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a joint initiative of BioRegional & WWF

LynxBrief

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ECOLOGISTAS
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Welcome to the seventh edition of *LynxBrief*, a briefing paper focusing on the conservation of the Iberian Lynx, **the most endangered feline species in the world**. Comments on, and questions about, any issue relating to the conservation of the Iberian Lynx should be emailed to: lynxbrief@yahoo.co.uk

Contents

New lynx LIFE project in Andalucía.....	1
Update on captive breeding	2
More lynx mortality due to vehicles.....	2
Habitat protection in Andújar	3

New lynx LIFE project in Andalucía

On 8 September 2006 the Junta de Andalucía (Regional Government) officially announced that a new Iberian Lynx LIFE project has been approved, to be part-funded by the European Union (EU). As reported in *LynxBrief* no. 5, an application was made for a new LIFE project in 2005 and this application was subsequently carefully scrutinised by the EU and outside experts – alongside applications for many other conservation projects in Europe – before approval was granted.

The new lynx LIFE project will continue actions undertaken by the previous LIFE project (which has now finished) including: monitoring of wild lynx populations, outreach work and formal agreements with landowners. In addition, extra actions will be undertaken including: research on lynx populations and other large mammals; research to identify and prepare appropriate sites for reintroductions of captively-bred individuals; actual reintroductions of captive lynx; translocations of lynx from one area to another; the creation of a gene bank for the species, and; additional outreach work and awareness campaigns, particularly in areas ear-marked for reintroductions.

In Andújar-Cardeña, the LIFE project includes an aim to link-up the two existing sub-populations as well as to expand the whole population into new neighbouring areas. In Doñana, the LIFE project includes an aim to translocate animals in from Andújar-Cardeña so as to recover lost territories in the area and address the low genetic variation of the Doñana population. However, *LynxBrief* notes that it will of course be important for any such work to address the increased risk of mortality from motor vehicles (see *LynxBrief* no. 6) for any individuals translocated into the Doñana area from Andújar-Cardeña.

The new lynx LIFE project runs from August 2006 to July 2011, and has a total budget of nearly 26 million euros; with nearly 10 million euros from the EU and the majority of the rest coming from the Junta de Andalucía. This level of funding is almost three times the amount of the previous LIFE project.

All the organisations involved in the previous LIFE project will be involved in the new project: i.e. the Junta de Andalucía environment department, Ecologistas en Acción, Fundación CBD Habitát and hunting associations. In addition, the new LIFE project will also include WWF-Spain, the Junta de Andalucía transport and agriculture departments, and the Junta de Extremadura agriculture and environmental departments. The involvement of these additional partners should help to increase the influence and success of the LIFE project, as well as help address wider issues including problematic road developments, loss of habitat to agriculture and the hoped for recovery of the Iberian Lynx outside of Andalucía.



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Overall, the new lynx LIFE project is an important and welcomed initiative that should help improve the co-ordination, funding, profile and success of Iberian Lynx conservation. *LynxBrief* commends the European Union and the Junta de Andalucía for funding the LIFE project, and also commends all the other partners for their contribution and support. In addition, *LynxBrief* commends all those involved in the application for, and implementation of, the new lynx LIFE project for their hard work and dedication to lynx conservation.

Although it is an important step, however, the new lynx LIFE project will not on its own guarantee the survival of the Iberian Lynx. The work of many other government agencies, NGOs and individuals in Andalucía, elsewhere in Spain, in Portugal and internationally will also be important, particularly so as to change the situation in the wild – removing existing pressures and threats – so that an expansion from the two tiny remnant populations is possible. Overall, it is most important that all those involved or interested in Iberian Lynx conservation, whether in LIFE projects, captive breeding, scientific research, awareness raising or political lobbying, continue to work together to help conserve this beautiful and important creature.

For more information about the new LIFE project see:
<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/medioambiente/site/aplica/medioambiente/site/web/menuitem.a5664a214f73c3df81d8899661525ea0/?vgnnextoid=926f72979fb8d010VgnVCM1000000624e50aRCRD>

For details of the new EU LIFE-Nature Programme see:
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/news/index.htm>

For background information on EU-LIFE see:
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/life/index.htm>

Update on lynx captive breeding



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Castañuela and Camarina at El Acebuche

There are at present 24 lynxes in the captive breeding programme in Andalucía: 18 in El Acebuche, 5 in Jerez and 1 recently incorporated cub, to be the first inhabitant of the recently finished new centre in Jaén province. This cub was found abandoned at the age of 4 months on a patio of a house in the Sierra de Andújar on 14 September. Cardo is another recent inclusion in the captive breeding programme, captured as a cub from the wild in the Sierra Morena on 6 July 2006.

