

# Info Lynx ~

Welcome! WWF launches Info Lynx, a quarterly **newsletter**, published both in Spanish and English, that will cast the spotlight on one of the world's most fascinating and endangered species, the Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*). In each edition **we'll review the latest news and developments**, and examine a current issue in depth.

In this first number we'll be looking into the **new Life + Iberlince project**, involving several Spanish and Portuguese partners, including WWF. The project seeks to expand the presence of the species beyond the borders of Andalusia, in a first step to regain its historic range.

We will also **travel in time to follow the evolution of populations** of this feline for over four decades, including the recent 2011 census data.

## NEWS

### Reaching new territory

Camera traps have been able to locate a new Iberian lynx individual in the south of Castilla-La Mancha region. In addition, several media networks have collected information on the possible presence of the species in other regions such as Extremadura, Castilla y León and Madrid.

But these great news should be taken with caution. The specimens found in these areas, might not be part of a new stable population, but only isolated individuals.



Watch camera-trap lynx videos [here](#)



Phototrapping of Fontana (Photo: Junta de Castilla- La Mancha)

The truth is that these three Spanish regions are potential areas of the species' distribution and, in the coming years, will be critical for their expansion.

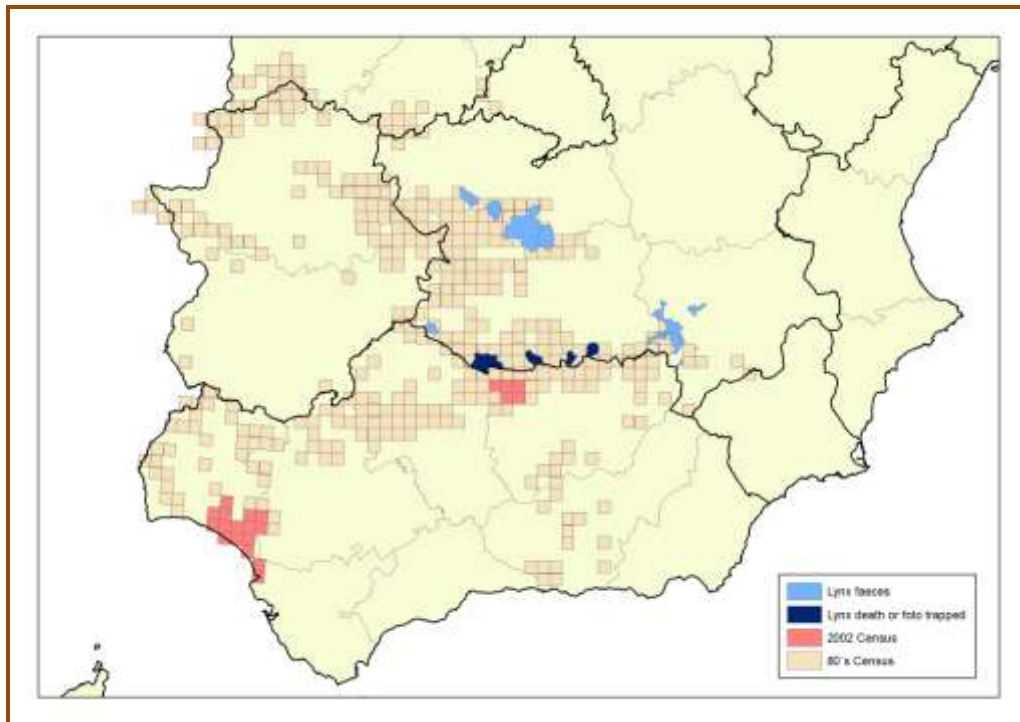
It is crucial that the different regional governments urgently gather and implement all necessary measures all means at their disposal to make sure the Lynx habitat is free of any possible dangers.

Regions such as Castilla y León, and Madrid, should begin to set up the recovery plans for the species - which should have been approved by December 2010, according to the Spanish Nature Conservation Law.

Meanwhile, the governments of Castilla-La Mancha and Extremadura should intensify their efforts within the framework of current projects and plans, to improve and enhance the conditions that guarantee the survival of the species, avoiding today's threats and anticipating others, such as a controlling predator control through loops and poisoned baits,

two of the historical causes of the species' disappearance in Spain.

