

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

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## Traffic calming proposals in Doñana

As reported in previous editions of *LynxBrief* (see: no. 3 and 7), the killing of Iberian Lynx by vehicles in and around Doñana is a major problem for this lynx population and the survival of the species in general. In 2006, 5 lynx were killed by vehicles in the Doñana area, and 20 have been run over there since 2000. Although lynx continue to also be killed by hunting activities (see page 2), and although the lack of available prey and the loss of habitat are also major problems, the killing of lynx by vehicles accounts for the majority of lynx mortality in Doñana.

Road developments, traffic volumes and speeds have all increased in recent years in and around Doñana, and traffic can often travel at over 120 km/h. This problem has been recognised for several years by conservationists and scientists. Moreover, the regional government has implemented measures (e.g. traffic signals, underpasses for fauna and fences to exclude lynx from roads) aimed at reducing the number of lynx run over each year. However, the high number of lynx killed by vehicles in 2006 indicates that a lot more still needs to be done.

Attempts to reduce the number of lynx run over were given new impetus towards the end of 2006 with announcements about new proposals to: reduce traffic speeds in the Doñana area, and; encourage lynx not to cross particular roads. Following these initial announcements, a new “sustainable mobility plan” has been drafted for Doñana by the Regional Government, in consultation with NGOs and local people. This *draft* plan foresees: extra fauna underpasses and fences; new nature bridges; stricter enforcement of existing speed limits and – most notably – a reduction in the speed and volume of traffic on the busy A483 road, where many lynx have been run over, accompanied by a new “park and ride” scheme (see map on p4, and: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2006/09/30/ciencia/1159614255.html>)

Proposals for extra fauna underpasses and fences are welcomed by *LynxBrief* as serious attempts to reduce the number of lynx being run over, to be mostly funded by the new lynx LIFE project (see *LynxBrief* no. 7). However, it will be important that designers of fences and underpasses learn from the experience of existing fences and underpasses, some of which have been reported as ineffectual at excluding lynx from problem roads.

Proposals for new nature bridges and a reduction in traffic speeds, particularly between El Rocio and Matalascañas, would undoubtedly have a positive effect – if implemented – on the Iberian Lynx population in Doñana. However, there has already been significant opposition voiced to reducing traffic on the A483 road, from local businesses and opposition politicians. Many people use the A483 to access the resort of Matalascañas, particularly during the summer months, and the traffic can become very congested. Moreover, there have been serious calls to *increase* traffic speeds and volumes on the A483.



In all areas of policymaking, including nature conservation, compromises are important and the economic, social and cultural needs of the local human population in Doñana need to be considered. However, the Doñana area is a World Heritage Site, as well as one of only two known breeding areas for the Iberian Lynx. Moreover, the development of Doñana to date has not sufficiently respected the natural heritage importance of the area, nor followed international principles for managing protected areas, including providing a buffer zone where some development is allowed but strictly limited. The fast A483 road runs right along the edge of the Doñana National Park, the illegal El Rocio-Villamanrique Road was constructed through the middle of Doñana Natural Park and a lot of valuable habitat has been lost in surrounding areas to intensive agriculture. Similarly, there are existing proposals for more road developments in the area, including between Huelva and Mazagón. Doñana is being protected as an island, increasingly isolated by surrounding rapid and unsustainable development.

The transport needs of the local human population could and should be met without compromising the survival of the Iberian Lynx population. The *draft* mobility plan has considered extra car parking at El Rocio, and new bus connections and/or a new tram link to Matalascañas, which would allow for a significant reduction in traffic volumes and speeds on the A483 road.

In general, *LynxBrief* strongly endorses the proposals to reduce traffic speeds on the A483 as well as other proposals for new nature bridges, more fences and more fauna underpasses in the Doñana area. *LynxBrief* calls upon the Andalusian Government to move towards implementing these proposals, whilst developing other schemes (e.g. a new tram link) to meet the transport needs of local people without compromising the conservation of the Iberian Lynx and other important species.

Given the level of opposition expressed against some aspects of the traffic calming proposals, it is important that all those interested in the survival of the Iberian Lynx write letters of support to the President of the Junta de Andalucía (Regional Government) calling upon his government to implement the new proposals, including reducing traffic speeds and volumes on the A483. Individuals and organisations should write to:

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

**An example letter is given below. Please adapt this letter to make it more effective, and add your name and address.**

Dear Dr. Chaves

I am writing to you concerning the Iberian Lynx population in and around Doñana National Park in Andalucía, one of only two surviving breeding populations. In 2006, at least 5 lynx from this small population were killed by road vehicles, representing an unsustainable level of mortality for the species.

