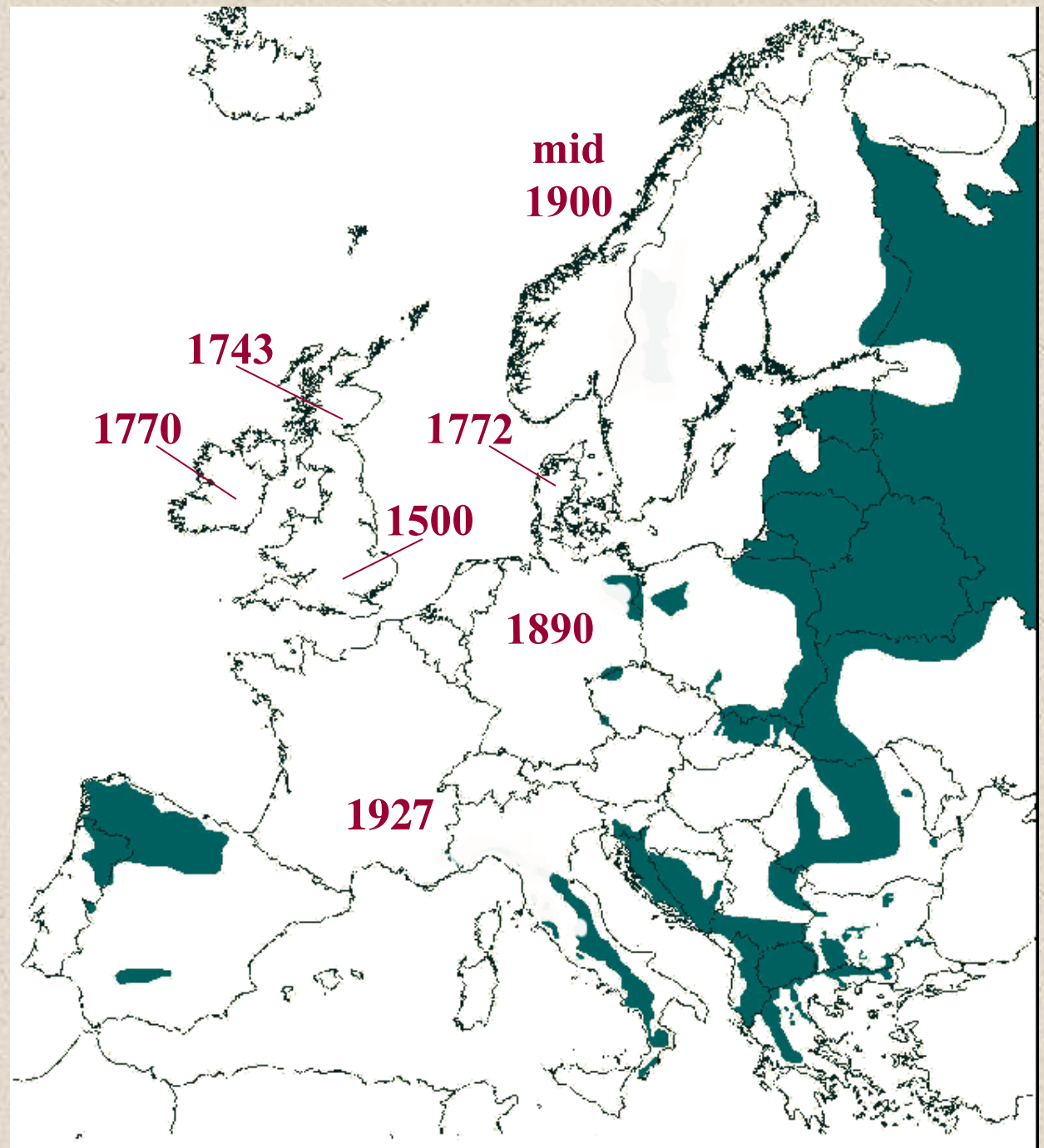
- **Bear**
- **Wolf**
- **Eurasian lynx**
- **Wolverine**
- **Iberian lynx**
- **Jackal**

