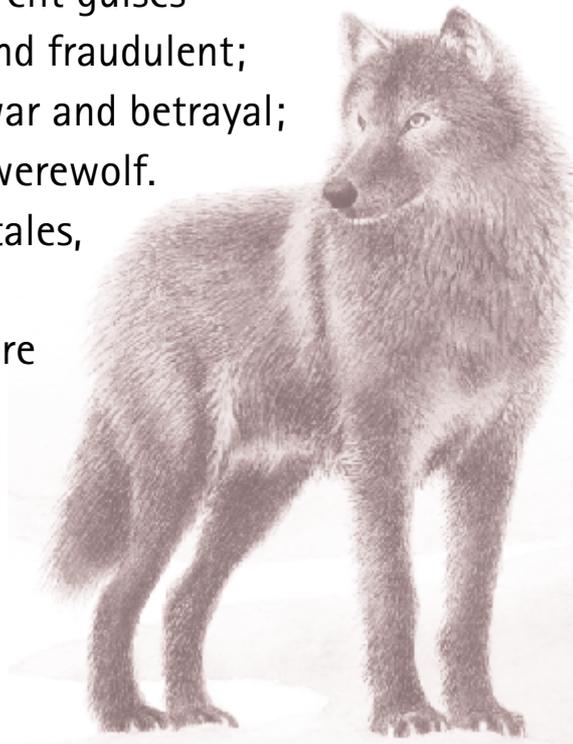




## Secondary supplement

# Europe's Carnivores

Over the centuries, writers have portrayed the wolf in many different guises – as greedy and fraudulent; a symbol of war and betrayal; as Devil and werewolf. Even in fairy tales, the wolf is a savage creature who is out to cause death and destruction.



### ACTIVITY 1

## Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?

What do pupils think of when we say the word 'carnivore'? Ask pupils to come up with their own definition of the word, then check it against one in a dictionary or thesaurus. The following prompts may help:

- What makes a creature a carnivore?
- What do you expect to be the characteristics of a carnivore – physical or otherwise?

What species come to mind? Make a class list. Spend a few moments brainstorming words we use when we think of carnivores and record this on the chalkboard or flipchart, labelled List 1.

Stories about bears and the fear and respect that they inspired may be seen in the cave paintings that were made more than 10,000 years ago. Anyone killing a bear was sure to be seen as a great hunter with tales of his exploits passing into folklore. In recent years, of course, the bear has been rehabilitated – at least in the pages of children's literature – but real bears, such as the brown bears of Europe, are isolated and threatened by loss of habitat and food supplies.

The classroom is a good place in which to help young people question stereotypical images and challenge their own perceptions. Pupils can be encouraged to express their feelings through talking and writing, and to develop empathy. The theme of European carnivores offers a topical focus for such work; work which we hope will lead to a better understanding of the real nature of creatures such as the wolf, the bear and the lynx.

The following activities are 'graded' in their approach to the issues and the suggested pupil outputs. The 'Follow-up' activities are not intended as 'optional extras' but offer valuable extensions to the initial activity idea, practising pupils' creative writing skills and developing their understanding of 'audience'.

## ACTIVITY 2

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### I thought I saw a pussy cat a-creeping up on me...

Ask pupils to think about carnivores closer to home – our pet cats and dogs, for example. Again, brainstorm words we might associate with these animals and record them as List 2. Now share with pupils the statistics on kills of birds, small mammals and reptiles in the UK by domestic cats – see Resource 2. In the light of this, review and compare the characteristics of carnivores the students discussed earlier in Lists 1 and 2. Does this change their attitudes towards wild carnivores?

#### Follow-up

Invite pupils to write their own poem about a wild carnivore or a carnivore at home. The brainstorm lists could be their starting point, and they might wish to experiment with different formulas such as the haiku, or poetic devices such as kenning. Alternatively, they might wish to play with the idea of 'The carnivore in my home'.

### Haiku...

is a three-line poem of Japanese origin which consists of one line of five syllables, one of seven syllables, and one more of five. For example:

*A tail-swishing cat  
Lies waiting in the bushes  
Birds peck unaware.*

### Kenning...

is a metaphorical phrase or hyphenated word, for example 'swan-road' could be used to denote a river. An example is given below:

*My dog  
Ankle-biter  
Bone-cruncher  
Night-howler  
Rabbit-catcher*

## ACTIVITY 3

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### Behind the mask

Revisit the list of carnivores pupils came up with in Activity 1. Where would they expect to find them? Mention Europe, if no-one else does. Many pupils might be surprised to realise that there are still wild large carnivores in Europe. What sort of carnivores do pupils think they might be? Assuming they do not already feature in your lists, introduce the names of the following European carnivores which are all featured in WWF's European Carnivore campaign: grey wolf, brown bear, lynx, otter, wolverine.

