



for a living planet®

Species

Home > About_wwf > What_we_do > Species > Critically Endangered species: Iberian lynx | Introduction

Iberian lynx: Introduction

A great cat in a shrinking space



"Morena", the oldest female (13 years old) of the captive breeding program of the Iberian Lynx (Doñana National Park). Spain.
© WWF-Canon / WWF-Spain/Jesus Cobo

- Problems**
- Habitat loss
- Human-Animal Conflict
- Unsustainable Trade
- Climate Change
- Bycatch
- Invasive Species
- Pollution
- Our Solutions**
- WWF Classifications
- Threatened Species**
- Giant Pandas
- Elephants
- Tigers
- Cetaceans
- Rhinoceros
- Great Apes
- Marine turtles
- Other Species:**
- A-Z Species Index*
- Species by Country*
- Programmes**
- African Elephants
- African Great Apes
- African Rhinos
- Asian Rhinos & Elephants
- LAC Marine Turtles
- Tigers
- Policy**
- Wildlife Trade
- CITES
- IWC
- What You Can Do**
- News**
- Successes**
- Stories**
- On The Ground**
- Publications**

Species File

Common Name	Iberian lynx, pardel lynx, Spanish lynx; Lynx d'Espagne (Fr); Lynx pardelle, lince ibérico (Sp)
Scientific Name	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>
Location	Southern Europe
Status	IUCN: Critically Endangered CR C2a(i) CITES: Appendix I
Population	120 to 155 individuals

- Introduction**
- Ecology and Habitat**
- Population and distribution**
- Threats**
- What We Do**
- Iberian lynx**

* WWF only provides detailed information on the 'priority' and 'flagship' species that it is focusing on.

This information has been reviewed by Luis Suarez, Head, Species Programme, WWF-Spain.

Having decreased steadily in population numbers over the last two centuries, the Iberian lynx may soon be the first cat species to become extinct for at least 2,000 years. The species is classified by the World Union for the Nature (IUCN) as the world's most endangered feline species. Habitat loss and degradation, as well as the

disappearance of food resources (rabbits) are contributing to this declining trend. Today, there are no more than 38 breeding females in the wild.

There are only two confirmed small and isolated breeding populations, both in southern Spain, containing together just 120-155 individuals, and these will disappear unless significant changes occur.

Urgent action is needed. WWF is calling for the Spanish National Government and the Regional Government of Andalusia to implement the captive breeding programme as a matter of urgency, and work with others to ensure the protection and appropriate management of the habitat and prey conditions for the Iberian lynx.

WWF has contributed to Iberian lynx conservation through the creation and sponsorship of the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE), which has led to the development of an action plan for the Iberian lynx among other species. Since 1998, WWF/Spain is actively working for the conservation of the species.

Physical Description

Species Description

The Iberian lynx is a relative species of the Eurasian lynx, the Canada lynx and the North American bobcat. It is approximately the same size as the Canada lynx but about half the size of the Eurasian lynx, which survives in central and eastern Europe.

Adult lynx live in territories of up to 20 km², which they scent-mark and defend from each other, although male and female territories may overlap. Territories relate to areas of habitat and rabbit supply, and can change over generations.

The Iberian lynx's status as a separate species from the Eurasian lynx has long been questioned, but fossil records, morphological and genetic evidence have clarified its position as *Lynx pardinus*. The Iberian lynx is heavily spotted and weighs about half as much as the Eurasian species, with long legs and a very short tail with a black tip. Its coat is tawny with dark spots and it bears a characteristic "beard" around its face and prominent black ear tufts.

Size

A female Iberian lynx may weigh up to 10 kg or 13 kg for males, and reach up to 88 cm (female) or 1 m (male) at adult stage.

Habitat

Biogeographic realm

Palaearctic

Range States

Portugal, Spain

Geographical Location

Southern Europe

Ecological Region

Mediterranean Forests, Woodlands and Scrub

Why is this species important?

Iberian lynx displace and kill other carnivores - including foxes, Egyptian mongooses, and feral cats and dogs - to ensure sufficient supplies of rabbit populations and to protect their offspring. The loss of the Iberian lynx could result in an increase in the density of more common predators and a consequent decrease in rabbit populations.

Interesting Facts

A mother may carry its cubs between up to twelve homes, to avoid predation.

[< Go back](#)

Page last updated : April 21, 2005. © All photos/graphics remain the copyright of WWF