- www.lcie.org

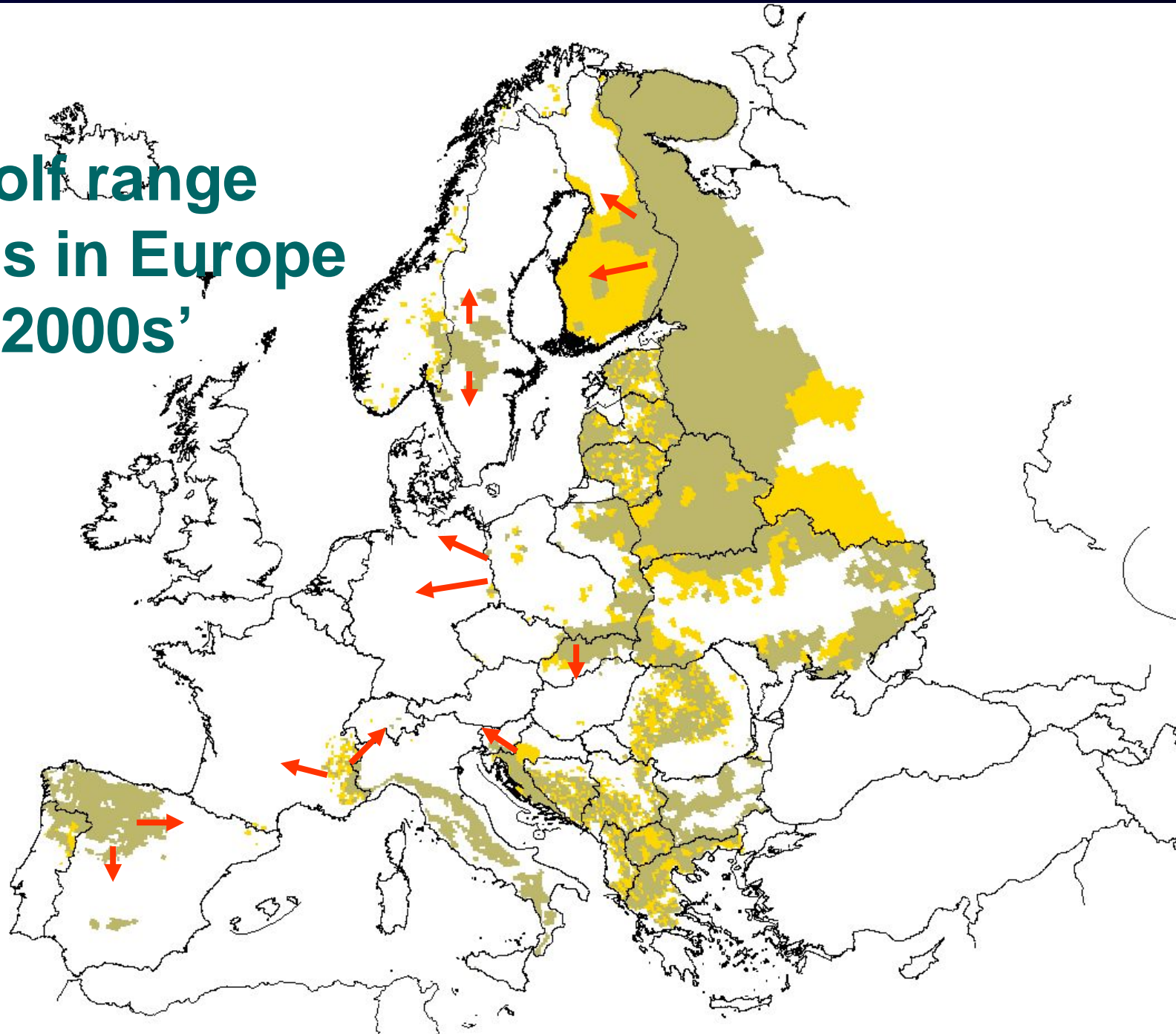


Eradication of wolves in Europe

(ranges in 1960s')



Wolf range trends in Europe 2000s'