I note that in late 2006 a number of announcements were made by officials from your government concerning proposals to reduce the impact of road vehicles on Doñana's lynxes, including reducing traffic speeds/volumes, building new nature bridges, and installing more fences and fauna underpasses.

I call upon your government to urgently implement these proposals, including reducing the speed limit on the busy El Rocio to Matalascañas Road, where many lynx have been run over in recent years. The needs of local people for transport should be better met through more sustainable means than private cars, including with the development of a new tramway.

Yours sincerely.....

## Lynx killed by hunting activities

Hunting activities, including deliberate and accidental shootings and predator control traps and snares, played a significant part in the decline of the Iberian Lynx in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. For example, in Doñana in the 1980s, hunting and predator control accounted for 50% of known lynx mortality and up until the 1970s lynx were still being killed en masse in Spain by officially sanctioned "vermin extinction councils".

Despite this historical role, however, it has sometimes been assumed in recent years that hunting activities no longer represent a significant or immediate threat to the two remnant lynx breeding populations in Doñana and Andújar-Cardeña. Various organisations have worked hard to educate and persuade hunters in lynx areas to alter their activities, and recorded mortality from hunting has decreased significantly, particularly in comparison with deaths from road vehicles, which is now the major cause of mortality (see page 1, above).

It was thus an unwelcome surprise when it was announced that a four-year-old male lynx (Justo), was found on 11/10/06 severely injured by a leg trap. He later died from his injuries, despite receiving medical attention. The use of indiscriminate and inhumane leg traps (shown below) is illegal in Spain.



This lynx death highlights the fact that hunting activities remain a problem for the two surviving lynx breeding populations. Moreover, given the practical (and sometimes political) difficulty in locating dead lynx in extensive private hunting estates (where most lynx live), it may be the case that more lynx have been killed by hunting practices in Doñana and Sierra Morena in recent years. In addition, if it is still possible for lynx to be killed by illegal hunting practices in the relatively small areas where they still survive – under considerable surveillance by conservation personnel – it will undoubtedly be likely that any lynx reintroduced into other areas in the future will be at risk from hunting and game-keeping activities.

Hunting activities: remain popular in Spain (with over 1 million regular hunters); take place over large areas (70% of the country), and; often involve illegal predator control and other practices. For example, the illegal use of poison is widespread in Andalucía, and has killed many predators and vultures. Thus, both in actual and potential lynx areas, a lot more work is still needed to reduce risks from hunting activities to enable the Iberian Lynx to be conserved and recovered. Moreover, such work will benefit many other endangered and declining species.



## Update on lynx captive breeding

A new larger breeding centre has now been opened at "La Aliseda" in Jaen province (Andalucía). During January 2007 a number of captive lynx were transferred from their previous enclosures at El Acebuche, Zoo Jerez and Los Villares (Cordoba) to take up residence in the new centre. The new centre greatly increases the capacity of the captive breeding programme, allowing numbers of captive lynx to be increased.

January/February is the peak breeding season for Iberian Lynx and the personnel of the captive breeding programme have been working hard to encourage the lynxes to have another successful year breeding in captivity. In particular a number of male-female pairs have been isolated together in enclosures, taking care to mix up individuals from Doñana and Sierra-Morena so as to maximise the genetic diversity of the captive population and any lynx to be reintroduced in the future.

At present there has been no news of lynx births in 2007, though such news may be imminent. *LynxBrief* sends best wishes to the personnel of the captive breeding programme and looks forward to more good news in the future, whilst noting that ex-situ conservation will only ever form a part of a wider strategy to ensure the recovery of the species. Similarly, those conservation personnel working hard to safeguard wild lynx deserve congratulations, particularly for helping to ensure an increase in the number of lynx born in the wild (see page 3), especially in the now expanding Andújar-Cardeña population.

