



2015 Census of the Iberian lynx population in the Iberian peninsula



Picture: Pedro Cortijo.

The Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) census are carried out annually to find out the evolution of the populations and be able to evaluate the success of the conservation activities designed and executed following the directives of the National strategy of Spain, the Action Plan for the Conservation of the Iberian Lynx, Portugal and the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) conservation plans of the Autonomous Communities of Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha and Andalusia.

All the conservation initiatives have been carried out since 2002 using European funds from the Life Nature financing line and have been supported by a strategy for land custody through agreements signed with private hunting estate owners and hunting societies.

The lynx mating season starts at the end of December and extends until February, and so considering that the gestation period is approximately 63 days, they begin to give birth at the end of March. For the first few months the cubs remain in the delivery den, and it is not until mid-June that they start to join their mothers and can therefore be detected. That is why the census starts in the middle of June and only finishes in January/February the following year.

The census is carried out using camera-trapping. The same methodology has been used since 2001, consisting of blocking off the species entire area of presence. The camera traps are strategically placed in the lynx territories, one camera trap /Km² being installed in the area with signs of lynx and known presence the previous year. The minimum number of cameras set up for each reproductive female territory is 4.



Methodology

The minimum number of lynxes photographed during the camera trapping campaign is used for all estimates, and so the real population might be higher than that photographed. It is estimated (using capture-recapture methods) that 95% of the Iberian lynxes in the Doñana-Aljarafe, Andújar-Cardena, Guadalmellato and Guarrizas areas of presence, all in Andalusia, are identified using camera-trapping.

In the Vale do Guadiana, Portugal, Valle de Matachel, Badajoz, Montes de Toledo, Toledo and east and west Sierra Morena new areas of reintroduction, the census is carried out by direct counting supported by the information from camera-trapping and sightings.

The camera-trapping campaigns also enable us to control all the territories, and gather information regarding:

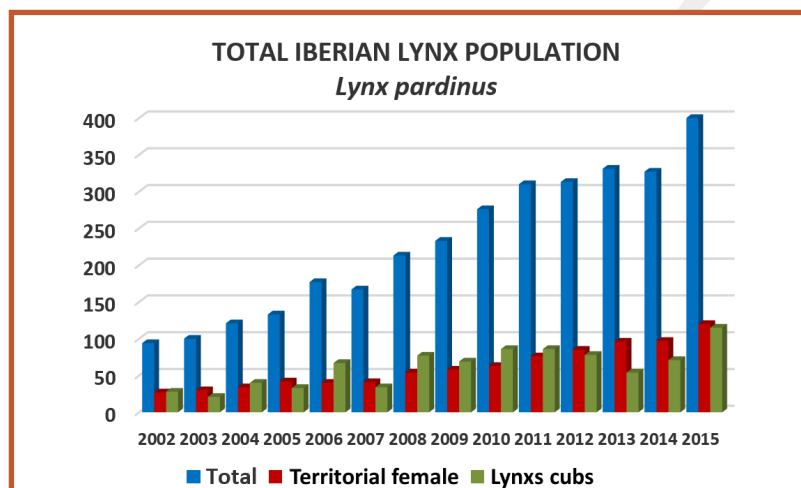
- 1.- Confirming the presence of adult lynx and knowing their identity.
- 2.- Demarcating the territories as far as possible.
- 3.- Confirming reproduction, identifying in turn the litters.
- 4.- Obtaining information on the state of the animals based on their appearance.
- 5.- Evaluating the effectiveness of the conservation activities.

Results

The 2015 census of the Andalusia populations gave the result of an increase in the population of free lynxes compared to the data from last year. The total count of individuals showed a figure of 361 in Andalusia territory, plus the 43 lynxes that are already grazing the areas of reintroduction that began with the Life Iberlince project in Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Portugal. As such, for the entire Iberian peninsular, the total number of individuals is **404 free Iberian lynxes**.

The recently formed populations must consolidate, working on establishing the individuals in the new areas of reintroduction and improving the populations of wild rabbit.