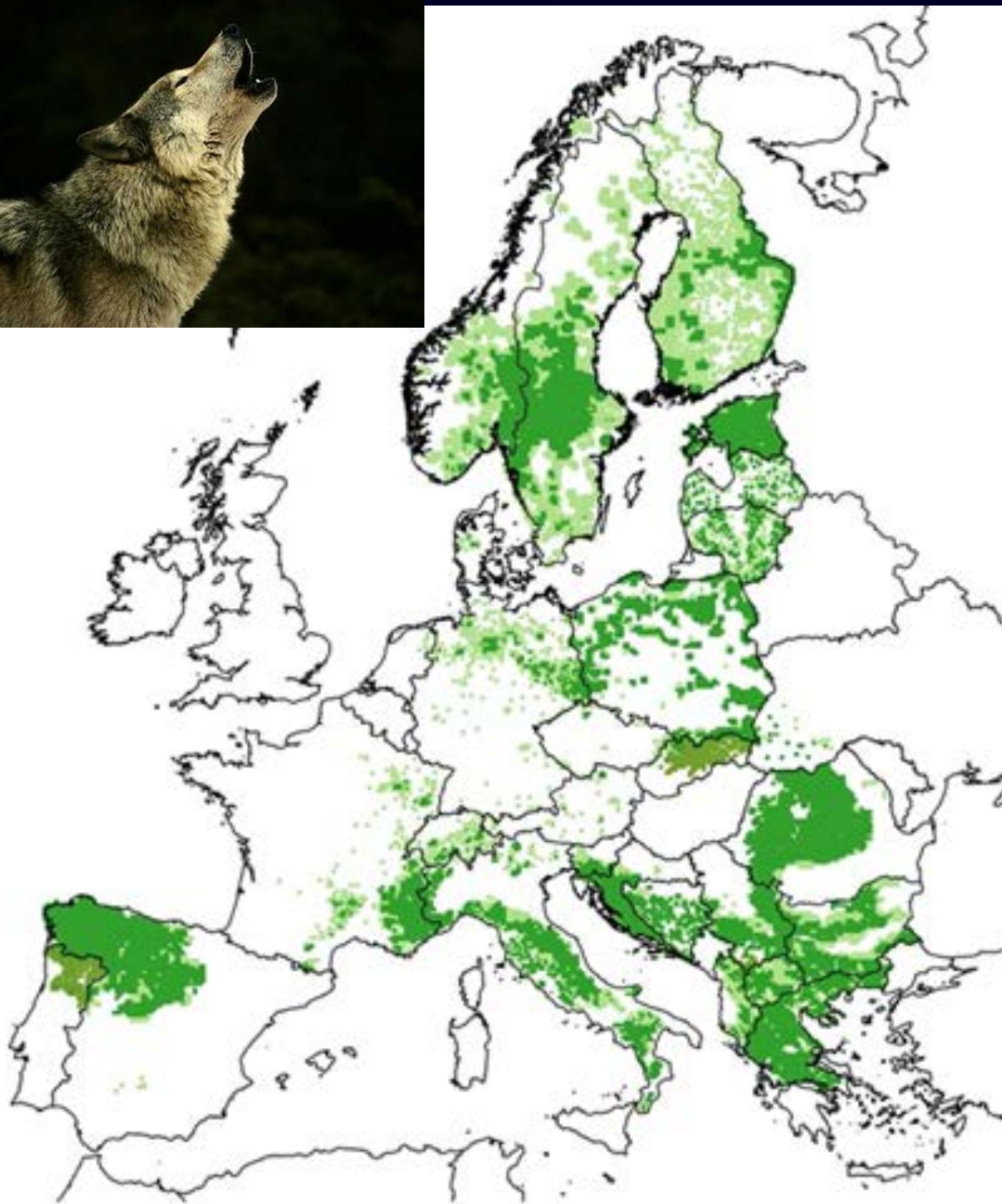




Wolf distribution in Europe

(permanent and sporadic)

2017 data



— Country Boundaries

Wolf_IUCN_RedList_2018

■ Permanent

■ Present

■ Sporadic

0 250 500 km



The national scale



All mainland European countries now have wolves, some with large numbers (e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, and Ukraine have more than 1000 individuals)

Most importantly, 19 out of 34 countries report increasing wolf numbers and only three countries report decreasing numbers.

