

MINISTRY OF THE



ENVIRONMENT



The Experience of the Baltic Countries

Mārcis Saklaurs

Latvia

Ministry of the Environment

Contributed by Jānis Ozoliņš – SFS (Latvia), Peep Männil – Centre of Forest Protection and Silviculture (Estonia), Ministry of the Environment (Lithuania)

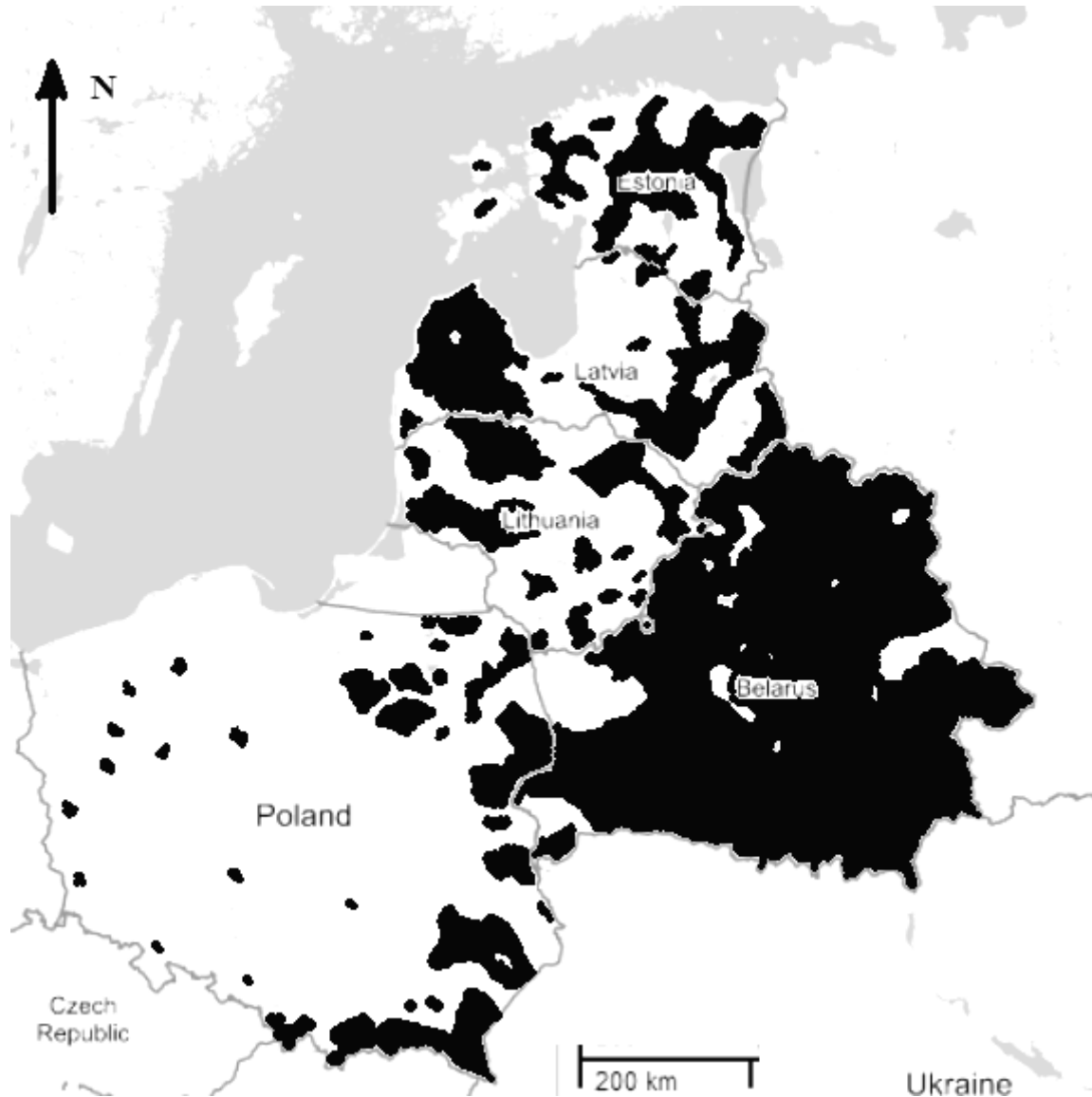
Introduction

- Area – 175 117 km², population ~7,1 million
- Three species of large carnivores (wolf, lynx and brown bear)
- Responsibility:
Estonia and Lithuania - Ministry of the Environment
Latvia - Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of the Agriculture
- Conservation and management actions of the three LC species in Latvia are prescribed and initiated according to national action plans adopted by the Minister of Environment (*Lynx lynx*: 2002; *Canis lupus*: 2003; *Ursus arctos*: 2003).

History and today

The main factor limiting LC populations for centuries and millenniums has been hunting. Suitable habitats were comparatively evenly distributed and less important for the pattern of LC distribution and population status in Baltic States.

Wolf distribution



Estonia 200

Latvia 300-600

Lithuania 200-300

Lynx distribution



Estonia 900-1000,
Latvia 700-900,
Lithuania 40 -80 (strictly
protected – 7 Natura
2000 – 18 000ha)

