



lynxconnect



# IBERIAN LYNX

Training for trainers  
Primary and Secondary School Teachers

Coordinator beneficiary:




Junta de Andalucía

Associated beneficiaries:







This document has been produced by the Project Team of the LIFE NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY 19NAT/ES001055 LINXCONNECT: “CREATING A GENETICALLY AND DEMOGRAPHICALLY FUNCTIONAL METAPOPULATION OF IBERIAN LINX (*Lynx pardinus*)”.

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# GENERAL SECTION



# INTRODUCTION

The LIFE 19NAT/ES001055 LYNXCONNECT project, 'Creation of a genetically and demographically functional metapopulation of Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) (2020-2025)', is the fourth LIFE project approved by the European Commission for the conservation of the Iberian lynx. Connecting all existing lynx population centres requires not only measures related to population management, but also the implementation of land stewardship and social participation tools.

The project promotes the design and implementation of a Training for Trainers Plan, whose main objective is to train those responsible for training the target audience (primary and secondary school teachers, driving instructors and law enforcement agencies).

This handbook has been produced as a resource to support this training and is divided into two sections. The first, common to all target groups of the Training Plan, covers the main aspects related to the biology, habitat and distribution of the Iberian lynx. The second has been developed specifically for each of the target groups, including tools and methodologies to improve and facilitate the transfer of knowledge to students in the case of teaching staff, and a compilation of the regulations and protocols used by law enforcement agencies.

These materials are intended to facilitate the work carried out by the groups targeted by the Training Plan for Trainers within the framework of their competences, raising awareness in settings other than the traditional school context.



The species reached its maximum distribution in the Upper Pleistocene, occupying the entire Iberian Peninsula, southern France, and part of central Europe. There are three moments in which a decline in its genetic variability has been detected. The first coincides with the last glaciation and the arrival of *Homo sapiens* in Europe (approximately 47,000 years ago); the second occurred about 300 years ago; the last, the best known and most recent, took place during the 20th century. During the first half of this period, populations disappeared from the north of the Central System, the Iberian System, the Mediterranean arc and the Subbetic mountain ranges. Between 1950 and 1990, the area occupied by the lynx decreased by 80%, entering into a continuous decline. The lowest known population was in 2002, when the first census-diagnosis carried out on a peninsular scale reduced the number of lynx to approximately 100 specimens distributed in two isolated areas, Doñana and Sierra Morena Oriental (Andújar-Cardeña).



**Fig. 2.** Evolution of the geographical distribution of the Iberian lynx.  
A) Distribution area approximately 40,000 years ago ( Late Pleistocene).  
B) Distribution area in 2002.

The main causes of the decline of the Iberian lynx are anthropogenic, with roadkill and illegal hunting having the greatest impact. Apart from these, the main threats hindering the recovery of the species are the decline in rabbit abundance and the alteration, fragmentation and loss of quality of its habitat resulting from agroforestry intensification, changes in hunting management, large infrastructure projects, etc. The loss of genetic variability and increased inbreeding have also led to a reduction in biological efficiency and high mortality from disease.

Among the pathogens affecting the Iberian lynx, the three main agents that have been shown to cause mortality in the species, due to their potential as population regulators, are feline leukaemia virus (FeLV), tuberculosis (TB) and canine distemper virus (CDV). FeLV affects and is transmitted from domestic and wild cat populations (*Felis catus* and *Felis sylvestris*), CDV to carnivores, and TB can be transmitted from wild ungulates.

As far as the social perception of the species is concerned, it is very favourable to its presence, recovery and reintroduction. There are very sporadic situations of social rejection that slow down or limit the settlement of the species in some areas. This rejection is partly motivated by the interference that can be generated between lynx and domestic animals, whose commercial or non-commercial farms (sheep and goat herds, poultry farms or chicken coops) may suffer occasional attacks by the feline.

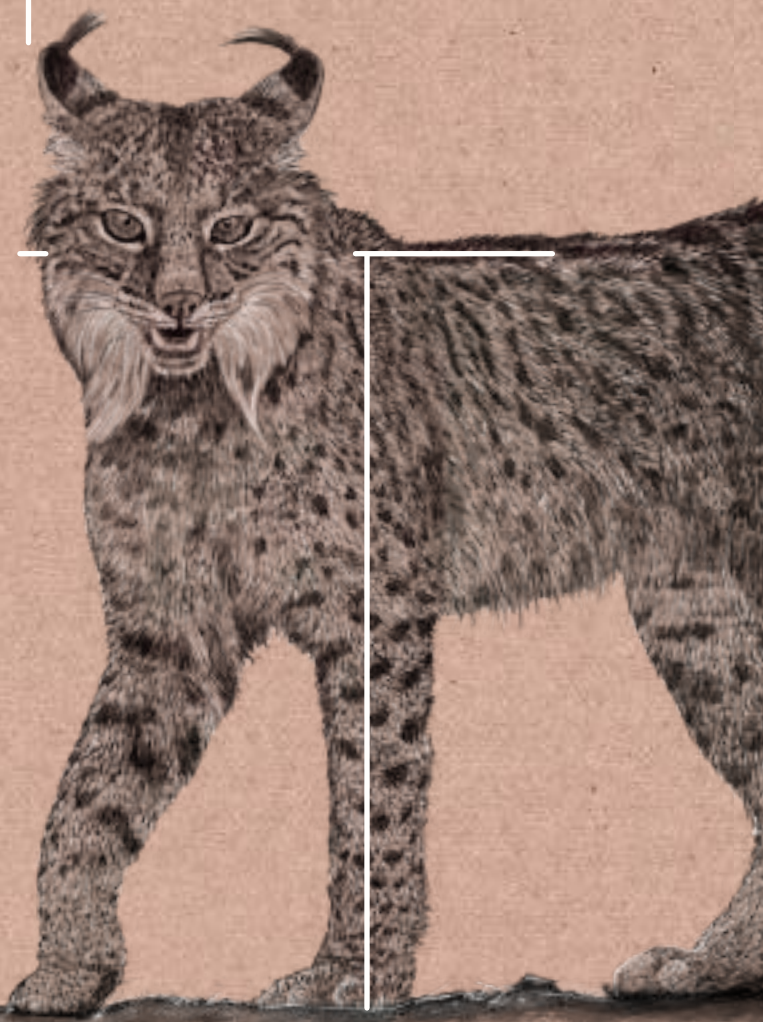
## 2. CHARACTERISTICS

- Medium-sized feline.
- Slender body, long legs and short tail. Adapted to hunting wild rabbits and the Mediterranean climate.
- Habits: mainly nocturnal and crepuscular.

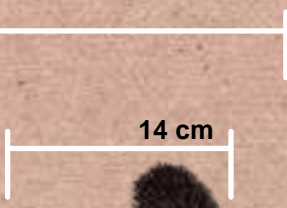
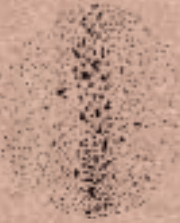
Body length

Adult **males: 85-100 cm**    Adult **females: 84-88 cm**

45-55cm



Spotted coat that allows it to camouflage itself and go unnoticed among the grass and Mediterranean scrub. The spots and patterns are specific to each individual and allow for the identification and census of specimens. There are three types of spots: small, medium and large spots.



**10-15  
years**



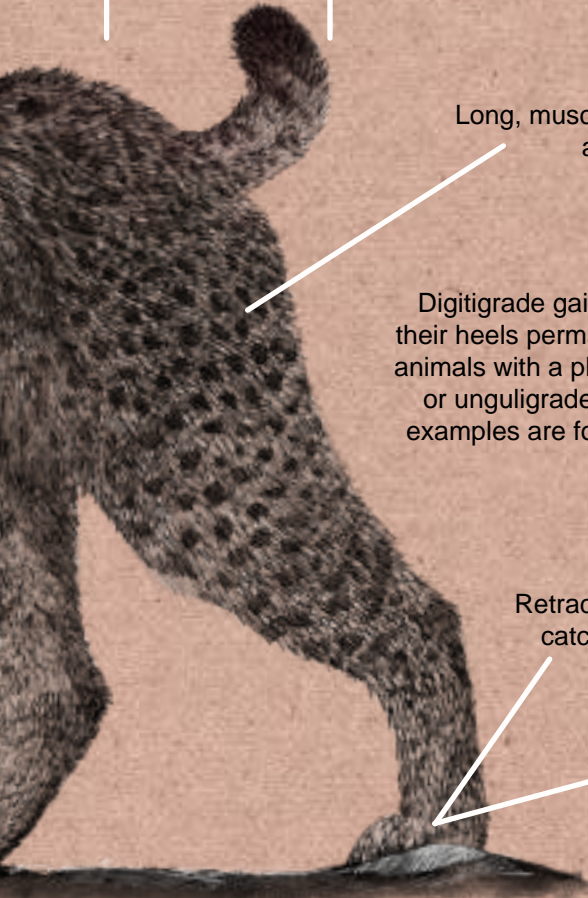
**8-10  
KG**

Adult females



**10-15  
KG**

Adult males



Long, muscular hind legs, adapted for jumping and short, powerful runs.

Digitigrade gait: they walk on their toes, keeping their heels permanently raised. They are faster than animals with a plantigrade gait (e.g. bears, badgers) or unguligrade gait (e.g. deer, wild boar). Some examples are foxes, wolves, lynx and wild rabbits.

Retractable claws to catch their prey.







Eyes positioned at the front, large round pupils. This allows for three-dimensional vision and the ability to see in dark conditions.

Ear tufts (brushes) and long whiskers that, in addition to blurring the contours of the face, send visual signals about the individual's mood.

The dentition is that of a strict carnivore, with large canines to deliver the fatal blow, carnassial teeth to tear large pieces of flesh, and small incisors.

