

The LoupO project has identified a minimum of 70 bears and 8 wolves since 2019 in the Pyrenees

The European program concludes, which has strengthened cross-border collaboration and has developed a plan for the monitoring and follow-up of the populations of bear (*Ursus arctos*) and wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the Franco-Spanish Pyrenees and in the Principat d'Andorra

The main objective of the LoupO project has been to develop a cross-border plan for the monitoring and follow-up, especially genetic, of bear and wolf populations in the Pyrenees, two species that are part of the natural heritage of Spain, France and Andorra. Both species show transboundary distributions: the bear with a breeding population in the Central Pyrenees (Haute Garonne, Ariège, Val d'Aran and Pallars) and the wolf, through the presence of some erratic males settled in the Pre-Pyrenees and Eastern Pyrenees.

Since the beginning of the project, more than 500 non-invasive samples (hair, feces, urine in snow) have been collected to identify the bears and wolves of the Pyrenees. The genetic and ecological data (obtained from cameras, observations, location of wild and domestic fauna prey) have allowed to identify a minimum of 70 different bears for the entire Pyrenees and a minimum of 4 wolves only on the Catalan slope. The presence of some isolated individuals has also been detected both in Aragon and in the French Pyrenees. All this information is collected in a database that has been created jointly between the different partners.

The project, with a total budget of 1,250,109 euros, has been co-financed at 65% by the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER) through the INTERREG V-A Spain-France-Andorra Program (POCTEFA 2014-2020), a European territorial cooperation program created to promote the sustainable development of the border territory between the three countries. During the two and a half years that the project has lasted, coordinated by the researcher Natalia Sastre of the Department of Animal and Food Science of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the LoupO project has had as beneficiary partners the Cos d'Agents Rurals, of the Department of the Interior (GENCAT), the Conselh Generau d'Aran, Forestal Catalana S.A., le Laboratoire d'Ecologie Alpine (CNRS), and as associated partners, the Departament d'Acció Climàtica, Alimentació i Agenda Rural (GENCAT), l'Office Français de la Biodiversité, the Direction Régionale de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement (Occitanie), the Government of Aragon and the Ministeri de Medi Ambient, Agricultura i Sostenibilitat (Govern d'Andorra).