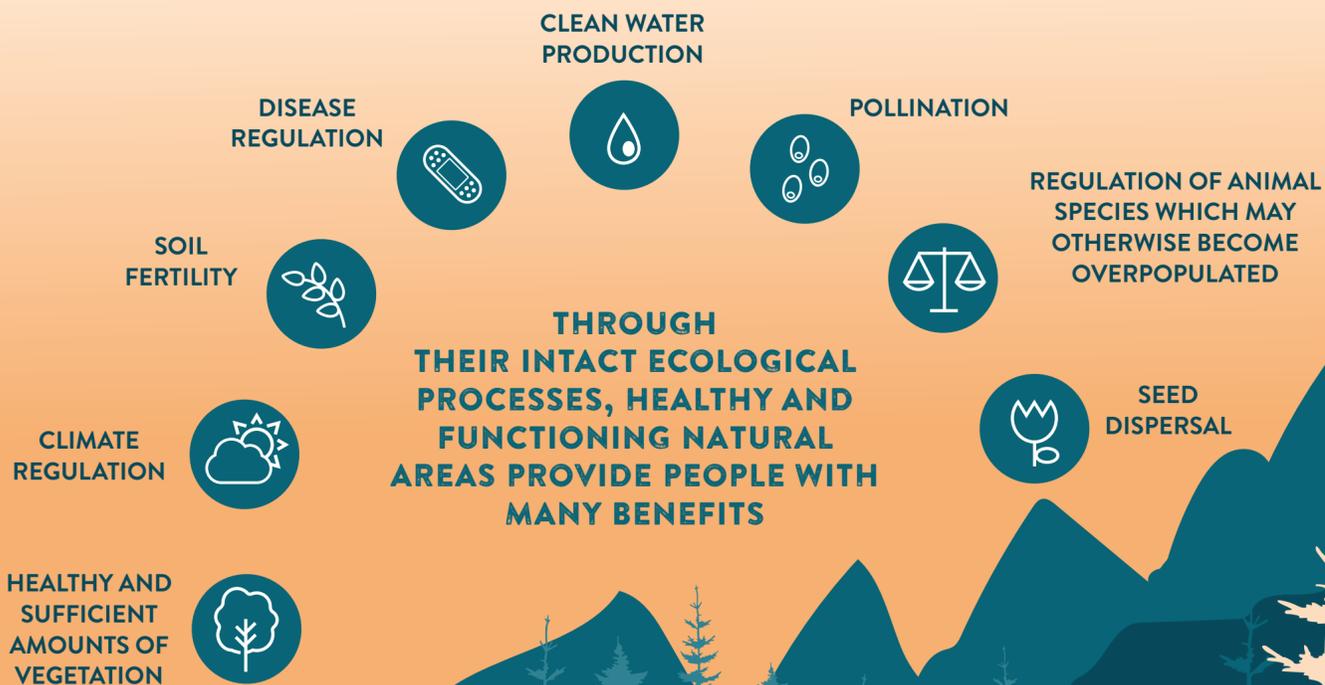


WHAT A DIFFERENCE LARGE CARNIVORES MAKE

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (NATURE SERVICES) = "THE BENEFITS THAT ECOSYSTEMS PROVIDE TO PEOPLE"

There are four main groups of ecosystem services: provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural. Ecosystems need to be healthy in order to maintain the health of all living things within and around them, including humans.



THE ROLE OF LARGE CARNIVORES IN AN ECOSYSTEM

Large carnivores need massive areas of intact and uninterrupted habitat. Sustainably managing these habitats for carnivores also preserves the habitats of many other species.



LARGE CARNIVORES AFFECT ECOSYSTEMS MAINLY BY HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE NUMBER OF PREY AND SMALLER PREDATORS, IN ADDITION TO OTHER ECOLOGICAL INTERACTIONS

IMPACT ON PREY

1. Large carnivores can reduce the number of prey and affect prey behaviour because the prey chooses different habitats, its food source, group size and activity periods, and reduces the amount of time used for feeding.
2. Large carnivores help maintain healthier prey populations, as they can selectively cull weak members of ungulate herds and prevent the proliferation of infectious diseases among prey populations.

IMPACT ON SMALLER PREDATORS AND SCAVENGERS

1. Large carnivores may reduce the number of medium-sized predators like foxes, jackals, etc. and therefore the community structure of smaller prey.
2. Large carnivores can provide food for scavengers that take advantage of the increase in food left by large predators in the form of carrion.

