

Superdaddy Pyros keeps Pyrenees bear numbers up

12 May 2013



Pyros is set free in the woods in Melles, near the Franco-Spanish border, in 1997. The number of bears roaming the Pyrenees remained stable at a minimum of 22 last year, thanks largely to the continued virility of Pyros, the undisputed daddy of the colony.

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Pyros was introduced into the mountains that straddle France and Spain in 1997 as part of efforts to sustain an [indigenous population](#) that had been hunted to the point of extinction.

He or his offspring have since produced an estimated 20 cubs, and his dominance has raised concern about [genetic diversity](#) within the colony.

The ONCFS reported that six female bears would be ready to reproduce during 2013 and that, given Pyros's advanced age, three other [adult males](#) were likely to take over fathering duties. Only one of the males, Balou, is unrelated to Pyros.



A collage of pictures of Pyros. At 24, he is close to the average life expectancy for brown bears but he still had the energy to father three cubs by two different mothers during 2012, according to a report by French state conservation body, the ONCFS.

All but two of the bears live in the central Pyrenees and the two in the western part of the range are both males. Proposals to introduce a female that would have allowed them to breed were shelved in 2011 following an outcry by local farmers.

The ONCFS report noted that bears had been responsible for 135 attacks on livestock in 2012, injuring or killing 272 animals. Honey raids on beehives have however become rare with only four cases recorded last year.

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