

Iberian Lynx

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Conservation status	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">Extinct ○ EX</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Threatened ┌───┬───┬───┐ ○ EW ○ CR ○ EN ○ VU</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Least Concern ○ NT ○ LC</div> </div> <p>Critically Endangered (IUCN 3.1)^[1]</p>	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Carnivora
Family:	Felidae
Genus:	<i>Lynx</i>
Species:	<i>L. pardinus</i>
Binomial name	
<p><i>Lynx pardinus</i> (Temminck, 1827)</p>	
	
1980 range map	
	

2003 range map

The **Iberian lynx**, *Lynx pardinus*, is a critically endangered species native to the Iberian Peninsula in Southern Europe. It is one of the most endangered cat species in the world.^[2] According to the conservation group SOS Lynx, if this species died out, it would be one of the few feline extinctions since the *Smilodon* 10,000 years ago.^[3] The species used to be classified as a subspecies of the Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*), but is now considered a separate species. Both species occurred together in central Europe in the Pleistocene epoch, being separated by habitat choice.^[4] The Iberian lynx is believed to have evolved from *Lynx issiodorensis*.^[5]

Description



Close up of the Iberian Lynx

In most respects, the Iberian lynx resembles other species of lynx, with a short tail, tufted ears and a ruff of fur beneath the chin. While the Eurasian Lynx bears rather pallid markings, the Iberian lynx has distinctive, leopard-like spots with a coat that is often light grey or various shades of light brownish-yellow. The coat is also noticeably shorter than in other lynxes, which are typically adapted to colder environments.^[6] Some western populations were spotless, although these have recently become extinct.

The head and body length is 85 to 110 centimetres (33 to 43 in), with the short tail an additional 12 to 30 centimetres (4.7 to 12 in); the shoulder height is 60 to 70 centimetres (24 to 28 in). The male is larger than the female, with the average weight of males 12.9 kilograms (28 lb) and a maximum of 26.8 kilograms (59 lb), compared to an average of 9.4 kilograms (21 lb) for females; this is about half the size of the Eurasian lynx.^{[4][7][8]}

Ecology

The Iberian lynx is smaller than its northern relatives, and typically hunts smaller animals, usually no larger than hares. It also differs in habitat choice, with Iberian lynx inhabiting open scrub and Eurasian lynx inhabiting forests.^[4]

It hunts mammals (including rodents and insectivores), birds, reptiles and amphibians at twilight. The European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) is its main prey (79.5-86.7%), with (5.9%) hares (*Lepus granatensis*) and rodents (3.2%) less common.^[4] A male requires one rabbit per day; a female bringing up cubs will eat three rabbits per day.^[9]

As the population of rabbits in Spain and Portugal has declined due to myxomatosis, the Iberian lynx is often forced to attack young fallow deer, roe deer, mouflon, and ducks. The Iberian lynx competes for prey with the red fox, the *meloncillo* (*Herpestes ichneumon*) and the wildcat. It is solitary and hunts alone; it will stalk its prey or lie in wait for hours behind a bush or rock until the prey is sufficiently close to pounce in a few strides.

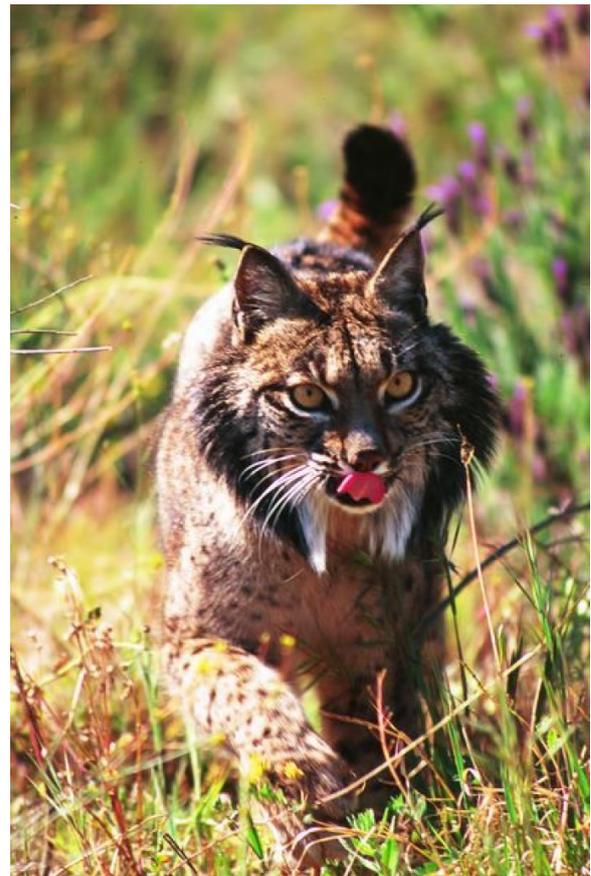
A lynx, especially with younger animals, will roam widely, with ranges reaching more than 100 kilometres (62 mi). Its territory (~ 10 to 20 square kilometres (3.9 to 7.7 sq mi)) is also dependent on how much food is available.^[9] Nonetheless, once established, ranges tend to be stable in size over many years, the boundaries often being along man-made roads and trails. The Iberian lynx marks its territory with its urine, droppings left in existing tracks through the vegetation, and scratch marks on the barks of trees.^[6]

Reproduction

During the mating season the female leaves her territory in search of a male. The typical gestation period is about two months; the cubs are born between March and September, with a peak of births in March and April. A litter consists of two or three (rarely one, or four to five) kittens weighing between 200 to 250 grams (7.1 to 8.8 oz).