### 3. FEEDING

The lynx is a predator that specialises in hunting wild rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), which make up between 85 and 100 per cent of its diet — a figure that can vary between different populations. The smaller size and lower energy requirements of Iberian lynx compared to European lynx are most likely due to parallel evolution between lynx and rabbits. The lynx's diet may also include small mammals (rodents), birds, reptiles and even ungulates.



**85-100%**

To meet its trophic needs, an adult male weighing 15 kg needs approximately 912 kcal/day, and an adult female weighing 10 kg needs approximately 673 kcal/day, which is equivalent to the consumption of one adult rabbit per day. These energy requirements undergo seasonal changes, being higher during winter, for example, and also depending on the breeding season, especially in the case of females. A breeding female with two young needs approximately three rabbits per day. The joint evolution of prey and predator can also be seen in the fact that the lynx's breeding season coincides with the peak rabbit population in early summer.

The specialisation is such that, despite the general decline in rabbit populations, the Iberian lynx does not change its diet, nor does it substitute other alternative prey.

The lynx hunts by stalking its prey, attacking with a leap or a short run and without pursuing it if it misses. It prefers to try again with new prey, which it will kill quickly with a bite to the back of the neck.



In the case of larger prey such as ungulates, it will suffocate them by biting the front of the throat, and if the prey is birds, it will bite the upper back, between the wings. The size of the prey also determines how and where it is consumed, so that smaller prey (rabbits and birds) are carried to a quiet, sheltered place to be devoured, starting with the head and leaving behind skin, paws or feathers. When the prey is larger, it is consumed on the spot, and the remains may be partially buried with earth or branches to be eaten again over several days. It does not often consume animals that it has not killed itself.

The abundance of wild rabbits plays a fundamental role in the population dynamics of the lynx, determining such important aspects as its reproductive capacity and survival rate.

An essential part of the conservation measures implemented since 2002 have been aimed at managing wild rabbit populations, primarily focused on improving habitat, creating refuges and strengthening populations, with the aim of improving the area with prey presence and increasing the density of specimens.

## **4. HABITAT**

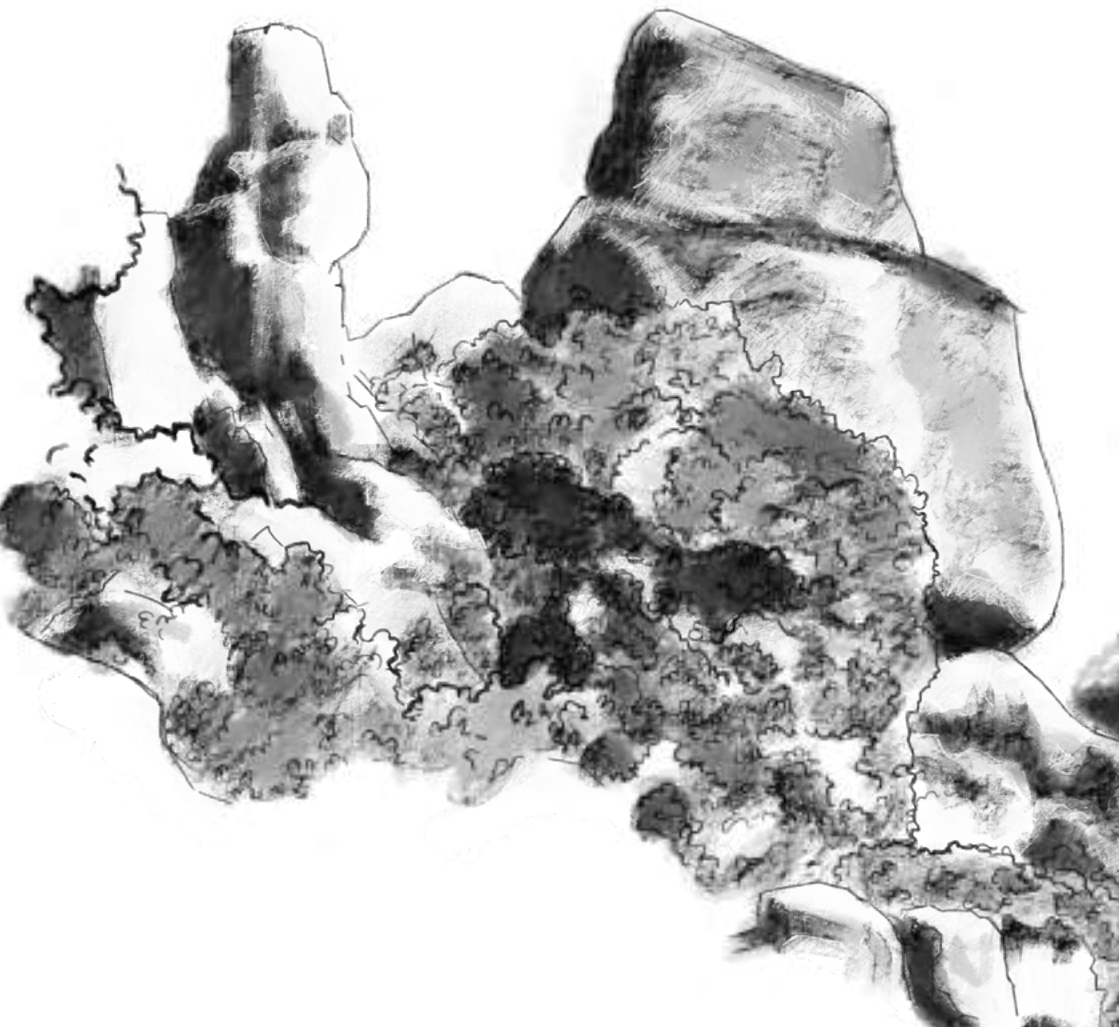
The optimal habitat for the Iberian lynx is Mediterranean scrubland and woodland, on which it is strictly dependent: the decline in the population in the second half of the 20th century is closely linked to the loss of this habitat.

The species' use of its habitat varies, preferring dense areas with rocks and dense vegetation cover for resting and edge areas for hunting rabbits. It can also inhabit scattered wooded formations (olive groves or pastures) with patches of scrub and riparian vegetation. Breeding dens are located in rocky areas or even in hollow trees.

Studies indicate that the average scrub cover in territorial lynx territories is 55%, with scrub cover of between 20 and 80% considered adequate. The ideal situation is the presence of abundant shrub cover interspersed with grassland areas, with large ecotone zones between the two, as this heterogeneous vegetation structure offers the best options for shelter and food availability for rabbits.

The home ranges of adult lynx remain defined throughout their lives, with males having larger ranges. The size of these ranges varies between 4 and 20 km<sup>2</sup>, depending on sex and rabbit abundance. The average size of the territory of a potentially reproductive female is around 600 ha.

Habitat is one of the most limiting factors in terms of the species' distribution. Habitat loss and degradation is the main long-term threat, but losses due to urban development, connectivity and climate change are also significant. These can cause major changes in the survival of the lynx itself, as it is a specialist of the Mediterranean scrubland, and in the status of rabbit populations.



Some of the habitat improvement measures being implemented for the recovery of the Iberian lynx are:

- » Improving shelter and food for wild rabbits
  - Heterogenisation of the plant structure, promoting the development of native Mediterranean vegetation
  - Protection of existing rabbit warrens
  - Improving food availability through clearing, sowing or providing seeds in feeders
  - Creating water points
- » Reintroducing wild rabbits
  - Reinforcement population through rabbit enclosures, consisting of large areas (approx. 4 ha), which allow the population to develop while excluding potential predators
  - Free reinforcement of rabbits with mesh, in which reintroduction is carried out in groups of warrens that are protected with mesh for at least 24 hours
  - Free reinforcement of rabbits without mesh, as above, but without fencing the warren
- » Management of rabbits used for reintroduction. A number of aspects will be taken into account for the selection and management of the specimens used, such as their origin, giving priority to populations close to the recipient and of the same subspecies, and the date of release, so that they occur sufficiently in advance of the breeding and rearing season
- » Involvement of local owners and managers



## 5. INTERACTION WITH OTHER SPECIES

The presence of lynx can 'shape' the trophic structure of an area. As a superpredator, it can regulate the abundance of other opportunistic mesocarnivores such as foxes, mongooses, genets, etc., so that these are less abundant in the feline's domain, having a positive impact on small prey populations such as rabbits and partridges.

## 6. TERRITORIAL BEHAVIOUR

The lynx is a territorial animal. This means that, while resources are optimal, it frequents a territory that it defends from other intruders of the same or competing species (e.g. foxes, mongooses and feral cats). The size of its territory and how well it defends it depends on the availability of food and sex. Males have larger territories. A male's territory may overlap with those of several adult females, but generally does not overlap with those of other males. The lynx marks its territory with urine and excrement at key points on paths, trails and obligatory wildlife crossings, and sometimes next to the remains of consumed prey, in order to exclude other members of the same species.

These scent marks are used to delimit the territory and mark important resources, such as water points, as their own. These deposits are often made in groups (latrines or dung piles). These marks also serve as an effective communication system, enabling females and males to be aware of each other's presence and degree of receptivity as the breeding season approaches.



**Fig. 3.** Lynx droppings.

## 7. REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE

Between approximately eight months and one year of age (the latter being less common), young lynx begin to become independent and seek their own territory. Until this point, the sexual dimorphism easily seen in adult specimens does not exist. This is the most delicate and critical time for their survival, as it is a stage with high mortality rates, mainly due to factors related to human impact on the environment: roadkill, persecution, etc., as well as malnutrition and disease.