The only region with evidence of the species in the last 10 years is Castilla - La Mancha. (See map below)



Positive data of Iberian Lynx from 2002 to 2011 in Castilla-La Mancha region (6 phototrapped individuals, 1 corpse and 18 feaces)

### Back to the wild 2011-2012

This season the two reintroduced lynx populations have been reinforced through several releases. This spring 7 individuals have been released in the heart of Guarrizas (Jaén) - 3 males and 4 females - and 7 more in the area of Guadalquivir (Córdoba) - 3 males and 4 females -, Both in the Andalusia region. (See map on page 9)

All except one come from the captive breeding program and they have undergone a program of preadaptation, prior to their release.

It's the first time a female released after captive breeding is able to procreate. *Granadilla* had a 4-cub litter.

The fast adaptation of these animals to their new conditions is a major step on the

road to success of reintroduction programs.



Click [here](#) to see the release charts

During the past three seasons, the release program has managed to settle most of

the individuals, achieving a survival success around 70%, much higher than expected.

### Lynx caught in traps

Among the causes of unnatural death, WWF is very concerned about illegal practices of predator control, such as leghold traps.

Recently, the body of a lynx has been found dead in the reintroduction area of Guadalmellato (Córdoba), The leghold trap was still attached to its paw.



*Grazalema*, lynx female dead in 2011 in a trap (Photo: Junta de Andalucía)

Local authorities need to urgently conduct a thorough investigation on this and other similar cases. These kind of traps are an illegal predator control practice, banned for over 20 years now, because of their cruelty and their lack of selectivity, both by national and international laws.

### The dangers of crossing the road

The recent deaths of two lynx on the road is bad news. The first occurred in the Doñana region on the A-49 highway, in La Palma del Condado (Huelva). It was *Habichuela*, a female born in 2011. Although the autopsy has not been decisive, it seems clear that the animal was hit by a car.

The second death took place in the reintroduction area of Guadalmellato, in the A-300 road, close to the town of Adamuz (Córdoba). The individual was *Hyades*, a female born in 2011, in the breeding center of La Olivilla (Jaén) and released in the wild recently.

In the Doñana – Aljarafe population, we must add another run-over, happened in the same A-49 highway, earlier this year.

Although many of the problems related to the road network in this area have been solved, the expansion of the Iberian lynx populations make these animals colonize areas far from their normal distribution. The recent accidents occurred in these new areas, due to the lack of permeability and habitat connection measures, still not in place.

The new challenge in Doñana is to stop the lynx population isolation. One of the most important measures is to improve the permeability of the A-49 highway throughout the Doñana area.



Iberian Lynx pup. Lynx Exsitu conservation program. (Photo: Ministry of the Environment)

In parallel, there's a need to work on the creation of ecological corridors beyond this barrier.

As for the reintroduced population of Guadalmellato (Córdoba), WWF considers that it's vital to increase efforts to adapt the road network.

### Captive breeding, a success

The results in the breeding season 2012 in the captive breeding centers, have exceeded all expectations, significantly improving the statistics of previous years.



Watch the new born cubs live [HERE](#)

In 2012 a total of 28 females found a mate, a number similar to 2011. There were a **total of 59 pups born**. 3 in Granadilla, 14 in El Acebuche, 21 in La Olivilla and 21 in Silves.

Moreover, the percentage of survival during the extremely sensitive perinatal

period was also very high: 44 pups alive at this moment.

The most outstanding fact of the breeding season has been the unusually high number of pups per litter. Out of the 21 births, seven of them were 4-cub litters, eight were 3-cub litter, one was a 2-cub litter and just 5 births of just one cub.

Another good development is the fact that there are very few puppies being raised by hand, only two. One of the reasons is that those puppies that were rejected by their mothers, have been adopted by another female and her litter.

The main group of these animals will be used to strengthen the current reintroduced populations or to create new ones.

## New LIFE-Lynx project



New Life+Iberlince Project logo

September 2011 has witnessed the birth of the new European project *Life+ Iberlince* (<http://www.lifelince.org/pagina.aspx?id=5>) to work on the recovery of the historical distribution of Iberian lynx in Spain and Portugal. The project roadmap aims to expand the lynx's area of stable presence beyond the limits of Andalucía. The work plan has a duration of 5 years (2011-2016) and a budget of 34.015.188 euros. The European Community is funding the 61.57% (more than 20.9 million euros) while the rest of partners provide the 38.43% (around 13 million euros). This is the **largest budget that has been invested in a Life project**.