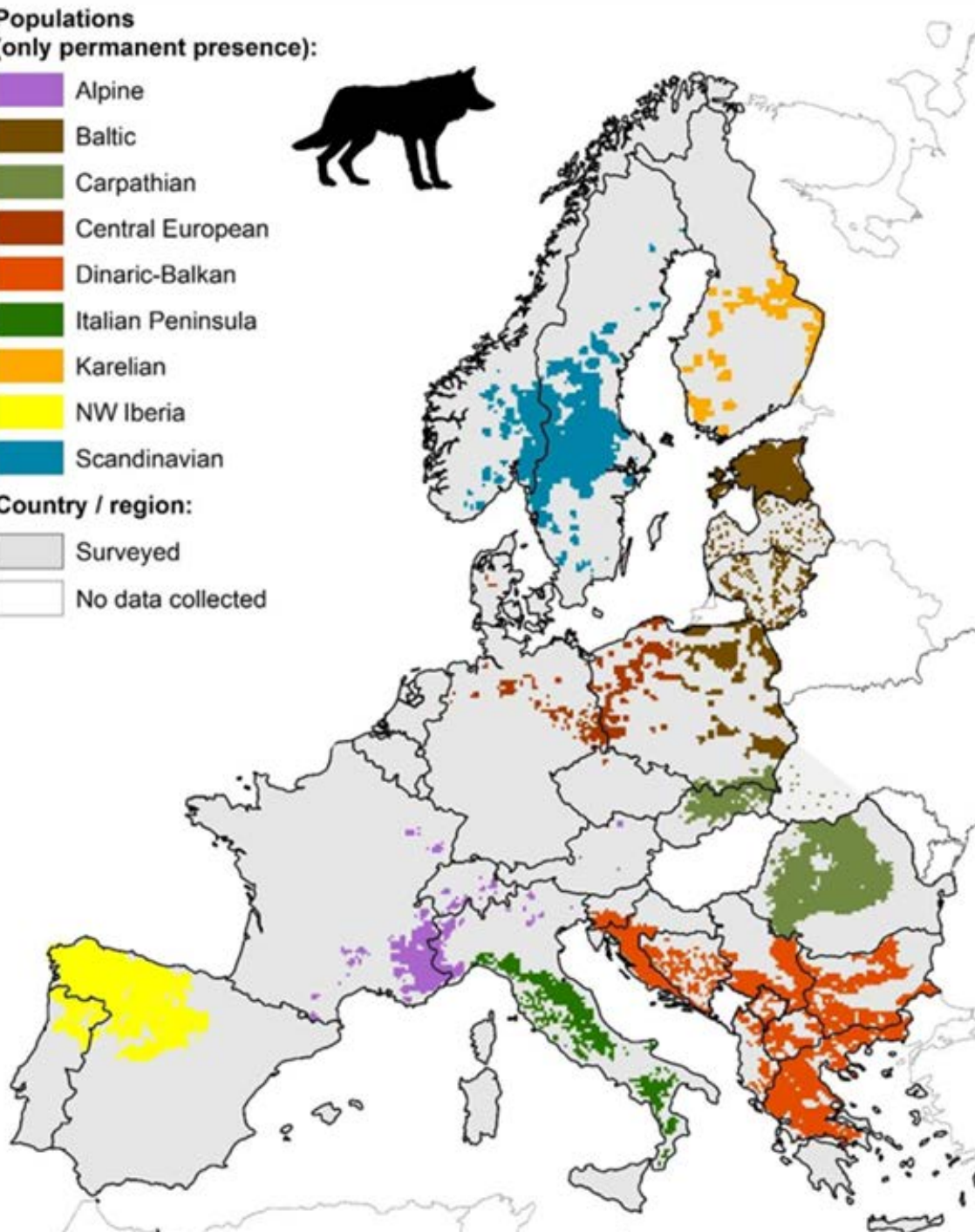
The latter are all in the Dinaric/Balkan region.