During this period, they can sometimes travel long distances, crossing areas such as roads or urban areas, demonstrating their ability to “avoid” unsuitable habitats, provided there are riverbanks, crops or tracks that serve as corridors. The dispersal period varies in length, from a few weeks to almost two years, after which the habitats used are usually of lower quality than those used by resident animals or those occupied prior to dispersal.

This dispersal of young individuals is usually related to times when rabbits are more abundant, with higher dispersal rates in years of scarcity. There are no differences between the sexes in terms of age, time of year or distance, although it does seem to be related to the return to high reproductive activity of the parents.

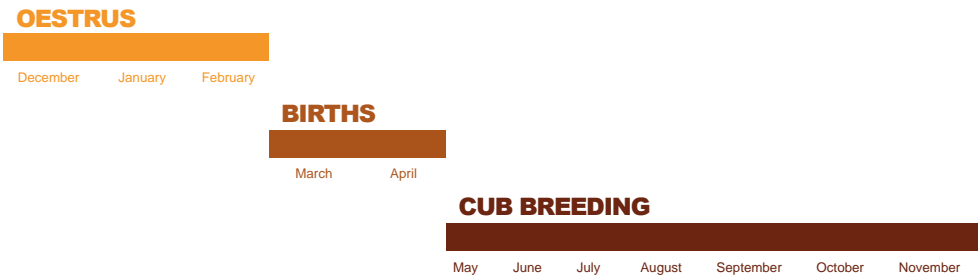
Sexual maturity is normally reached around one year of age and the mating season takes place between December and February, with females that do not become pregnant mating somewhat later. Urine markings that indicate reproductive status, as well as confrontations between territorial males and suitors, take place increasingly closer to the female, both during the day and at night.

As with other felines, mating is accompanied by a whole ritual of growling, head-butting... these are patterns of behaviour that will culminate in a period of just three days where both partners copulate, play and hunt together. It is very important that, as this mating period is so short, peace and quiet are ensured and disturbances are avoided so as not to interfere with the behaviour of the species.

Generally, the female will continue the gestation and rearing of the cubs alone. However, the male usually fulfils the role of protector, marking the territory and preventing other intruding males from entering and even killing the cubs, as occurs in other felines. There is also evidence of males providing food for the cubs. The birthing period usually ranges from March to April, although there may be fluctuations depending on the abundance of rabbits.

Gestation lasts about 65 days, after which the female will give birth to 2 to 4 cubs. The birthing dens are located in rocky burrows, brambles, thick scrub and even tree stumps or underground burrows abandoned by other species. It is common for the female to move the cubs to a new location to prevent disease, parasitism or to make it more difficult for potential predators or other males to find them. Early mortality is high in this species, with only two cubs surviving weaning in 90% of cases, and it is usually the smallest cubs that have the lowest survival rate.

The young remain with their mother for months, usually until she comes into heat again. Trophic independence is achieved gradually, with weaning beginning at three months. By seven months, the young spend only 60% of their time with their mother, decreasing to 2% at eleven months.



**Fig. 4.** Reproductive cycle diagram.

# SPECIES REGRESSION AND RECOVERY

## 1. ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION

At the end of the 20th century, alarm bells were ringing: the emblem of Iberian wildlife was suffering a dramatic decline that was leading to its disappearance.

Half a century earlier, the lynx was considered vermin and its fur was highly prized. It was therefore hunted and persecuted in every possible way, which was the main cause of its disappearance from large areas of favourable habitat. Combined with the emergence of new diseases in its main prey, wild rabbits, and the fragmentation of its habitat, which resulted in inbreeding, this brought the species to the brink of extinction in 2002. Only two isolated populations of fewer than 50 adult individuals remained: Doñana and Andújar-Cardeña. The time had come to save the world's most endangered feline.

## 2. RECOVERY OF THE SPECIES

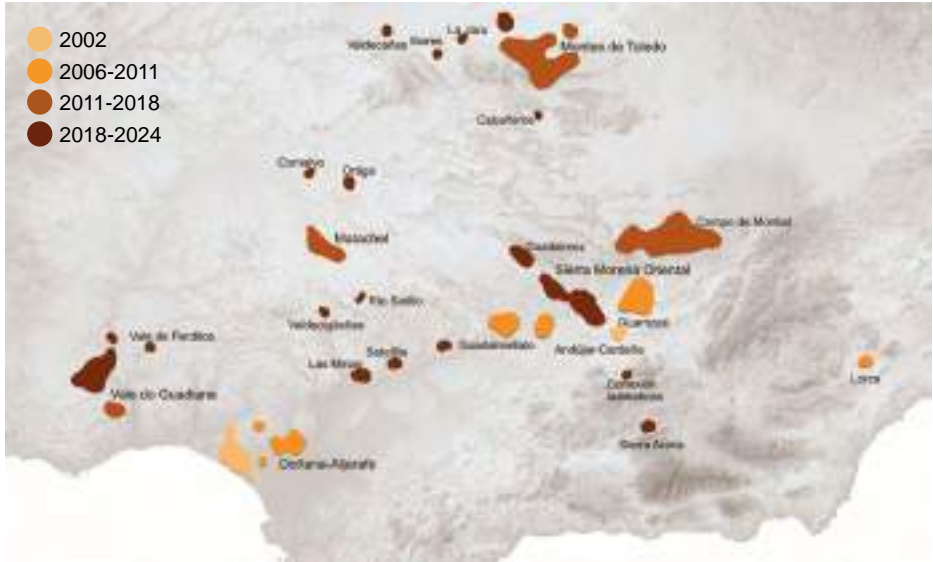
Given the delicate situation of the species, in February 1999 the first Strategy for the Conservation of the Iberian Lynx in Spain was approved. Since then, conservation measures have been implemented that have significantly reduced the risk of extinction for the species. To this end, the population has been increased by promoting the abundance of rabbits and reducing threats, optimising genetic variability and establishing new self-sustaining nuclei in Portugal, Andalusia, Castile-La Mancha and Extremadura. In relation to the latter, areas suitable in terms of size, quality, rabbit density, low risk of death and adequate social support have been selected, where genetically selected specimens have been released and subsequently monitored.

The Andalusian and national administrations' recovery efforts, as well as the concern of society, were joined by those of the European Union. Through various LIFE projects, the EU financed a significant part of the work to save the Iberian lynx.

The LIFE programmes co-financed by the European Commission have contributed to the implementation of the priorities established in the regulations for the protection of the lynx, as well as in its recovery and action plans. Several approved projects have benefited the Iberian lynx from 1994 to the present day and have been and continue to be of essential importance in providing the necessary financial support for the conservation actions proposed and undertaken by public and private entities. The recovery of the species has been supported by three consecutive LIFE projects, which between 2002 and 2010 achieved the consolidation of the isolated populations of Doñana and Andújar-Cardena. The next step was to recover areas of distribution prior to the decline of its populations through the reintroduction of specimens, as well as connecting the existing populations in the province of Jaén, tasks that were carried out between 2011 and 2018. In 2010 and 2011, the creation of populations in the Guadalquivir Valley (Córdoba) and the Guarrizas Valley (Jaén) began through the reintroduction of individuals. From 2014 onwards, part of the work focused on creating population centres outside Andalusia, with reintroductions in Montes de Toledo (Toledo), southern Ciudad Real (Campo de Calatrava and Campo de Montiel), Valle del Matalcán (Badajoz) and Vale do Guadiana (Bajo Alentejo, Portugal).

Increasing numbers through the reintroduction of specimens is the main action for the long-term recovery and maintenance of the species. The LIFE Lynxconnect project establishes a protocol for identifying potential areas that could support viable long-term lynx populations. Some of the characteristics of these areas are that they have a minimum continuous area of 10,000 ha of suitable habitat, i.e. they have an adequate structure and density of rabbits.

Regarding the released specimens, the lynx has demonstrated its ability to adapt well to the release areas. This applies to both wild specimens and those from captive breeding, with an average survival rate of 71%. Wild specimens from other areas have better survival rates (up to 81%) than those bred in captivity (60%). Both groups undergo health checks before release, and the latter undergo a programme of adaptation to freedom beforehand.



**Fig. 5.** Evolution of the recovery of Iberian lynx populations on the peninsula.

### 3. AN UNCERTAIN BUT PROMISING FUTURE

Despite all the work carried out, the viability and future of Iberian lynx populations remains uncertain. Connecting existing population groups is essential to achieve metapopulation integration, which will produce a genetic flow that ensures the long-term sustainability of the species.

This is why a fourth LIFE project, called LYNXCONNECT (LIFE 19NAT/ES001055 LYNXCONNECT 'Creation of a genetically and demographically functional metapopulation of Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) (2020-2025)', has been created and developed. The project aims to continue the conservation plans from previous stages and implement 33 new strategic conservation actions. These actions are intended to consolidate and connect emerging populations and ensure demographic and genetic viability, as these are considered the most pressing threats to the species. A key aspect is the project's transnational nature, necessitating effective collaboration between Spain and Portugal. Work plans must transcend political and administrative boundaries so that the species recovery process is a joint effort involving the countries and autonomous communities concerned.

The achievement of a large Iberian metapopulation of the species and, therefore, its long-term conservation, requires the promotion of demographic and genetic exchange between the different lynx populations, thus ensuring that these populations and the species as a whole remain self-sufficient. Connectivity between already stable populations and reintroduction areas plays a very important role in this regard. This requires ensuring an adequate distribution of reintroduction areas (in relation to each other and also in relation to already stable population areas) and adequate management of the territorial matrix, ensuring functional connectivity between populations, either through the conservation or restoration of corridors or through actions that reduce the barrier effect of linear developments and other landscape elements.

As a result of the efforts made by the various administrations to conserve the species, in June 2024 it was finally removed from the 'Endangered' category of the Red List of Threatened Species, thanks to a 'spectacular recovery process'. Since then, it has been considered 'vulnerable', according to the latest update of the list.