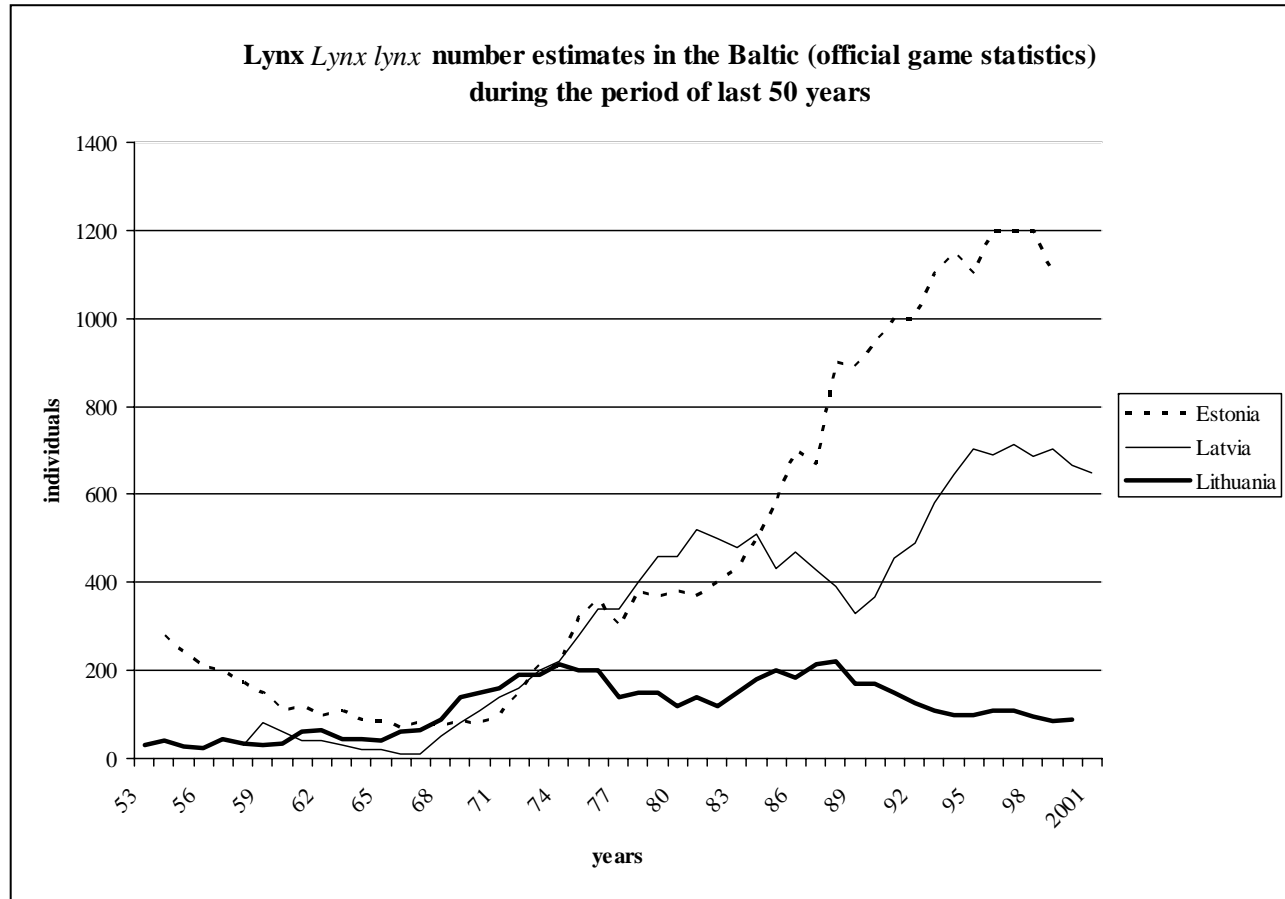


Brown bear distribution



Estonia 500-600,
Latvia 10-15
(strictly
protected),
Lithuania - none

Population dynamics



All three large carnivore species are increasing in long term (excluding Lynx in Lithuania)

Number of mammal species in some European countries*

| Country | Number of species |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Estonia | 61 |
| Latvia | 63 |
| Lithuania | 64 |
| Finland | 68 |
| France | 98 |
| Poland | 86 |
| Portugal | 70 |

**Uudo T., Pilāts V., Balčiauskas L. (1998) "Mammals of the East Baltic"*

Collaboration among Baltic States

- Mammalogical conference since 1990
(consider all aspects of research, protection and management)
- 7th conference at 1 to 5 of October, 2008 in Estonia
- Action Plan for the Baltic Large Carnivore Initiative, 2001-2005
(*Estonian Fund for Nature*)
- Actions among countries:
joint international conventions,
development of a monitoring system for mammals,
joint working groups,
workshops (*Baltic Large Carnivore Workshop Jaunmokas, Latvia, 2000*)
case studies (*“Integrated Wetland and Forest Management in the Transborder Area of North Livonia” Estonia/Latvia, financing PINMATRA NL, 2003-2006*)

Human dimensions

- in general regulation of number of individuals is considered a necessary tool for LC management
- illegal actions of individual people (hunters/poachers) are ascribed to the whole hunters' community