### Objective: Happy cats

In this new project, the overall objective is very ambitious: reduce the degree on the IUCN Red List's threat category from 'critically endangered species' to 'endangered'.

To achieve this outcome, there are three specific goals:

**Increase** the number of individuals from existing populations of Iberian lynx, reaching at least 70 territorial females in the eastern Sierra Morena (50 in Andújar-Cardena, 10 in Guarrizas and 10 in Guadalmellato) and 25 in Doñana – Aljarafe.

**Establish** four new populations of Iberian lynx in Portugal, Castilla – La Mancha, Extremadura and Andalusia.

**Identify and prepare** four new areas to accommodate future population of Iberian lynx in Portugal, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Andalusia.

The project is coordinated by Junta de Andalucía, and involves a total of 17 members, including 9 regional administrations of Portugal and Spain, various hunting associations, a group of NGO and an media producing company.

WWF's work as partner focuses on fieldwork in Andalusia and Castilla – La Mancha, using their more than 12 years experience with the species and its habitat.

## Iberian Lynx in Spain: a look back~

### Road to extinction

In the **decade of the 80's**, a first national census of the Iberian lynx was conducted (*Rodríguez y Delibes, 1990*). The results estimated a population of 600-1200 animals (about 350 breeding females) in 48 stable presence groups, gathered in 9 populations, occupying an area total of 11,000 km<sup>2</sup>.



*Iberina Lynx (Photo: Jesús Cobo/WWF Spain)*

**In the 90's**, the hemorrhagic disease virus RHD had an impact on rabbit populations (main prey of lynx), causing

their total extinction in its historic territorial range.

At the **turn of the century**, a new national census was carried out, using two new tools: genetic analysis of feces, and camera traps. This study showed an estimated population of 84-143 individuals older than one year and 20-31 territories of breeding females, in 2 stable populations, Doñana and Andújar-Cardena occupying less than 500 km<sup>2</sup>.

This report sounded the alarm and **the Iberian lynx was included in the Red List** of IUCN as *critically endangered*.

## A ray of hope for the species



Electric shepherd to protect crops (Photo: WWF Spain)

Since the beginning of the XXI century, several projects have been implemented to recover the species.

**In the year 2000** WWF began working with the Biodiversity Foundation and the CBD Habitat Foundation, in what would become the seed from which the main priorities for the recovery of the species emerged.

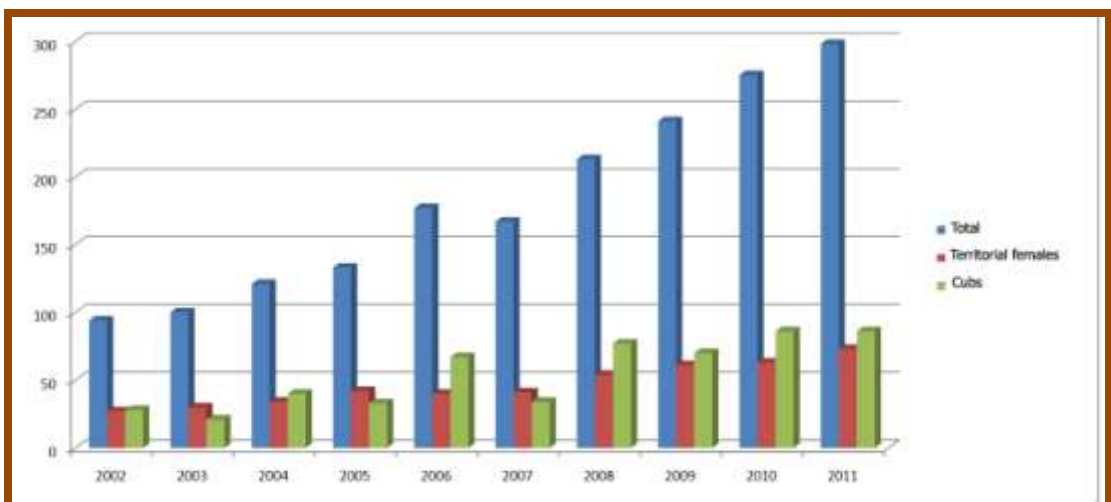
A series of pilot **agreements with several private properties** were made, working on the restoration of rabbit populations (representing between 90 and 100% of the feline's diet), setting up measures such as fencing, re-building of warrens, planting, clearing, etc. These guidelines have been, since then, followed in all the projects, with remarkable

success. Most of these initiatives were led by the Government of Andalusia, with the participation of numerous institutions and other stakeholders. Hunting ground owners, included.