# **SPECIFIC SECTION**



# THREATS

The main causes of Iberian lynx mortality stem directly from human activities, with roadkill and illegal persecution at the top of the list. Other causes, such as disease, also pose a significant problem for wildlife conservation, especially those transmitted by domestic species that are not subject to health controls, which sometimes constitute a natural reservoir of pathogens that affect populations of endangered species such as the lynx.

Two threats stand out as particularly important in hindering the recovery of the species: the decline in rabbit abundance and the alteration, fragmentation and loss of habitat quality. To these must be added the low genetic variability of lynx populations.

## 1. DECLINE IN WILD RABBIT POPULATIONS

The Iberian Peninsula has suffered a decline in wild rabbit populations since the 1950s, resulting in a highly heterogeneous distribution and fluctuating population dynamics. Although locally the species can be very abundant and even experience upturns, the overall trend is negative, leading to it being declared an 'endangered' species by the IUCN.

The causes of this decline can be traced back to two viral diseases. Myxomatosis, which has been present since the 1950s, and viral haemorrhagic disease, with two strains spreading since the 1980s and 2010s respectively, are responsible for 90% of natural rabbit deaths.

On the other hand, the loss of the mosaic structure of the landscape and the reduction of trophic resources and shelter, as a result of changes in land use and intensive agriculture, also have a significant impact on rabbits and, therefore, on lynx.

The use of phytosanitary products and herbicides can cause a direct (due to lack of food) or indirect (fertility or health problems caused by synthetic chemicals) decline in the number of rabbits.

In addition to all these causes, there are also difficulties in managing their populations. We are dealing with a species that is prey to more than 40 predators, some of which are protected, such as the lynx or the imperial eagle, but which is also the main small game animal and the one that causes the most damage to agriculture.

## **2. DECLINE IN HABITAT QUALITY**

In relation to this threat, there are several factors affecting the species:

- Loss of habitat due to agricultural, industrial or urban development. Changes in land use are causing the disappearance of the Iberian lynx's natural habitat, the Mediterranean scrubland, in favour of urban development or an increase in the area devoted to agricultural use.
- Transformation of agricultural ecosystems, both through the intensification of agricultural systems and their abandonment.
- Lack of connectivity and habitat fragmentation. Infrastructure such as communication and transport routes, farm fencing, photovoltaic parks and others can cause habitat fragmentation and, as a result, the isolation of lynx populations or limitations on their movement.
- Climate change. Mediterranean forests are subject to the negative effects of increased thermal stress and more frequent and severe droughts.

These changes in habitats can affect both the survival of the lynx, a specialist in Mediterranean woodlands, and rabbit populations.



### 3. UNNATURAL MORTALITY

Among all the causes of unnatural mortality of the Iberian lynx, three stand out, with the highest incidence being those of anthropogenic origin:

- Roadkill on roads and other linear developments. Roads, in addition to being a serious threat due to habitat fragmentation, continue to be one of the leading causes of lynx mortality. Of the 189 lynx deaths recorded in 2023, 144 were caused by roadkill on roads and tracks, accounting for 76.2% of the total. These roadkill incidents affect resident lynx that have roads in their territories and hunting grounds; lynx that hunt rabbits attracted to burrows in the roadside ditches; or juveniles or recently released lynx that cross roads due to the dispersive movements characteristic of the species.
- Illegal hunting. These deaths occur mainly as retaliation for attacks on poultry or lambs by livestock farmers or chicken coop owners, management of hunting grounds that includes non-selective methods of predator control (traps, snares, cage traps and poison) and shooting. Although the available data show that this cause accounts for around 5% of lynx deaths, it cannot be considered conclusive because not all cases of death by persecution are detected, with an estimated 30% of deaths occurring for this reason.
- Other causes. Other less significant threats overall have been drowning in wells and ponds, entrapment in structures (mesh and others) and attacks by feral dogs.



## 4. NATURAL MORTALITY

There are other causes of mortality with a much lower incidence, but which regularly cause deaths:

- Inbreeding and diseases. The genetic diversity of the species has decreased significantly, as most individuals originate from a small number of remaining populations. This has led to greater susceptibility to diseases such as feline leukaemia and chronic kidney disease, as well as reproductive problems. The most significant of these are infectious diseases, which have become critical in some populations, including feline leukaemia virus, tuberculosis, distemper and feline parvovirus. These diseases have become critical in some populations. Added to this lower resistance to disease is the problem posed by feral domestic animals, which lack health control and act as vectors for transmitting these pathogens.
- Invasive and feral domestic species pose a threat. Invasive exotic species are one of the main causes of biodiversity loss worldwide. According to Law 42/2007 of 13 December, “del Patrimonio Natural y de la Biodiversidad”, an invasive exotic species is defined as ‘one that is introduced or established in a natural or semi-natural ecosystem or habitat and is an agent of change and a threat to native biological diversity, either through its invasive behaviour or through the risk of genetic contamination’.
- Invasive species can be considered a threat to the Iberian lynx in terms of interspecific competition. However, the real problem lies with feral domestic cats and dogs, which can transmit viral diseases — especially when the two species are related. There have even been cases of feral or abandoned dogs preying on cubs.

For these reasons, it is important to control invasive or feral species exhaustively and, of course, to raise public awareness of the problems caused by abandoning domestic animals and the danger they pose to wildlife.

## COEXISTENCE WITH HUMAN ACTIVITIES

The presence of the Iberian lynx in a territory creates the need for mutual coexistence with human activities. In the places where this jewel of Iberian fauna lives, there are many recreational nature tourism activities: observation, photography, routes in the lynx's hunting grounds... These activities need to be regulated if we don't want to have a negative impact on the species and others that share its habitat.

Ecotourism, wildlife observation and photography, hides and other similar activities have become a booming tourist resource in recent decades. Such initiatives are an important economic driver in areas where the Iberian lynx occurs and, in turn, lead to the conservation status of these places being valued as an added bonus to their biodiversity and resources.

Respecting current legislation, establishing limits on these activities so that sensitive periods for the species are respected, and following good practices such as those indicated in the following section are actions that contribute to the sustainability of coexistence between lynx and humans.

In addition, in the lynx's territory there are privately owned farms, hunting grounds, environmental agents, rural guards, state security forces, conservation organisations, scientific entities, private companies, public administrations, etc. All these stakeholders play an important role in lynx conservation and should feel that the species' recovery is also their success, constituting an example of how very different points of view can coincide in a common goal.

Although we may think that areas with a lynx presence are far from population centres and human settlements, nothing could be further from the truth. In its confident roamings and its travels in search of new territories, it does not hesitate to approach towns and cities. It has sometimes been seen calmly walking through the streets and surroundings of municipalities. Human populations located in lynx areas must be particularly aware of the species.



# ETHICS AND GOOD PRACTICES

When walking through areas where lynx live, we must show the utmost respect and caution. Let us not forget that we are in the presence of one of the jewels of Iberian wildlife. Following a series of simple recommendations and guidelines can help us reduce unwanted effects, enriching the observation experience and promoting awareness of biodiversity conservation. Observing the Iberian lynx is a unique experience whose future depends largely on our present behaviour.

The golden rule when observing lynx is to remain unnoticed. This is especially important during the breeding season, when disturbances to the species can have serious consequences, including the abandonment of the litter in the most extreme cases.

Such disturbance can also occur indirectly, and can be even more significant, through interference with the activity cycles of wild rabbits and other prey.

## 1. MINIMISE DISTURBANCES TO THE LYNX

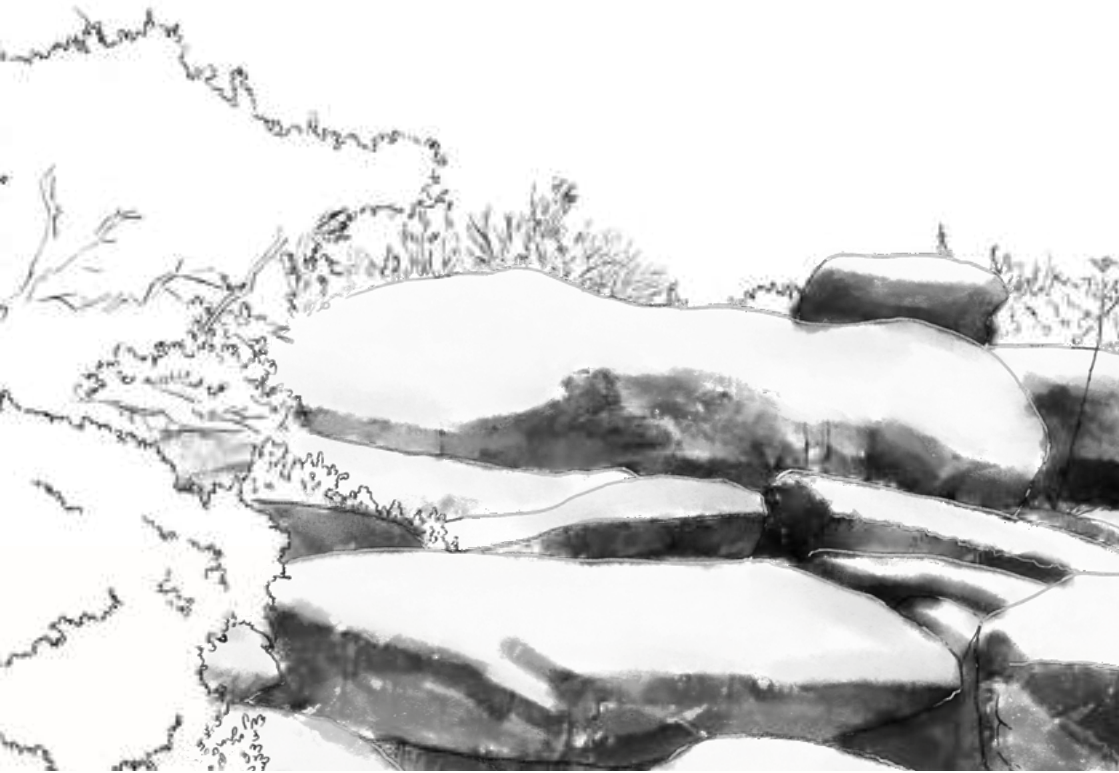
- Be patient, avoid sudden movements and stay in your observation spot. If the lynx feels threatened, it will normally flee.
- Do not interfere with the lynx's behaviour, especially during sensitive periods such as the breeding season.
- Avoid twilight and night-time, as although these are the periods of greatest activity for the lynx, any human activity during these times may interfere with its predatory efficiency. Above all, avoid using artificial lighting to improve observation conditions or take photographs.
- The use of attractants, bait or sound calls is prohibited, and any such behaviour or other illegal practices should be reported.
- Knowing the biology of the species and its behaviour patterns, understanding and appreciating the natural and cultural environment in which it lives, as well as the management of the territory and the ways of life of its inhabitants, is essential to facilitate observations and to achieve greater enjoyment and enrichment of the experience.

