

THE WOLF AND THE LYNX IN POLAND – RESULTS OF A CENSUS CONDUCTED IN 2001

S u m m a r y

In 2001, a national census of wolves *Canis lupus* and lynxes *Lynx lynx* was conducted by services of the state commercial forests and national parks. The census was co-ordinated by the Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The methods were based on winter snow tracking and year-round records of any observations of large predators, their tracks, dens, and prey remains. Data were analysed in the program MapInfo. Wolf population was estimated at about 510 individuals (115 packs), living predominantly in NE and SE parts of Poland. Mean pack size ranged from 5.5 wolves in the Carpathians, to 4 in NE Poland, and to 2.4 in the western part of the country. Lynx population (minimum 200 individuals) inhabited the Carpathians and eastern Poland. Recent reintroduction of lynx to the Kampinos National Park led to establishment of a small population in central Poland as well. In the Polish population of lynx, reproducing females constituted 22% of all lynxes, and kit-

tens – 35%. From 1 to 3 kittens per mother (mean 1.6) were recorded. The most important wild prey of wolves were red deer *Cervus elaphus* and roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*. Lynxes hunted mainly roe deer. Depredation of livestock (mainly sheep and cattle) by wolves was recorded in NE and SE parts of Poland, and was estimated as 0.06% of the sheep stock and 0.002% of the cattle stock in the whole country. Based on analysis of historical and contemporary distribution of these two large predators and distribution of forests, we propose to set a net of forest corridors for large predators (and other rare forest species as well). Protection and, when necessary, afforestation of those corridors is essential for the long-term survival of large predators and their expansion towards suitable habitats in western Poland.