- Media is responsible for creating the “image” of LC (either important part of biodiversity or killers of cattle and dogs)

Problems in conservation and management

- Hybrids of wolf and dogs proved by DNA analyses (threats of population identity, dangerous, not afraid from human, difficult management etc.)
- Fragmentation of habitats and distribution region (agricultural lands and highways)
- Fencing from Belorussia (already 100km)
- Damages to beehives by brown bear



Damage to livestock

- The highest number of incidents in Lithuania
- Situation in Latvia (2007) - 14 incidents: 3 cattle, 69 sheep, 7 beehives
- Cattle in Lithuanian, sheep in Latvia and dogs in Estonia



Scientific research

- Telemetry on lynx in collaboration between Estonia and Latvia (support by Norway)
- Foraging research
- Parasitology
- Interpretation and analysis of monitoring data



Monitoring

Three monitoring actions are considered:

- records on LC occurrence and rough estimates of their numbers within ranges of local state foresters are gathered;
- surveys of annual hunting bags enable to compile data on place, dates and circumstances of killings as well as to collect samples of carcasses and skulls;
- voluntarily reported
(farmers who suffered
are temporarily not provided
with compensations or
assaults to livestock are
investigated and documented.



Future

- Continue cooperation among countries
- Support of local people is essential
- Policy vs. social and economic interests
- Educating public on LC management

Thank you for your attention!

