

THE MEDIALOUP PROJECT GOES TO SPAIN

The third and final workshop of the project hosted representatives from the French departmental (FDC) and national (FNC) hunting federations', the *Louvèterie*, the French Big Game Hunters' Association (*Association Nationale des Chasseurs de Grand Gibier*), the Ministry of Ecology and FACE on 12 September at the Royal Spanish Hunting Federation.

The Spanish experiences in the fields of knowledge, management, and monitoring of the wolf were developed by specialists from different networks (a natural resource consultancy, technical assistants from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, the Spanish Foundation for the protection of hunting and wildlife, the Castile and Leon region, a representative of the National Coordination of livestock farmers).

Historically, the species was considered harmful and was therefore persecuted. **In 1970 the wolf became both protected and hunted.** Over the past 30 years, these protectionist measures, the rural exodus, increasing forest cover as well as populations of large ungulates (Chamois, deer, roe deer, wild boar), group behaviour, reproductive rates and the opportunistic nature of the species have led to an increase in the wolf population. Spain now has between **1700 and 2500 wolves** divided into three populations: a very important one in the northwest (especially the regions of Castilla y León, Galicia, Asturias), another in the Pyrenees (Catalonia) with some ten individuals of Italian lineage and a third in the south (Sierra Morena) with some thirty individuals.

The development of this wolf population is considered natural according to the experts consulted, and the question of releases is considered unrealistic. The Spanish State, with its national action plan written in 2008, is based on the Habitats Directive and implements a policy of **adaptive and decentralised management of its wolf population**. Its objective is to promote the expansion of the species towards the centre and east of the country and to reconnect isolated populations.

- ✓ To the north of the Duero River, the wolf is listed in Annex V of the Directive, it can be subject to management and off-take, including through hunting.
- ✓ To the south of the Duero, the wolf is listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive: the species is subject to strict protection. However Article 16 of



the Directive allows for derogations to be granted in order to prevent damage to livestock.

It is the Autonomous Regions and Communities who implement this national strategy on the ground by defining within their management plans the hunting plans or shot control, designed to keep damages at an acceptable level for livestock farmers.

According to the consulted experts, the wolf remains **poached** in Spain.

In the Castile and Leon Region, out of 1300 wolves attributed to the hunting plan for the period 2000-2012, more than 800 wolves were taken. Representatives of the federation of hunters, as consultants of the Ministry in charge of agriculture and the environment, as well as the environmental direction of the Castilla y Leon Region **regard the wolf as an asset for their territories**. The wolf provides hunting benefits, tourism benefits (for example the Wolf in the Sierra Culebra Centre) and therefore economic benefit. Wolf hunting is available from a dozen Euros for local hunters (driven hunts) to € 12,000 for a wolf (auction) for "foreign hunters" (stalking hunts for trophies), thus generating **financial flows which are reinvested by the communities/local authorities and administration within rural areas**. It is also seen as an ally in the regulation of large ungulates which generate road safety issues, significant economic damages to agriculture and forestry or health risks such as bovine tuberculosis which directly threatens livestock.

Regarding its impact on large ungulates and hunting, the consulted scientists agree that predation tends **to clip the high population densities (deer, roe deer, wild boar), whilst allowing the maintenance of a sustainable hunt of these species**.

In the Sierra Culebra Reserve for example, red deer and fallow deer were reintroduced to reduce damages to livestock by the wolf. The Deer population has experienced a sharp increase in numbers – so much so that it has reached densities that are amongst the highest in Europe and the finest specimens in Spain. On the other hand, the fallow deer has been completely eradicated by the wolf in this area. Overall, given the population density, the wolf is not considered an enemy in the hunting community. It must also be considered that the wolf has never disappeared from Spain and has always been hunted, at least in the north-west (particularly in the region of Zamora). Today, the main concerns of the hunters



and the administration are to reduce road accidents with big game and damages to agriculture.

The Ministry and the Regions seek to keep **damages at a socially and economically acceptable level for farmers. They pragmatically use several action-levers defined by the normative framework and local balances: hunting, control, protection, compensation.** Without considering the latter as the only solution to favour, the agricultural compensation system varies according to the Autonomous Communities: a system of direct compensation for damages; damages payments incurred by private insurances of farmers; indirect subsidy paid by communities/local authorities to support the costs of these private insurance.

A unique man-and-wolf story is being inscribed in Spain. Adaptive management of the species allows the establishment of local equilibriums socially, environmentally and economically.

ABOUT MEDIALOUP

The French National Hunters' Association FNC (Fédération Nationale des Chasseurs, FACE Member) received support from the Ministry of Ecology and the Foundation of the House of Hunting and Nature (Maison de la Chasse et de la Nature) to coordinate a mediation and communication project: Medialoup, to address the return of the wolf in France and Europe. FACE is part of the Steering Committee and coordinating the organisation of 3 workshops / fact finding missions by FACE Members, notably from Italy, Sweden and Spain.

For more information on the Medialoup project and these reporting workshops, visit the project website on <http://docs.chasseurdefrance.com/Intraloup/index.htm>.

