

What does downlisting of wolves mean for practical management?

John Linnell

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A region with diverse governance

Two conventions

Bern Convention – whole region

Habitats Directive – EU countries



Convention appendices

Bern Convention Appendix 2 = strict protection
Appendix 3 = protected

Habitats Directive Annex 4 = strict protection
Annex 5 = protection



Convention appendices

Strict protection - can only kill animals under very specific conditions

Protection - can kill animals without specific conditions

Obligation for conservation outcome is the same under both regimes.



A region with diverse governance

- Lynx - Bern convention – appendix 3 = **protected** – in all countries
(except Balkan lynx – appendix 2 = **strictly protected**)
- Habitat directive – annex 4 = **strictly protected** – in all EU countries
- Bear - Bern convention – appendix 2 = **strictly protected** in all countries
(except Croatia – appendix 3 = **protected**)
- Habitat directive – annex 4 = **strictly protected** – in all EU countries



A region with diverse governance

Wolf - Bern Convention – previously - appendix 2 = **strictly protected**
(except – Bulgaria, Macedonia, Turkey)

Now – appendix 3 = **protected**

Habitat Directives – previously annex 4 = **strictly protected** (except Bulgaria and northern Greece)

Now – on way to being on annex 5 = **protected**



What does «protection» mean?

Bern Convention

- Exploitation shall be regulated in order to keep the populations out of danger (article 7).
- Procedures to regulate their exploitation (article 7).
- Limit on certain means of killing.
- *«The Contracting Parties shall take requisite measures to maintain the population of wild flora and fauna at, or adapt it to, **a level which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements**, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements and the needs of sub-species, varieties or forms at risk locally.» (article 2).*



What does «protection» mean?

Habitats Directive

- Need to maintain Favourable Conservation Status (article 14).
- Monitoring and regulation of killing (article 14).
- Limit on certain methods (article 15 & annex 6).
- Definition of Favourable Conservation Status is complex!
- Multiple EU guidance documents – including a large carnivore specific guidance from 2024.



What is impact of downlisting

A **common legal status** of wolves across the region – both inside and outside the EU.

Reduced administration if wolves are to be killed.

Greater **member state discretion** to make decisions about management actions.

But, there is still a **ban on certain methods** to kill animals AND the same need to deliver on **conservation outcomes**.



What is impact of downlisting

A transition to a more normal **hunting system** is possible, if a country wants to (but strict protection can be maintained).

Designing a hunting system that is compatible with conservation goals is possible – but needs to be very carefully designed!

- Careful **monitoring** of the population
- **Adaptive quotas** that follow trends in population
- Careful design of **hunting methods**
- **Regulation** and enforcement



What is impact of downlisting

Large carnivore conservation requires **international cooperation**.

No change on the **biological needs** of the species.

Large scale **regional cooperation** is still essential.



What is impact of downlisting

More liberal use of lethal control / culling may help some conflicts, especially the **social conflicts** linked to perceptions of power and influence – and should help build bridges to hunters.

It may help with some aspects of **livestock depredation**.

But the primary protection for livestock must always be with **husbandry methods**.

Hunting / lethal control is not a magic answer to all challenges.



Sustainable management

Thursday workshop!

Welcome.

