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| Title of the example of good practice | Developing a network of young Lynx ambassadors in Albanian PAs |
| Categories | Education; wildlife |
| Organization | Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) |
| Partners | 25 High schools |
| Area of Activity / Location | Puke-Mirdite region and Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park (NP) |
| Country | Albania |
| Degree/form of protection | National Park |
| Scope of implementation | Local/regional |
| Time period required to achieve a solution | 7 months |
| Number of employees | 2 persons part time |
| Budget (EUR) | 15.000 € |
| Funding source | Euronatur, MAVA Foundation, IUCN |
| More information about the project | |
| Contact person | Klaudja Koci |
| Achievements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 schools participated • 60 ambassadors educated • More than 600 peer-coached children • First time that Lynx became a part of promotional material of a municipality (Munella). • Municipality in Munella region started lobbying for environmental protection. • Lynx is on the Shebenik-Jabllanica NP logo. • Shebenik-Jabllanica NP is using a network of ambassadors for their educational activities. • Shebenik-Jabllanica now has a person dedicated to education and communication activities. • 3 ambassadors which started working as local guides. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young ambassadors had various initiatives on raising awareness about Lynx in their communities – fair on the main square, sharing materials, paintings, poetry, local campaigns, social media. |
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| Problem/opportunity | |
| Problem you wish to solve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of illegal activities inside and around PA • Conflict between locals and wildlife. • Lack of understanding of PA values • Unsustainable practices |
| Opportunities you wish to seize | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of Balkan lynx in selected Albanian PAs • Support from the schools in and around PAs • Young people making an impact in the community |
| Planning | |
| Key pre-requisites for success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of Balkan Lynx in the PA. • Support from Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment. • Permission to work from the Regional Education Directory • Support from local schools. • Permission from the parents for their children to participate in the programme. |
| How did you come up with the idea? | Klaudja Koci, PPNEA staff member, studied different approaches to informal teaching on her Masters programme for Outdoor Education. In 2015, together with US Peace corps volunteer at PPNEA, who was working at the Yellowstone NP, developed an education programme. |
| Is the idea part of a broader strategy? | <p>NGO's Balkan Lynx recovery programme education strategy.</p> <p>Teacher's training is a priority for the Western Balkans education systems on the road towards EU accession.</p> <p>Ministry needs to partner with organizations in order to</p> |

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| | make progress for non-formal education training of teachers. |
| What are the roles of the partners? | <p>Puke-Mirdite region – supported the initiative</p> <p>Shebenik-Jabllanica county– cooperated with Agro environmental local organization (Agri-En) and the National Park staff.</p> <p>Agri-En, with the support of NP staff, assisted with the practical/logistical side of the project, facilitated the contacts with schools, got permission from the regional directorates of education.</p> <p>NP staff and Agri-En participated in the trainings of the two high school groups and educational sessions in all other local schools in the region.</p> |
| Implementation | |
| Key stages – from idea to actualisation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Designing the training program 2. Contacting the Regional Directorates of Education, and selecting schools 3. Conducting the trainings at school with the selected groups of students 4. Conducting the peer education sessions of the new group of Ambassadors with their younger peers in other schools in the region 5. Field Trip with young Ambassadors to Munella Mountain and Shebenik-Jabllanica NP to visit the home of Balkan Lynx (Munella Mt) and other important habitats in Shebenik. |
| Budget per stages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 training sessions (2*2 days), expert and material was 2.600€. • 7 field trips of ambassadors to other schools for dissemination of knowledge was 2.500€. • 2 field expeditions with ambassadors to national park 1.500€. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange visit of ambassadors between two national parks (Shebenik and Divjake Karavasta) 500€. • Celebration of Shebenik-Jabllanica day 800€. • Salary and other 2.100€ (2 persons). |
| Which actions have you undertaken? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed training programme concept idea. • Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment to support the initiative. • Regional Education Directory gives a permission to work. • Developed the full training programme package and different promotion materials. • Chose the PAs according to the presence of the endangered species • Approached the directors of local schools in selected PAs (2 secondary schools per area) and agreed on cooperation. • Met with biology teachers in selected schools and agreed on criteria/characteristics for choosing students to become ambassadors. • Approximately 15 students were chosen per school age 16-17 years • Received permission from the parents on their children participation in the programme (teachers mainly do it). • Conducted 2 day training – one day theory (focus on the endangered species important for that area, values of area, connection between wildlife and people, threats, ways to overcome conflict and threats, how to raise awareness), one day field work (present values of nature in the field by experts, to see problems in PA). • Peer to peer learning approach – the team of ambassadors (one trained group) goes to other |