- Special attention should be paid to the regulations of the Natura 2000 Network and endangered species, the regulations applicable to paths and tracks, as well as any permits that may be required for both observation and the use of facilities.
- Preferably use observation sites that are already prepared and signposted for this type of activity, avoiding access to private land without authorisation.
- Hiring professional companies and guides is always a good idea to enjoy lynx observation without disturbing them or other people. In addition, these companies must have the relevant permits and authorisations.
- It is important never to reveal the location of the specimens observed and, if possible, to inform the personnel responsible for the conservation of the species in the area.
- If you encounter lynx cubs, do not interfere or disturb them, as their mother is likely to be nearby and following the same path.
- Excrement (latrines) is part of the lynx's territory marking, so avoid moving or touching it, as it can also be a source of disease.
- If you witness any inappropriate behaviour or other violations, you should report it to the authorities (Tel. 112).



## 2. OBSERVATION POINTS AND ACCESS TO THEM

- The appropriate distance is one that allows the observer to remain unnoticed by the animal, enabling it to behave naturally.
- It is best to use elevated locations that offer a panoramic view.
- Particularly sensitive areas, such as trails, resting places, feeding grounds and breeding sites, should be avoided.
- Drive carefully on roads near areas where lynx are present to avoid collisions. It is not recommended to try to spot animals from the vehicle, as this practice involves driving excessively slowly, distractions or lack of attention.
- Access to observation areas should be via authorised roads and paths, avoiding restricted areas and moderating speed.
- Parking vehicles in designated areas, avoiding parking in places that may obstruct the movement of other vehicles.
- It is recommended to walk and limit the use of motor vehicles to the minimum necessary. Use roads and tracks and do not open new paths or passages.
- Do not litter and collect all traces of human presence, paying special attention to fire prevention.



### **3. WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A LYNX ON THE ROAD**

- Switch to low beam headlights so as not to dazzle or disorient the animal, stop the vehicle calmly and signal your position clearly.
- Notify the SEPRONA agents of the Guardia Civil or Emergencies (112) and follow their instructions.
- Do not attempt to capture it or force it off the road in any way.
- If you have an accident with a lynx, in addition to stopping the vehicle in a controlled manner and securing the area with warning signs, do not touch the animal or move it from its location. Call 112 and follow their instructions.
- The accident must always be reported. Even if there is no apparent damage, the animal may be injured and can thus be located and treated.



# CITIZEN COLLABORATION IN THE CONSERVATION OF THE IBERIAN LYNX

One of the keys to the recovery of the Iberian lynx lies in the very positive social perception of the species' presence. The lynx is part of humanity's heritage, and its conservation is everyone's responsibility. Many efforts and resources have been devoted to saving this beautiful, unique feline from extinction.

For lynx conservation measures to be successful in the long term, it is essential to involve society and the various sectors that are affected by the presence of the species or that can influence its conservation. In this participative environment, the competent administrations and institutions work to understand the social perception of the species, disseminate information about its benefits and involve all key actors in decision-making.

All educational initiatives are a fundamental tool for raising awareness about the conservation of the Iberian lynx. Such education should be extended to the entire peninsula and to all audiences.

Citizen involvement is key to the long-term conservation of the species. Seemingly simple matters, such as following the proposed best practices, especially those aimed at avoiding disturbance to the species, reporting sightings of individuals at risk (injured, near roads, etc.) and, of course, complying with applicable legislation and regulations, are the main and most important responsibilities that citizens must assume in order to contribute to the conservation and protection of the lynx.





## EDUCATIONAL WORKSHEETS

Below is a series of educational worksheets and resources for teachers, designed to complement classroom work on the lynx. These materials are designed for students in the third cycle of primary school and for all secondary school years.

Each worksheet includes the following sections:

- **Specific content:** a summary of content not covered in this booklet that may be of interest for carrying out the proposed activities.
- **Skills:** an indication of how the activities proposed in the teaching worksheet contribute to the development of related key skills.
- **Objectives:** the goals pursued with the activities proposed in each worksheet.
- **General considerations:** includes general recommendations on carrying out the activities, preparation, adaptation to the educational level, etc.
- **Development:** describes the different proposed activities, including suggestions for their implementation.
- **Materials:** this section indicates the support materials needed to carry out the activities. These materials can be found in the appendix to the worksheets.
- **Further information:** includes recommendations on websites, applications, documents, materials, projects, etc. that can be used to expand and reinforce the work in the teaching worksheet.
- **Complementary activities:** these are proposals, both in and outside the classroom, that can reinforce the knowledge acquired through the completion of the proposed worksheets.

# A VULNERABLE TREASURE

## SPECIFIC CONTENTS

- The recovery of the Iberian lynx stands out as a major conservation achievement, going from near extinction to 'Vulnerable' status.
- The impact of measures such as area protection, reintroductions, poaching prevention, roadkill mitigation and genetic management has reversed the decline in population and prevented a more than likely extinction.
- The IUCN is the global authority on the state of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

## SKILLS

- Competence in linguistic communication. Students must interact orally and in writing in a coherent and appropriate way.
- Competence in mathematics and science, technology and engineering. Competence in science involves understanding and explaining the natural and social environment, using observation, among other methodologies, to ask questions and draw conclusions based on evidence.
- Digital competence. Students will use digital technologies for learning in a safe, sustainable, critical and responsible manner.
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence. The proposed activities encourage students to manage time and information effectively, collaborating with others in a constructive manner.
- Citizenship competence. This helps students to show an active commitment to sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- Entrepreneurial competence. Students are encouraged to train their minds to analyse and evaluate their environment, and to create and rethink ideas using imagination, creativity, strategic thinking and ethical, critical and constructive reflection.

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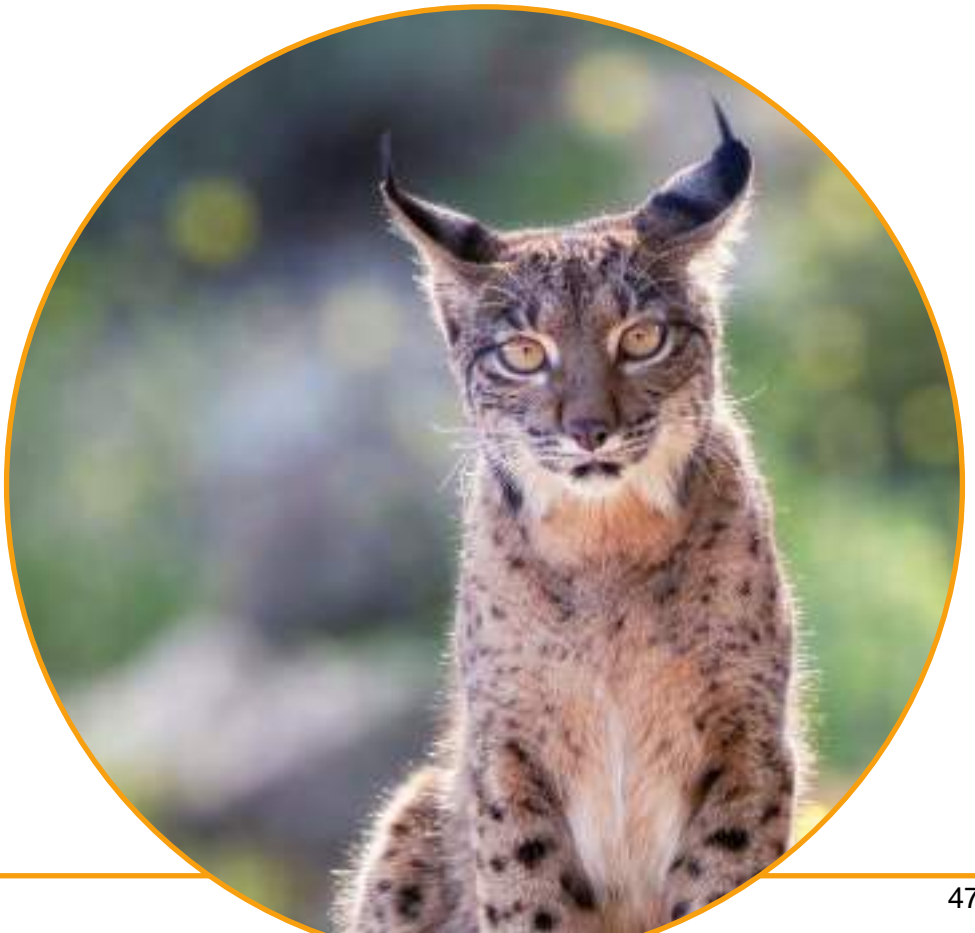
## OBJECTIVES

- Learn about the protection status of the Iberian lynx and what it means.
- Learn about the dynamics of the decline and recovery of lynx populations.

