

Perceptions of Predators

Each group heard an outline of context, and questioned and commented on that, before discussing three questions. Key points were then chosen.

Key points:

- Lack of knowledge about species
- Polarised views and controversial stance esp. in media
- Must identify common ground amongst all stakeholders
- Need education that is realistic and balanced
- Need to pin down how, who we need to educate; agree targets.
- And this education must be experienced based
- Must create positive incentives

Comments on context:

- Environmental issues are global and need to be highlighted
- Strong anti-bear lobby eg. Pyrenees
- To communicate with farmers – be a farmer
- Demonisation of animals, demonisation of other people
- Use of appropriate vocabulary to communicate ideas, use of language and need for education
- Develop understanding from knowledge
- Changing attitudes through educating children
- In Norway, farmers are politically powerful therefore predators always on the agenda and lack of willingness to co-exist. Very polarising.
- Need to rediscover respect for nature. Our need to control is worrying

What barriers are created to possible predator reintroductions, from the negative perceptions of predators?

- There are 'bad' images. We need positive images
- Too much 'outside' interference
- Lack of knowledge
- Urban mentality
- Media sound bites mentality
- Too much polarity

What can make people change their minds about predators (positively or negatively)?

- Need to restore a 'good' image
- Find common ground before polarisation sets in
- Involvement needed eg. NFU, game people, forestry folk, tourism interests
- and incentives needed (look at this from the urban mentality)
- Work with schools and education
- Be realistic and balanced

What incentives, outreach programmes etc could overcome negative perceptions of predators?

- Need more educators, esp. in secondary schools
- Need skills based education
- Must be cool to be wild – experiencing the wild
- Need money / bribery
- Support interest groups
- There are practical examples of good incentives eg. Sweden where the system rewards and values predators (and does not pay compensation for damage)