



Pop-up feature

# Large carnivores and you(th)!

## Fostering dialogue and mutual understanding

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In the age of rapid digital communication, misinformation has become a pressing challenge, sometimes overshadowing advances in scientific knowledge. Large carnivores are no exception. While myths and misconceptions about these animals have existed for centuries, today's misinformation spreads quickly through social media, often amplifying fears and misunderstandings. At the same time, concerns have grown as recovering large carnivore populations increasingly overlap with human activities, leading to conflicts, economic pressures on rural communities and polarised debates. For these reasons, creative communication strategies have become essential for reaching key audiences.

Recognising that today's youth are tomorrow's voting public, the EU Large Carnivore Platform (hereafter: the Platform) is developing information tools specifically targeting young people from secondary school age. These resources aim to generate discussion and greater awareness and understanding of issues around coexistence with large carnivores as well as the complexity of their conser-

vation and management. The Platform Secretariat has created a range of tools. Its youth webpage<sup>1</sup> presents (fun) facts about animals, features a range of educational materials compiled from different projects and countries for educators to discover and provides information about various networks that connect young people interested in nature conservation. The Platform has compiled information debunking the most common misconceptions about large carnivores with scientific facts<sup>2</sup>. Readers can check their knowledge with a quiz<sup>3</sup>. The Platform has also been involved in organising youth-related sessions at relevant events such as the Wolves across Borders conference<sup>4</sup> and will be also do so at the Europarc International Junior Ranger Camp<sup>5</sup> this summer. Finally, the first of a series of informative social media reels<sup>6</sup> about the different large carnivore species was recently released on various social media platforms and was shared by partners of the Platform and other European youth networks to increase outreach.

<sup>1</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive/large-carnivores/eu-large-carnivore-platform/large-carnivores-and-youth\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive/large-carnivores/eu-large-carnivore-platform/large-carnivores-and-youth_en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive/large-carnivores/eu-large-carnivore-platform/facts-and-common-misconceptions\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive/large-carnivores/eu-large-carnivore-platform/facts-and-common-misconceptions_en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/LargeCarnivoreMythBusterQuiz?startQuiz=true&surveylanguage=EN>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wolvesacrossborders.com>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.europarc.org/2025-ijrc/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bvA7\\_CKwEQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bvA7_CKwEQ)



## Building bridges through role play

One particular tool designed to foster learning and dialogue on large carnivore conservation is a role play<sup>7</sup> exercise modelled on real-life large carnivore platforms with a special focus on promoting dialogue and respect for different stakeholders' perspectives by helping young people understand the underlying social, economic, cultural and personal factors around coexistence. Large carnivore platforms are collaborative forums implemented

in various European countries that bring together key stakeholders to discuss and address the challenges of coexistence with species such as wolves, bears and lynx. They aim to facilitate constructive dialogue and find shared solutions to often complex and controversial issues. The role play, which was developed and tested by platform members, provides the opportunity to 'step into someone else's shoes' by adopting the roles of various stakeholders involved in large carnivore management. It simulates a stakeholder dialogue platform where participants representing different interest groups—such as livestock owners, hunters, environmentalists, local inhabitants, journalists and government officials—come together to discuss challenges and find solutions related to wolf presence.

Designed primarily for 15–18-year-olds, the role play is structured to last approximately two hours, with 30 minutes for preparation, 60 minutes for the actual discussion and 30 minutes for evaluation. Participants receive role cards describing their character's background, attitude towards wolves and position on key issues. One participant takes on the role of a neutral facilitator who guides the discussion, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to express their views. During the simulation, participants are also provided with factual information about wolves and learn about various management options through 'action cards' that outline measures such as livestock protection with guarding dogs and electric fencing, compensation payments, public awareness campaigns and population monitoring. As large carnivore populations continue to recover across Europe, educational tools like this will play an increasingly important role in fostering coexistence by helping young people understand the complexity of the issues and the diversity of perspectives involved.

<sup>7</sup> <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/3f466d71-92a7-49eb-9c63-6cb0fadf29dc/library/dec36255-750b-4c93-9021-84a928e6092a/details>