FROM CAPTIVITY TO FREEDOM - SOME BREEDING FACTORS AFFECTING THE ADAPTABILITY OF REINTRODUCED ANIMALS ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE EURASIAN LYNX AND THE IBERIAN LYNX

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The protection of endangered species is one of the most serious problems of modern biology and ecology. Thereare active and passive forms of species conservation. Reintroduction is an example of active conservation and involves to reintroduce individuals of a given species to the areas where they used to occur. Individuals that are released to the new environment may come from captivity or from wild populations (the process of so-called translocation). Many researchers argue that individuals from captivity are less likely to adapt to the wild than those that have been translocated. The Eurasian lynx (Lynx lynx) and the Iberian lynx (Lynx pardinus) are two species of the family of felids (Felidae) that have been reintroduced several times in different countries, with different effects, however, depending on the reintroduction programme,the individuals releasedcame from captivity, from wild populations or were released using both methods at the same time.
The aim of the study was to determine the effect of selected breeding factors on the adaptation of reintroduced individuals from the species Eurasian lynx and Iberian lynx.
The study was carried out by analysing reintroduction programmes for the Eurasian lynx in Poland (Piska Forest, Kampinos National Park), Switzerland (Alps) and France (Vosges), as well as the Iberian lynx in Spain. Moreover, a survey was conducted with scientists who participated in a given reintroduction programme or were involved in the biology of the above species.
The majority of scientists claimed that translocated animals were more likely to adapt to the new environment than those from captivity. There are a number of factors, such as feeding, age or behaviour, whichmay more or less influence their adaptation to the wild. The majority of scientists claimed that training before releasing animals to the wild had an impact on lynxes' hunting success. It is also recognised that the prey species used in such training may also influence adaptation processes.
This issue is vital, because animals derived from captivity can significantly enrich the gene pool of wild populations, and are also essential in situations where translocations cannot be carried out. The results of the research have shown that the proper preparation of animals for life in the wild can be crucial for the adaptation process. The release of unprepared or improperly prepared animals into the wild may result in the inability to rebuild a new population.

Keywords: breeding, Eurasian lynx, Iberian lynx, reintroduction

Acknowledgement
Research funded by the project "The best of the best! 4.0" as a part of the Knowledge, Education and Development Operational Program co-financed by the European Social Fund.