- Where in Europe might they live?
- What sort of threats might they offer to humans?
- What sort of threats might humans offer to them?

Hand out photocopies of the Thought Square and information on European carnivores – see Resources 3 and 4 (you may need to enlarge them). Ask students to undertake research on one of these species and to fill in the squares. Additional information on European carnivores can be found on WWF's website: [www.wwf-uk.org](http://www.wwf-uk.org)

Pupils can cut out the names or pictures of their chosen animals and stick them over the shape in the middle. Under 'Description', pupils should include not only physical appearance but also characteristics of the animal, for example wolves are social creatures with a strong hierarchy and sense of family bonding. The 'Threats' box is for threats to the carnivore from humans. It might be direct hunting, or habitat loss, or something else.

#### Follow-up

Completed Thought Squares could be stuck onto A3 or flipchart sheets, and illustrated all around with pupils' own artwork or pictures relating to the physical appearance of their chosen creature – the power of the brown bear; the gleaming eye of the wolf; the coat of the lynx; the lithe wetness of the otter. An impressive class display could be made up from pupils' Thought Squares and from their poems under the heading of 'Fact or Fiction?'.

## ACTIVITY 4

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### Seeing through different eyes

Pupils should now have a better knowledge of some of Europe's carnivores but what would they do if they met a wild carnivore? And how might they feel if they had to live near them? The following role play should help pupils to explore the different opinions of people who *do* live near a wild carnivore, and one which has suffered a very bad press – the wolf.

Photocopy, cut up and distribute copies of the role cards on Resource 1. You will also need one person to chair the meeting: they will need to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and to record the outcome. (Formal meeting notes could be produced if there is time.) Introduce the following scenario to the pupils:

*"An international agency is keen to support environmental projects in upland areas of Europe. They have money to spend. They have called a community meeting of interested parties to discuss the issues. What will the community decide?"*

## ACTIVITY 4 continued

After the role play, remember to debrief pupils: how did it feel to be in role? Who did they think held the most power?

### Follow-up

Pupils could describe the content and outcome of the meeting in any of the following formats:

- a newspaper article for the local or national press
- a feature in a children's magazine
- a piece for radio or TV news.

Alternatively they might wish to produce campaigning leaflets or posters to persuade the groups against the wolf in the meeting to reconsider their position. Remind them that to have any chance of success, they will need to consider and address the points made by these groups – it's not enough simply to tell people to stop chasing carnivores away from their animals, or to stop hunting them, or to stop the pollution that kills others.

## ACTIVITY 5

### Turning the tables

Pupils could be asked to write an essay with the title "Men! The only animal in the world to fear!" (*Mountain Lion*, D. H. Lawrence). Their essay should express their thoughts and feelings about the plight of Europe's carnivores. They should also include descriptions of the creatures and their habitats, some explanation of why they are under threat and an idea of what can be done. Students could also include their own views for conservation.

Older or more able pupils could be encouraged to express deeper and more thoughtful ideas about our relationship with the environment in general, and European carnivores in particular. They could consider the traditional antipathy of humans to carnivores – where are the points of conflict? Settlement and agriculture – particularly stock-rearing are obvious ones, but perhaps there is something much deeper, that goes back to a time when we shared the forests with many creatures, and had to compete directly with the carnivores, and perhaps we were prey for carnivores.

## RESOURCE 1

### Role cards

**Local farmers against the wolf** – You already lose too many sheep to wolves – they are nothing but a pest. You are not appeased by government payments for lost stock – as a farmer, it goes against the grain to accept the death of any member of your flock. You think that the area would be much better if all the wolves were killed. If people want to see them, they can go to a zoo.

**Representatives of an international conservation group** – You believe that wolves have as much right to live in their traditional habitats as humans. You have come across research which suggests that many sheep losses are attributable to domestic or feral dogs. You feel sure it is possible to live alongside wolves – careful management should reduce sheep losses and the government could pay for lost stock. Besides, surely we should be prepared to lose a few sheep if it means ensuring the survival of the wolf? You know that money is available from an international agency to help environmental projects.

**Hotel and restaurant owners; shop keepers** – You have heard that wildlife holidays are growing in popularity. You believe your business might benefit from increased tourism if there were more wolves in the area for tourists to see.

**Government official from the agriculture department** – You are under pressure from some farmers to eradicate wolves from the area. Others are calling for payments to farmers who lose sheep to wolves and other wild animals. You are worried that there will not be enough money in the treasury to cope.

**Local councillor** – You are aware of the farmers' concerns but the tourist lobby is forceful and you can see how the tourist trade might boost the local economy. You also know that money is available from an international agency to help environmental projects.

