

Recovery of large carnivores in Europe's modern human-dominated landscapes

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1. Guillaume Chapron^{1,*†},
2. Petra Kaczensky²,
3. John D. C. Linnell³,
4. Manuela von Arx⁴,
5. Djuro Huber⁵,
6. Henrik Andrén¹,
7. José Vicente López-Bao^{1,6,†},
8. Michal Adamec⁷,
9. Francisco Álvares⁸,
10. Ole Anders⁹,
11. Linas Balčiauskas¹⁰,
12. Vaidas Balys¹¹,
13. Péter Bedő¹²,
14. Ferdinand Bego¹³,
15. Juan Carlos Blanco¹⁴,
16. Urs Breitenmoser^{4, 15},
17. Henrik Brøseth³,
18. Luděk Bufka¹⁶,
19. Raimonda Bunikyte¹⁷,
20. Paolo Ciucci¹⁸,
21. Alexander Dutsov¹⁹,
22. Thomas Engleder²⁰,
23. Christian Fuxjäger²¹,
24. Claudio Groff²²,
25. Katja Holmala²³,
26. Bledi Hoxha²⁴,
27. Yorgos Iliopoulos²⁵,
28. Ovidiu Ionescu^{26, 27},
29. Jasna Jeremić²⁸,
30. Klemen Jerina²⁹,
31. Gesa Kluth³⁰,
32. Felix Knauer²,
33. Ilpo Kojola³¹,
34. Ivan Kos²⁹,
35. Miha Krofel²⁹,
36. Jakub Kubala³²,
37. Saša Kunovac³³,
38. Josip Kusak⁵,

39. Miroslav Kutal^{34, 35},
40. Olof Liberg¹,
41. Aleksandra Majić²⁹,
42. Peep Männil³⁶,
43. Ralph Manz⁴,
44. Eric Marboutin³⁷,
45. Francesca Marucco³⁸,
46. Dime Melovski^{39, 40},
47. Kujtim Mersini⁴¹,
48. Yorgos Mertzanis²⁵,
49. Robert W. Mysłajek⁴²,
50. Sabina Nowak⁴³,
51. John Odden³,
52. Janis Ozolins⁴⁴,
53. Guillermo Palomero⁴⁵,
54. Milan Paunović⁴⁶,
55. Jens Persson¹,
56. Hubert Potočnik²⁹,
57. Pierre-Yves Quenette⁴⁷,
58. Georg Rauer²,
59. Ilka Reinhardt³⁰,
60. Robin Rigg¹²,
61. Andreas Ryser⁴,
62. Valeria Salvatori⁴⁸,
63. Tomaž Skrbinišek²⁹,
64. Aleksandar Stojanov³⁹,
65. Jon E. Swenson^{3, 49},
66. László Szemethy⁵⁰,
67. Aleksandër Trajçe²⁴,
68. Elena Tsingarska-Sedefcheva¹⁹,
69. Martin Váňa³⁵,
70. Rauno Veeroja³⁶,
71. Petter Wabakken⁵¹,
72. Manfred Wöfl⁵²,
73. Sybille Wöfl⁵³,
74. Fridolin Zimmermann⁴,
75. Diana Zlatanova⁵⁴,
76. Luigi Boitani¹⁸

+ See all authors and affiliations

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- **RE: Costs of European Wolf and Human Coexistence**

- **L. David Mech**, Senior Research Scientist, USGS, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center

(2 March 2016)

Costs of European Wolf and Human Coexistence

L. David Mech, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, 8711 – 37th St. SE, Jamestown, ND 58401-7317

In “Recovery of large carnivores in Europe’s modern human-dominated landscapes” (19 December 2014, p. 1517), G. Chapron and 75 other authors documented that large carnivores (LC), including gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) can “share the same landscape,” with humans. The authors distinguish between North America’s separation model of LC conservation and the European coexistence model and suggest that the latter is applicable to “other areas of the world.” The authors mention LC-caused social conflict, but the article implies a level of compatibility between humans and wolves that is debatable. Wolves have only begun to recolonize most of western Europe and are rapidly proliferating, so the full extent of conflicts lies ahead. Conflict response will vary by culture and wolf distribution and density, but even now, wolf damages total 8 million euros annually (1) fostering such animosity that French shepherds kidnapped two government authorities, demanding that more wolves be killed (2). Sweden and Finland are at legal odds with the European Union over controlling wolves (3), and in Norway thousands of people are seeking to kill wolves (4). Persecution and poaching of wolves is common in each country (1).

Yes; wolves and Europeans do coexist, and, so far, the environmental values of the urban majority have predominated (except for widespread poaching). However, it is important for other areas considering coexistence rather than separation to understand that coexistence will only be possible at the cost of considerable conflict and civil unrest, urban-rural polarization, and anthropogenic wolf mortality (legal, illegal, and accidental) (5). Because all cultures will not necessarily accept such costs, regions considering the European coexistence model of wolf conservation must be accurately informed about them.

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