In general, most of the wild lynxes incorporated into the breeding programme are either injured individuals, abandoned cubs or cubs from large litters where all cubs are unlikely to survive. In this way, the ex-situ conservation programme is incorporating sufficient wild founder individuals to form a viable captive breeding population, whilst minimising any negative impacts on the two wild populations. This founder population is being increased through successful captive breeding, with an aim to have 60-70 captive lynx by 2010. This work is helping to maintain and increase the genetic diversity of the species, and could provide individuals for future reintroductions (as planned under the new LIFE project), provided that conditions in the wild can be improved.

Of the 18 lynxes currently in El Acebuche, 5 were born and bred in captivity: Brezo and Brisa (2005), and Castañuela, Camarina and Cynara (2006). Brezo now weighs 11 Kg, and Brisa 10 Kg. Castañuela, Camarina and Cynara each weigh approximately 5.5 Kg. It is hoped that there will be more breeding success in the next breeding season in early 2007.

Reference: Iberian Lynx Ex-situ Conservation Programme E-Newsletters available on-line, along with other information, news, photos and videos at: www.lynxexsitu.es

More lynx mortality due to vehicles

As reported in *LynxBrief* no. 6, Iberian Lynx road deaths remain high, particularly in and around Doñana, where 18 individuals were run over in the previous 5 years, and 7 have been killed by road vehicles in the last 18 months alone. For more information see *updated Doñana map on page 4*.

Tragically, last month two more lynx were killed by vehicles in the Doñana area. A 2 year-old female lynx was run over between Rociana del Condado and Villarrasa, north of Doñana, on 15 September. Then, another lynx was run over between Mazagón and Huelva on 22 September.

Many large mammals, including lynx, suffer some deaths from road vehicles. However, the level of lynx mortality in and

around Doñana is unacceptable given the small size of the lynx population (20-35 adults) and given that this is a prestigious and supposedly highly-protected area. In particular, in recent years new roads have been built and some roads upgraded around the Doñana area, and the volume and speed of traffic has increased, including along the edge of the Doñana National Park, and through some parts of the Doñana Natural Park.

As argued in *LynxBrief* no. 6 (and as called for by a number of organisations; e.g. WWF-Spain), the continued high number of Doñana road deaths, along with the continued loss of habitat to intensive agriculture, means that an Emergency Recovery Plan for Doñana's lynxes is required. Such a plan would supersede and go further than existing plans and actions that do not seem to have the scope or political will to recover Doñana's lynxes.

In order to increase the pressure for the creation and implementation of an Emergency Recovery Plan for lynx in Doñana, individuals and organisations concerned with the survival of the Iberian Lynx are advised to write to the President of Andalucía, calling upon him to mandate such a plan. Individuals and organisations should write to:

**Excmo. Sr Presidente de la Junta de Andalucía,
Dr Manuel Chaves, Palacio de San Telmo,
Avenida de Roma, 41071 Sevilla, SPAIN
email: manuel.chaves@juntadeandalucia.es**

An example letter is given below. However, it would have more influence if you added your own words and thoughts. Also, please be sure to add your own name and address.

Dear Dr Chaves

I am writing to you as an individual / a representative of an organisation concerned about the survival of the Iberian Lynx, the world's most endangered feline species.

I understand that your government, and other organisations, have been implementing plans and actions to benefit this beautiful and important creature, with some success, particularly in Andújar-Cardeña. However, I also understand that parts of your government have supported agricultural and road developments that directly threaten the Iberian Lynx in Doñana, where lynx continue to be run over at an alarming rate.

It does not seem to me that your government is doing enough to conserve the Iberian Lynx in Doñana. I thus call upon you to urgently mandate an Emergency Recovery Plan for Doñana's lynxes, to fully address and reverse the on-going rise in traffic speeds and volumes in the area, and the recent loss of valuable lynx habitat to intensive agriculture.

Yours sincerely.....