**Populations
(only permanent presence):**

- Alpine
- Baltic
- Carpathian
- Central European
- Dinaric-Balkan
- Italian Peninsula
- Karelian
- NW Iberia
- Scandinavian

Country / region:

- Surveyed
- No data collected



**The population
scale:**

**Wolf
populations in
Europe**



WOLF POPULATIONS OF EUROPE

Population	LCIE Estimate in 2011	LCIE Estimate in 2016-7	LCIE Estimate 2021-22	IUCN Red List Assess	HD App .
Iberian	2200-2500	2500	2550 ↑	Near Threat.	IV-V
Western Central Alps	280	420-550	c. 1900 ↑	Near Threat.	IV
Italian peninsula	600-800	1100-2400	2388 ↑	Near Threat.	IV
Dinaric – Balkan	c. 3900	c. 4000	5000-5500 →	Least Conc.	IV-V
Carpathian	3000	3460-3840	c. 4500 ↑	Least Conc.	V
Baltic	870-1400	1713–2240	c. 2500 ↑	Least Conc.	V
Karelian	150-165	c. 200	290 ↑ (750 with Russia)	Near Threat.	IV-V
Scandinavian	260-330	c. 430	550 ↑	Vulnerable	IV
Central Europe	36 packs + 5 pairs	780-1030	c. 1850 ↑	Near Threat.	IV
Europe		c.17,000	c.21,500	Least Concern	
EU		13–14,000	c.19,000	Least Concern	

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Western Central Alps	280	420-550	c. 1900		V
Italian peninsula	600-800	1100-2100			IV
Dinaric – Balkan	c. 3900			Least Conc.	IV-V
Carpathian			1500	Least Conc.	V
Baltic		c. 240	c. 2500	Least Conc.	V
Karelian		c. 200	290 (750 with Russia)	Near Threat.	IV-V
Scandinavian	260-330	c. 430	550	Vulnerable	IV
Central Europe	36 packs + 5 pairs	780-1030	c. 1850	Near Threat.	IV
Europe		c.17,000	c.21,500	Least Concern	
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GREAT DIVERSITY OF METHODS TO ESTIMATE NUMBERS AND RANGES

Wolf trends

- General increase in numbers and ranges of wolves:

In the last decade only, the wolf range in Europe increased by over **25%**



Main Causes of Wolf Increase

Disentangling the relative weight of each factor in quantitative and objective way is impossible

- Changes in land use patterns
- Increase in wild prey
- Natural recovery (high growth rate and long dispersal)
- Legislation (EU and national)

- Changes in human attitudes (?!)
- Protected areas?



Wolves are very tolerant of human landuse

An aerial photograph of a lush green agricultural landscape. A winding road or path cuts through the fields, leading to a central cluster of tall, thin trees. The terrain is rolling, with various shades of green representing different crops or stages of growth. In the distance, there are more fields and a few buildings, including a small circular structure on the left. The overall scene depicts a well-managed human landscape.

Currently, permanent wolf ranges are characterised by an average density of **90 persons/km²**, which reflects a high degree of adaptation to human presence.