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## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

This worksheet is designed as an initial task, intended to spark curiosity and motivate students to learn more about the lynx. It is recommended for use when students already have some prior knowledge about the biology and issues surrounding the Iberian lynx, or as a first introduction to the topic.



## DEVELOPMENT

### Activity 1. Thinking routine. CSI: colour, symbol, image.

Based on the text “In 2002, the lynx population on the Iberian Peninsula was less than 100 individuals. Just over 20 years later, in 2023, the census indicated that the population was 2,021. These are certainly figures that give cause for hope,” the students will select three ideas that they find representative. They will represent one of them with a colour, another with a symbol and another with an image. They will then share their ideas and explain why they chose to represent them in that way.

### Activity 2. Key questions.

The following questions will be posed to the students:

Do you know what an endangered species is?

Do you know the name of any?

What is the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List?

The questions can be stimulated through ICT searches, with the answers being recorded in different formats.

### Activity 3. Vulnerable species close to us.

To conclude this introduction to protected species, students will be encouraged to search for the status of some endangered species of fauna or flora in their area (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>), including the Iberian lynx, and to indicate the status, trend or threats to each of them. It is very practical to use the advanced search on the website to select an area on the map, which will return the protected species in that area, allowing us to see how the results change depending on the geographical scale.



#### **Activity 4. With scientific criteria.**

The declaration of a species as endangered involves thorough scientific research. We propose that students become part of the IUCN research team by preparing a report on the status of the species. To do this, they can consult the available data from the lynx census (<https://lifelynxconnect.eu/censos/>), the current distribution of the species and the causes that have led to the decline in populations, analysing whether these causes continue to be a threat. The result of this report can be presented in different formats: mind map, digital presentation, oral presentation, etc.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- IUCN Red List: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>
- Lynx population census: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/censos/>
- Lynx bibliography: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/bibliografia/>
- The conservation history of the Iberian lynx: <https://www.youtube.com/@lifelynxconnect>
- Ex situ conservation of the Iberian lynx: <https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/temas/recursos-geneticos/conservacion-exsitu/ce-exsitu-prog-lince.html>
- Strategy for the conservation of the Iberian lynx: <https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/publicaciones/pbl-fauna-flora-estrategias-lince.html>

#### **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**

There are Endangered Species Recovery Centres in all regions covered by the LIFElynxconnect project. These types of facilities usually offer guided tours detailing their work, the species that arrive there, etc. It is particularly interesting.

# THE LYNX'S HABITAT

## SPECIFIC CONTENTS

- Habitat characteristics of the lynx: structure, biotope, associated flora and fauna.
- Species distribution and changes in relation to its traditional habitat, particularly linked to the availability of food.
- Factors threatening the lynx's habitat. Habitat fragmentation as the main obstacle to the species' expansion.

## SKILLS

- Linguistic communication competence. Pupils should interact orally and in writing in a coherent and appropriate way.
- Mathematical, scientific, technological and engineering competence. Scientific competence entails understanding and explaining the natural and social environment, using, among other methodologies, observation to pose questions and draw evidence-based conclusions.
- Digital competence. Pupils will use digital technologies for learning in a safe, sustainable, critical and responsible way.
- Personal, social and learning-to-learn competence. The proposed activities encourage effective time and information management, and constructive collaboration with others.
- Citizenship competence. Pupils are encouraged to demonstrate an active commitment to sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- Entrepreneurial competence. Pupils are invited to develop thinking skills to analyse and evaluate the environment, and to create and reconsider ideas using imagination, creativity, strategic thinking, and ethical, critical and constructive reflection.

## OBJECTIVES

- To recognise the natural habitat of the Iberian lynx.
- To engage pupils in actively participating in its conservation.

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The activities proposed in this worksheet are presented as a complement to the study of the ecosystems present on the peninsula. They may be addressed as a whole or incorporated into related teaching units. They may also be implemented following Worksheet 1, in order to complete the overview of the threats faced by the species.



## DEVELOPMENT

### Activity 1. Thinking routine: Compare–contrast.

As a starting point, this observation activity is proposed. It can be done individually, in pairs or as a whole group. Use an image of the lynx's main habitat (Mediterranean scrubland with granite outcrops, locally known as "berrocal") and, interchangeably, any of the other images provided as materials for this worksheet. Split a sheet of paper into two columns, noting in one the similarities (compare) and in the other the differences (contrast) between the two images.

### Activity 2. Write your review.

This activity involves using imagination to put yourself in the place of a lynx and write a review of each of the ecosystems shown in the images provided. Each one is to be rated from 1 to 5 stars, with justification, indicating which elements of each ecosystem are or are not suitable for the species.

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### **Activity 3. Vulnerable species close to home.**

In this game, pupils may compete in teams or pairs. One team represents humans, and the other represents a lynx. The grid provided shows four images in the outer corners. Two of these depict population centres, which the human team must connect, while the other two depict a lynx shelter and a rabbit, which the lynx team must take into account.

To achieve their objective, each team rolls the die and may mark as many squares as indicated, colouring them green for the lynx and black for the humans. These coloured squares represent, on the one hand, the route connecting the two population centres (road) and, on the other, the path followed by the lynx to reach its food from its shelter. Both routes may not occupy the same squares.

Once the route between the two population centres is completed, the human team's mission is over. However, the lynx team must complete an outbound journey to reach the food and a return journey to the shelter. This may, at times, make it impossible for the lynx to cross, being hindered or even blocked by the road.

When the game ends—either because the lynx completes its round trip or because it cannot do so—a discussion is held on the phenomenon of habitat fragmentation and how it affects species and their distribution.

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### **MATERIALS**

- Images of habitats: high mountain, Mediterranean scrubland with granite outcrop, olive grove with grassland, coastal lagoons, steppe (Annex I).
- Grid for Activity 3 (Annex I).
- Six-sided die.
- Green pencil and black pencil.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

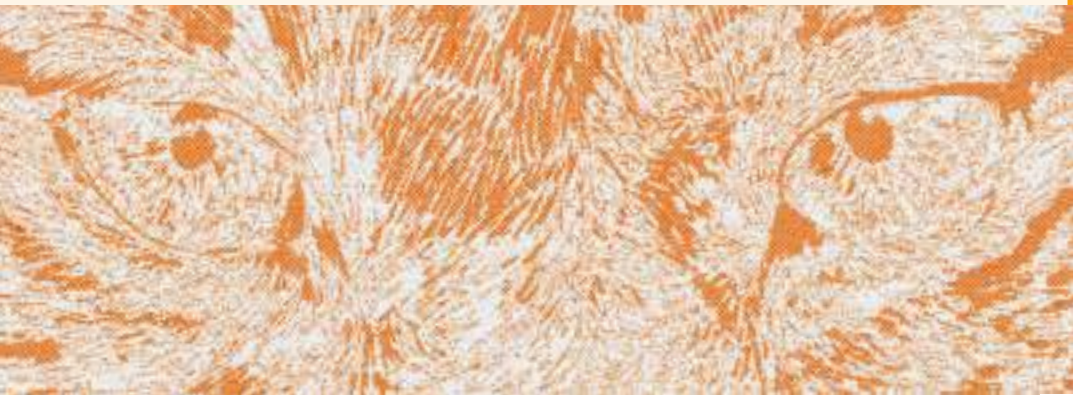
- LIFE Lynxconnect project: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/>
- Article with multiple images of the lynx in its habitat (National Geographic): [https://www.nationalgeographic.com.es/felinos/viaje/lince\\_15778](https://www.nationalgeographic.com.es/felinos/viaje/lince_15778)

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Ideally, the activities proposed in this worksheet should be complemented with a guided field trip to the natural environment, where pupils can directly observe the characteristics of the Mediterranean scrubland as the lynx's preferred habitat. Including multisensory experiences during this trip (such as the smells of the Mediterranean scrubland, sounds, landscape interpretation, textures, etc.) enriches the experience and can serve as a starting point for further learning.

As an alternative to conducting this field trip, it is suggested that pupils watch a documentary. Recommendations include: WildMed. The Last Mediterranean Forest and Dehesa, the Forest of the Iberian Lynx.

The game from Activity 3 can also be extended with new rules and the introduction of a third team or player, representing species recovery teams. Under their supervision, for example, the lynx's route could be allowed to cross the road (similar to wildlife crossings).



### SPECIFIC CONTENTS

- Mammals exhibit a series of particularities in relation to their limbs, which allow them to be classified into three groups according to their posture: plantigrade, digitigrade, and ungulate.
- The adaptations of each species' footprint demonstrate how evolution selects the most efficient forms for the ecological niche occupied by each species.
- Characteristics of the lynx's footprint: shape, size, and differences compared to other felines.
- Factors threatening the lynx's habitat: habitat fragmentation as the main obstacle to the species' expansion.

### SKILLS

- Linguistic communication competence. Pupils should interact orally and in writing in a coherent and appropriate way.
- Mathematical, scientific, technological and engineering competence. Scientific competence entails understanding and explaining the natural and social environment, using, among other methodologies, observation to pose questions and draw evidence-based conclusions.
- Digital competence. Pupils will use digital technologies for learning in a safe, sustainable, critical and responsible way.
- Personal, social and learning-to-learn competence. The proposed activities encourage effective time and information management, and constructive collaboration with others.
- Citizenship competence. Pupils are encouraged to demonstrate an active commitment to sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- Entrepreneurial competence. Pupils are invited to develop thinking skills to analyse and evaluate the environment, and to create and reconsider ideas using imagination, creativity, strategic thinking, and ethical, critical and constructive reflection.