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

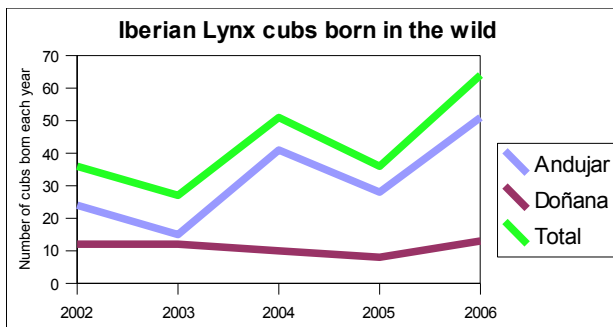
## Two lynx die in fights with other lynx

In addition to the 5 lynx killed by road vehicles in Doñana, and the lynx killed by a trap (see above), 2 lynx were found dead in Andújar-Cardeña in September and November, apparently killed in fights. Deaths from fights are natural occurrences in wild feline populations. However, it has also been suggested that these lynx fought and were killed due to competition for scarce prey (i.e. rabbits). The Andújar-Cardeña lynx population is much larger and more viable than the Doñana population, is not as threatened by road traffic or loss of habitat to agriculture and (unlike Doñana) shows signs of recovery (see below). However, the population is still threatened and constrained by low rabbit densities, due in turn to diseases, excessive hunting and habitat loss. This may have led in part to these lynx deaths. See: [http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/article.php3?id\\_article=6519](http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/article.php3?id_article=6519)



## 64 cubs born in the wild in 2006

In January 2007, the Andalusian Regional Government announced definitive figures for the numbers of lynx cubs born in the wild in 2006, with 64 being born. As shown below, these figures indicate an on-going increase in the Andújar-Cardena population but no recovery in the smaller Doñana population.



Note, also, that the number of cubs born each year tends to fluctuate, particularly with rabbit densities, which themselves are disease and climate dependent. When rabbit densities are lower, both birth rates and survival rates of cubs decrease.

Overall, these figures indicate some more good news for the Andújar-Cardena population, which seems to be expanding in both range and numbers, thanks in part to good work by conservation personnel. Unfortunately, however, there is little good news about Doñana, where there is no recovery, and where the population is already too small to be viable in the long term and continues to be threatened by fast road vehicles and the activities of some hunters and game keepers (see above).

**Reference:** “Actuaciones para la conservación del lince ibérico en Andalucía”, [http://www.portaldelmedioambiente.com/html/gestor\\_documentos/doc/Balance%20lince.pdf](http://www.portaldelmedioambiente.com/html/gestor_documentos/doc/Balance%20lince.pdf)

## New Multilateral Commission

Since 2003 a bilateral Iberian Lynx commission has existed between the governments of Andalucía and Spain, which has been important in improving political co-ordination, vital for the survival and recovery of the species. On 21/11/06, this bilateral commission was expanded to include representatives from Portugal as well as the Spanish regions of Castilla – La Mancha and Extremadura. This new multilateral commission is important because enhanced co-operation between Spain and Portugal, and between various Spanish regions, will be important for the future recovery of the Iberian Lynx, particularly regarding any future reintroduction programmes and any captive breeding outside of Andalucía. Moreover, the lack of sufficient inter-regional co-ordination has been one significant barrier to Iberian Lynx conservation in the past.

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## Conclusions

It is important that all those interested and working in lynx conservation (in research, conservation and/or lobbying) work together to ensure the survival of this beautiful and important creature, particularly in the face of conflicting interests. In particular, it is important that those interested in lynx conservation write lobby letters to politicians and policy-makers to encourage them to alter their actions in favour of the Iberian Lynx.

In this edition, *LynxBrief* advises those interested and working in lynx conservation to write a letter to the President of Andalucía calling upon him to urgently implement proposals to reduce the impact of traffic on lynx in Doñana, including reductions in traffic speeds.

Government officials have recently proposed such measures, and they need to be urgently implemented given the high and unsustainable level of lynx mortality from road vehicles in and around Doñana. These measures are particularly important given the small size, isolation and lack of recovery of the Doñana population.

