

Press Release

Iberian Lynx released in Portugal is located in Catalonia

A male Iberian Lynx, released in Vale do Guadiana, Portugal, in 2016, has been located in the metropolitan area of Barcelona in Catalonia.

Technicians from Generalitat photographed a lynx with a radiocollar in a cherry tree area. The Catalan technicians of Servicio de Fauna y Flora shared the lynx picture with technicians of LIFE+ Iberlynce “Recovery of the historical distribution for Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) in Spain and Portugal” and it was possible to identify the animal as “Lítio”, a four year old male, first released in Portugal in 2015.

The lynx, which was born in the captive breeding centre in Acebuche in 2014, was captured by the Andalucian team on the 5th of May 2016 in Gibraelon, Huelva, after having been released in Vale do Guadiana, Mértola municipality, Portugal, on the 14th of May 2015. As it was in a debilitated condition he was taken to the recovery centre of threatened species in Huelva (CREA). Once recovered, Lítio was again released in Portugal, in October 2016, to integrate the lynx population of Vale do Guadiana. He then started dispersal movements and was at one point located in the southwest area of the Algarve. His current detection in Catalonia indicates a total dispersal of around 1000 kilometres between two countries and across several regions in Spain.

Large movements of some lynx individuals, capable of crossing the whole Iberian Peninsula, might play an important role in the connectivity of the species and its future. In fact, contrary to most animals stabilized with territories around 5-10 km², these lynxes travel great distances without settling down. This capacity allows the possibility of genetic flow among Iberian populations and the species to have a metapopulation dynamic.

The ongoing species reintroduction launched by Iberlynce project in 2013 in several areas of Spain and in Portugal, has a final goal of reestablishing an Iberian metapopulation in which the population nuclei are connected. The project, co-financed by the LIFE program from the European Commission, gathered together 22 public and private partners. The existence of sustainable practices by resident human populations and specific management actions during the project has allowed the reintroduction to proceed successfully.

Lítio is the fifth lynx, since 2010, to demonstrate a known dispersal between Portugal and Spain, but is the first one to be located in Catalonia. It is the first occurrence of the species in this region since the beginning of XXth century. The technicians are now preparing to recapture the lynx. The recovery of his collar, that after 2 years has no functional battery, will provide details of the route taken by this lynx.

The Iberian Lynx is a superpredator and an umbrella species for Mediterranean ecosystems. The experience of its reintroduction provides more knowledge about wild species dynamics and is a case study that can be helpful for other species at risk of extinction.

ICNF e Generalitat de Catalunya, 1st of June 2018

