

3.4 Kalkalpen National Park - Shared management and responsibility of protected species

The role of the Protected Area in the reintroduction and management of wildlife

Date: 24.10.2017

Location: Molln (AT)

Summary of the workshop

The workshop was organized with the aim to discuss the current social acceptance of large carnivores and define a potential shared management between stakeholders and the National Park. Several meetings on this topic have been conducted so far to reinforce the local cooperation and the engagement of stakeholders in regards to large carnivores.

The workshop started with a general introduction by Eurac. Christoph Nitsch of the Kalkalpen National Park introduced the main topic of large carnivores' management and on tourism potentials.

Twelve participants discussed around a table to highlight the main issue regarding large carnivores' presence and potentials in this PWR.

The number of participants was not really high, and the topic not new in the region, so, no new proposals were generated, but stakeholders had a more positive attitude regarding coexistence potentials and shared management. The discussion focused on shared management, social acceptance, touristic promotion, coexistence and countermeasures to poaching.

INTRO

The Park is located in the Upper Austria, and contains Central Europe's largest forested area (fig. 13). It is one of the most suitable area for the presence and dispersal of large carnivores. The region Oberösterreich is very active in the topic of large carnivore's management. From 2011, the remaining population of lynxes was supported by the release of other individuals inside the park in order to avoid the extinction of the species in the area. Meanwhile, an ad hoc group composed by local stakeholders was created in order to involve prominent stakeholders in the management of the lynx. Likely to attack domestic animals and to affect wild ungulates population carefully managed by hunters and for hunting reasons, the reintroduction and the presence of the lynx is indeed a source of controversy.

Several cases of poaching of lynxes were discovered and the topic has become a crucial issue in the area. The discussion table called the LUKA working group has been working for six years to enhance the cooperation between hunters, NGOs and researchers. Due to a lack of data and knowledge, it seems complicated to reach the constructive dialogue needed to overcome conflicts of interests. Surveys have shown a clear position against the removal of the lynx among the population.