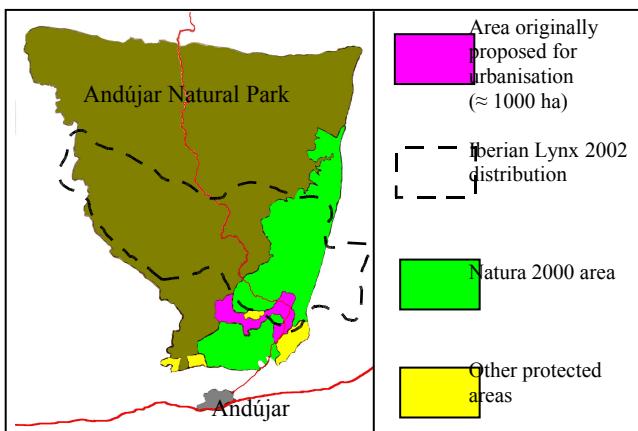


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Habitat protection in Andújar

The first edition of *LynxBrief* in February 2005 reported a worrying proposal from the Andújar local government (Ayuntamiento de Andújar) to change the classification of a 1000 ha area of land immediately adjacent to the Andújar Natural Park for “urbanisation”; legalising some illegal constructions in the area and permitting more development. This area of land is used by Iberian Lynx for hunting and breeding, and *LynxBrief* no. 1 called upon those interested in Iberian Lynx conservation to write to the Ayuntamiento de Andújar expressing their opposition to the proposal.

Thanks to opposition expressed – including from recipients of *LynxBrief* – the proposal to re-classify the 1000 ha area for urbanisation was not implemented. Instead, the area remains classified as “not for urbanisation”. Although there are still problems with past and on-going illegal developments in the area, not re-classifying the area was important, contributing to the conservation of the Iberian Lynx in Andújar. This action also demonstrates that, by voicing their opinions about particular issues, those concerned about the conservation of the Iberian Lynx can contribute to the species’ survival.



Those wishing to view previous editions of *LynxBrief* (and other important and interesting information) on-line, should visit one or both of the following websites:

www.soslynx.org (under button “lynx news”)

http://www.lcie.org/res_sps_Iblynx.htm

Ex-Situ Conservation Website



An excellent new website has been produced by the Iberian Lynx ex-situ conservation programme (captive breeding), available at: www.lynxesxitu.es

This website contains reports and information about the ex-situ conservation programme, along with videos and many photographs of captive lynx. These photographs and videos are freely available for non-profit use, provided that appropriate acknowledgement is made of their source. Anyone wishing to use photographs or videos for commercial purposes must contact the ex-situ conservation programme to request official approval.

Conclusions

It is important that all those interested and working in lynx conservation (in research, conservation and/or lobbying) work together to ensure the survival of this beautiful and important creature, particularly in the face of conflicting interests. In particular, it is important that those interested in lynx conservation write lobby letters to politicians and policy-makers to encourage them to alter their actions in favour of the Iberian Lynx. The past success of securing the protection of an area of lynx habitat in Andújar shows that the protests of those individuals and organisations that care about the Iberian Lynx can make a real difference to its conservation.

In this edition, *LynxBrief* again advises those interested and working in lynx conservation to write a letter to the President of Andalucía calling upon him to urgently implement an emergency lynx recovery plan in Doñana.

Such a plan is needed given the very small size, isolation and lack of recovery of the Doñana lynx population, and the on-going threats from fast motor traffic and the loss of habitat to intensive farming and other developments.

Finally, *LynxBrief* sends best wishes to all those interested and involved in lynx conservation and looks forward to more of your comments and suggestions.

About the author

LynxBrief is edited by **Dan Ward**, who has a degree in Natural Sciences (Cambridge University), a MSc specialising in Environmental Policy and experience in conservation projects in Scotland, New Zealand, Ecuador and Spain. He accepts no responsibility for the use that may be made of this report.

About SOS Lynx

SOS lynx is a campaign organisation set up in 2000 to promote the conservation of the Iberian Lynx, and works mainly at the International level. For more information about, and to support, SOS lynx, see: www.soslynx.org

About Ecologistas en Acción – Andalucía

Ecologistas en Acción – Andalucía is a federation of ecological groups that works to conserve the Iberian Lynx and the natural environment in general, and promotes peace and solidarity. Ecologistas en Acción is not necessarily identified with all the contents of this publication. You can contact the organisation by email at: andalucia@ecologistasenaccion.org

About One Planet Living and Pelicano SA

In 2001, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said: “Our biggest challenge this new century is to take an idea that seems abstract – sustainable development – and turn it into a reality for all the world’s people”. BioRegional and WWF have sought to take up this challenge. One Planet Living (OPL) is a joint initiative that aims to make it easy, attractive and affordable for people everywhere to adopt sustainable lifestyles, and at the same time support nature conservation. Pelicano SA, a Portuguese developer, is a Founding Global Partner of the OPL initiative, and is directly supporting lynx conservation in Portugal.

Iberian Lynx, Roads and Road Deaths in Doñana

Sources of information:

1984-2004: "Incidencias y mortalidad de lince ibérico registradas en el área de Doñana", Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, Doñana Parque Nacional (2004)

2005-2006: Ecologistas en Acción – Andalucía, personal communications

