



THE IBERIAN LYNX, AN ENDANGERED SPECIES THREATENED BY THE SPANISH WATER PLAN

The Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) is classified by the World Union for Conservation (IUCN) as the world's most endangered feline species. In October 2002, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species upgraded the lynx to "Critically Endangered" following new evidence of alarming decline. Nevertheless, the Spanish Government has included in the National Hydrological Plan (SNHP) hydraulic works with negative impacts on the lynx population. **WWF/Adena considers that these impacts are unnecessary, because sustainable alternatives with less environmental impacts exist to solve the water management problems of Spain.**



The lynx population is declining

The Iberian lynx populations are basically located in the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula, where they face different threats.

At the end of the 80s, it was estimated that the Spanish population of Iberian lynx was at about 1.100 animals, with less than 350 breeding females. Of the 48 areas of stable presence found in Spain, only in eight of them were there more than 25 animals¹. The most recent national survey indicates that currently the Iberian lynx is only breeding in 2 of the 48 areas (Doñana and Sierra de Andújar), where the estimated population is around 150 individuals. There are estimations that isolated individuals live in other areas like Eastern Montes de Toledo, Western Sistema Central and Western Sierra Morena (although in the last survey only the presence of one lynx's scat was detected in Eastern Montes de Toledo)².



Illustration 1. Lynx population in 1980



Illustration 2. Lynx population in 2002

¹ Rodríguez, A. Y Delibes, M. 1990. El lince ibérico (*Lynx pardina*) en España. Distribución y problemas de conservación. *Colección Técnica*. ICONA. Madrid

² Guzmán, N. (coord.). 2002. Censo-diagnóstico de las poblaciones de lince ibérico (*Lynx pardinus*) en España. Informe inédito. Ministerio de Medio Ambiente. Tragsa. Madrid.

Loss of habitat and food

The decline of the lynx population is caused by:

- Decline in rabbit population, the basic prey;
- Mortality caused directly by man in the form of traps, shooting and dogs.
- Loss and fragmentation of habitat.

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.

Protected areas to stimulate the survival of the lynx

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

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The report with impacts of the SNHP on Natura2000 sites is available at the following website: www.panda.org/dams

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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).

Natura2000, urgent measures for certain priority habitats and species

The European Union has a particular responsibility for the conservation of natural habitats which are in danger of disappearing or species threatened with extinction. Classified as priorities, they must benefit from urgent protection measures.

The Natura2000 network will include a representative sample of all habitats of Community interest, especially priority habitats. It will thus ensure that all fauna and flora of Community interest receive sufficient protection to guarantee their long-term viability.

SNHP infrastructures will put pressure on lynx habitats

The SNHP proposes the construction of dams and other water infrastructures which will have huge impacts on lynx sites and which together form a real threat for the survival of this species. The construction of 12 dams (for example La Breña II and Monteagudo) will have negative impacts on already designated Natura2000 sites, which are one of the few remaining protections in place for the survival of the lynx. Moreover, 20 dams foreseen in regional water plans, will have negative impacts on possible lynx areas and corridors, further threatening the spread and interaction of the species.

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