



LynxBrief

lynxbrief@yahoo.co.uk



Welcome to *LynxBrief*, a new monthly political briefing paper focusing on the conservation of the Iberian Lynx, **the most endangered big cat species in the world.**

LynxBrief is produced by SOS lynx, in partnership with Ecologistas en Acción - Andalucía, and supported by One Planet Living. Any other organisation or individual wishing to support, contribute to, or comment on *LynxBrief* should email: lynxbrief@yahoo.co.uk.

***LynxBrief* aims to assist the conservation of the Iberian Lynx by:**

- Increasing co-ordination and information exchange between organisations working and lobbying to conserve the Iberian Lynx.
- Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the impact of official policies and projects on the Iberian Lynx and its habitat.
- Providing a forum for those working in lynx conservation to communicate openly about their work, concerns and opinions.

To achieve this, *LynxBrief* will report on:

- Development proposals that threaten the Iberian Lynx and its habitat.
- The status and conservation of lynx populations in Doñana and Andújar.
- Progress in reducing hunting and road kill pressures on lynx populations.
- Progress in implementing sufficient Natura 2000 areas for lynx recovery.
- Progress in securing long term funding for lynx conservation and recovery.
- Any other key issue suggested by those interested in lynx conservation.

LynxBrief will be produced every month in English, Portuguese and Spanish. It will be available on the internet at www.soslynx.org, along with accompanying information, and will be emailed to interested individuals and organisations. If you would like to add to, or be removed from the *LynxBrief* email list, please email: lynxbrief@yahoo.co.uk



Antonio Sabater©

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More issues will be covered in the next edition of *LynxBrief* in March, including problematic motorway proposals, agriculture development and conservation management in Doñana.

Status of the lynx in the wild

The Iberian Lynx is in critical danger of extinction, with **100-120** surviving mature individuals in the wild, and 37-47 cubs born this year from just 21-26 reproducing females. **It is the most endangered big cat species in the world.** For comparison, there are around 8,000 surviving tigers in the wild and 10,000 cheetahs.

The Iberian Lynx lives only in Spain and Portugal, where it has declined drastically in numbers and range over the last 100 years. At the beginning of the 20th century, it is estimated there were approximately 100,000 Iberian Lynx throughout the Iberian Peninsula. **Now there are just two small and isolated populations with confirmed breeding, both in Andalusia in southern Spain.**

The larger of the two surviving lynx populations is in Andújar, northern Andalusia. It contains around 80 mature individuals and 33-39 cubs were born here this year. This population has seemingly stabilised, and could be recovered in the future by expanding the population into neighbouring areas, and creating a viable “metapopulation” along the Sierra Morena, or between Andújar and Monte Toledo, where lynx survived until recently.

The other surviving lynx population is in Doñana, South Western Andalusia, and contains just 20-40 mature individuals. Only 4-8 cubs were born here this year and the population is not being well managed, is still declining and is already too small, fragmented and isolated to be recovered in the future, without drastic intervention.

Very few lynx survive in Doñana National Park, where rabbits remain very scarce and hunting and other illegal activities are still being reported. Outside the national park, lynx and lynx habitat are threatened by further agriculture and road development proposals and at least two lynx have been killed over the past year by road traffic.

More up to date information on the Iberian Lynx, including a new report “*Saving the Iberian Lynx: The Way Forward*” is available via the SOS lynx website:

www.soslynx.org

Urbanisation in Andújar

The **Ayuntamiento de Andújar** (Andújar local Government) is proposing to alter the classification of a 1000 ha area within and adjacent to the Andújar lynx area, as shown on the **map on page 4**.

This 1000 ha area is currently classified as protected and not for urbanisation. Part of this area is used by lynx for feeding and breeding, and thus

the area should, by European law, be included in Natura 2000 areas, and re-classified for greater protection. Instead, the Ayuntamiento de Andújar is proposing to reduce the protection of this area.

These proposals threaten the Iberian Lynx by:

1. **Threatening the largest and most important wild population;** the smaller Doñana population being already too small and isolated to be viable in the long term.
2. **Increasing road traffic** within the Andújar lynx area; road traffic being the single most important cause of non-natural mortality of this critically endangered species.
3. **Consuming valuable habitat;** important for the survival and expansion of this most important Iberian Lynx population.
4. **Impeding communication** of lynx between adjacent protected areas.

