



Species

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## Iberian lynx: Threats

### Once regarded both as an attractive hunting trophy and as a vermin



Spanish National Hydrological Plan (SNHP). Traditional irrigation by flooding the fields in Orihuela, Murcia, Spain. © WWF-Canon / WWF-Spain/Guido Schmidt

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

The Iberian lynx has been brought to the brink of extinction because of a combination of threats that include the radical decrease of rabbits, the lynx's principal prey; a serious reduction in habitat; being caught in snares set for rabbits; accidental deaths caused by speeding vehicles on the expanding road network, and illegal hunting.

#### Decreasing food base

Rabbits form the main prey of the Iberian lynx. Epidemics, such as myxomatosis, have affected rabbit populations over the years, which has in turn affected the Iberian lynx population.

#### Habitat loss and degradation

Infrastructures like roads, dams, railways and other human activities contribute to the loss and fragmentation of the Iberian lynx distribution area, creating barriers between the different populations and obstructing the exchange of individuals among them, which raises fears for its genetic viability and resistance to disease. It is thought that between 1960 and 1990, the Iberian lynx suffered an 80% loss in its range.

#### Protected areas to stimulate the survival of the lynx

The Spanish government has proposed 72 sites to be included in the Natura2000

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network (European Habitat Directive) to conserve the lynx habitat, covering more than 2,750,000 hectares (approximately the surface of the Galicia region). The relevancy of each area differs from one to the next. WWF-Spain/Adena considers that these areas do not cover all the important habitats for the lynx. In particular, some important corridors have not been included. For this reason, WWF/Adena has compiled a new list of relevant areas and corridors to be included in the Natura2000 network (74 sites with a total surface of 2,7 million hectares).

The Spanish National Hydrological Plan (SNHP) has proposed the construction of dams and other water infrastructures, which will have huge impacts on lynx sitess. The construction of 12 dams (for example La Brena II and Monteagudo) will have negative consequences on already designated Natura2000 sites, which are some of the few remaining protections in place for the survival of the lynx.

[Find out more about habitat loss and degradation](#)

### **Hunting**

Ironically, the species has been regarded both as an attractive hunting trophy and as a vermin. Hunters prized its valuable fur and its meat, and although some landowners appreciate its tendency to keep fox and rabbit numbers down, most perceive it as a threat to their game populations. The Iberian lynx was legally protected against hunting from the early 1970s, but they are still the victims of guns, traps and snares, particularly those set for other animals.

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