**Local landowners for the wolf** – You can remember when there were many more wolves in the area. You were sometimes scared of them, but weren't really bothered by them. You believe other creatures have a right to live and want to leave a rich environment to your grandchildren. You know that money is available from an international agency to help environmental projects.

## RESOURCE 2



Nick Berringer

### What the cat brought in

Between 1st April and 31st August 1997, *Mammal action*, the youth section of The Mammal Society, conducted a survey to assess the affects domestic cats were having on local wildlife. The capture records of 964 cats were received, amounting to more than 14,000 prey items.

These included:

**3,383 birds**

(13 bird species were recorded including house sparrows, robins, blackbirds and thrushes but also yellow wagtail, bullfinch, nuthatch, goldcrest, woodpeckers and even swallows!)

**4,196 mice**

**1,949 voles**

**946 shrews**

**162 rats**

**30 bats**

Extrapolations from these statistics indicate that every year the domestic cat could be taking up to **30 MILLION** animals and birds!

If the cats in the survey are 'average' in their habits, then the situation for reptiles and amphibians is particularly alarming. Every year, cats could be getting through:

**4 million frogs**

**700,000 slow worms**

**370,000 lizards**

**180,000 toads**

**170,000 newts**

**80,000 grass snakes.**

They could also be responsible for 230,000 bats and 1.5 million harvest mice – both of which already have a limited distribution.

## RESOURCE 3

### THOUGHT SQUARE

<p>DESCRIPTION:</p>	<p>HABITATS:</p>
<p>THREATS:</p>	<p>SOLUTIONS:</p>

Wolf

Otter

Wolverine

Lynx

Bear

## RESOURCE 4

### Key facts about European Carnivores

The Large Carnivore Initiative in Europe is a conservation project supported by WWF and partner organisations in 17 European countries. It has four levels of approach:

1

Protecting large carnivores and their habitats

2

Considering large carnivores when developing local areas

3

Supporting carnivores through laws and financial arrangements

4

Working with the local populations to accept the existence of carnivores.

#### Distribution

- Most threatened cat species in the world
- Only found in isolated pockets in Spain and Portugal
- Estimated population loss of 80% between 1960 and 1990
- Perhaps 800 left in the wild.

#### Biology

- Only recently established as a separate species
- Appearance: heavily spotted
- About half the size of the Eurasian lynx
- Prey: almost exclusively rabbits, but some birds, rodents and young deer
- Prefers scrubland interspersed with open areas
- Generally solitary
- Most active at twilight
- Kittens born in April

#### Threats

- Hunters – seen as vermin or trophies
- Protected since 1970, but still hunted and trapped accidentally
- Loss of habitat
- Road kills
- Rabbit disease led to drop on available prey
- Fragmented communities of lynx means limited genetic variation.

#### Conservation solution

- Designed 'lynx' areas
- Ban roads in 'lynx' areas
- Promote land use which will preserve scrubland
- Hunting and trapping prohibited in 'lynx areas'
- Careful monitoring of lynx population
- Habitat corridors to allow separated lynx groups to meet.

#### PROSPECTS

Unless something is done, the Iberian Lynx will disappear within fifty years. This would be very embarrassing for environmental policies in Europe. Action urgently needed.

## Grey Wolf

#### Biology

- Second largest predator in Europe
- Adult male weighs 40kg
- Can be 150cm in length
- Eats what it can find, but hunts mainly moose and deer
- Lives in a wide range of habitats
- Social animals with strong bonds within packs
- The dominant male and female are usually the only two wolves of the pack to breed.

#### Threats

- Poor image based on misunderstanding and fear
- Human interaction usually ends in conflict
- Some countries permit unrestricted hunting of wolves
- Some countries license hunting of wolves, but in unplanned way
- Poaching probably most serious threat
- Human encroachment on wolf habitat
- Lack of conservation planning for wolves.

#### Conservation solution

- WWF and other organisations and experts from all over Europe sharing knowledge and funding to protect the wolf
- Nine-year research project underway to find out more about wolves
- Habitat restoration projects and 'wolf-corridors' to allow small populations to meet
- Local people need to be involved in wolf management projects
- Education programmes to counter myths about wolves
- Livestock protection schemes with dogs and compensation
- Change in Common Agricultural Policy to assist return of wolves.

#### PROSPECTS

General positive future for wolves, but some populations so small that their survival is in doubt. Humans and wolves can live nearby each other.

#### Distribution

- Once ranged across most of Northern Hemisphere
- By end of 19th Century, wolves exterminated in all central northern European countries
- Today mostly found in eastern Europe, Romania and all the Balkans
- Population recovering in some areas of Europe
- Between 15,500 and 18,000 wolves in Europe today.

