



**REINTRODUCTION AND RECOVERY OF NATIVE CARNIVORES:  
THE NORTHERN EUROPE PROJECT (SCOTLAND, NORWAY  
AND SWEDEN)**

**April 25 - June 8, 2018**

**Meeting Place: Edinburgh, Scotland**

**FULL PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Thank you for your interest in our Northern Europe Project: Reintroduction and Recovery of Native Carnivores. Our field study will take place in some of the wildest places in Europe: the Scottish Highlands and the mountainous borderlands of Norway and Sweden, land of the Midnight Sun. Here, on our first field study in northern Europe, we will investigate one of the most ambitious conservation projects in the world, Europe's attempt to "rewild" its natural landscapes through vast efforts to re-establish native carnivores and their native habitats.

Through hands-on restoration work, wildlife monitoring, backcountry travel, and presentations from and interactions with land and wildlife managers, scientists, conservationists, and indigenous people (the Sami in Scandinavia), we will gain an in depth understanding of the ecosystems, ecology, conservation biology, and habitat and wildlife restoration and management of northern Europe. We will study the current efforts to restore habitats and recover native carnivores (Eurasian lynx, wolves, and European brown bears) that were extirpated or reduced to small, isolated populations.

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**I. Background Information**

Most North Americans perceive Europe as an urban-dominated landscape devoid of large carnivores and intact ecosystems. The truth is rather different, in large part because of proactive conservation efforts over the last few decades. There are 15,000 brown bears in Europe, and wolves have begun to recolonize almost every European country, from Scandinavia to Spain and Greece. After being extirpated from most of Europe by the mid-nineteenth century, lynx have made a comeback, too. The Iberian lynx, the world's most endangered felid, has been reintroduced to Spain and Portugal, boosting the population to 400, while Eurasian lynx have been returned to Switzerland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Italy and France. While improvements have been made, carnivores throughout Europe face the same threats as their North American counterparts.

Northern Europe is an excellent locale for interdisciplinary field studies on the rewildling phenomenon throughout Europe. In Scotland we will study the imminent reintroduction of Eurasian lynx after a 1000-year absence. After years of hard work, the Lynx UK Trust is on the cusp of releasing three male and three female Eurasian Lynx (which are much bigger than our lynx here in North America) into the wild. As contentious as the reintroduction of wolves to the contiguous United States, the impending return of the Eurasian lynx to the Scottish Highlands provides a fascinating opportunity to study the ecological and socio-political complexities of returning top predators to their native hunting grounds. Some local farmers worry about the possibility of excessive livestock depredations, but ecologists believe the big cat will help restore ecological health: the arrival of the lynx will help reduce deer populations and restore ancient Caledonian pine forests that are critical habitat for the beautiful but endangered capercaillie (the largest member of the grouse family).

Scandinavia, on the other hand, never lost its top carnivores. Eurasian lynx, Eurasian brown bears and wolves existed in very low numbers in the early twentieth century. The difference in management strategies and values between Norway and Sweden are dramatic, with Norway maintaining a small population of lynx (400), but Sweden boasting more than a thousand, though over-hunting may be shrinking the population. While Sweden has restored the brown bear population from 130 individuals in the 1930s to 3500 today, there are only about 70 in neighboring Norway. Likewise, by the 1960s wolves had been wiped out of both countries, but they were able to recolonize from neighboring Finland. Sweden now boasts almost 500 wolves while Norway continues to manage them at low numbers.

## **II. Project Goals and Activities**

Our project objectives include providing team members with a firsthand introduction to the natural history of Northern Europe, on-site examination of natural resource and wildlife management issues through personal exchanges with the land and its people, and field investigations of its flora, fauna and ecosystems. Our project will consist of wilderness explorations, field discussions, and research activities that will serve as vehicles for hands-on environmental and cultural field studies for our team.

One of the most exciting aspects of this course will be our ability to compare and contrast wildlife management and recovery between European countries, and between Europe and North America, where the guiding doctrine has been the so-called “North American Wildlife Management Model”.

Key questions include: How has the absence of predators in particular, affected European ecosystems, and how are those ecosystems affected upon the return of predators? What kinds of restoration activities are being pursued and why? What are the various opportunities and challenges? Why do Norway and Sweden have such different conservation visions despite being almost linguistically and culturally identical? And why the relatively sudden interest across Europe in restoring species and the habitats they depend on?

### Ecosystems, Flora and Fauna

Through hiking and backpacking field studies we will investigate a variety of ecosystems in the Scottish Highlands and the mountains of Norway and Sweden. Here we will develop plant and animal identification skills as well as gain experience conducting scientific observations and recording a field journal.

### Wildlife Habitat & Conservation Studies

Our field studies will take us to key wildland habitats critical to the persistence and recovery of Northern Europe’s carnivore populations. In these settings, the team will investigate the threats and impacts on these populations as well as management policies for endangered species. We will focus our attention on the

ecological role of top carnivores (Eurasian brown bear, Eurasian wolf, Eurasian lynx), and on the habitats and prey species (red deer, roe deer, moose) on which these predators depend. We will learn about relevant wildlife research techniques and have the chance to practice them in the field.

