

Activity report 2024 Felis Association

Organisation structure

The Felis Association continues to consist of six founding members and, since 2023, one additional member. All members work 100% on a voluntary basis and do not receive any wages or compensation. A project manager is defined for each Felis project, and the members work closely together and on the basis of the time available to them.

Funding

With the exception of the Brazil project, the projects continue to be financed by donations from the two founding members, Sophie and Manuel Baumgartner. Two thirds of the Brazil project was successfully realised thanks to foundation donations received by the association. It is planned to co-finance the further project years of the India project through foundation donations. New ways of fundraising are to be tested in 2025. Individual donations from private individuals have also been received.

Purpose of the organisation

At the time of its foundation, the purpose of the organisation was defined as follows: The purpose of the association is to promote the awareness and protection of wildcats, especially the small and less recognised wildcats. The association aims to enhance national parks and other important areas that are of high importance for wildcats (better equipment, camera traps to study populations, capacity building, ecotourism development, etc.). Wildcats are particularly well suited as ambassadors and thus also help other species. It can be assumed that an area is healthy if wildcats, which are at the top of the food chain, are doing well.

Activity 2024

Hide project in Switzerland

The association wants to sensitise the local population about native wildcats and at the same time be perceived as an association in Switzerland. We want to achieve this by converting a former military trailer into an observation hide. Wild animals should be able to be observed without being disturbed. The project partner, a farmer in the Jura, will use this hide as a supplement to his overnight accommodation offer. Felis investigated the area for two years using 10 camera traps. Lynx, wildcat, stoat and many other mammal species were identified. Windows were installed in 2023. In 2024, the floor was laid and further planning was drawn up. The renovation (carried out by members of the association) will probably run until 2026 before the hide can be used.

'Mammalwatching' community

The association continues to be very active in the mammalwatching community and is committed to making mammal watching more sustainable and contributing to nature conservation. To this end, Felis held two online meetings in 2023 and two in 2024, introduced various measures and implemented various outcomes.

Brazil project

In Emas National Park in Brazil, over 1,000 children from various schools in the area were to be reached and sensitized to the local flora and fauna using the proven method of environmental education through children's books. In 2023, the first of three books was written and printed. In 2024, the second book was realized and a lot of work was done in the field of environmental

education. The collaboration with our local partners, who know two of the founding members personally, works very well and communication is excellent. The local partners are extremely committed, keen to implement the project and the impact of the project so far has exceeded our expectations. We hope that we will receive further funding in 2025 to continue the project and realize the third book. A meeting is also planned to discuss visions and ideas on how to continue working together after the environmental education project.

India project

In 2022, a joint project 'Forgotten Cats of North East India' was launched with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). The main aim of this project is to involve the inhabitants of a village in north-east India, Shergaon, in the establishment of a protected area. The aim is to develop an alternative source of income and to ensure the conservation of the area. The project will have two aspects: The first aspect will focus on sustainable ecotourism, which will include activities such as capacity building of community members in areas such as mammal watching. The second aspect will focus on wild cat research, e.g. through camera trap studies and community attitudes towards wildlife (more benefit than harm). The joint project was launched and two founding members, Sophie and Manuel Baumgartner, visited the project in March 2023. 30 camera traps were successfully transported to the project site. These were all equipped with rechargeable batteries and chargers were supplied to enable long-term exploration of the project forest. It took some time to reach a mutual agreement between the local partners and the Wildlife Trust of India. This was achieved by the end of 2023 and the project was able to move forward in 2024. In collaboration with Felis and WTI, the study has been launched and the wildlife cameras have already captured some rare and exciting animals. This will lead to a contribution in a renowned paper and some valuable information for the future protection of the region can be brought together. The plan for 2025 is to ask foundations for financial support to hopefully continue to successfully drive the project forward.

Patagonia project

In 2023, Felis supported the work of biologist and scientist Mauro Lucherini with 10 camera traps. Mauro is researching small wild cat species in Patagonia, Argentina. A founding member of Felis, Ruben Vernieuwe, visited the project in 2023 to continue supporting Mauro and to learn as much as possible about the practice of such studies and the special features there. It is generally important to Felis that each project site can be seen and assessed in person by at least one member of the team. The meaningfulness, importance of the area, assessment of the project partners and potential for mammal observer ecotourism play a key role here. In 2024, further camera traps could be brought to Argentina and Felis is working on funding support via Belgian foundations.

Commitment of the association members

As Felis does not require an hourly report for the work of members who worked on a voluntary basis, only an estimate can be provided here. To this end, all members were asked to provide an estimate. This has shown that the individual members have performed between 150-400 hours of voluntary work since the association was founded in 2022 and 2023 (during 1.5 years). In total, this amounts to an estimated 1,500 hours of voluntary work for the association in 2022 and 2023. We have refrained from making an assessment in 2024. Felis would like to thank everyone for this extraordinary achievement!

Summary of activities in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024

Looking back, a lot has already been started and achieved, even though all members work for the association on a purely voluntary basis alongside their jobs / training / family. All projects have been started and the necessary funds have been raised to continue them.

Even though there were times when the workload was high and many things had to be done at the same time, Felis would like to emphasize that the commitment of the members was never taken for granted and would like to express its appreciation for this!