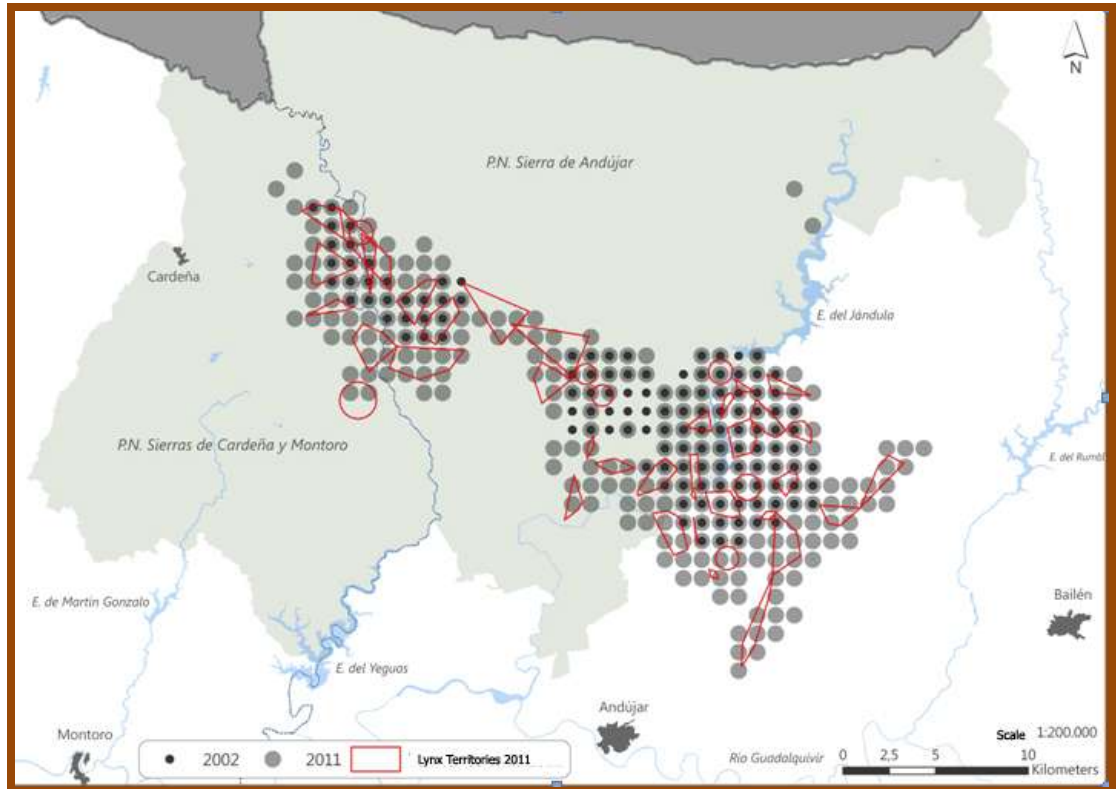
Rabbit release on one of the warrens built for the recovery of the species. (Photo: WWF Spain)

On the other hand, there has been an intensive follow-up activity both of the lynx and rabbit's population numbers. The goal was to monitor conservation measures outcome. The result was an unquestionable success. In just a decade, the wild populations of Iberian lynx have tripled and the area of stable presence has doubled. Thanks to reintroductions two new populations have been created. In addition, a new captivity breeding area has been set up with around 100 animals who are being reintroduced in the wild.



Total Iberian Lynx population. Data obtained from phototrapping methods (Photo: Junta de Andalucía)

## Sierra Morena population (Andújar - Cardena)



Evolution of the Andújar-Cardena population between 2003 and 2011 (Photo: Junta de Andalucía)

The population of Sierra Morena is distributed mostly along the Natural Park of Sierra de Andújar and the Natural Park of Sierras de Cardena y Montoro. The population also expands over the Eastern border of the parks. The signing of different agreements with private property owners has been a fundamental tool for conservation.

In 2004 the entire surface with presence of Iberian lynx had some kind of agreement with a local organization working in the area. Between 2004 and

2011, there has been a 76% increase in the area of stable presence of the Iberian lynx, from 153 km<sup>2</sup> to 270 km<sup>2</sup>. Over that period, the lynx population increased from 79 individuals in 2004 to 192 in 2011 (143%). The number of breeding females has been raised from 23 to 50. (117%)

The habitat conservation work has served to unite the two initial main lynx nuclei, Jándula and Yeguas, by winning back 3 territories in the land that separated both areas.