### Distribution

- Occurs in Europe, Asia and North America
- 14,000 brown bears in Europe
- 36,000 brown bears in Russia
- Main European brown bear population in Carpathian Mountains and north-eastern Europe
- Some very small populations in southern, central and western Europe.

### Biology

- Males weigh 140-320kg
- Omnivores – eat anything from nuts to fruit to insects and meat (hunts or eats carcasses)
- Bears are not efficient hunters
- Will take young moose or unprotected livestock
- Hibernate in late autumn for between three and seven months
- Active day and night
- Have huge ranges.

### Distribution

- Formerly widespread in the UK, went through rapid decline in late 1950s
- By 1980, only located in south-west of England and borders of Scotland and Wales
- In recent years, has spread out from strongholds to many of its former localities.

### Biology

- Live on banks of rivers, lakes and sea coasts (where access to fresh water)
- Adapted to semi-aquatic lifestyle
- Thick, sleek coat protects from cold
- Broad tail allows them to move through water at speed of 10kph
- Eats mainly fish, occasionally small mammals, water birds and frogs.
- Home ranges may include up to 40km of waterside
- Generally solitary.

### Threats

- General negative attitudes to brown bears based on fear of attack
- Loss of habitat and food sources
- Logging and forest clearance
- Altered ecosystems through planting of exotic conifers
- Traffic casualties
- Road building isolates populations
- Poachers kill cubs in some areas
- Increased demands for bear parts for traditional Chinese medicine.

### Conservation solution

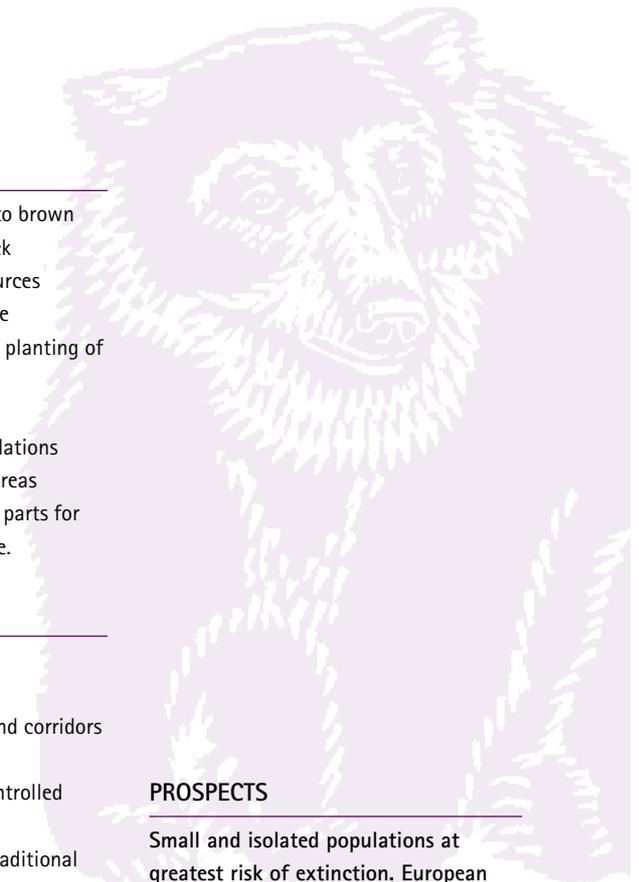
- Laws protecting bears must be enforced
- Identify key bear habitats and corridors to protect them
- Forest management and controlled logging to be encouraged
- Encourage farmers to use traditional stock guarding techniques
- Compensation scheme for lost livestock
- Public education about bear ecology and human safety
- More research into population dynamics, genetics and bear habitat.

### Threats

- Hunting and persecution
- Distribution of riverside habitat
- Increased pollution from chemicals such as organo-chlorine pesticides and PCBs which have affected reproductive and immune systems
- Declining fish-stocks.

### Conservation solution

- Protected by national and international legislation
- Biodiversity Challenge – restoring otters to locations where they have been recorded since 1960 by the target date of 2010
- Establishment of 'otter havens'
- Recreation of historical wetlands to aid otters moving from location to location
- Research into present distribution and potential future spread
- Land management to encourage more wetland and grassland habitats.



### PROSPECTS

Small and isolated populations at greatest risk of extinction. European brown bears are adaptable so can survive if human pressure not too great.

## Brown Bear

## Otter

### PROSPECTS

PCB levels in freshwater foodchains have declined resulting in increasing numbers of otters. However, otters are under significant threat of road death. Bridges must be made otter friendly to reduce need for otters to cross roads.