The kittens become independent at 7–10 months old, but remain with the mother until around 20 months old. Survival of the young depends heavily on the availability of prey species. In the wild both males and females reach sexual maturity at one year old, though in practice they rarely breed until a territory becomes vacant; one female was known not to breed until five years old when its mother died. The maximum longevity in the wild is 13 years.^{[4][8]}

Siblings become violent towards one another between 30 and 60 days, peaking at 45 days. A cub will frequently kill its littermate in a brutal fight. It is unknown why these episodes of aggression occur, though many scientists believe it is related to a change in hormones when a cub switches from its mother's milk to meat. Others believe it is related to hierarchy, and "survival of the fittest." No matter the reason, conservationists must separate the kittens until the 60 day period is reached.

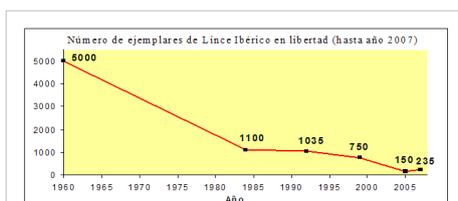


Specimen in the Doñana National Park.

Habitat

This lynx was distributed over the entire Iberian Peninsula as recently as the mid nineteenth century. It is now restricted to very limited areas of southern Spain,^[10] with breeding only confirmed in two areas of Andalucía. The Iberian lynx prefers heterogeneous environments of open grassland mixed with dense shrubs such as strawberry tree, mastic, and juniper, and trees such as holm oak and cork oak. It is now largely restricted to mountainous areas, with only a few groups found in lowland forest or dense maquis shrubland.

Population



Graphic showing Iberian Lynx population in Spain, 1950-2007

The Iberian lynx is a critically endangered species.^[1] The Iberian lynx is the world's most threatened species of cat, and the most threatened carnivore in Europe.^[11]

Studies conducted in March 2005 have estimated the number of surviving Iberian lynx to be as few as 100, which is down from about 400 in 2000^[12] and down from 4,000 in 1960.^[13] If the Iberian lynx were to become extinct, it would be the first big cat species to do so since *Smilodon populator* 10,000 years ago.

The only breeding populations are in Spain, and were thought to be only living in the Doñana National Park and in the Sierra de Andújar, Jaén. However, in 2007, Spanish authorities announced that they had discovered a previously unknown population in Castilla - La Mancha (Central Spain).^[14] It was later announced that there were around 15 individuals there.^[15]

The Iberian lynx and its habitat are fully protected and are no longer legally hunted. Its critical status is mainly due to habitat loss, poisoning, road casualties, feral dogs and poaching. Its habitat loss is due mainly to infrastructure improvement, urban and resort development and tree monocultivation, which serves to break the lynx's distribution area. In addition, the lynx prey population of rabbits is also declining due to diseases like myxomatosis and hemorrhagic pneumonia.^[16]

In 2008 the Doñana population was assessed at 24 to 33, with an estimated 60 to 110 adults in the Sierra Morena, which is the stronghold of the species. The total population is estimated to be 99 to 158 adults, including the newly discovered La Mancha population, and the Iberian Lynx qualifies as Critically Endangered under C2a(i) on the IUCN Redlist.^[1]

Conservation

On March 29, 2005, Saliega, the first Iberian Lynx to breed in captivity, gave birth to three healthy kittens at the El Acebuche Breeding Center, in the Doñana Nature Park in Huelva, Spain.^[17] On March 22, 2008, Saliega gave birth to three more kittens at the El Acebuche centre. These kits were born at 64 days gestation. One of the young was rejected by the mother, and the Junta de Andalucía's Environment Department reported on March 24 that the rejected kitten had died.^[18]

In the Sierra Morena area just north of Andújar, Andalucía, there were 150 Iberian Lynx individuals overall in 2008, up from 60 in 2002. As a result of this increase, the lynx area in Andújar-Cardena has probably reached its carrying capacity, and thus could provide animals for future reintroductions elsewhere. In addition to these on-site conservation achievements in the Sierra Morena, the off-site conservation captive breeding program has also progressed well, totaling 52 individuals, 24 of which were bred in captivity. The off-site conservation population will provide 20 to 40 individuals per year for reintroductions beginning in 2010.

Finally, in Doñana National Park, the lynx population seems to have remained steady in recent years, with around 50 individuals reported in total each year between 2002 and 2008. In March 2009 it was announced that three more kittens were born as part of the breeding program at Doñana National Park, in Huelva.^[19] The Iberian Lynx is planned to be reintroduced into Guadalmellato beginning in 2009, and into Guarrizas sometime in 2010 - 11.^[2]

SOS Lynx

SOS Lynx is a conservation charity based in Portugal, working to prevent the extinction of the Iberian Lynx. Its aim is to stop the declining of the Iberian Lynx and other lynx species.^{[20][21][13]}

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External links

- Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe - Iberian Lynx (<http://www.lcie.org/>)
- **(Spanish)** Programa de Conservación Ex-Situ (<http://www.lynxexsitu.es/>) Official page Spanish government.
- ARKive - images and movies of the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) (http://www.arkive.org/species/GES/mammals/Lynx_pardinus/)
- The natural history of the Iberian lynx (<http://www.iberianature.com/material/iberianlynx.htm>)
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- WWF species profile: Iberian lynx (http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/species/profiles/mammals/iberian_lynx/)
- **(Portuguese)** Lynx pardinus in Naturdata (<http://naturdata.com/Lynx-pardinus-25088.htm>)

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