



Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*)



French:	Lynx, Lynx Boréal
Spanish:	Lince Boreal
Kingdom	Animalia
Phylum	Chordata
Class	Mammalia
Order	Carnivora
Family	Felidae
Genus	<i>Lynx</i> (1)
Size	Head-body length: 80 - 130 cm (2) Tail length: 16 - 23 cm (2)
Weight	15 - 29 kg (2)

STATUS

The Eurasian lynx is classified as Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List (1) and listed on Appendix II of CITES (3)

DESCRIPTION

The largest of the lynxes, the Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) has powerful legs, with slightly longer hindlimbs adapted for springing (1) (4) (5). In common with other lynx species, the large ears are adorned with conspicuous black tufts, and the long cheek hair hangs down to form a facial ruff, appearing almost mane-like in winter. The coat is long and extremely dense, especially over the winter, and is more variable in colouration than in any other felid. While the shorter, summer coat tends to be more reddish or brownish in colour, the winter coat may be silver-grey, yellowish-grey, grizzled greyish-brown, ashy blue, or dark grey (2) (4). The coat pattern is also incredibly variable, with some individuals having highly visible black spots, sometimes coalescing into narrow stripes, while others have almost no spots (2) (4) (6). The underparts are usually white, and the short stubby tail is tipped with black. Over winter, the large paws are covered in long, dense, shaggy hair that provides a snowshoe effect when moving through deep snow (2) (4).

RANGE

One of the widest ranging of all cat species, the Eurasian lynx has a broad distribution stretching from western Europe through Russia and down into Central Asia (1) (4) (6). This overall range is occupied by around seven separate subspecies but there is yet to be a final agreement on their classification (7) (8). While populations from Scandinavia to Central Asia are largely intact, the Eurasian lynx has been

extirpated from large parts of western and central Europe, and southwest Asia, with generally only small, widely separated populations remaining (1).

HABITAT

The Eurasian lynx is primarily associated with forested areas, but in Central Asia occurs in more open, thinly wooded areas (1).

BIOLOGY

The Eurasian lynx is mainly active around dawn and dusk, but may actively hunt during any hour of the day (8). The bulk of its diet is comprised of mammalian **herbivores** such as roe and red deer. Wild pigs, beavers, hares, rabbits, small rodents, other **carnivores** and birds are also taken when larger animals are scarce (1) (2) (4) (8). A proficient hunter, the Eurasian lynx is capable of killing animals three to four times its own size (2) (4) (6). Prey is usually approached by stealth, until close enough to pounce on, or pursue over a short distance, but sometimes it will ambush potential quarry by lying in wait near trails (4).

In common with other solitary cats, the Eurasian lynx appears to have a social organisation that involves males inhabiting large home ranges, within which one or more females reside (4). While female territories tend to exhibit little overlap, male territories often overlap to some extent, although males normally avoid each other (2) (4). The lynx uses various scent marks, including urine, faeces and scrapes to mark territory and also to communicate with neighbours. Although not commonly heard in the wild, during the mating season, between February and April, both the males and females vocalise frequently (4). Towards the end of the **gestation** period, which lasts 67 to 74 days, the female finds a sheltered den to give birth to one to four kittens (2) (4). At three months old the young are weaned and begin to accompany the female, eventually leaving just before the next mating season (2). The female reaches reproductive maturity at 20 to 24 months, and the males at 30 to 34 months (8).

THREATS

The Eurasian lynx has been intensively hunted for its fur and persecuted as a threat to game and livestock. As a result, it has been eradicated from large parts of its former range, particularly in Europe (1) (2) (4). The commercial export of lynx skins from China and Russia was prevalent in the 1970s and 1980, but fortunately this trade has since ceased. Nonetheless, illegal trade in skins continues to be a major threat to the Eurasian lynx, as does habitat loss and the depletion of prey (1). While the species is currently classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List owing to its wide range, some isolated European subpopulations are Critically Endangered or Endangered (1) (7).

CONSERVATION

The Eurasian lynx is legally protected in most European countries and is listed on Appendix II of CITES which prohibits international trade in this species without a permit (1) (3) (4). Reintroductions of lynx populations to parts of its historical range in Europe have met with mixed success, with conflict commonly arising between conservationists, and hunters and farmers (4). Fortunately, there has been a continued increase in the number and geographic spread of Eurasian lynx in Europe since the 1950s. Furthermore, in recent years, numerous European range states have developed national action plans which hope to increase public awareness and involvement in the long term conservation of the Eurasian lynx (7).

FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about the Eurasian lynx and its conservation:

- IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group:
<http://www.catsg.org>
- Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe:
<http://www.lcie.org>
- ELOIS - Eurasian Lynx Online Information System for Europe:
<http://www.kora.ch/en/proj/elois/online/index.html>

Find out more about the Eurasian lynx:

- MacDonald, D.W. and Loveridge, A.J. (2010) *Biology and Conservation of Wild Felids*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Wilson, D.E. and Mittermeier, R.A. (2009) *Handbook of Mammals of the World, Volume 1: Carnivores*. Lynx Edicions International, Barcelona.

AUTHENTICATION

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GLOSSARY

- **Carnivores:** Organisms that feeds on flesh. The term can also be used to refer to mammals in the order Carnivora.
- **Gestation:** The state of being pregnant; the period from conception to birth.
- **Herbivores:** animals that consume only vegetable matter.

REFERENCES

1. IUCN Red List (June, 2009)
<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

2. Nowak, R.M. (1999) *Walker's Mammals of the World*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.
3. CITES (June, 2009)
<http://www.cites.org>
4. Sunquist, M. and Sunquist, F. (2002) *Wild Cats of the World*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
5. IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group (October, 2009)
http://www.catsg.org/catsgportal/cat-website/20_cat-website/home/index_en.htm
6. Burnie, D. (2001) *Animal*. Dorling Kindersley, London.
7. ELOIS - Eurasian Lynx Online Information System for Europe (October, 2009)
<http://www.kora.ch/en/proj/elois/online/index.html>
8. Bumstead, P. (January, 2011) *Pers. comm.*