



Methodology and Results Obtained in the Rabbit Census Conducted by the Life Project Technical Team

The rabbit plays a key role in the Mediterranean ecosystems for carnivorous and predatory animals. Regarding the Iberian lynx specifically, the rabbit accounts for 80%-90% of their diet and, therefore, in order to be able to develop any management and handling work, it is compulsory to have information on the rabbit population dynamics quality



Adult field rabbit.

DLife Lynx Conservation Project has used diverse tracking methodologies for the rabbit population in order to provide an answer to various questions:

¿How abundant (relatively) are rabbits in the area?

Random scat counts are carried out in the months of July and August, at a total of more than 1,500 points. This study method began to be used in 2000.

The results observed since 2000 up through 2008 (2009 data are still pending analysis) show that between 2000 and 2005, there was a significant regression in the relative abundance of rabbits, while between 2005 and 2008, the negative tendency stopped, a slight

recovery was even observed in the last two years.

Can we compare the evolution of the Doñana and Sierra Morena populations?

Two hour walking itineraries are carried out in the different 2.5 x 2.5 km quadrants in which the area with a current lynx presence in the Doñana and surrounding areas have been divided. Researchers started using this method in 2008.

This year, some 103 quadrants have been sampled, for a total of 543.78 km. In this case the series of data is too small for drawing conclusions, but comparing the 2008 data with the 2009 data, a slight recovery of the rabbit populations can be appreciated, primarily in the Coto Maza-gon region and in the province of Seville (Villamanrique de la Condesa and Aznal-

SUMMARY



page.2

- Iberian Lynx to Be Released in Guadalmellato and Guarrizas Now Have a Name
- Iberian Lynx 2008 Conservation Efforts Receive Awards
- New Web Page

cazar-Puebla del Rio).

How are the two main diseases affecting the rabbits (myxomatosis and viral hemorrhagic disease-VHD)?

A series of walking itineraries are performed and repeated weekly between the months of February and mid May (season of highest incidence of VHD). As for myxomatosis, throughout the year note is taken of rabbits observed with symptoms of the disease.

In the three years of sampling, only one significant outbreak of VHD was detected in 2008; the outbreak coincided with a decrease in the relative abundance of rabbits observed for that year. Therefore, it could be concluded that the incidence of diseases are a major factor regulating rabbit populations.

Is there a relationship between the number of latrines per Km and the number of rabbits?

Five walking itineraries are done in one of the areas with the greatest density of rabbits. They are repeated over three consecutive days, taking note of all the rabbits observed within a visual band of 10 meters along both sides of the path. The data obtained from these routes has been analysed with another 60 routes done in Sierra Morena, and a direct relationship has been seen between the absolute abundance of rabbits and the number of latrines per Km., giving an equivalence of 1 rabbit/ha. for every 10 latrines/Km.



Iberian lynx to be released in Guadalmellato and Guarrizas now have a name



Charqueña and Cascabel



Reintroduction of the Iberian lynx is almost a reality. Animals will soon be released that will have to re-colonise the territory they were pushed out of. These lynx have been captured and quarantined, and have met all the health requirements to be released again.

They are:

1. Charqueña (female, 2006).

Captured on 18/01/2008 (in the breeding programme since then). From the Yeguas River valley population.

Weight: 11 kg.

2. Cascabel (male, 2006).

Captured on 27/10/2008 (in the breeding programme since then). From the Jandula River valley population.

Weight: 10.9 kg.

3. Elanio (male, 2008).

Captured 26/10/2009. Currently in quarantine at La Olivilla. From the Yeguas River valley population.

Weight: 11.25 kg.

4. Elron (male, 2008).

Captured on 27/10/2009. Currently in quarantine at El Acebuche. From the Yeguas River valley population.

Weight: 11.75 kg.

5. Diana (female, 2007).

Captured 27/10/2009. Currently in quarantine at La Olivilla. From the Yeguas River valley population.

6. Eclipse (female, 2008).

Captured 29/10/2009. Currently in quarantine at El Acebuche. From the Yeguas River valley population.

Weight: 9.6 kg.

7. Flora (female, 2009).

Born in captivity, 2009 cohort. Daughter of dam Adelfa and sire Cromo. Currently at El Acebuche.

8. Fuego (male, 2009).

Born in captivity, 2009 cohort. Daughter of dam Adelfa and sire Cromo. Currently at El Acebuche. Still pending capture are a 2006 male in Jandula and a 2008 female in Yeguas.



Iberian Lynx 2008 Conservation Efforts Receive Awards

A public high school, an association of hunters and a compendium of information on the Internet were honoured with this annual award.

This past October, a ceremony was held to give out awards to Iberian lynx conservation efforts. The act was presided over by Environment Department Director Cinta Castillo, and was held at the Alcazares de los Reyes Cristianos of Cordova. On this occasion one of the acknowledgements was for Manuela Von Arx, distinguished member of the group of feline specialists of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), for "encouraging large scale outreach through the Internet, and providing information about these great endangered cats, especially the lynx, to a large number of people." Another award winner was the Bonares Society of Hunters, for their participation in conservation efforts carried out by the Life Project to guarantee the survival of the lynx in Doñana.

Lastly, a high school in Ciudad Real, IES Los Batanes, also received this recognition for having been very actively involved in the Life Project Educational programme, participating in information campaigns and surveys of residents of Viso del Marques, a municipality located in a strategic area, regarding future reintroductions of the feline in the area of the Guarrizas River.

New Web Page

Soon you will be able to view the updated Web page www.lifeline.org. More dynamic and attractive, it will offer lynx web surfers news about the Life-lynx project (newsletters, reports, scientific articles, meetings, etc.), faster and more efficiently. We hope you like it!



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