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

### About the author

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

### About SOS Lynx

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

### About Ecologistas en Acción – Andalucía

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

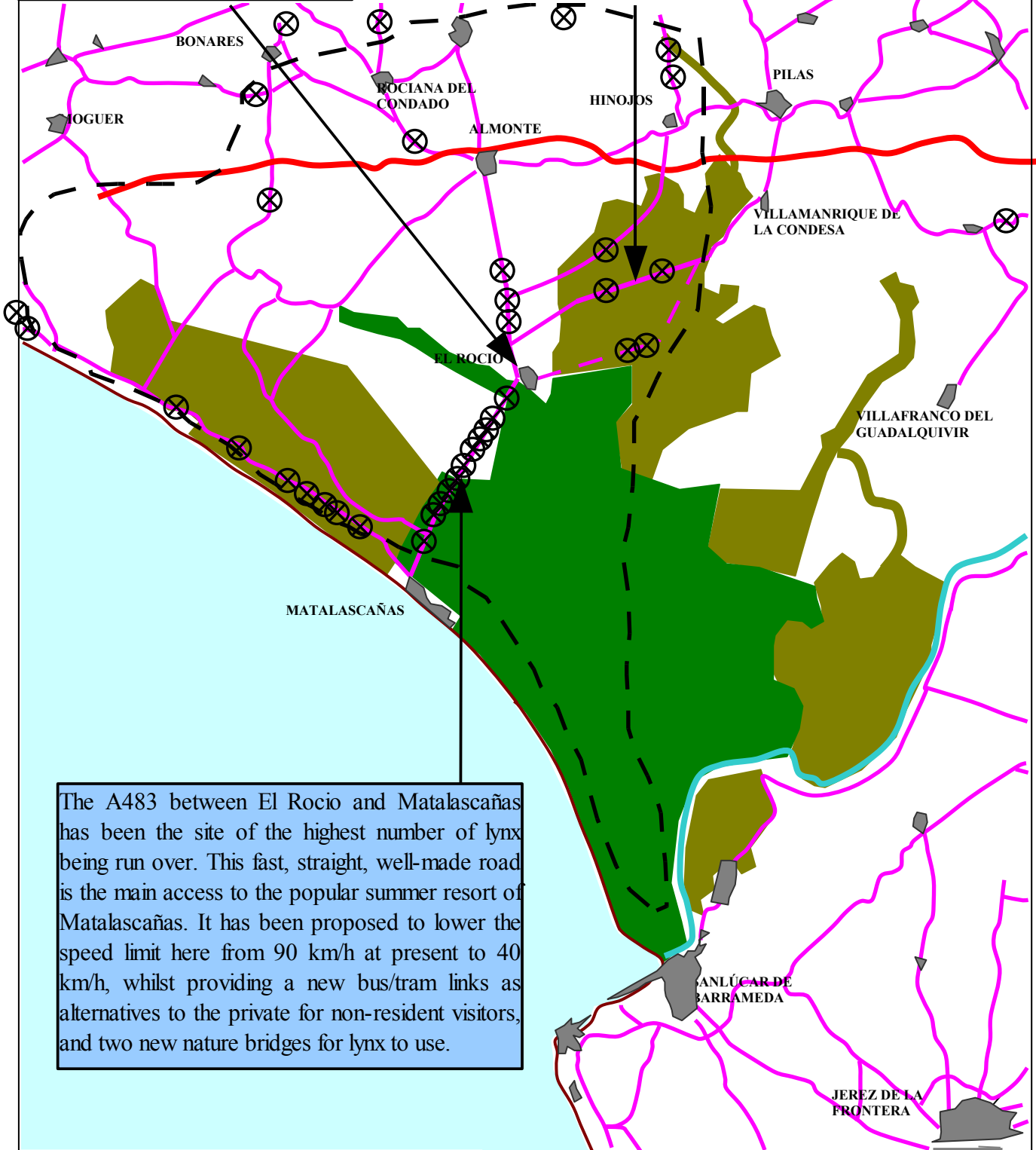
### About One Planet Living and Pelicano SA

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

# Proposals for traffic calming in and around Doñana

The draft sustainable mobility plan has considered extra car parking facilities in El Rocio, and a new bus and/or tram link to Matalascañas to discourage visitors from using private cars on the A483 road to the resort town (see below).

Ecologistas en Acción and WWF-Spain have campaigned for the illegally upgraded road between Villamanrique and El Rocio to be removed. At least 2 lynx have died here since the road was built in 2001. The EU recently condemned the Spanish Government for allowing this road to be built. The Regional Government is proposing to reduce traffic speeds here, but not to close the road. For more details about the recent EU decision about the road, see: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1395&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>



The A483 between El Rocio and Matalascañas has been the site of the highest number of lynx being run over. This fast, straight, well-made road is the main access to the popular summer resort of Matalascañas. It has been proposed to lower the speed limit here from 90 km/h at present to 40 km/h, whilst providing a new bus/tram links as alternatives to the private for non-resident visitors, and two new nature bridges for lynx to use.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #808000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Doñana Natural Park</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #008000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Doñana National Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 5px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> MOTORWAY</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 2px; background-color: magenta; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> ROAD</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border-bottom: 1px dashed magenta; margin-right: 5px;"></span> OFF-ROAD TRACK (not all shown)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle; margin-right: 5px;">X</span> Lynx killed by vehicles in the area (1982-2006)</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px dashed black; border-radius: 50%; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle; margin-right: 5px;">X</span> Iberian Lynx breeding areas (1984 – 2001)</li> </ul>	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>0km 5 km 10 km 15 km</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>SOSLynx.org</b></p> </div>
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