

Romania's embrace of the wild, versus an escaped lynx in Wales...



Photo by Bernard Landgraf

Who has been following the debate on social media this week following the escaped lynx, shot dead in Wales?

I was once lucky to spend some time in the Romanian wilderness of north-east Transylvania, among the Carpathian mountains. I met shepherds and other farmers who lived among wolves, lynxes and bears.

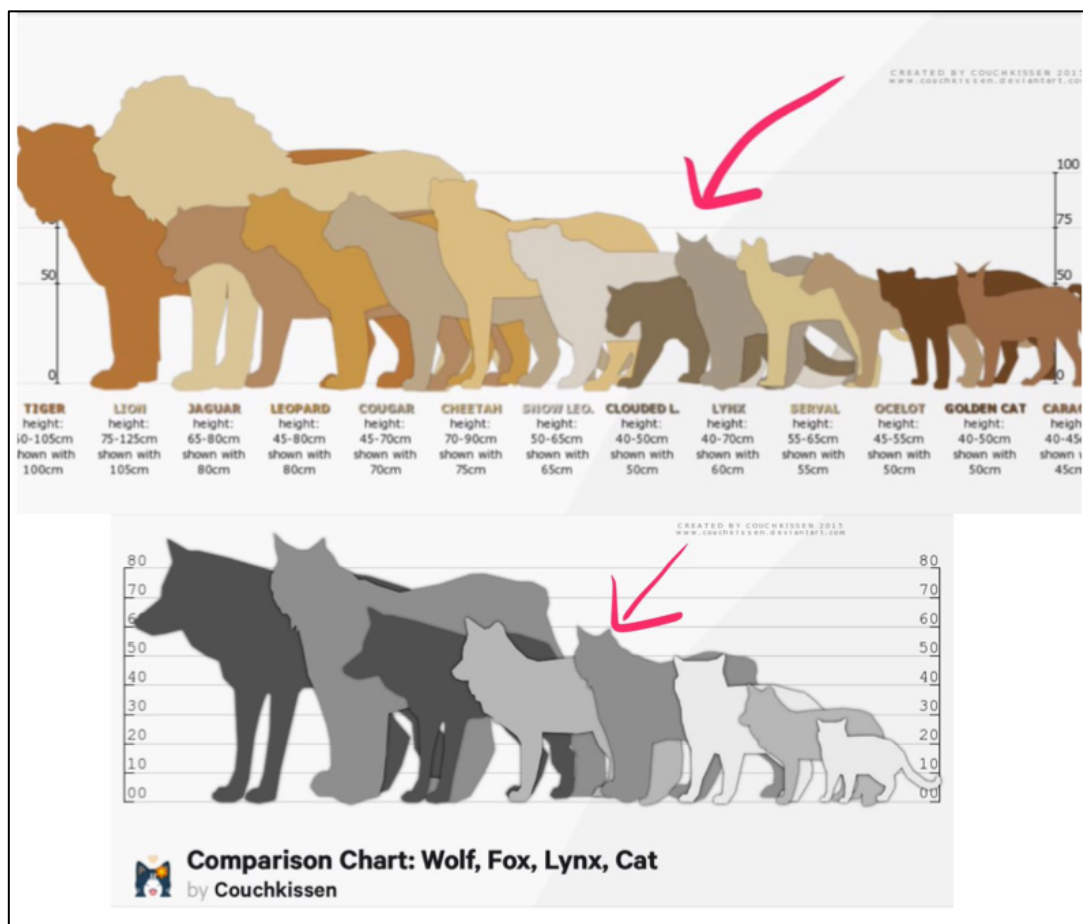
I sat out in the vast forest behind one of Ceaușescu's former hunting lodges, drinking potent țuică and chatting with the locals, late into the night. Their dogs were barking warnings. This meant there were wild predators about, said the locals.

I looked and listened, eagerly, and followed tracks, but did not encounter any. They are shy animals by nature - but there were supposedly more of them here than anywhere else in Europe.

One morning, we found lynx and bear prints in the fresh snow right beside where we'd been sitting whilst the dogs had been barking. But no-one was harmed, or alarmed. I felt thrilled and lucky to have been so close. The locals proudly and enthusiastically shared tales about their wild neighbours.

Back here in the UK, we witnessed genuine panic because one juvenile lynx that escaped from a nearby zoo, Borth Wild Animal Kingdom, was allegedly heading towards town. So Ceredigion Council had it shot dead.

No time was wasted with grabbing the tranquiliser darts that had been on standby. They went for real bullets instead. The council said it was concerned about public safety. It was a sad and unnecessary killing, in my view.



Images: These illustrations from Deviant Art illustrator CouchKissen show the size of a lynx compared to other cats, dogs, foxes and wolves.

This was panic, over a little lynx, no bigger than a fox, not King Kong storming into town. We are unlikely to see evidence of unprovoked lynx attacks on people. We are not their natural prey. They are small cats.

The most likely significant risk, in my view, of waiting for the tranquiliser darts to arrive, would have been if idiotic have-a-go-heroes tried to corner the lynx and capture it, and then it would have defended itself, naturally.

What a contrast though. We have lost touch with the wild and, in doing so, our respect for it seems to have turned to an irrational fear, even at government level.

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