

PROPOUSAL OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE IBERIAN LYNX IN PORTUGAL

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The proposal of the action plan for the Iberian lynx conservation in Portugal was developed to provide a consistent and effective approach to prevent the species disappearance in the country. Proposed conservation actions and management tools relied on the most recent information from research throughout the species range. The fundamental goal of this plan is to restore the historical lynx populations in Portugal by creating territory management figures that will allow managing lynx habitat, even in the absence of the species. This procedure will consist in the implementation of lynx management units that are intended to provide the smallest scale of evaluation, monitoring and management of lynx habitat. These areas will be managed as theoretical home ranges and will be protected and improved for lynx presence and reproduction.

The proposal of Action Plan is divided in two main action guidelines: *in-situ* conservation (habitat improvement, species protection and rabbit population recovery) and *ex-situ* conservation (captive breeding and genome resource bank).

In-situ conservation includes the on-going actions of habitat protection and restoration, rabbit population recovery and reduction of mortality causes. Several projects, co-financed by the EU are being planned and applied in Natura 2000 network areas, in order to improve habitat suitability for lynx and prey species and, at the same time, vigilance towards non-selective predator control methods are being promoted in potential areas.

Public education and information is other priority component to be implement and methods, designs and techniques should be applied in a professional level. The proposed Action Plan contains several actions regarding this theme, particularly the promotion of possible incentives and advantages derived from the conservation of the lynx and its environment.

The participation of Portugal in the Captive breeding group and the constitution of a Reintroduction Specialist Work Team was also covered by this plan. The implementation of a breeding centre, specially designed to breed suitable animals for reintroduction and the creation of a captive breeding team is being conducted. Priority actions include the identification of optimal areas for reintroduction and the evaluation of reintroduction protocols.

Special attention is being paid to conducting and improving methods for monitoring lynx presence and abundance in order to establish a systematic network to collect lynx data and improve basic knowledge necessary to the decision making process.