

# Habitat fragmentation and degradation

Lynxes are conservative species, closely dependent on extensive forest areas that meet the relevant habitat requirements of the species.

Due to its large habitat requirements, lynx population density is very low, whereby even the largest forest complexes (such as the Bialowieza Forest) have insufficient space to maintain a viable population. The ability to move freely in accessible environment, conducive to maintaining genetic diversity and adequate number of individuals in various parts of the population is necessary to the survival of lynx in Poland. Forest corridors provide a migration route for lynx. The stability of the Polish population depends on both, the local possibilities of migration (between the forest complexes), as well as on its communication with the source populations in the Carpathians and Eastern European countries. Preservation of ecological connectivity in Poland, however, is seriously threatened due to lack of legal protection of wildlife corridors, chaotic spatial planning policy at the municipal level, intensive development of transport network and the implementation of large-scale investments in the existing dense habitats of these animals. In Poland, a significant threat to the Carpathian population of lynx is the development of ski investments in these animal refuges. In environment with high degree of forest fragmentation, low population density and slow reproductive rate affect the low potential for regeneration of the population.