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## OBJECTIVES

- To recognise the tracks and signs left by the lynx on the ground.
  - To understand the type of physiological adaptations indicated by the anatomical features imprinted in each animal's footprints.
- 

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

These activities, together with those in Worksheet 4, are intended to develop general knowledge of the species and can be easily related to other aspects such as the distribution, ecology, and biology of the lynx, as covered in the common section of the booklet.

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## DEVELOPMENT

### Activity 1. Thinking routine: 3,2,1 Bridge.

In this activity, the 3,2,1 technique is used: 3 thoughts, 2 questions, and 1 analogy or metaphor about the concept of "animal tracks", completed individually and in writing. Once the activities proposed in the teaching worksheet have been completed, pupils will complete another 3,2,1 with their final impressions. They will then share their initial and new thoughts, explaining to the rest of the group how and why their thinking has changed. It is essential to make clear at all times that their initial thinking is neither right nor wrong; it is simply a starting point.



## **Activity 2. Classifying footprints**

The mammal footprint sheets from Annex II are distributed among the pupils. Observing these images, they will be asked which part of the paw touches the ground when the animal walks and will attempt to classify the footprints into the three types mentioned in the content: plantigrade, digitigrade, and ungulate.

The activity can continue with two different proposals: on the one hand, trying to identify the species to which each footprint belongs; on the other, listing species of fauna that the pupils are familiar with from their local area and attempting to classify them within these three groups.

## **Activity 3. The magic shoes**

Students will be invited to imagine that they have three pairs of “magic animal shoes” that can change their feet to match different types of footprint, and to answer, with reasoning, the question: Which pair would you use for the following activities in the natural environment?

- Picking fruits from the branches of a tree (plantigrade).
- Trotting among rocky outcrops (ungulate).
- Sprinting (digitigrade).
- Swimming (plantigrade).



## MATERIALS

- Sheets with different mammal footprints: lynx, dog, bear, badger, human, cat, deer, wild boar, rabbit (Annex II).
- Images of lynx droppings and scratch marks (Annex II).

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- How to make footprint casts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC2eqmjdCBg>
- Memory game on tracks and footprints: <https://diario.madrid.es/cieacasadecampo/wp-content/uploads/sites/61/2021/04/Juego-de-memoria-rastros-y-huellas.pdf>
- Diverse fauna workshop: [https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/ceneam/recursos/mini-portales-tematicos/Nivel%202%20Fauna%20Diversa\\_tcm30-171841.pdf](https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/ceneam/recursos/mini-portales-tematicos/Nivel%202%20Fauna%20Diversa_tcm30-171841.pdf)

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Transversal skills can be developed through activities related to artistic expression, such as creating a mural featuring the diversity of footprints mentioned in the activities, or composing a message to celebrate an environmental event, such as Earth Day.

Making footprint casts is also particularly interesting. This is a very simple process in which plaster is used to capture the relief of an animal's footprint, allowing observation of its details.

# WHO EATS WHOM?

## SPECIFIC CONTENTS

- Ecosystems as dynamic elements, sensitive to changes in the composition and abundance of populations.
- The food chain in the lynx's habitat, including its role as a top predator and the rabbit as a key prey species for the lynx.
- How the presence of the lynx affects the maintenance of balance between producers and consumers.
- The importance of each link in the food chain and how the interconnection between them ensures the sustainability of the ecosystem.

## SKILLS

- Linguistic communication competence. Pupils should interact orally and in writing in a coherent and appropriate way.
- Mathematical, scientific, technological and engineering competence. Scientific competence entails understanding and explaining the natural and social environment, using, among other methodologies, observation to pose questions and draw evidence-based conclusions.
- Digital competence. Pupils will use digital technologies for learning in a safe, sustainable, critical and responsible way.
- Personal, social and learning-to-learn competence. The proposed activities encourage effective time and information management, and constructive collaboration with others.
- Citizenship competence. Pupils are encouraged to demonstrate an active commitment to sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- Entrepreneurial competence. Pupils are invited to develop thinking skills to analyse and evaluate the environment, and to create and reconsider ideas using imagination, creativity, strategic thinking, and ethical, critical and constructive reflection.



## OBJECTIVES

- Understand the food chains that develop in the Mediterranean forest.
  - Appreciate the fragility of their balance in relation to a specialist species such as the Iberian lynx.
- 

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed activities fit perfectly into the study of ecosystems, biodiversity and interactions between living beings. Students will be able to apply the knowledge acquired in class about the food chain and apply it to the presence of lynx in a particular place.

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## DEVELOPMENT

### Activity 1. Thinking routine. What would happen if...?

In this activity, students will be individually presented with different fictional situations, with the aim of gaining an initial understanding of how changes in the composition of the habitat can modify food chains. The following questions are proposed:

What would happen if...

- ...rabbits disappeared from a place with lynx?
  - ...there was an overpopulation of rabbits in a place with lynx?
  - ...lynx were a species capable of feeding on a multitude of different prey?
-

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### **Activity 2. A delicate chain.**

The students will make a list of some of the species present in the lynx's habitat, both plants and animals. They will then establish the trophic relationships between them, identifying both the producers (plants) and the primary consumers and predators.

Next, they will analyse the impact on each element of this trophic network and on the interactions between them of certain interventions in the environment for which humans may be directly or indirectly responsible.

- Change in agricultural use.
- Construction of a new road.
- Introduction of a foreign species.
- Fire.
- Release of cats or dogs into the wild.

### **Activity 3. Debate.**

A fictional situation is presented in which a public infrastructure project (e.g. a heavy goods vehicle road) is to be carried out in an area of high value for wildlife, within the territory of the Iberian lynx.

Working in groups, each will be assigned a role related to the situation: the promoter of the project, the owner of one of the affected farms, residents of the nearest town, technical or scientific personnel working on the recovery of the lynx, a local environmental group, etc. Time will be allowed for research into the position of each of the roles involved and to define the main points of argument for each group.

The activity should begin with approaches that prioritise personal interests. Teachers should try to bring the positions closer together by creating a climate of debate and argumentation that leads to a consensus and a viable project with the lowest possible cost and environmental impact.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- An example of how the presence of lynx modifies the food chain: <https://www.csic.es/es/actualidad-del-csic/restaurar-las-poblaciones-de-lince-puede-reducir-la-abundancia-de-depredadores-pequenos-y-medianos>
- Ecology of the Iberian lynx: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/ecologia/>

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

A good way to adapt the activity to secondary school students and supplement it is to analyse how energy flows along the food chain. Adapting to their main prey can also be the starting point for analysing the case of other specialist species and working on the differences with generalist species.



# MISINFORMATION, ALSO ABOUT THE LYNX

## **SPECIFIC CONTENTS**

- The different social realities and points of view that clash in the conservation of the lynx.
- The impact of the media on society.
- The ability to critically analyse information.

## **SKILLS**

- Competence in linguistic communication. Students must interact orally and in writing in a coherent and appropriate way.
- Competence in mathematics and science, technology and engineering. Competence in science involves understanding and explaining the natural and social environment, using observation, among other methodologies, to ask questions and draw conclusions based on evidence.
- Digital competence. Students will use digital technologies for learning in a safe, sustainable, critical and responsible manner.
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence. The proposed activities encourage students to manage time and information effectively, collaborating with others in a constructive manner.
- Citizenship competence. This helps students to show an active commitment to sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- Entrepreneurial competence. Students are encouraged to train their minds to analyse and evaluate their environment, and to create and rethink ideas using imagination, creativity, strategic thinking and ethical, critical and constructive reflection.

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## OBJECTIVES

- Detect dubious, biased or outright false claims.
- Learn to verify information using verified sources.
- Reflect on the different interests surrounding the conservation of protected species and how this is reflected in the media.

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## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

This fact sheet can be used as an introduction to the conservation of the species, as a starting point for an educational project focusing on the lynx and its conservation, and as a basis for key questions that students should ask themselves in order to understand the real situation of the species.

---

## DEVELOPMENT

### **Activity 1. Reading and analysis of a newspaper article.**

In the materials section, there is a link to an article published in the digital edition of El Diario on 2 March 2025, which discusses the rejection faced in three areas of our country regarding the reintroduction of the species, based on polarised opinions and the spread of incomplete and erroneous information. We suggest reading the article comprehensively with the students, resolving any questions that may arise during the reading.

To complement this reading, collaborative fact-checking can be carried out using AI, so that students can verify statements in the article with verified sources. To do this, students will choose a controversial statement from the article and use AI to ask questions about it, for example: *Is it true that the reintroduction of the lynx negatively affects local farmers? What real impact does the Iberian lynx have on other species?* The AI will provide data and sources that must be checked against scientific sources.

---

## Activity 2. Questions to answer.

Below are four questions to reflect on the content of the article, for which multiple response formats can be defined.

Question 1: Explain, with justification, whether you agree with the article's headline '*The lynx is the new wolf: the hostile environment of hunters and farmers paralyses three plans to reintroduce the feline*'. If you disagree, suggest an alternative headline.

Question 2: The article presents several arguments against the reintroduction of the lynx, all of which are erroneous. Choose one of them and refute it critically. You can consult the training materials and the booklet, as well as the LIFE Lynxconnect project website for more information on which to base your argument.

Question 3: The article closes with the statement: '*At the end of October, the Regional Government finally ruled out reintroducing the feline in Zamora until, they said, "there is social consensus"*.' In your opinion, what action(s) could help to achieve this social consensus?

Question 4: If you were involved in the management and conservation of the species, what measures would you take to encourage the general public to take a critical and informed view of the conservation of the Iberian lynx?