The proposals will combine legalising currently illegal dwellings in this area (which should never have been built and which should now be removed), with encouraging further construction, mainly of second and holiday homes.

If you would like to voice your concern about these urbanisation proposals, please contact:

Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Andújar
Plaza de España, 1
23740 – ANDÚJAR
ANDALUSIA, SPAIN.
Telephone: 00 34 953 508 200

Conservation in Andújar

Fortunately, there is also a lot of good news to report about lynx in Andújar. Organisations, including the Junta de Andalucía, WWF Spain, Fundacion CBD Habitat and the Ministry for the Environment, are working together well, and have agreements with nearly 80 private land owners.

These agreements cover most important areas, and allow conservation personnel to access, monitor and work in private estates, where most lynx now survive. Personnel no longer find many traps and snares in Andújar, and no lynx were killed by hunting or road traffic in Andújar in 2004.

Supplementary food is being supplied to particular weak lynx, or females with many cubs, to compensate for low rabbit numbers. In addition, areas of 1 ha and 4 ha have been enclosed and re-populated with rabbits, allowing lynx to enter, but excluding more common predators such as foxes. Habitat has also been improved to provide more food for rabbits (and thus more rabbits for lynx).

Over 200 camera traps cover the Andújar area, allowing personnel to survey the population accurately and monitor individual lynx, which are identified and named by coat patterns. The population has stabilized at around 80 since 2002, due partly to conservation efforts.

In order to allow this good work to continue, and be expanded, it will be necessary to secure long term funding, as existing funding via the EU LIFE programme is only secured until 2006. It will also be important that conservation efforts are not undermined by conflicting development proposals, such as the urbanisation proposal outlined above.

Luck will also be important, in avoiding further crashes in local rabbit populations (through more disease epidemics) and forest fires, which could still wipe out the entire lynx population in Andújar.

Captive Breeding Update

There are now 13 lynx (8 females and 5 males) in captivity, in two centres in Andalusia, and a new larger centre is being built in Jaen, also in Andalusia. Captive lynx need to be spread across more centres, including in Portugal, and in Castilla la Mancha and Extremadura in Spain, to spread risks and maintain an *Iberian Lynx*.

There has not yet been a lynx bred in captivity, but there is some optimism that there will be this year. The intention is to increase the captive population to 60 by 2010 (through captive breeding and incorporating more wild-caught founders), when reintroductions could begin, provided that *in situ* conservation and planning has significantly advanced by then. More information about the Captive Breeding Programme can be found in the regular *Ex Situ* Bulletins, produced by the Captive Breeding Centre in El Acebuche, Doñana.

Captive breeding could be important for the Iberian Lynx and its conservation, by supplying animals for reintroductions, and maintaining genetic and demographic diversity. However, **it is important to stress that Captive Breeding will never be as important as the survival and expansion of the existing wild populations in Doñana and Andújar,**

which should be the priority for lobbying and fund-raising from now on.

Conclusions

It is important that all those interested and working in lynx conservation (in research, conservation and lobbying) work together to ensure the survival of this beautiful and important creature, particularly in the face of conflicting policies and interests.

In particular, it is **RECOMMENDED** that those interested in lynx conservation **contact the Ayuntamiento de Andújar to voice concerns at current proposals for urbanisation** within and next to the lynx area, using the address given above.

If you have any information or concerns about this or other issues, that you would like to share with others interested in lynx conservation, please email:

lynxbrief@yahoo.co.uk

Finally, *LynxBrief* would like to send best wishes to all those working in lynx conservation, and to wish them the best of luck with their work.

About the author

LynxBrief is researched and written by **Dan Ward**, who has a degree in Natural Sciences, a MSc specialising in Environmental Policy and experience in conservation projects in Scotland, New Zealand, Ecuador and Spain.

