

New population of Iberian lynx raises hope, says World Wildlife Fund

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Spanish authorities have announced they have discovered a previously unknown population of Iberian lynx, triggering hope for one of the world's most endangered cat species, said World Wildlife Fund today.

“We are excited and amazed by this discovery,” said Luis Suarez, head of WWF’s Species Program in Spain. “However, we are a long way from saving the Iberian lynx from imminent extinction.”

It appears that the new population was discovered in previously unsurveyed estates in Castilla - La Mancha (Central Spain). This Iberian community is one of the most sparsely populated of Spain's autonomous communities.

At present, the exact numbers and location of the newly discovered population are being kept confidential, but the population is thought to be made up of both adults and cubs.

Until the exact location is known, conservationists cannot confirm if this population is genetically distinct from the larger and more stable population of lynx found in Andujar (South).

According to the most recent comprehensive survey prior to this discovery, there were about 100 adult Iberian lynx in two isolated breeding populations in southern Spain. The population is thought to have since risen to some 110 adults.

The Iberian Lynx faces myriad threats - a lack of prey, accidental deaths from cars and trucks on Spanish roads, and new construction work destroying habitats.

WWF is calling for all Lynx habitat to be covered by the EU's Natura 2000 Program, which offers the strongest level of protection in Europe, something that still hasn't happened despite years of petition.

“We hope this discovery reinvigorates action in Spain to save the world’s most endangered cat species. If Europe cannot take responsibility for Europe’s ‘tiger’, then shame on us all,” Suarez added.

Source: World Wildlife Fund

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