## Activity 3. True or false: analysis with AI.

This activity will enable students to detect dubious, biased or outright false statements. To do this, the article will be divided into key fragments (e.g. statements such as '*...the reintroduction of the lynx would be fatal...*'). These fragments will be copied into a generative AI, such as ChatGPT, and asked: *Is this statement true, false or misleading? Why?* They will then write down the AI's response and add their own conclusion, evaluating the reliability of the argument.

## MATERIALS

- Link to press article activity 1: [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/lince-nuevo-lobo-ambiente-hostil-cazadores-agricultores-paraliza-tres-planes-reintroduccion-felino\\_1\\_12093794.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/lince-nuevo-lobo-ambiente-hostil-cazadores-agricultores-paraliza-tres-planes-reintroduccion-felino_1_12093794.html)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- Bibliography on lynx: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/bibliografia/>
- The conservation history of the Iberian lynx: <https://www.youtube.com/@lifelynxconnect>
- News about lynx: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/noticias/>

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

There are endangered species recovery centres in all regions covered by the LIFE Lynxconnect project. These types of facilities usually offer guided tours detailing their work, the species they care for, etc., which can provide a new, much more scientific perspective on the activities carried out.



# CONFLICTING INTERESTS

## SPECIFIC CONTENTS

- To examine the situation of the species in the Iberian Peninsula, its evolution and the future of its conservation.
- To learn about the different roles involved in lynx conservation and seek points of consensus between them.
- To critically weigh up the pros and cons of reintroducing the lynx to its original territories, using reliable sources of information.

## SKILLS

- Competence in linguistic communication. Students must interact orally and in writing in a coherent and appropriate way.
- Competence in mathematics and science, technology and engineering. Competence in science involves understanding and explaining the natural and social environment, using observation, among other methodologies, to ask questions and draw conclusions based on evidence.
- Digital competence. Students will use digital technologies for learning in a safe, sustainable, critical and responsible manner.
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence. The proposed activities encourage students to manage time and information effectively, collaborating with others in a constructive manner.
- Citizenship competence. This helps students to show an active commitment to sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- Entrepreneurial competence. Students are encouraged to train their minds to analyse and evaluate their environment, and to create and rethink ideas using imagination, creativity, strategic thinking and ethical, critical and constructive reflection.

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## OBJECTIVES

- Analyse different points of view regarding lynx management.
- Help students develop a critical perspective on the importance of the species and the role of humans in its conservation.

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## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this activity and all those that use AI, it is interesting to follow and even collaboratively develop a basic guide on how to use generative AI ethically, with recommendations such as the following:

- Use AI as a support tool, not as a substitute for your thinking.
- Verify the information with other sources.
- Do not copy without understanding: reflect before using what has been generated.
- Give credit if you use an idea generated by AI.
- Use respectful and responsible language.
- Remember: AI has no real emotions or opinions.

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## DEVELOPMENT

### Activity 1. If the lynx could talk...

This activity aims to provide an initial introduction to the species, using creative dynamics and AI tools. Students will interview the lynx using ChatGPT or another conversational AI. To do this, we will ask the AI to put itself in the place of a lynx and we will ask different questions: *What is happening to the species on the Iberian Peninsula? How does an Iberian lynx live? Why are you endangered?*

We will ask the AI to generate a first-person creative biography of the lynx, and the results could be used to create short narrative texts or animated videos in which the lynx talks about its situation.

### **Activity 2. Conflict map.**

This activity focuses on identifying and analysing the different roles involved in the management and conservation of the lynx. The first step will be to jointly identify the different stakeholders related to the species. After that, we will divide the group into teams: scientists, hunters, livestock farmers, farmers, environmentalists, politicians, public authorities, SEPRONA, rural inhabitants, etc. The students will be divided into groups and each group will research and construct the point of view of their character, using AI to generate arguments for and against the conservation and presence of the lynx according to their role.

A visual map of the conflicts of interest can be generated digitally using Canva, Miro or Genially, including links to sources, videos, statements, etc.

### **Activity 3. The great debate.**

The groups represent their characters in a round table or simulated debate, using AI-generated avatars or simply defending their role orally. To help them, they can use the character sheet and debate guide provided in the additional materials. As a final product, a video of the debate can be made, either recorded or performed live with visual support.

### **Activity 4. Critical evaluation and final reflection.**

To conclude, students will reflect on what they have learned. By comparing positions, writing a formal letter, opinion piece, etc., the main conclusions of the debate will be gathered, encouraging students' critical thinking. The final reflection template provided in the materials can be used as a guide.

## **MATERIALS**

- Character sheet (Annex I).
- Discussion guide ( Annex I).
- Final reflection template (Annex I).

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- LIFE Lynxconnect Project: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/>
- News about lynx: <https://lifelynxconnect.eu/noticias/>
- Wildbook AI. Platform that uses AI to identify endangered animals through image recognition: <https://www.wildme.org/wildbook.html>
- UNESCO – “AI and the Future of Education” (2021). Integrating AI into learning while continuing to foster critical judgement: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377071>

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

One suggested activity to expand and involve the entire school would be to design an awareness campaign aimed at the entire educational community. This could include designing posts for social media, digital posters, or short videos (reels).



# CONFLICTING INTERESTS

## SPECIFIC CONTENTS

- To examine the situation of the species in the Iberian Peninsula, its evolution and the future of its conservation.
- To learn about the different roles involved in lynx conservation and seek points of consensus between them.
- To critically weigh up the pros and cons of reintroducing the lynx to its original territories, using reliable sources of information.

## SKILLS

- Competence in linguistic communication. Students must interact orally and in writing in a coherent and appropriate way.
- Competence in mathematics and science, technology and engineering. Competence in science involves understanding and explaining the natural and social environment, using observation, among other methodologies, to ask questions and draw conclusions based on evidence.
- Digital competence. Students will use digital technologies for learning in a safe, sustainable, critical and responsible manner.
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence. The proposed activities encourage students to manage time and information effectively, collaborating with others in a constructive manner.
- Citizenship competence. This helps students to show an active commitment to sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- Entrepreneurial competence. Students are encouraged to train their minds to analyse and evaluate their environment, and to create and rethink ideas using imagination, creativity, strategic thinking and ethical, critical and constructive reflection.

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## OBJECTIVES

- Analyse different points of view regarding lynx management.
- Help students develop a critical perspective on the importance of the species and the role of humans in its conservation.

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## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this activity and all those that use AI, it is interesting to follow and even collaboratively develop a basic guide on how to use generative AI ethically, with recommendations such as the following:

- Use AI as a support tool, not as a substitute for your thinking.
- Verify the information with other sources.
- Do not copy without understanding: reflect before using what has been generated.
- Give credit if you use an idea generated by AI.
- Use respectful and responsible language.
- Remember: AI has no real emotions or opinions.

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## DEVELOPMENT

### Activity 1. If the lynx could talk...

This activity aims to provide an initial introduction to the species, using creative dynamics and AI tools. Students will interview the lynx using ChatGPT or another conversational AI. To do this, we will ask the AI to put itself in the place of a lynx and we will ask different questions: *What is happening to the species on the Iberian Peninsula? How does an Iberian lynx live? Why are you endangered?*

We will ask the AI to generate a creative biography of the lynx in the first person, and the results could be used to create short narrative texts or animated videos in which the lynx talks about its situation.

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### **Activity 3. Argumentative essay.**

In this activity, students are asked to write a short essay on the following topics:

- Controlling feral cats is necessary to protect the Iberian lynx.
- Misinformation is an ecological threat of the 21st century.
- The conservation of the Iberian lynx will only be possible if there is social consensus.

The essays will have the following structure:

- Introduction: presentation of the topic.
- Argumentation: 2-3 arguments supported by data.
- Counterargument.
- Conclusion.

### **Activity 4. Critical analysis of news items.**

Students will be given three news items about the lynx with different approaches (alarmist, political, technical), and will then answer the following questions:

- What is the approach of each news item?
- What type of language is used?
- What interests or ideologies may be behind it?
- Is it supported by scientific sources? Which ones?

Finally, students will reflect on how this affects the public perception of the lynx.

## MATERIALS

- Link to press article activity 1: <https://www.abc.es/deportes/caza/control-perros-errantes-gatos-asilvestrados-dejara-autorizarse-20230413133046-nts.html>
- Link to press articles activity 4:
  - » <https://elpais.com/clima-y-medio-ambiente/2025-05-22/el-lince-alcanza-los-2400-ejemplares-en-2024-un-19-mas-que-el-ano-anterior.html>
  - » <https://es.euronews.com/green/2025/05/07/salvado-de-la-extincion-el-lince-iberico-se-enfrenta-ahora-a-un-futuro-incierto-en-espana>
  - » <https://www.wwf.es/?67540%2Fxito-de-conservacion-el-lince-iberico-baja-de-categoria-de-amenaza-de-en-peligro-a-vulnerable=&utm>

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- National Geographic article: We have a problem with cats that no one wants to talk about: [https://www.nationalgeographic.com.es/mundo-animales/gatos-libertad-suponen-problema-que-nadie-quiere-hablar\\_20318#twitter](https://www.nationalgeographic.com.es/mundo-animales/gatos-libertad-suponen-problema-que-nadie-quiere-hablar_20318#twitter)
- Artemisán Foundation study on the presence of wild cats in Natura 2000 network areas and its consequences: <https://fundacionartemisan.com/gatos-problema-fauna-silvestre-colonias/>

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Some ideas to take these activities further:

- Reflection journal (individual): ‘What have I learned today about how the media influences species conservation?’
- Opinion piece (individual or group): write a short text taking a critical look at a threat to the lynx.
- Headline comparison: gather several real news headlines and analyse them solely in terms of the language they use.



Coordinator beneficiary:



Associated beneficiaries:

