

POLAND MARCH 2012 – HOW THE LYNX QUEST BECAME A WOLF ENCOUNTER



Some impressions according the participants:

An overall very enjoyable trip...mammals: no lynx but none of participants thought this would be easy. There was hope of course, with the help of a guide, but no success, next time more luck...different strategy maybe...places we stayed: very nice...nothing to say about that... good meals although Polish 'cuisine' may take a while to get used to ;-)

Highlights according the participants:

Very nice regions we visited, especially Bieszczady – paradise for large mammals...lots of (golden) eagles – very nice sightings – couple sitting in spruce at Magurski...nice view of juv eastern imperial eagle at Magurski – very rare in Poland...some nice birds species: white -backed and grey-headed woodpecker, nutcracker, hazel hen, rough-legged buzzard,...
beavers everywhere, some nice sightings in both Pieniny and Magurski...lots of fresh wolf tracks at Bieszczady – markings along most likely pack territory border...superb and fresh tracks of lynx in Bieszczady – following tracks through forest – over small streams – through dense vegetation... we were close here! And of course: wolf sighting the last morning: very nice views of a wolf pack with a large alpha male in the group!

Feedback concerning visited region according the participants:

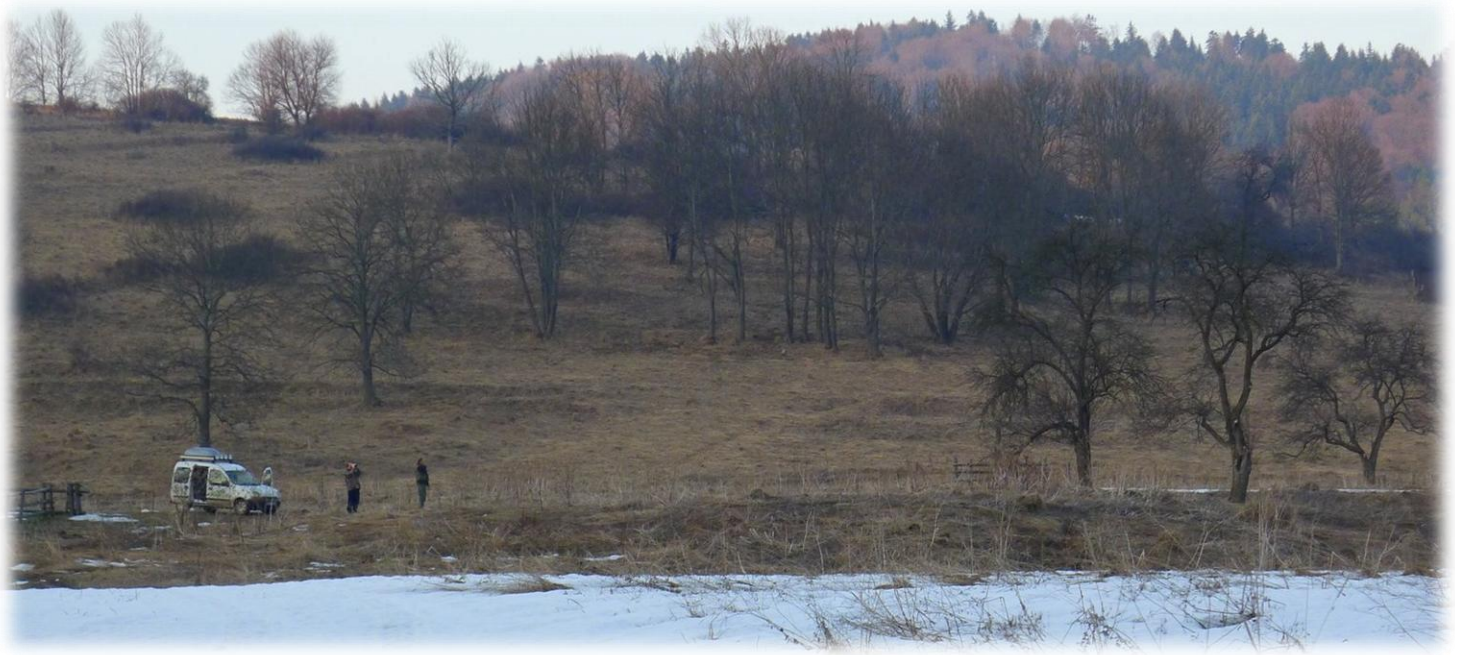
Pieniny NP: Nice landscape /spectacular view on Slovakian Tatras. Forest near pension quite intensively managed, maybe too much disturbance by logging? Only a smaller area of quite nice older forest with beech and dead trees with more animal activity.

Magurski NP: a short visit but also very nice wild area - looks like Belgian Ardennes in places but of course much more natural! Possibly a good potential area for lynx with abundant wide half open areas, a lot of forest edges- shrub and very small rural roads

Bieszczady: although we only stayed here for a (way too) short period, this region made a much greater impression on us than other parts we visited! Magnificent wild landscape – open spaces – large beech and mixed forests with quite a lot of standing dead wood – logging not as intensive – potential very good, proven by lots of tracks and sighting of 4 wolves in the end!



Some atmospheric images of the trip – part 1





Adjustments to improve the 2013 Eurasian lynx tour

Concentrate on one area with more target species

Although flexibility of course stays necessary if recent lynx observations/tracks are made/found in other areas, it's quite clear that the Bieszczady area is much better suited to seeing large mammals (with good open areas to scan, tower hides, feeding stations etc.) making other sightings then the Felid target more then just possible. This way the trip can develop to put quite a bit of time looking for lynx but with good chances of wolf, bear and bison making it overall more attractive.

Another logistic approach and vary methods to increase a lynx encounter

- A. By the use of self catering cottages, limitations of all in accommodations shall be wiped out. Giving the opportunity to be in the field during animal prime time as in general, around dusk and dawn, wild life is on the move and active
- B. Hide sitting strategy (using hunting towers aka tree platforms) and being stationary and on the look out for longer periods from vantage points. Use of a bear hide too.
- C. More assistance of local guides and, when participant are skilled, horse ride trips will be added. This approach makes access to less accessible areas more easy and animals less difficult to detect.

Being realistic concerning the chance of a lynx encounter

Keeping lynx as a target species for a trip is certainly possible, but it is just a lot harder then all other species. People joining this trip must realize that. It's all about being eager and hopeful without too much expectations.



Some atmospheric images of the trip – part 2



Salutations & credits:

KEJ should like to say thanks to Jan, Mark and Kristof; the participants who made this tour possible. Also nice to receive some honest feedback of them.

All used pics are from tour joiners:

Kristof Goemaere

(Tatra pano header, all shots with lynx footprints, the snow struggle of Jan and Mark and the summit view with Felix)

Mark Hows

(Wolf on the first page)

All others from the guide and driver.

Useful links:

Youtube movie of the wolves, made by the (camera) hand of joiner Jan Gouwy:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRwZB34oxeE>

A more detailed report with the full trip list and daily intinerary is available on Mark Hows personal blog:

<http://www.hows.org.uk/inter/birds/2012trip/Poland/poland.htm>

So maybe....one day...

