

BACK FROM THE BRINK: IBERIAN LYNX POPULATION RISES TO OVER 1,000

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

An Iberian lynx runs after being released in Villafranca de Cordoba, southern Spain December 14, 2009. | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

The Iberian lynx population in Portugal and Spain rose above 1,000 last year after 414 cubs were born under a joint breeding programme, in a major leap towards conserving the endangered species, Spain's Environment Ministry said on Friday.

The initiative was launched in 2002 when the number of Iberian lynx, a wild cat native to the Iberian Peninsula, plunged to just 94 in Spain and none in Portugal, due to farming, poaching and road accidents.

By the end of last year there were 1,111 Iberian lynx living in the wild in the region, including 239 breeding females, the ministry said in a statement. The number was a record high since monitoring of the species began, it said.

"With a 30% increase from 2019, this demographic curve allows us to be optimistic and to draw scenarios that distance the big Iberian feline from critical risk of extinction," the ministry said.

In 2015, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) downgraded the threat level for the Iberian lynx, a spotted nocturnal wild cat distinguished by its beard and ear tufts, to 'Endangered' from 'Critically Endangered', which the ministry said was thanks to the ongoing conservation efforts.

The World Wildlife Fund, a partner in the programme, said the data was encouraging.

"This is a great success for conservation in Spain and the world. Few species are able to escape from such a critical situation as the Iberian lynx has been in," said WWF Spain's chief Juan Carlos del Olmo.

In order to be classified as non-endangered, the Iberian lynx population would need to be above at least 3,000, including 750 breeding females, the WWF said.

Del Olmo said this could be achieved by 2040, but that much still needed to be done to eradicate threats to the Iberian lynx, such as road accidents and hunting, and to improve prosecution rates for killing lynx.

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