

One in six Mediterranean mammals face extinction

September 15 2009



Iberian Lynx Conservation Breeding Programme photo shows a female lynx with her cub at the captive breeding center of the Donana National Park, southern Spain. One in six Mediterranean mammals is threatened with extinction at the regional level, mainly due to the destruction of their habitat from urbanization, agriculture and climate change, nature body IUCN said Tuesday in a new study.

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Of the 320 mammal species assessed by the Geneva-based International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 49 were threatened, including 20 that can be found nowhere else in the world, it said in a statement.

Three percent are "critically endangered", including the Mediterranean monk seal and the Iberian lynx, another five percent are "endangered" and eight percent are "vulnerable".

"The number one threat is habitat destruction, which affects 90 percent of the threatened species," said IUCN expert Annabelle Cuttelod, co-author of the report, in a statement released in Spain.

"We need international action to protect key areas and preserve natural habitats to ensure we don't lose the rich [biodiversity](#) in this area," she added.

High concentrations of threatened species are found in the mountains of Turkey, northwestern Africa and the Levant, the ancient land now comprising Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

Large herbivores such as deer and rabbits, and carnivores, are particularly threatened.

Eight species from these groups, including the common [hippopotamus](#) and the Mesopotamian fallow deer, have already gone extinct in the Mediterranean region.

"To ensure the survival of large herbivore and carnivore mammals in the Mediterranean, we have to restore habitats and food chains," the report's co-author Helen Temple said.

"We need to encourage people to accept large predators, improve protected areas management and better enforce laws regarding hunting

practices," she added.

The study, carried out by over 250 mammal experts, did not include whales and dolphins.

Over one-quarter of Mediterranean mammal species, 27 percent, have declining populations, 31 percent are stable and only three percent are increasing, the study found. The trend for the remaining 39 percent is unknown.

It is the first time that all Mediterranean animals have been assessed for the IUCN Red List of threatened species.

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Citation: One in six Mediterranean mammals face extinction (2009, September 15) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-09-mediterranean-mammals-extinction.html>

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