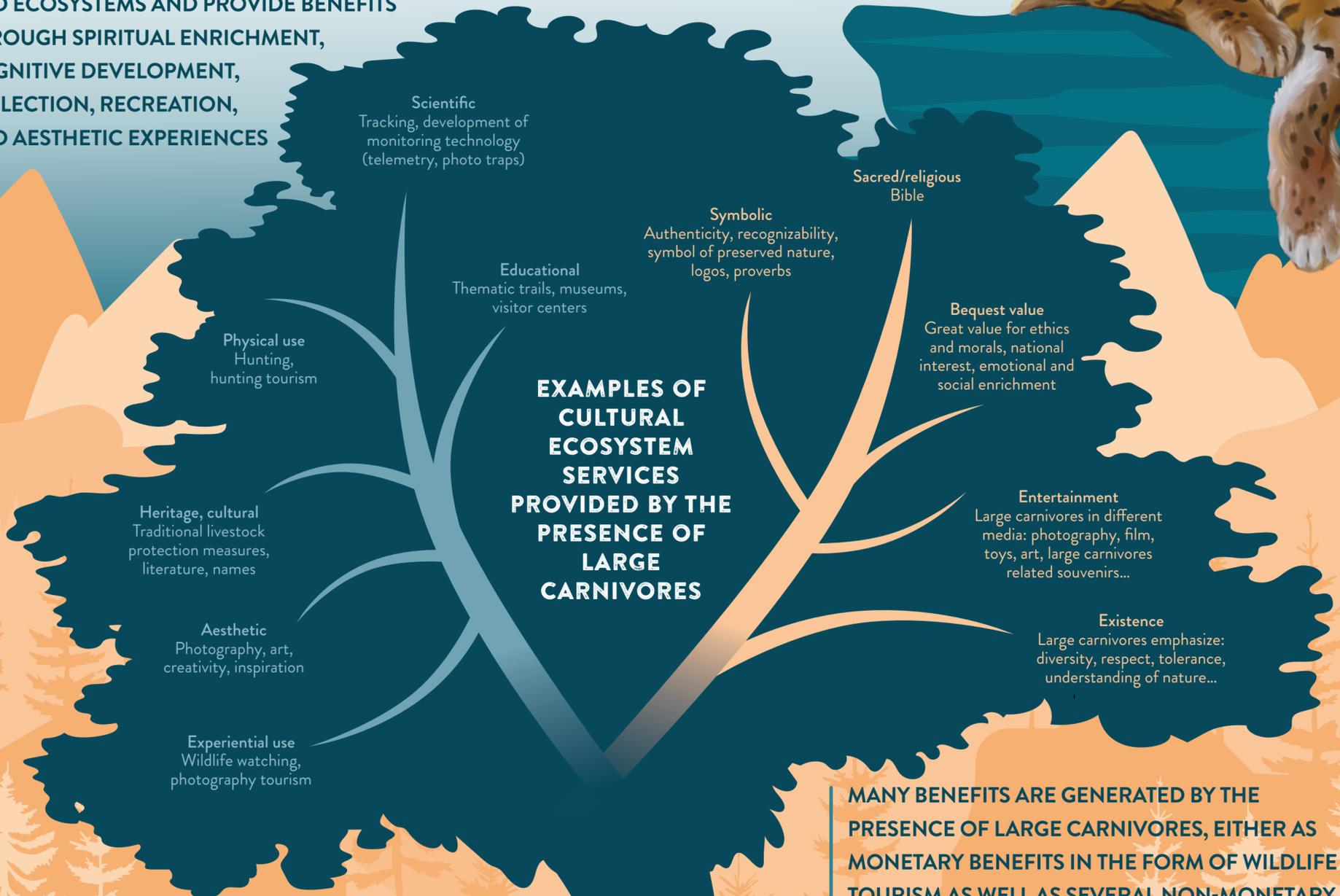
OTHER ECOLOGICAL INTERACTIONS

1. The impact of predators on nutrient cycling is ubiquitous, and it has to do with direct nutrient excretion, egestion or translocation within and across ecosystem boundaries after prey consumption.
2. Changes in vegetation and trophic cascades occur, as large carnivores are animals that survive by preying on other organisms, they can send ripples throughout the food web, regulating the effects other animals have on that ecosystem. One of the clearest examples of trophic cascades occurs when wolves prey on ungulates, which potentially keeps the ungulates moving around and their populations at lower numbers and more spread-out. This limits the impacts ungulates have on plant biomass – thus more trees, bushes, and grass can grow – which then preserves or creates habitat for many other species, from insects and reptiles to beavers and birds, especially around riparian areas (streams or rivers), preventing soil erosion at the same time.

SOCIAL BENEFITS OF LARGE CARNIVORES



CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM SERVICES ORIGINATE FROM INTERACTIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND ECOSYSTEMS AND PROVIDE BENEFITS THROUGH SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT, COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT, REFLECTION, RECREATION, AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES



MANY BENEFITS ARE GENERATED BY THE PRESENCE OF LARGE CARNIVORES, EITHER AS MONETARY BENEFITS IN THE FORM OF WILDLIFE TOURISM AS WELL AS SEVERAL NON-MONETARY BENEFITS SUCH AS THE VALUE OF A GIVEN SPECIES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, THE COMMUNITY, MANKIND, AND NATURE.



"I have seen all three large carnivores! And there was no fear, but it's always a surprise, especially with the wolf and the lynx because it happens when you least expect it. And even though you know they are around, you cannot know what it is like meeting them. It is always a fantastic moment when you get such a wonderful surprise!"

"If I may speak for the Kočevje region that is deeply connected with large carnivores through not only hundreds but thousands of years, the absence of bears, wolves or lynx would be a great loss."

"In Babno Polje, as we are totally surrounded by nature, the bear has become a reason for socialization because those of us who are hikers do not go exploring alone but always together."

"Large carnivores are a limitless source of ideas and creative inspiration that enrich our lives, indirectly affecting our spiritual side without which it would be almost impossible to live."

"The presence of large carnivores helps us build relationships with fellow human beings because the way we treat animals is the same way we should treat people."

"The presence of large carnivores means the preservation of the species and the opportunity to show that we can all coexist together which may be of interest to other countries."

"Encountering a large carnivore enriches you every time, even if it is just a fleeting moment."

"Because of large carnivores our country is more colourful and diverse."

"Bears and other large carnivores are part of our culture and if they disappeared today – it would all become very empty without them."

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