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Teberda Reserve, Russian Federation. ©A. Bok

# CAUCASUS ECOREGION NEWSLETTER

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## Turkey's First Wildlife Corridor Project by KuzeyDoga Society

The Kars region of northeastern Turkey, a high plateau located at the intersection of Caucasus and Irano-Anatolian global biodiversity hotspots, is one of the most important places in Turkey for brown bears, wolves, lynx, and wild cats. In the past six years, environmental organization KuzeyDoga, in collaboration with the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP), has been doing long-term, community based conservation, ecological research, and village based ecotourism work focused on northeastern Turkey's wildlife.

KuzeyDoga is running a project studying the ecology and habitat use of the region's large carnivores (gray wolves (*Canis lupus*), brown bears (*Ursus arctos*) and Caucasian lynx (*Lynx lynx dinniki*)) to understand how they will use Turkey's first wildlife corridor. As part of this research, the KuzeyDoga team, led by Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu, a biology professor at the University of Utah, tracked wolves for the first time in Turkey and is also tracking 11 brown bears. The wolves used an area many times the size of Sarikamis, and of five wolves, only one survived for a year. The others were killed by cars, people, and dogs, collectively showing the necessity of more habitat creation, conservation and connection. Equally importantly, even during the first week of tracking, one of the brown bears followed the exact wildlife corridor route proposed by Dr. Sekercioglu, travelling from Kars to Ardahan province and back in a week.

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However, legal and illegal logging of Sarikamis' shrinking old-growth forests continue, providing inadequate habitat for large mammal species, increasing their vulnerability, and potentially reducing their genetic diversity.

Turkey's first wildlife corridor will cover 23,500 hectares and will span for 82 km, from Sarikamis Forest-Allahuekber Mountains NP, through the provinces of Kars, Erzurum, Artvin, and Ardahan, all the way to the Caucasus forests on the Turkey-Georgia border. As Ardahan's Posof forests are connected to Georgia's Akhaltsikhe forests bordering the Borjomi-Kharagauli NP, Turkey's first wildlife corridor will also promote transboundary conservation in the region.

For further info: <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/02/13/turkeys-first-wildlife-corridor-links-bear-wolf-and-lynx-populations-to-the-caucasus-forests/>

For additional information please contact  
KuzeyDoga Society: [www.kuzeydoga.org](http://www.kuzeydoga.org)

