

FOREWORD

1995 marked the 25-year anniversary of the re-introduction of the lynx (*Lynx lynx*) in the Swiss Alps. We celebrated this by organising an international symposium in Engelberg, Switzerland, from 7-9 December 1995. This symposium was not intended to be a forum for jubilation and triumph, but an occasion to critically review the re-introduction of the lynx into the Alps and to **ask** experts in the domain of re-introductions, monitoring, habitat evaluation, forestry, animal husbandry, and conceptual conservation to enhance our understanding of such a complex process as the recovery of a large carnivore population in a world dominated by humans.

The proceedings of this first conference on the Status and Conservation of the Alpine Lynx Population (SCALP) have been published by the Council of Europe (The re-introduction of the lynx into the Alps, Environmental encounters. No. 38, 1998, 157 pages). These proceedings, however, do not include the reports on the status of the lynx in the countries sharing the Alps. It was our hope to have all these reports published in a single document. This wish comes true with the present issue of *Hystrix*, the Italian Journal of Mammalogy. This issue incorporates the contributions of experts from France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Slovenia on the status of the lynx in the respective countries, and hence offers an overview of the status of the lynx in the entire Alpine arc.

All these status reports include data up to 1995. Since then the discussions and the controversy on the return of the lynx into the Alps have continued. Some lynx occurrences continue to dwindle. Others seem to be recovering. We do not know what the fate of the lynx in the Alps will be. We still need to learn a lot about the ecology of recovering carnivore populations, and even more about the socio-cultural framework of a lynx re-introduction. But one thing is certain: No country in the Alps will be able to conserve and manage its lynx population irrespective of what happens in its neighbouring countries. We hope that the SCALP initiative and especially the status reports compiled in this issue of *Hystrix* will be the start of an international co-operation with regard to lynx conservation in the entire Alpine arc.

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