## Doñana - Aljarafe population

The Doñana -Aljarafe population doesn't have a solid core population center, as clearly defined as the one in Sierra Morena. In Doñana the lynx group behaves as a metapopulation (a set of populations or nuclei that are interconnected by occasional phenomena of emigration and immigration) consisting of several groups.

The location of these groups is independent from the protection status of the space. These nuclei are not isolated and not closed, but instead there is a relatively fluid movement of specimens from one group to another.

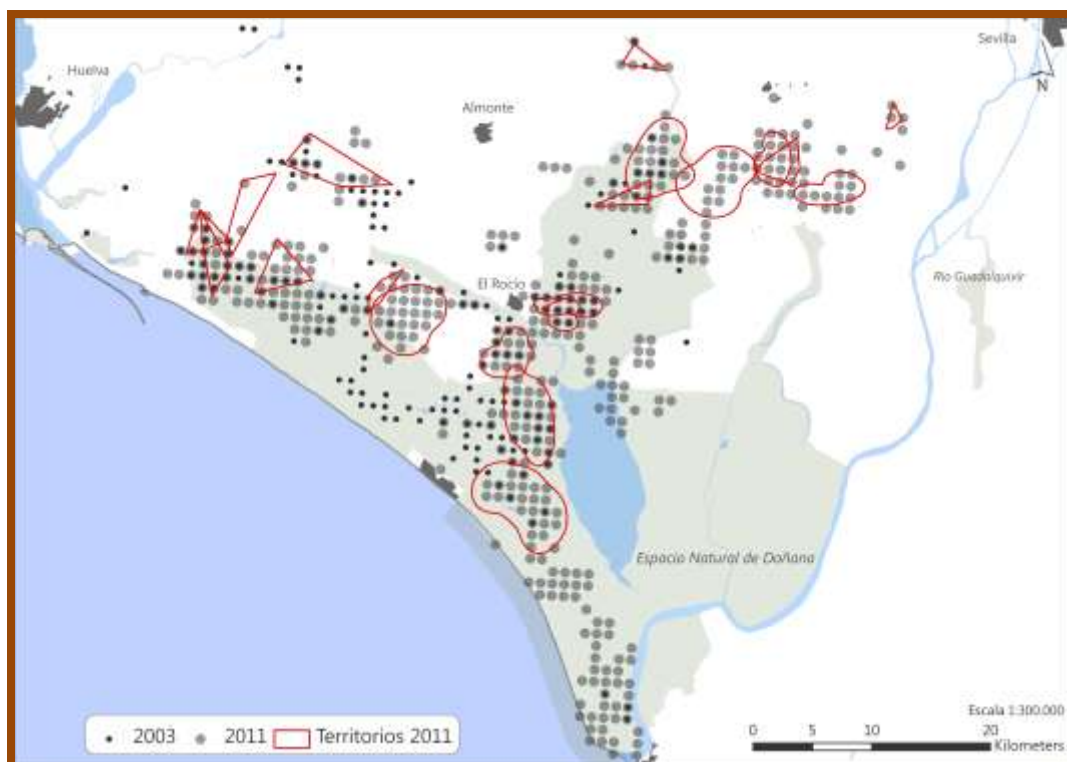
Comparing the surface with presence of lynx in the year 2004 (on this year all properties with the presence of lynx were fitted with collaboration agreements) with the 2011 data, we observe that the surface

has increased by 240%, from 174 km<sup>2</sup> in 2004, to 591 km<sup>2</sup> in 2011.

Over that period, the lynx population increased from 42 individuals in 2004 to 88 in 2011 (101%). The number of breeding females has been raised from 11 to 19 (73%).

As in the case of Sierra Morena, this increase in space is closely linked to the actions taken to improve habitat and rabbit populations. The main example is the formation of a new population in Aznalcázar-La Puebla (northeast sector), started in 2005 with the arrival of one single individual from the Matasgordas' area.

Seven years later there are 5 territorial females with 7 cubs and a total of 14 males. This area is now one of the most important lynx centers of Doñana - Aljarafe.



Evolution of the Doñana-Aljarafe population between 2003 y 2011 (Photo: Junta de Andalucía)



## Reintroduced populations

Within the framework of the former project *LIFE Lynx: Conservation and reintroduction of the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) in Andalucía*, ended in 2011, there were a series of tests, to try out the different methods of re-introducing the species in the wild.

