

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats



Standing Committee

Recommendation No. 10 (1988) of the standing committee concerning the protection of the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*)

(Adopted by the Standing Committee on 9 December 1988)

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the convention,

Having regard to the aims of the convention to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats;

Considering that the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) is a fundamental part of the European natural heritage for its symbolic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational, aesthetic and intrinsic value;

Recalling that Article 1, paragraph 2, requires that Contracting Parties give particular emphasis to the conservation of endangered and vulnerable species;

Considering that the brown bear is seriously endangered throughout western Europe, having become extinct in the countries of ten Contracting Parties and being reduced to relic populations in some others ;

Considering that habitat loss, excessive hunting in the past, and present poaching have been the most significant causes of its extinction in Western Europe;

Considering that the areas where the brown bear lives and also those areas which have the possibility of being recolonised by the species and may sustain stable populations (hereinafter referred to as bear areas) are of paramount biological importance and should be conserved and transmitted to future generations without irreversible degradation;

Referring to Recommendation N° R (88) 11 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on ancient woodlands and semi-natural woodlands,

Recommends that Contracting Parties:

1. Strengthen the basis of legal protection of the brown bear by making or enforcing specific legal instruments to enable the improvement of the status of the species and a more efficient treatment of the details of its conservation;
2. Pay particular attention to habitat conservation by adopting preventive measures in bear areas, integrating them if required in existing networks of protected areas ;
3. Assess the impact on bear populations of projects of public works, reforestation, touristic uses or other developments in bear areas ; avoid as far as possible that public works affect these areas;
4. Give priority to conservation activities in contact areas – both existing and potential – between different population nuclei, avoiding as far as possible the fragmentation of the area of distribution of brown bears and the resulting demographic and genetic isolation of populations ;

5. Moderate, as far as possible, the access to bear areas for recreational activities, and the opening of new tracks that may be used without restrictions ; consider closing down tracks permanently, including those that are built for a precise temporary use ;
6. Encourage the use of indigenous tree species in the reafforestation of bear areas and the avoidance of inappropriate forestry techniques; favour as far as possible the return of forest to conditions closer to the natural state ;
7. Strengthen the surveillance of bear areas, paying particular attention to the fight against poaching and the use of poisoned baits, snares and traps, and penalising transgressors in an exemplary manner;
8. Establish, wherever absent, compensation schemes for damages caused by bears to the cultures, beehives and cattle of the rural population, improving the payment of compensation where such schemes already function, for instance by simplifying and accelerating administrative procedures and increasing significantly the amounts paid, wherever needed;
9. Favour the development of systems aimed at reducing the damages caused by bears to the rural economy, for instance by protecting private beehives or by offering alternative feeding sources through the planting of cultures or the installation of beehives for bears;
10. Promote the establishment of funds to be used for financing conservation work, payment of compensation for damages caused by bears, and in the socio-economic development of rural populations in bear areas ; these funds could channel aid through specific contracts with municipalities of bear areas, requiring in return environmental protection measures to favour the species;
11. Promote new management practices based on the promotion, on a European scale, of products from bear areas in which significant efforts are being made to protect the species;
12. Strengthen collaboration with the populations of bear areas, the scientific community, agricultural and conservation organisations on the discussion and solution of problems affecting the species;
13. Undertake the organisation of awareness campaigns aimed at the populations of bear areas and other target groups (hunters, excursionists, schoolchildren);
14. Encourage research on all aspects of the biology of the brown bear and other fields that may permit a more efficient management of the species ; carry out, in particular, the monitoring of the size, biological characteristics and geographical distribution of bear populations;
15. Pay particular attention to small populations and those of low density, controlling also their genetic viability;
16. Whenever any introduction of new individuals to small populations is considered, determine in advance the need of such action and carry out extensive genetic studies of both the receiving population and the individuals to be translocated, in order to avoid possible negative effects of introducing individuals from genetically different stocks;
17. Promote co-ordination at national and international levels among all authorities concerned with the conservation of the brown bear.