La dispersione di Slavo

- Home range natale
- Home range nuovo
- Percorso di Slavo
- Confine



Info from: Progetto LIFE Slowolf 2010-2014
Source: <http://www.volkovi.si>



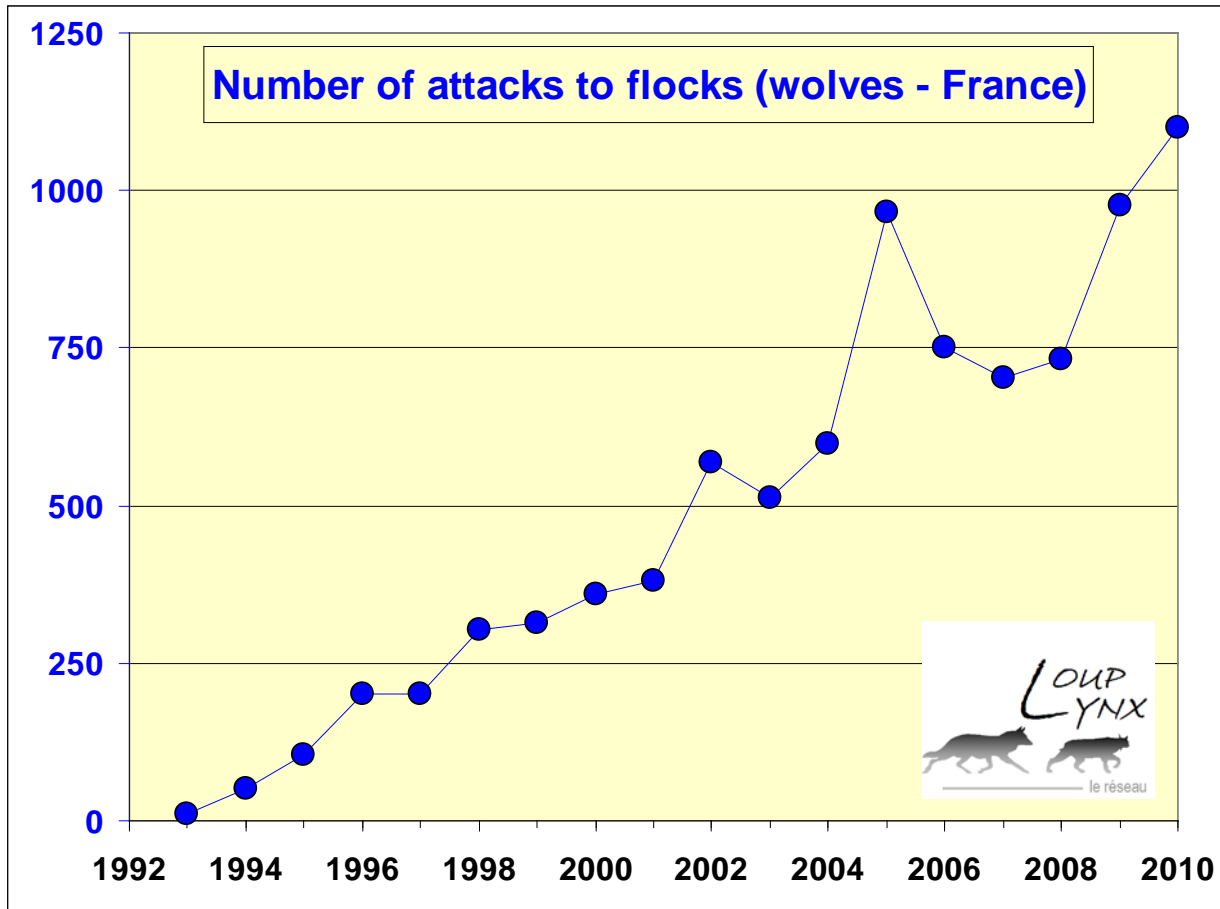
An old and never solved problem...



Losses can be substantial (about **40,000 head/year**, with a few countries suffering disproportionately such as France, Croatia, Italy, Greece, Lithuania, Norway, Türkiye), especially on sheep, semi domestic reindeer and, locally, dogs.

FRANCE - 2021:

3700 attacks - **12000** sheep killed



European Union

Habitats Directive



Council of Europe

Bern Convention



Despite the existence of two pan European bodies – management scales for both conservation planning and assessment have remained at national (or sub-national) scales.

EU-level tools for transboundary cooperation



Guidelines for Population Level Management Plans for Large Carnivores in Europe

Guidelines for Population Level Management Plans for Large Carnivores

Contract nr. 070501/2005/424162/MAR/B2

J. Linnell et al.

Final Draft 11th April 2007

IUCN/SSC WORKING GROUP

Prepared by Istituto di Ecologia Applicata, January 2007
Via Cassiana 71 - IT 00161 Rome

Agreement to participate in the EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores

In recognition of the challenges arising from the conservation of large carnivores in the European Union, the European Commission has established a Large Carnivore Initiative. Following discussions with stakeholders, it has been decided to establish a dedicated EU Platform on Large Carnivores in order to provide a framework for structured dialogue among stakeholders on the issues arising from co-existence of people and large carnivore. This will be a voluntary grouping of main stakeholder organizations with an interest in large carnivore issues. The species of concern are the brown bear, the wolf, the Eurasian lynx and the wolverine; the highly endangered Iberian lynx is not part of this initiative.

The mission of the platform is to PROMOTE WAYS AND MEANS TO MINIMIZE, AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE FIND SOLUTIONS TO, CONFLICTS BETWEEN HUMAN INTERESTS AND THE PRESENCE OF LARGE CARNIVORE SPECIES, BY EXCHANGING KNOWLEDGE AND BY WORKING TOGETHER IN AN OPEN-ENDED, CONSTRUCTIVE AND MUTUALLY RESPECTFUL WAY.