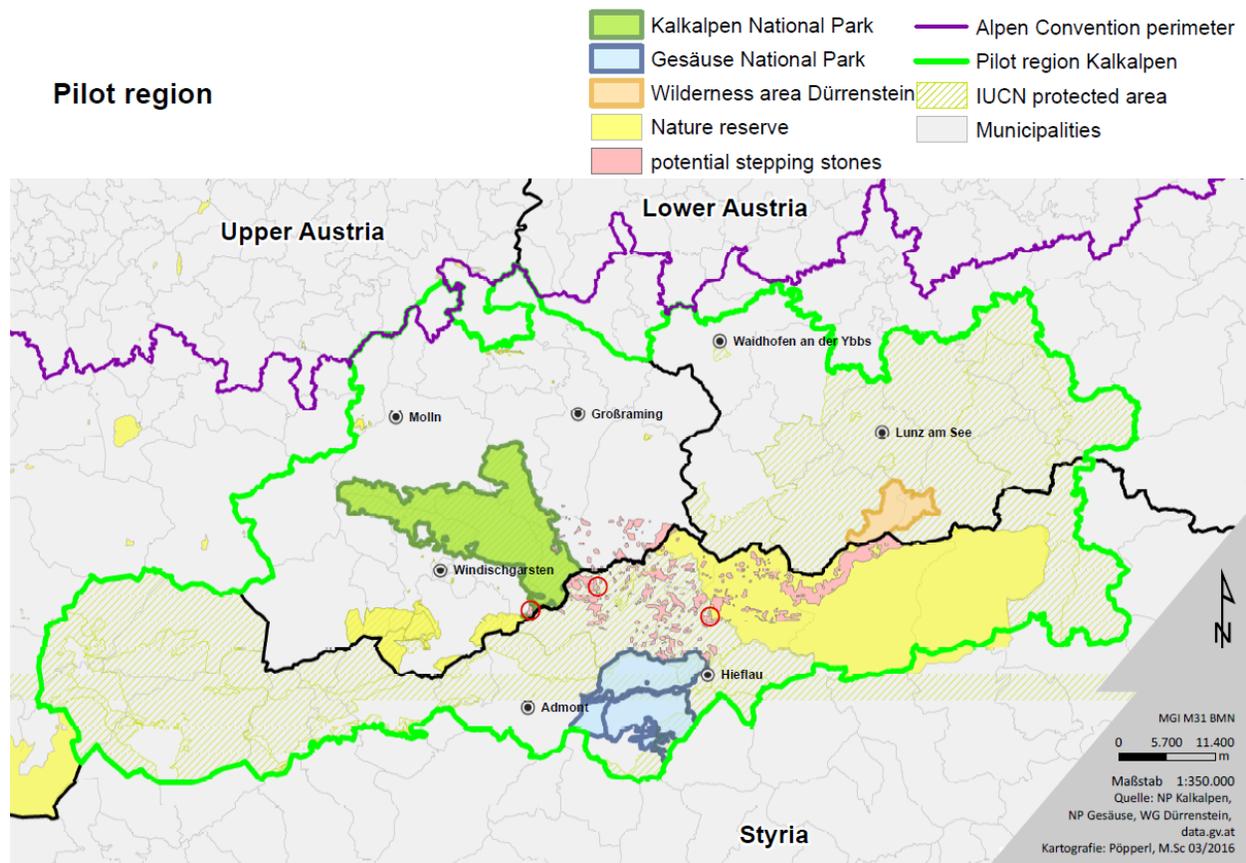


Figure 13 – Area of the Kalkalpen National Park

Proposed conflict issues

The experts' survey (Fig. 14) highlighted, as in Prealpi Giulie, the human-wildlife interactions as main conflict for the area. Predation and poaching, as well as animal-vehicle collision, are reported as most urgent issues to concentrate on.

Kalkalpen issue in WP5

In Kalkalpen, the main issue related to human-wildlife conflicts regards the management of protected species such as the lynx and the closely related activities against poaching. In this area, the human dimension of the conflict is apparent: the tension between the different of local stakeholders (e.g. environmentalists, the National Park, administrations and hunters) on this regards is a fundamental issue to take into account in order to define an adequate management of wildlife that could allow the enhancement of ecological connectivity. The site visit was oriented to discuss the development of a common understanding of the problems with the interested parties and stimulate the will for a better local cooperation on these issues.