### Northern European People & Culture

Through team interactions with local Scots, Swedes and Norwegians, including the Sami people of Scandinavia, we will explore diverse perspectives on the role of scientific research, community-based conservation and governmental policies in natural resource management. Together we will learn about Northern Europe's history from Aboriginal inhabitation to European settlement, and the dramatic changes that have taken place since. We will engage with proactive community groups such as field naturalists and wildlife advocates, as well as scientists, land/wildlife managers, farmers, and indigenous people, all of whom will provide insight into the ecological and socio-political challenges associated with maintaining healthy carnivore populations on the landscape.

**All field methods and data gathering techniques will be taught in northern Europe. No prior research experience is required**, but we expect participants to arrive excited and prepared for a rewarding field study experience.

### **III. Academic Credit**

Students will receive 15 quarter credits/10 semester credits from Western Washington University. Our staff will be happy to explain the program in further detail to the applicant's advisor, if necessary. This field studies program gives credit in one course:

ESCI 497T, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits/3.35 semester credits)

ESCI 497U, Environmental Field Survey (5 quarter credits/3.35 semester credits)

ESCI 497V, Wildlands Environment and Culture (5 quarter credits/3.35 semester credits)

Students will be evaluated on the basis of: 1) field journals; 2) quality of their fieldwork; 3) exams; and 4) participation in seminars/discussions.

Team members are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner. Wildlands Studies reserves the right to require any student to withdraw from the program if their conduct is detrimental to or incompatible with the interests, safety, or welfare of any course participants. We ask all students to read the Student Program Manual before joining the project on-site.

### **IV. Team Logistics**

Students fly into Edinburgh, Scotland, and depart from Stockholm, Sweden. This project will involve daily field study explorations, which can involve early morning departures and long hours in wildland habitats waiting for wildlife observations. For much of the program we will undertake both short and long day hikes from base camps. We will also go on a multi-day backpacking trip in each of Scotland, Sweden and Norway. Therefore, physical conditioning, adequate equipment, and preparation are important.

We will first meet in Edinburgh, Scotland and then spend the first two weeks in our first study area at Cairngorms National Park. Once there, we will help local managers monitor red deer populations and restore Caledonian pine forests. We will also go on a multi-day backpacking trip on Cairngorms' high mountain plateau.

We will then travel (by plane or ferry) to Norway, where we will spend two weeks comparing habitat and carnivore restoration efforts in Scotland with similar efforts in Norway. We will embark on a week-long backpacking trip on the west slope of the Scandinavian Mountains in an effort to observe and study lynx, wolves and brown bears.

The last section of the program will be spent in Sweden studying the successful recovery of brown bears and wolves. This will involve day hikes on the southeast slopes of the Scandinavian Mountains, as well as a week-long backpacking trip along the southern portion of the Kungsleden (The King's Trail) in the Vindelfjällen Nature Reserve, one of the largest protected areas in all of Europe. Supplies will be purchased during the project. When team members arrive in Edinburgh, we will break into cook groups. There will also be time during the project to purchase supplies in small towns with limited selections.

All reasonable efforts will be made to follow the activities outlined above. However, please understand that travel arrangements can remain tentative until the traveling actually takes place. Weather conditions and road closures may affect our plans. Wildlands Studies has put together an innovative, unique program in Northern Europe, and team members need to be flexible, patient, and prepared to adapt to unexpected situations. Being flexible also allows us to take advantage of unique opportunities that inadvertently arise during our journeys, often producing some of the program's most memorable moments.

#### **V. Accommodations**

Primarily camping in tents or staying in huts.

#### **VI. Official Documents/Visa**

U.S. citizens do not require a visa to travel to Scotland, Norway or Sweden. If you are a non-U.S. citizen, contact your country's Consulate Office to determine if you need a tourist visa to enter Scotland, Sweden and Norway.

#### **VII. Language**

This program is taught in English.

#### **VIII. Pre-Program Mailings**

Detailed information regarding travel and visa information, equipment requirements, food costs, meeting plans, group expenses payment, medical recommendations, and academic preparations will be sent to all team members in a logistics letter emailed about 8-10 weeks before the project initiates. Stay in good shape and get ready for an exciting wildlife project.

#### **IX. PROJECT LEADER**

JEFF GAILUS: M.S. in Environmental Science, University of Montana, 2007; M.F.A., University of Montana, 2016. Jeff has been a university field instructor since 2007, focusing on conservation policy and wilderness education in the United States and Canada. He is an award winning author who has published two books and numerous essays and articles on wildlife conservation and natural resource policy. Jeff has taught at University of Oregon and the University of Montana and has been teaching with Wildlands Studies since 2012. He currently leads our Yellowstone and Northern Europe Projects.

## **X. Project Costs**

Program Fee:	\$4150 plus \$150 Application Fee. Program fee due February 1, 2018. Enrollment on a space-available basis after the fee due date until the program is full.
Estimated On-Country Expenses:	\$2800 per person Includes most in-country accommodations, travel in-country, camping costs/permits, logistical support, group supplies, field activities and materials/research costs.
Food in Northern Europe:	\$1000 (varies according to taste, dietary preferences and exchange rate)
Personal Spending Money:	\$400 (this varies according to taste - but don't be caught short)
Estimated Airfare:	\$1500 (varies but don't be caught short)

Students should inquire at the financial aid office of their home campus regarding the use of their loans or grants for this course. Wildlands Studies is not responsible for non-refundable airline or other tickets or payments or any similar penalties that may be incurred as a result of any course cancellation or changes.

## **XI. Contact Information**

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