The organizations listed below agree to the following core principles:

- Working within the EU legal framework: *The EU's Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) is the overarching legal instrument for the conservation and sustainable management of Large Carnivore species at a favourable conservation status in the EU.*
- Ensuring the necessary knowledge base: *Any management of large carnivores must be determined on the basis of sound scientific evidence using best available and reliable data.*
- Recognition of socio-economic and cultural considerations and values: *Human societies have the right to use their natural resources and preserve cultural heritage in a sustainable way within multifunctional landscapes, of which large carnivores are an integral part. The contribution of economic activities to the values of those landscapes has to be recognised. The need to ensure public safety should also be recognised.*
- Solutions to conflicts through constructive dialogue among stakeholders: *Finding solutions arising from conflicts with large carnivores and facilitating human-large carnivore coexistence is best achieved through constructive dialogue among key stakeholders at local, national and EU levels. These solutions should be adapted to local and regional conditions.*
- Engagement in trans boundary cooperation: *The vast majority of the populations of large carnivore species in the EU have ranges that cross national borders. Therefore national solutions will not work in isolation without meaningful stakeholder dialogue involving trans boundary cooperation within the EU, and where appropriate, with neighbouring countries, taking into account, inter alia, the Guidelines for Population Level Management Plans for Large Carnivores.*

The undersigned organizations commit themselves to the EU Platform on Large Carnivores. By doing so, they undertake to work together to find solutions to conflicts arising from the coexistence of humans and large carnivores by:

- 1) sharing their experiences and expertise in addressing the challenges of human and large-carnivore coexistence;
- 2) listening to, and discussing other stakeholders' experiences and views;
- 3) engaging in dialogue for consensus seeking and accepting that solutions may at times involve compromise;
- 4) being open to accept examples of good practices for successful coexistence of humans and large carnivores;
- 5) expressing willingness to transfer and test those examples of good practices;
- 6) ensuring their capacity to fully engage in the work of the platform.

Brussels, 10 June 2014

 Bernard Laza, President CIC – The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation	 Pádraig Póseon, Secretary General COPA-COGECA European Farmers and European Agri cooperatives	 Christoph Baron, President FLO – European Landowners' Organization	 Thomas Hansson, President EUROPARC Federation
 Gilbert de Turckheim, President FACF – The European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation	 Anne Ojila, Director Joint representative of Finnish and Swedish Reindeer herders	 Luc Bas, Director IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature, European Union Representative Office	 Tony Long, Director WWF World Wide Fund for Nature European Policy Office

I would like to convey my appreciation for and extend my warm congratulations to the organizations listed above on the signature of this important Agreement, which I wholeheartedly welcome. This represents a major step forward in the EU Large Carnivore Initiative, which the Commission has promoted for the past two years, and is the fruit of our joint efforts to address issues arising from the coexistence of humans and large carnivores in the EU in a constructive spirit of cooperation and dialogue.


Janez Potočnik
European Commissioner for the Environment




Wolf recovery: a cautionary note

Current wolf management systems in Europe have not secured stability of wolf-human relationship

Current positive trend is not guaranteed

AND new threats such as

- Wolf/dog hybridization
- Border and sanitary fencing
- Contested conservation paradigms
- Policy interpretations (legal)

The first evidence of hybridization in Italy, 1975



Some pics of anomalous phenotypes



Portugal



Greece



Estonia



Poland



Germany



Bulgaria



Spain

Wolves and hybrids

- Generally less than 5% with isolated events
- Locally up to 75%, e.g. Grosseto (Italy)



