

Part 2

The most endangered cat species is the Iberian Lynx, sometimes called the Spanish Lynx. [9] Should this species (1)_____ it would be the first feline extinction since the Smilodon, commonly known as the Sabre-toothed Tiger, 10,000 years ago [10]. Recent studies (2)_____ the number of surviving Iberian lynx to be as few as 100, which is around (3)_____ less than there were in 2000. [11] What does an Iberian Lynx look like? Their leopard-like spots particularly (4)_____ it from its cousin, the Eurasian Lynx and it is also smaller, with a head and body length between 85 and (5)_____ centimetres.

Males can weigh between 12.9 and 27 kilograms [12], which is about half the weight of the average Eurasian Lynx. The lynx can live up to a period of (6)_____ years. The Iberian Lynx's size means that it typically hunts for animals no bigger than rabbits or hares. Rabbits would account for more than 70% of the Lynx's food [13], but due to Spain's declining rabbit (7)_____, the lynx has been forced to attack larger (8)_____ such as young deer or roebuck. The Iberian Lynx hunts alone and follows its prey even up to distances of (9)_____ kilometres. Or it lies in wait for its prey for many hours. It uses the four sets of whiskers on its ears and chin to sense its (10)_____. They are active at night. They stay active in winter and their fur becomes thicker and paler. In extreme weather, they take shelter in caves or trees. [14]

The Iberian Lynx was once widespread all over the peninsula but it is now restricted to very small areas, mainly (11)_____ covered with vegetation. Its recent drastic decline over recent decades is due to loss of habitat, (12)_____ in prey and high non-natural mortality from road kills, predator control and hunting, although it is under legal protection and it is no longer legal to hunt them. [15] It was recently thought that the only (13)_____ Iberian lynxes were in the Donana National Park in Andalucia, southern Spain, but in 2007 a previously unknown population was discovered in Castilla-La Mancha in central Spain. In March 2005, for the first time Iberian Lynxes managed to breed in (14)_____. 3 healthy cubs were born at a breeding centre in Donana. In 2009 it was announced that 3 more cubs had been born in the same centre. [17] Typically a mother will give birth to 3 cubs after a gestation period of 60 days [16]. Iberian Lynx conservation is now under way through political campaigning and lobbying from individuals and organizations such as SOS Lynx.

Important progress has been made in a number of ways. The foundation of the breeding programme in Andalucia, (15)_____ of further construction in areas the Iberian lynx lives, and the halting of proposals for new roads in problematic areas, such as the new motorway that had been planned between Ciudad Real in La Mancha and Cordoba in Andalucia. Despite these successes, (16)_____ and conflicting pressures remain.

The World Wildlife Foundation has been urging Spanish authorities for over two years to close a road which crosses the Donana national park [18], as Callum Rankine of the WWF says, 'With such a small population, the (17)_____ of just one individual on the road brings the species closer to the brink of extinction.'