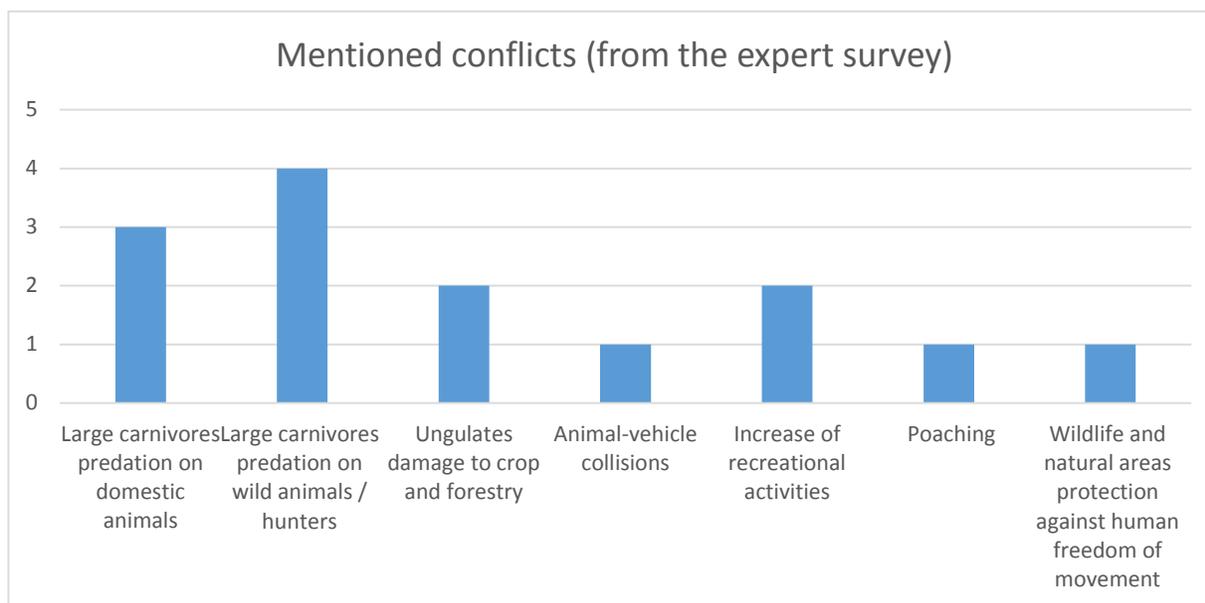


Figure 14 - Proposed conflicts in the Kalkalpen Project Working Region

Involved stakeholders and workshop approach

Different public authority representatives, several administration representatives in charge of nature protection, and a representative of the hunters' community were present at the workshop. The representatives of the ownerships' associations and tourism representatives were missing. This has impeded the discussion to turn also on the touristic promotion of the region through the valorisation of large carnivores.

Due to the low number of participants (Table 4), a focus group was held with the objective to confront the different expectations and opinions on protected species management.

Table 4: Participants to the Kalkalpen Workshop

Andrea Omizzolo (EURAC)	Filippo Favilli (EURAC)
Prune Claire Giatti (EURAC)	Franz Zehetner (Bezirkshauptmannschaft Kirchdorf)
Bernhard Schön (Naturschutzabteilung)	Christian Fuxjäger (Nationalpark Kalkalpen)
Klemens Blaimauer (Land OÖ, Abteilung Land- und Forstwirtschaft)	Herbert Sieghartsleitner (Bezirksjägermeister, Landesjägermeister-Stv)
Thomas Nestler (Bezirkshauptmannschaft Steyr-Land)	Othmar Coser (Landeskriminalamt - Umweltkriminalität)
Christoph Nitsch (Nationalpark Kalkalpen)	Sara Vezaro (EURAC + Villaggio degli orsi)

Report of the meeting

During the workshop, stakeholders were invited to give their general ideas and suggestions about the management of problematic species.

Management principles

If finding a compromise on how to deal with the lynx seems complicated and premature, there is a common agreement that a structured management plan is needed. On one hand, scenarios' possibilities have to be considered in advance for the purpose of predictability and action awareness. For that purpose, conducting surveys would be necessary, in order to collect data on the species' ethology and on the general knowledge of this species by the large public and stakeholders. Clearly established management plans could also come along with an enhanced control and higher criminal punishment measures, which, according to the criminal expert present, could participate in preventing environmental crime.

On the other hand, there is also a will of flexibility in the management plan, mostly when it regards the removal of problematic individuals. Participants indeed insisted on the fact that no strict rule could be simply enforced, and that the acceptance of this kind of issue comes with compromises and ways to exit the general application of rules. In that way, the National Park position itself has the opportunity to develop an integrative and holistic concept of management that would be permanently adjusted according to the upcoming needs.

Social actions on the issue

All seemed to agree however on the fact that education and awareness campaign at the local and sectoral level is needed in order to preserve wildlife. Media and newspapers are a serious shaping opinion force. On the proposition to view human-wildlife conflict as an opportunity for local development, stakeholders tried to imagine in what sense the presence of the lynx could be used to change the perception that the population has of hunters.

