

All four species of carnivores live and reproduce mostly outside protected areas, such as national parks, in human-dominated landscapes.

Conservation policies work

Their numbers suggest that they can coexist with humans in areas dominated by the latter, testifying to the success of European Union conservation policies, the authors wrote.

For instance, Europe today has twice as many wolves as the United States even though its territory is half the size of North America and its population twice as dense.

"Our results are not the first to reveal that large carnivores can coexist with people but they show that the land-sharing model for large carnivores (coexistence model) can be successful on a continental scale," the study stated.

including the replenishing of stocks of prey such as deer and wild boars, which provides them with ample food.

They also cited an exodus of people from rural areas in the 20th century, which allowed wolves, bears and lynxes to expand their territories.

But the report mainly attributed the success to laws aimed at preserving species of wild animals and their habitats, such as the Berne convention of 1979.

More information: "Recovery of large carnivores in Europe's modern human-dominated landscapes," by G. Chapron et al. *Science*, www.sciencemag.org/lookup/doi/10.1126/science.1257553

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European grey wolves in the Sainte-Croix animal park in Rhodes, eastern France on December 12, 2012

In the US, by contrast, protected species often live far from human-inhabited ones, such as wolves of Yellowstone National Park.

The researchers said several factors explained the vitality of Europe's populations of large carnivores,

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