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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

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Draft Recommendation
on urgent measures for the conservation
of the Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*)

Document prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage

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Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Draft Recommendation No. ... (2002) examined on 5 December 2002 on urgent measures for the conservation of the Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*)

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aims of the convention to conserve wild fauna and its natural habitats;

Recalling that Article 1, paragraph 2 of the convention requires Parties to give particular emphasis to the conservation of endangered and vulnerable species;

Considering that the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) is a fundamental part of the European natural heritage and is listed in Appendix II of the Convention;

Noting that the population of the Iberian lynx has sharply decreased since 1997, mainly as a result of the viral hemorrhagic pneumonia that has affected rabbits, its main prey;

Conscious that other factors (modification of Iberian landscapes for game reserves, building of new transport infrastructures and dams, etc.) may have had also a negative effect on lynx survival:

Noting with concern that the species may be in serious risk of extinction unless urgent and decisive conservation measures are taken;

Desirous to avoid a further loss of biological diversity in Europe;

Conscious that international co-operation and improved co-ordination between regional and national conservation authorities in Spain are essential elements for the effectiveness of conservation measures proposed;

Recalling that one of the aims of the Convention is to conserve wild fauna and its habitats, specially those species whose conservation requires the co-operation of several states, and to promote such co-operation;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 59 (1997) on the Drafting and Implementation of Action Plans of Wild Fauna Species;

Recalling its Recommendations No. 19 (1991) on the protection of the pardel lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) in the Iberian Peninsula), No. 74 (1999) on the conservation of large carnivores, and No. 82 (2000) on urgent measures concerning the implementation of action plans for large carnivores in Europe;

Referring to the Action Plan for the conservation of the Iberian lynx in Europe presented by the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe sponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (Nature and Environment Series, No. 111);

Recalling the Spanish strategy for conservation of the Iberian lynx and recognizing the important efforts deployed by Spanish conservation authorities, at all levels, to redress the decline of the species;

Recognising the support of the European Union to Iberian lynx conservation, particular through well-targeted LIFE projects;

Seriously concerned about delays in the implementation of the approved captive breeding programme;

Recommends that Spain and Portugal

1. conserve and improve, as a matter of urgency, lynx habitat within its present distribution area avoiding further habitat fragmentation and the building of new infrastructures; ensure that other activities are compatible with the conservation of the species; adapt roads in lynx areas by building passages permitting safe crossing by lynx; take measures to efficiently reduce non-natural mortality in lynx areas

2. maintain in a good conservation status all areas occupied by the Iberian lynx in 1980 (hereinafter referred to in this recommendations "lynx areas"), so as to permit a future recolonisation by the species, as they will be vital to its long-term conservation;

3. adapt forest policy, hunting, management of water, and use of alluvial zones to favour lynx conservation; promote agro-environmental measures specially targeted to lynx conservation, establishing appropriate assessment procedures; give priority, in this context, to NATURA 2000 areas; promote the harmonisation of management methods for rabbit populations, adopting also protocols for efficient rabbit repopulation;

4. provide incentives for landowners in lynx areas to take management measures that favour the species; such incentives may take the form of tax benefits, better public recognition of their role in lynx conservation and other image-improving measures, such of quality labels of products coming from lynx areas;

5. manage as a single metapopulation all remaining lynx, including those in captivity; assess the feasibility of carrying out translocation of animals between the two breeding populations to prevent or minimize possible risks associated to genetic drift.

6. ensure that the captive breeding programme aims to the conservation of the greatest possible genetic variability, incorporating to the programme lynx from marginal populations, in addition to the planned captures of individuals from the Doñana and Cardeña-Andújar populations; create a genomic resources bank as a complementary activity.

7. implement, as a matter of urgency, the approved captive breeding programme; capture without delay the animals foreseen in the plan; take the political decisions and technical measures requested, so that animals dispersing in autumn and winter 2002 may be taken; support the captive breeding group and reinforce its activities; review the captive breeding programme to make it more ambitious;

8. carry out lynx surveys and monitoring of populations, devoting more efforts to present breeding areas; survey and monitoring should cover all lynx areas and be of different intensity depending on whether the area is a breeding area, an area where lynx presence has been recently recorded or another area of the 1980s distribution; promote the establishment of common monitoring procedures within the Iberian lynx working group and ensure they are used in a co-ordinated way;

9. promote research in the following topics, relevant to lynx conservation:

- inbreeding expression and remedial measures (translocation, restocking, etc)
- pathology of both lynx and rabbits; vaccine use
- relation between rabbit density and lynx breeding success
- distribution, density and mapping of rabbit populations in the Iberian Peninsula
- non-natural mortality
- effectiveness of conservation projects;

10. promote the inclusion, in all lynx conservation projects, of clear and measurable target; assess success of projects on the basis of their effect on the increase of lynx populations;

11. promote awareness and increased involvement in lynx conservation action of all relevant stakeholders, in particular water authorities, landowners, hunters, non-governmental organisations, the business community and other appropriate social groups; associate these stakeholders in the elaboration and implementation of conservation plans and projects; give appropriate public recognition to the importance of the involvement of landowners and their significant role in lynx survival;
12. promote a positive image of lynx through special campaigns where the symbolic value of the species for Iberian conservation is recognised, along with the biological and ecological interest of its conservation;
13. improve co-ordination and co-operation among the different administrative bodies involved in lynx conservation, aiming to an increased efficiency; assure co-operation with the relevant international organisations and the civil society; ensure integration of lynx conservation concerns into sectoral policies;
14. improve the efficiency of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures, assuring their reliability and independence;
15. support the establishment, within the Convention, of an international group to monitor and assess lynx conservation action;

Recommends that Portugal

16. approves and implements a national action plan for Iberian lynx

Recommends that Spain

17. carries out the improvement of lynx habitat in Doñana and in the Cardena-Andújar area that permits a significant increase of lynx numbers before 2010, in particular through the recovery of rabbit populations;
18. adopts and implements Iberian lynx recovery plans in Andalusia, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Extremadura and Madrid

Recommends that European Union

19. promotes instruments aimed specifically at the conservation of Mediterranean forests within European policies.