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# Turkey's First Wildlife Corridor



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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. Their research documented wild cat and two subspecies of lynx, discovered a new breeding population of lynx in Kars, obtained the first home range estimates for wolves in Turkey and showed that in only two months these keystone predators use an area 13 times larger than the Sarikamis-Allahuekber National Park (NP) they were captured in. 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 is the next step in KuzeyDoga's landscape conservation vision. Initially proposed in 2008,

KuzeyDoga created the corridor map with the government officials in 2011, and signed the final agreement with the Ministry of Forestry and Water Works in December 2011. The wildlife corridor will cover 23,500 hectares and will extend 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 that border the Borjomi-Kharagauli NP, Turkey's first wildlife corridor will also promote transboundary conservation in the region.

This corridor will provide additional habitat for large carnivores, will connect their isolated populations, and hopefully will also help reduce the local human-carnivore conflict.

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