

Project Update: January 2003

We focused on seven large mammalian species as representatives of biodiversity which, due to their large body size and sometimes solitary life, demand for vast areas, often clash with people and respond very sensitively to human effects: leopard (*Panthera pardus*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), bezoar goat (*Capra aegagrus*), moufflon (*Ovis ammon*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*).

In our monthly field trips, all sites with evident human activities were recorded for geographical position by hand-held GPS device and further used for extensive GIS mapping and statistical analysis. As in the summer-autumn period human activities are most active throughout Armenia due to the maximum amounts of mature grass for livestock, edible biomass for people and honey-bearing vegetation for apiculture, we have arbitrarily supposed that this study embraces most of locally existing human sites and activities and thus provides a reliable state-of-the-art analysis.

Seven categories of human activities are described in as much detail as possible in this report: settlements (active and abandoned), roads (highways and dirt roads), livestock breeding (by livestock species and villages), biomass collection and hunting for food, apiculture, fish farming and deforestation.

We believe that further research and conservation actions are urgently needed to incorporate the following priority issues:

- Effect of livestock grazing on local ecosystems and especially on forests;
- Assessment of green biomass collection and hunting on biodiversity;
- Enforcement of protection regime through mobilization of existing human resources (guards) and logistics (ammunition, off-road vehicles and firearms) and fundraising for covering field expenses and local involvement;
- Establishment of anti-poaching squads to curb poaching. This issue is closely related to the previous item "Enforcement of protection regime";
- Environmental education in village schools and among adults in shepherd camps, abandoned villages/pasture grounds, and farms.