Border fences



The impact of border fences

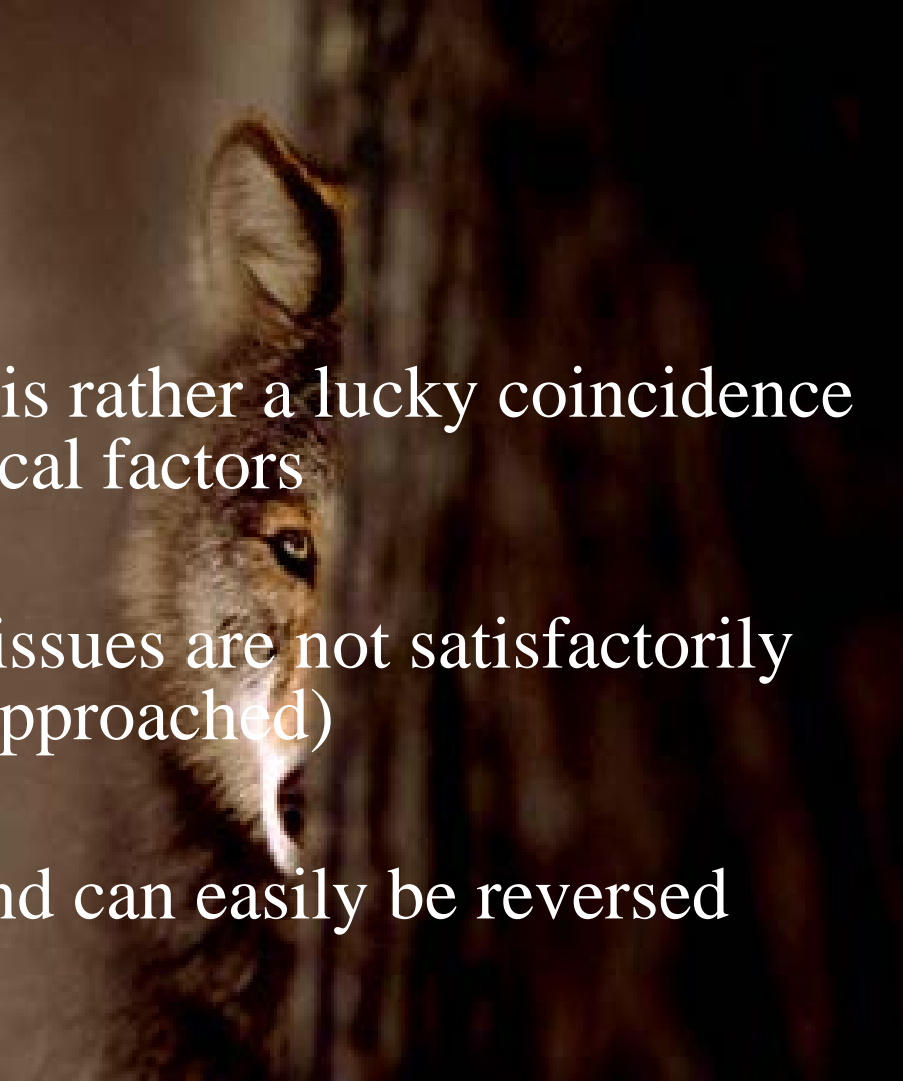
DISRUPT:

- Home ranges
- Hunting
- Dispersal
- Population dynamics: demography, genetics and social
- Death
-



Can wolf recovery in Europe be considered a management success?

Broad conclusions:

- It is hardly a success. It is rather a lucky coincidence of biological and historical factors
 - All major conservation issues are not satisfactorily solved (often not even approached)
 - The current positive trend can easily be reversed
- 

Concluding remarks 1

High diversity of monitoring approaches and field methods (individual animals, packs, territories, partial vs. total surveys, use of snow-tracking or genetics and/or capture/recapture techniques)

High heterogeneity of data,
BUT

the conservation status at European scale is undeniably positive

Concluding remarks 2

- The lack of any formal agreements among some neighboring countries and the resulting responsibility being limited to the national level creates the paradox that wolf management must be carried out as if in Europe there were as many independent wolf populations as the number of countries
- The outcome of this situation is that **several small countries have small numbers of wolves requiring full protection** even though there is a continuous distribution of wolf populations in the neighboring countries

Concluding remarks 3

- Despite the obvious benefits of the population level approach, **no neighboring European countries have so far engaged in a formal institutional action plan for a shared population**
- **Requests to manage a local/national population counting on the continuity with neighboring countries, but without formally engaging in a common action plan, are not acceptable** because the impact of management decisions at local level would necessarily reverberate on the whole population.

Concluding remarks 4

Four emerging threats:

- Border and veterinary fences
- Status of wolves in the Balkans
- Wolf-dog hybridization
- Social conflicts surrounding wolves being used in political struggles



LCIE mission:



*“To maintain and restore, **in coexistence with people**, viable populations of large carnivores as an integral part of the ecosystems and landscapes across Europe”*

(www.lcie.org)