Following the IUCN Guidelines for Reintroduction, a survey was conducted to identify potential lynx habitat. At the same time, there was a sampling of rabbit numbers inside selected areas. Finally, the best two areas were chosen: Guadalmez and Guadalmellato, both in Andalucía.

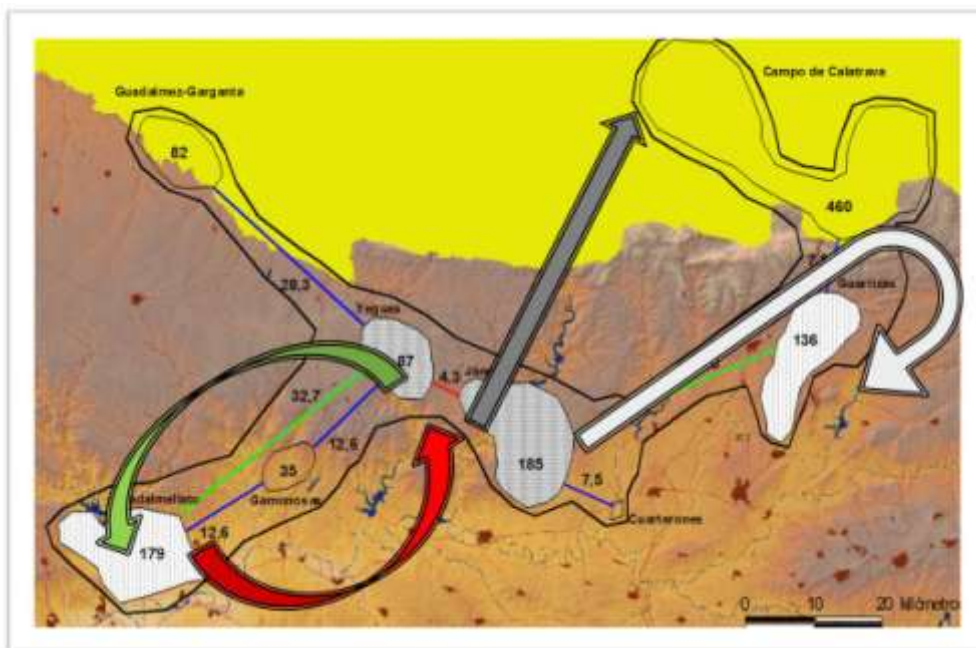
The main reasons for this choice were the remarkable habitat quality, high rabbit densities (> 6 rabbits / ha) and strong social support for the reintroduction (> 90% of the local population, IESA).

December 2009 saw the first Guadalmellato lynx releases. Three couples and a single female were soft released, inside 4ha plots. They were all individuals translocated from Andújar.

In the following breeding season, 2010-2011, there were new releases, in this case following the recommendations of the Fourth Iberian Lynx Seminar, 5 lynxes captured in Andújar-Cardena were released by 'direct' (or 'hard') method. Shortly after the release they reproduced successfully.

That same year 5 animals were released at the heart of Guarrizas, including two individuals derived from the captive breeding program. These experiences are having a lower mortality than expected, although not enough time has gone by, to thoroughly examine the success of the actions.

After this year's releases (read *news*) this populations amount to almost 40 individuals. Some breeding activity was detected for the first time in 2010 in Guadalmellato and during the current season (2012) in Guarrizas. On the other hand, we have witnessed the exchange of individuals between the Andújar-Cardena and the Guadalmellato populations. A senile tracked animal arrived also to Guarrizas.



Eastern Sierra Morena metapopulation: Grey areas: current lynx presence. In the center, the two original Andújar- Cardena lynx nuclei. On the Southeast, the reintroduction nuclei of Guadalmellato. To the East, the reintroduction center of Guarrizas. Arrows indicate movement between them.

This newsletter is published within the framework of the *Iberian lynx conservation project: Looking into the future* developed by WWF Spain with funding from WWF Netherlands. The project represents a crucial strategic support to the conservation and awareness actions undertaken by the organization for the protection of the species

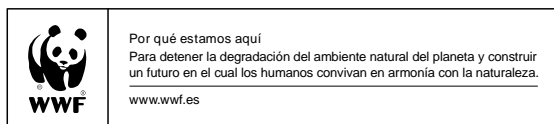
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