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 information about, and to support, SOS lynx, see: www.soslynx.org

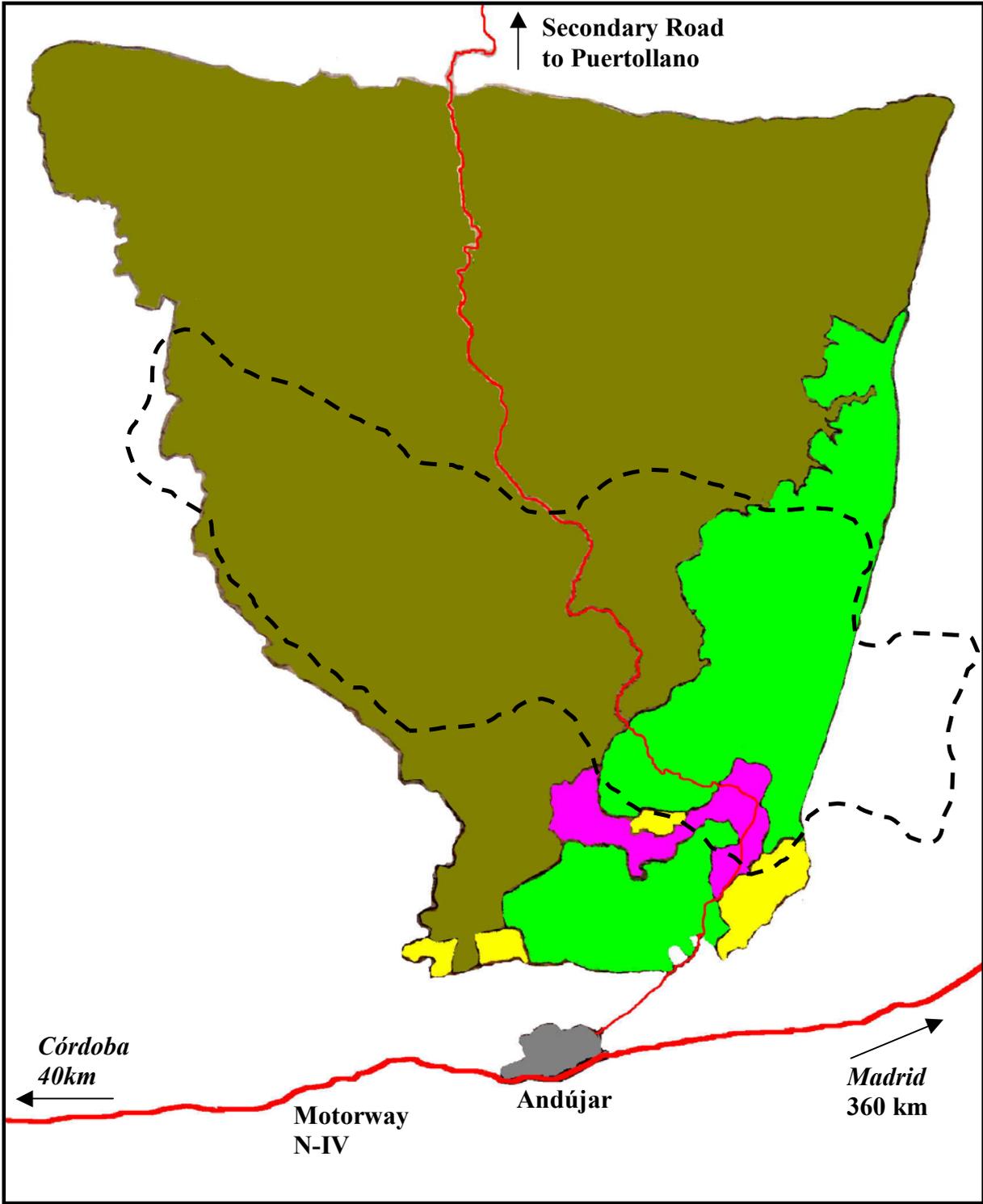
About Ecologistas en Acción – Andalucía

Ecologistas en Acción – Andalucía is a federation of ecological groups that works to conserve the Iberian Lynx and the environment in general, and promotes peace and solidarity.

About One Planet Living and Pelicano SA

One Planet Living (OPL) is a joint initiative of WWF and BioRegional that aims to put sustainability at the heart of decision-making about development and planning, promote sustainable lifestyles, and support nature conservation. Pelicano SA is a Portuguese developer and Founding Global Partner of OPL, and is directly supporting lynx conservation in Portugal.

Location Map for Urbanisation Proposals in Andújar



-  Sierra de Andújar Natural Park
-  Natura 2000 areas
-  Other classified nature areas
-  Area proposed to be re-classified for Urbanisation (approx. 1000ha)

 Iberian Lynx Distribution