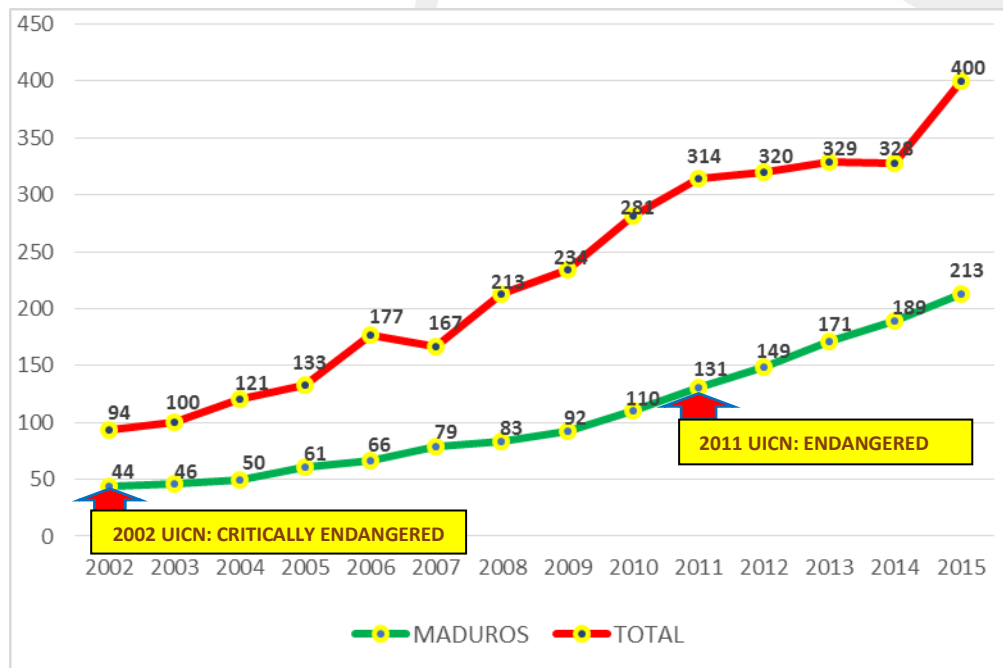
http://www.iberlince.eu/images/docs/3_InformesLIFE/Informe_Censo_2015.pdf.



Graph with the total evolution of the free Iberian Lynx population in the Iberian Peninsula.

Results

The criteria of the IUCN's Red List are based on the number of mature individuals. The graph with the evolution of the number of mature Iberian lynxes is as follows:



Conclusions

1- The dynamics of the Iberian lynx population continues to be very much affected by the negative influence of the new strain of haemorrhagic disease (RHDVb) which has caused a notable decrease in wild rabbit populations throughout the Peninsular, with Cardena-Andujar and Doñana-Aljarafe being especially affected, due to already starting out with low densities and through rabbit recovery being more compromised in other areas where they started out with higher densities. The effects of RHDVb are causing:

- A readjustment of the lynx populations in Cardena-Andujar and Doñana-Aljarafe on the environment's new bearing capacity.
- An increase in the felines' grazing areas and the area of their territories, with the consequential risks that this entails

2- In view of the decrease in rabbit densities, the Andalusia Regional Government together with its partners WWF, OAPN and FCBDH implemented an emergency plan in 2013 in Doñana-Aljarafe and Andujar-Cardena encompassing wild rabbit re-population, by putting into operation rabbit breeding enclosures built in previous Life projects. These re-populations have helped to curb the fall in the Iberian lynx census and are containing the drop in rabbit populations. This Plan also encompasses a warning system for detecting dead rabbits in the field to be later analysed and detected for RHDVb.



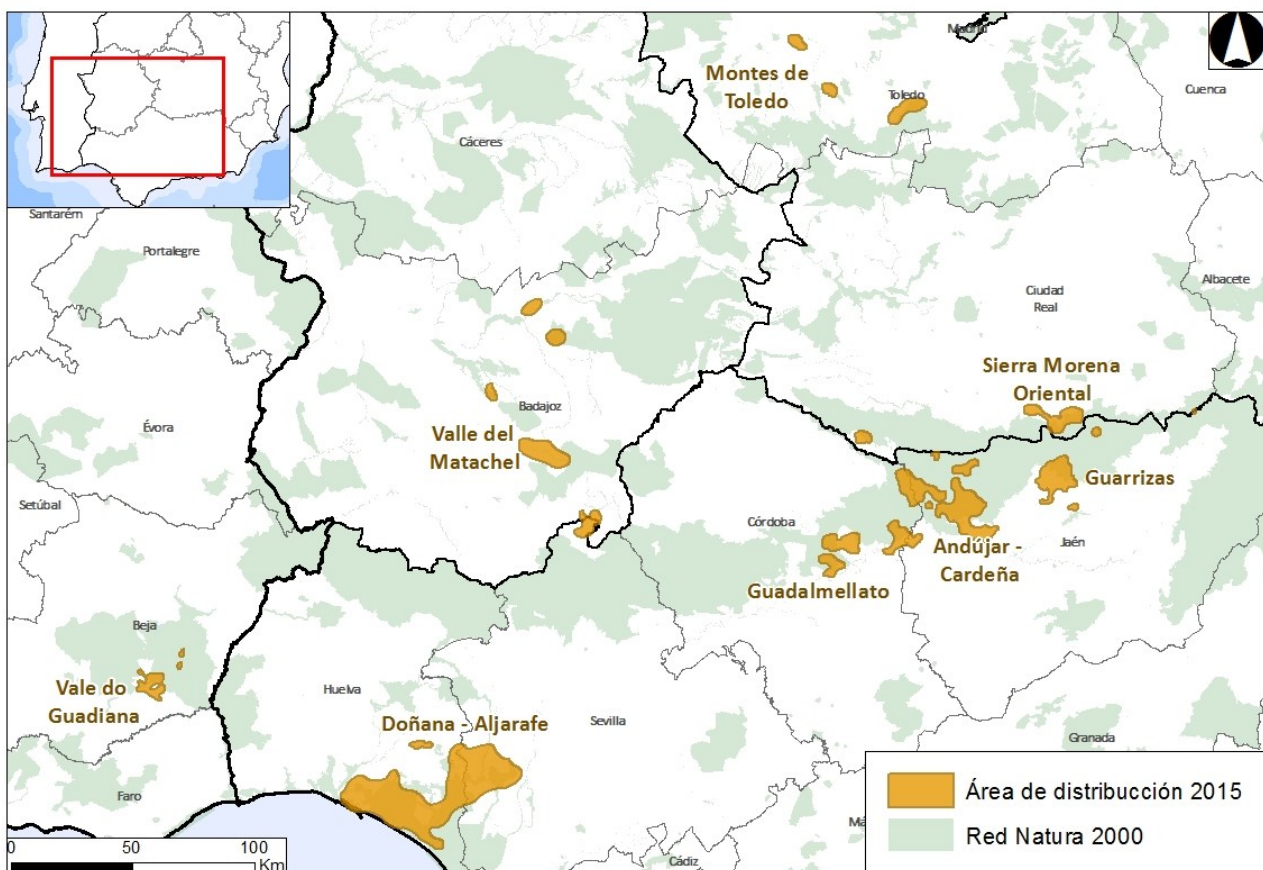
Conclusions

3- Despite the above, the Andalusia lynx population maintains an upward trend, reaching 361 Iberian lynxes in 2015 compared to 327 in 2014. Although it is true that there has been a decline in the total number of individuals in Andújar-Cardeña and Doñana-Aljarafe compared to the maximum populations prior to the surge of RHDVb, the growth experienced in the reintroduction areas of Guadalmellato and Guarrizas, the connection with the historic areas and the stable presence of individuals in the connecting areas is offsetting the adjustment experienced in Andújar-Cardeña and Doñana-Aljarafe.

4- Genetic reinforcement is still producing good results. The descendants of the released lynxes are scattered across the entire area of presence and third generation cubs have already been detected. A scientific analysis is being performed of the repercussion of this genetic reinforcement which will clarify the benefits of this action.

5- The population's mortality has suffered a setback compared to 2014, especially regarding collisions (21 vs 10) although this cause of death is still having a negative effect on the population. Incorporating the Portuguese Ministry of Planning and Infrastructure in the Iberlynce project should help to mitigate the deaths due to collision.

6- Implementing the emergency plan against the effects of RHDVb and maintaining supplementary food in cases proven by the Iberian Lynx Working Group, is ensuring the stability and a certain recovery of the Iberian lynx populations.



Distribution area of the Iberian lynx during 2015.

V INTERNATIONAL IBERIAN LYNX CONSERVATION SEMINAR



On the 4th, 5th and 6th of April, Life+IBERLINCE held the 5TH INTERNATIONAL IBERIAN LYNX CONSERVATION SEMINAR, in Seville. REINTRODUCTION STRATEGIES

The objective of this Seminar, after the 4th Seminar held in 2010 had determined the lines to be followed in order to start recovering the historic distribution in the Iberian peninsular, include designing a future conservation strategy that enables the work already started to be maintained and facilitate the incorporation of other appropriate places in the peninsular (Castilla y León, Aragón, La Rioja, Valencia...). Thus, the common thread of the Seminar was to determine the working lines that will have to be implemented to be able to move the Iberian lynx from "endangered" to "vulnerable", as well as the financial lines to make the implementation of these working lines possible.

Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) conservation programmes have been carried out in Andalusia since 2002. That year, and given the species' precarious situation, the IUCN declared it "critically endangered" of extinction, becoming the most threatened feline in the world. In 2012 the population results were revised after 10 years of conservation of the species and thanks to the good resulting data, the IUCN lowered the threat category to "endangered".

All the Conservation strategy has been based on a scientific and technical consensus supported by three International Seminars: the 1st Seminar held in 2002 in Andújar, Jaén, served to lay down the bases for the strategy needed to prevent the species from becoming extinct, which was analysed in the 2nd Seminar held in Córdoba in 2004. In the 3rd Seminar held in Huelva in 2008, the bases for reintroduction were laid down and the 4th Seminar held in 2010, determined the lines to follow to start recovering the historic distribution in the peninsular, giving rise to the Life+IBERLINCE project with which different areas of reintroduction in the Peninsular were selected and through which reintroductions are being carried out in Portugal, Andalusia, Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha.

All the documentation from this Seminar, [presentations](#) and [conclusions](#) are available on the website www.iberlince.eu.

Further information on the Seminar at:
<http://iberlince2016seminariointernacional.com/>

The 2015 Iberian lynx conservation awards ceremony

On 4th April, the Life+IBERLINCE project held the 2015 Iberian lynx conservation awards in Seville. These awards are acknowledgement of the work and involvement of owners, associations, hunting societies and institutions in the conservation of the Iberian lynx. This year it was organised by the Department of the Environment and Land Planning of the Andalusia Regional Government as a beneficiary partner of the Life+IBERLINCE Project. To commemorate the event the Consulate of Portugal in Seville gave up its premises.



The Government of Extremadura proposed the D. Juan Ignacio de la Cueva Spinola award, in the name of the owner of the Los Hardales estate, where releases of Iberian lynxes from the Project were carried out in the Extremadura province in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

The Regional Government of Andalusia proposed "Más Allá de mi Cocina" (Beyond my Kitchen) to the Alanís women's theatre group, because joining drama and the environment has always worked, and this amateur theatre group had very satisfactory results.

Castilla-La Mancha awarded the work carried out by the Toledo Council, which right from the start, showed a full commitment to the Iberian lynx's conservation in the province of Toledo through its Environmental Service.

The Portuguese Government proposed an award to the Herdade de Romeiras estate managed by Romeiras, Caça e Turismo SA. Situated in the heart of Mértola in the area of the Natural Park of the Guadiana Valley. Besides the abundance of small and large game available on its estate, the presence of endangered species is also evident, such as the Iberian imperial eagle and the Royal eagle, which nest within the boundaries of the estate.

The Murcia Region decided to award Miguel Ángel Ruiz Parra. He is a journalist, with a degree in Information Science from Navarra University. He has been working at the regional newspaper "La Verdad" since 1989, where he is currently the head of the Society and Culture area, specialised in the Environment.

On behalf of Life+IBERLINCE we should like to thank the dedication and efforts of all the people and groups who have in some way cooperate with the conservation of the Iberian lynx.

BENEFICIARIOS ASOCIADOS



COFINANCIADOR