Conclusions and next steps

Issues in management partly rest on the objectives of such a management: *Do we want to protect the animals against the human or the other way around?*

The matrix (fig. 15) showed that:

- a) Stakeholders show a positive attitude towards a potential coexistence between human activities and wildlife - taking the commitment of enhancing local cooperation for a shared management.
- b) The participants were skeptical to the fact that this workshop provided a way to better understand the different issues. The topic has been already greatly discussed, thus other ways of confrontation have to be found.
- c) Stakeholders believe in the opportunity given by the transnational cooperation in managing large carnivores.

- d) All stakeholders but one replied that nothing new was added to their knowledge in order to have a better comprehension of the problem and new ideas to face them.

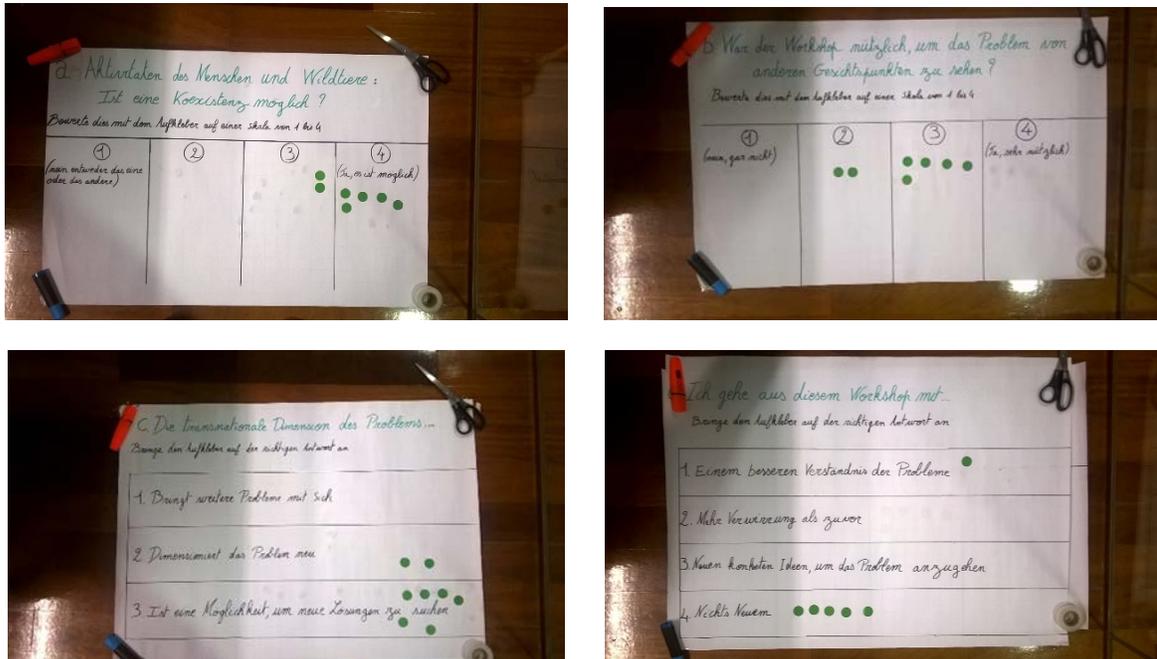


Figure 15 -Answers to the matrix of questions (in order question a,b,c,d, see general introduction)

Main findings in Kalkalpen

- Stakeholders generally agreed on the fact that human welfare should come first and that large carnivore's management should fit human needs before considering biodiversity.
- Stakeholders' mutual perceptions seem to be a major problem in the management of the conflict.
- The utility of the park is regularly questioned. The latter undergo a certain lack of recognition, namely for managing the lynx issue, as some would rather see in such an organisation a simple intermediate between the public and nature.
- Hunters represent a significant community, facing also a suspected illegitimacy in environmental issue.
- Participants insisted on the necessity to consider everyone's opinions and fear, without prejudice of the category to which they belong.
- Other groups of stakeholders could take part in the debate and maybe enable to broaden the issue's perspectives and solutions (e.g. representatives of the ownerships' association, the tourism representatives, alpine association, NGOs, forest owners (who are farmers at the same time).