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| | <p>nearby schools (25 all together) to teach their peers, with the support of the biology teacher and PPNEA-a team, education/communication officer from the Shebenik-Jabllanica PA staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPNEA-a team starts a new cycle with new school and teaching new ambassadors |
| How did you select the local stakeholders? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have chosen regions and PAs according to the presence of the endangered species (Lynx/ Shebenik-Jabllanica, Munella area) which have a history of conflicts with the wildlife (illegal activities). • We have chosen 2 schools in each PAs and Lynx Ambassadors to disseminated knowledge in all other schools in the selected PA and region. • Approximately 15 students (number for a manageable group) were chosen per school age 16-17 years because of their skills, knowledge, capability to understand the problematics and to act, and remain in the area for 2 more years. • Local stakeholders in Shebenik-Jabllanice NP and NGO Agri-En were chosen on the basis of previous working experience. • In Puke-Mirdita region we developed a partnership with the schools and local community network (nature lovers, environmental and forestry engineers, biology teachers) in the field. |
| Which vulnerable groups have you included and in what way? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools involved are located in a very poor economic area and youth participants had fewer opportunities to access this type of training or activities. • Teachers were mostly women, the gender overview of Lynx ambassadors. • In both regions, parents of the students expressed concern for their children going on field trips, because this activity was not familiar to them. This applies |

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| | <p>especially to female students. However, they trusted the teacher's staff that accompanied the students and they were willing to cooperate.</p> |
| Which communication activities have you implemented and which channels have you used? | <p>Internally - We used email and social media (Facebook group) to communicate with the school students but also direct phone calls to the schools' staff, NP staff and Agr-en local partner. Regular face to face meetings took place as well.</p> <p>Externally – PPNEA web page, social media.</p> |
| How have you included the activities of reducing and alleviating climate change into your work? | <p>Lynx ambassadors had some basic education on climate change.</p> |
| Challenges during implementation | <p>Technical:</p> <p>Because of the weather conditions and difficult terrain in Shebenik-Jabllanica, sometimes we had to postpone the nature field trips with students . This project was implemented in the period of December 2016- June 2016.</p> |
| Change | |
| How was the negative environmental impact reduced? | <p>Ambassadors are becoming watch dogs in the areas. They are reporting on different environmental crimes in their area.</p> <p>Different projects in schools about importance of PA, wildlife protection, and threats are presented in local community and thus increasing awareness about them.</p> |
| Positive economic (E) and social (S) change in: | <p>The public sector – local:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynx became a part of promotional material of the municipality Munella. • Municipality in Munella region is lobbying for environmental protection. |
| | <p>PA management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynx in the PA logo (Shebenik-Jabllanica), strong involvement in PPNEA activities. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through various environmental education modules/programs for ambassadors Shebenik-Jabllanica NP staff was also educated. • Using network of ambassadors for their educational activities. • Shebenik-Jabllanica now has a person dedicated to education and communication (media and local communities) activities. |
| | <p>The business sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of stuffed animals that local restaurants are putting in their interior one local restaurant painted a Lynx and its natural habitat on their wall. Small step in raising awareness. |
| | <p>The local community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic: three ambassadors, who started working as eco-tour guides, are now organizing tours in connection to biodiversity values of the Park. • Social: increased awareness of local community about PA values. Ambassadors had initiatives (painting, poetry, local campaigns, sharing leaflets to local community, social media) after the end of the education and are still influencing local communities. • Teachers in local schools have raised their capacities and improved their educational programme. |
| Replication and recommendations | |
| What are the key things essential to replication? | <p>Support from the educational management body.</p> <p>Interest of teachers and students.</p> <p>Teacher's training is a priority for the Western Balkans education systems towards the EU accession. Ministry needs to partner with civil society organizations in order to make progress for non-formal education training of teachers.</p> |

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| Is there anything you would do differently? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time dedication of one person during the entire project, including budget for staff time not only activities. • Choose the same amount of female and male volunteers when working. • Start with the Lynx ambassador education in March till November, because of the weather conditions. • Promote environmental jobs for women. At the moment, it is mainly a man's job, women don't want to work in the field. • Implement communication activities, staff time and budget for local promotion and raising awareness (perception on the importance of wildlife in their area, human induced fires, reducing logging and illegal hunting) |
| What is the key element for project sustainability? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include (biology) teachers in schools, they were mediators between PPNEA and partners and they will continue to educate other generations afterwards. • Train all schools around protected areas where Lynx has been seen. • Motivation of students/ambassadors after the end of the programme. • Actively involving ambassadors in PPNEAs other project to keep them active and not to lose their support. They became new supporters for Lynx, national parks, PPNEA and environment protection in Albania. |
| Where do you see this idea being replicable? | I could see this approach replicated in other protected areas throughout the country where there is Lynx and other endangered species (pelican, Egyptian vultures), and we plan to include this in future application funding. |
| What are your recommendations for policy improvements? | Development of education programmes in protected areas (their management plans). |

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| | <p>Improve PA staff competencies for educational activities.</p> <p>Large carnivores' recovery and education plan part of the PAs management plans.</p> |
| <p>What are the areas for which you'd like to know about the examples of good practice?</p> | <p>How to involve different stakeholders - women</p> |