



SCIENCE AND
CONSERVATION EVENTS

Lynx recovery in Europe – lessons for the UK?

DATE

Tuesday 6 June 2023

TIME

6pm – 7:30pm

LOCATION

Huxley Lecture Theatre,
ZSL, London

No charge

Registration required



AGENDA

Dr David Hetherington
Cairngorms National Park
Authority:

“The Lynx and Us”

Dr Urs Breitenmoser
KORA and IUCN Cat Specialist
Group:

“The continental strategy and
future recommendations for lynx
recovery in Europe”

Katherine Walsh

Natural England:

“Legal and practical barriers to
lynx reintroduction in Britain”

Chaired by **Professor Sarah**
Durant, Institute of Zoology, ZSL

ABSTRACTS

The Lynx and Us

Dr David Hetherington, Cairngorms National Park Authority

The faint traces of the Eurasian lynx's historical presence in Britain suggest that humans were responsible for its disappearance. This, combined with increasingly suitable ecological conditions in Britain, and a growing awareness of the species' successful reintegration into various, human-modified landscapes elsewhere in Europe, has seen the lynx's potential reintroduction here being mooted more and more. What are the implications of restoring the species to British landscapes for rural livelihoods, existing wildlife and the lynx itself?

*David lives in the Cairngorms National Park where he works on strategic habitat restoration. He also sits on the project management group of the Saving Wildcats project, which will see the first releases of captive-bred wildcats into the Cairngorms this summer. In his spare time he sits on the board of rewilding charity, Trees for Life. In 2005 he completed his PhD at the University of Aberdeen on the feasibility of reintroducing the Eurasian lynx to Scotland and in 2018 published a book, *The Lynx and Us*, with Swiss-based photographer, Laurent Geslin, which explores the implications for the UK of lynx reintroduction.*

Conservation of the Eurasian lynx in Europe

Dr Urs Breitenmoser, KORA and IUCN Cat Specialist Group

The Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) once roamed throughout the European forests, but was reduced to some relict populations in north, north-east and south-east Europe by the end of the 19th century. The reasons for this reduction were habitat loss, depletion of prey populations and consistent persecution. Over the past 150

years, forests have recovered in many parts of Europe, roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), the most important prey of the Eurasian lynx, are as numerous as never before, and legal protection and sustainable wildlife management favour the return of the lynx.

In northern and partly eastern Europe, remnant populations have been able to recover, and in western and central Europe, reintroduction projects starting in the 1970s have formed several new populations. However, the conservation of the Eurasian lynx remains a challenge. Three distinct subspecies exist on continental Europe; the Northern lynx (*Lynx lynx lynx*) in the north-eastern lowlands; the Carpathian lynx (*L. l. carpathicus*) in the respective mountain range; and the Balkan lynx (*L. l. balcanicus*) in the border region of Albania and North Macedonia. These subspecies should be preserved as distinct units. Most of the reintroduction projects half a century ago used wild-caught lynx from the Carpathians, but the number of animals released was small, and the population growth was slow, causing more reintroduced populations nowadays to suffer from genetic impoverishment. This is problematic because the populations are geographically isolated. Although the habitat quality and prey supply has considerably improved since the lynx has been eradicated, the fragmentation of the European landscapes has intensified, too. Lynx are bad colonisers, and populations do not easily spread across broad (anthropogenic) barriers.

In 2019, lynx experts from continental Europe met and issued a number of recommendations for continued conservation of lynx in Europe. The plan aims to establish a large west-central European metapopulation of Carpathian lynx across the mountainous regions of continental Europe. In a follow-up meeting in May 2023, the Carpathian Lynx Working Group met again and advanced the concepts and the protocols for the conservation of lynx as a wide-ranging transboundary metapopulation. The recovery and maintenance of a large carnivore in the human-dominated landscape of Europe requires long-term, large-scale and inter-sectoral cooperation.

Urs is a carnivore ecologist, formerly senior scientist at the University of Bern and director of the Foundation KORA – Carnivore Ecology and Wildlife Management. *Urs* has been involved in research projects on carnivore ecology for 40 years and has supervised master and doctoral theses in the frame of the Swiss carnivore projects. *Urs*' main field of interest is the reintroduction of Eurasian lynx and the re-integration of large carnivores into human dominated landscapes, and he has co-chaired the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group since 2001. *Urs* has since been involved in many cat research and conservation programmes all over the world.



Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) © Urs Breitenmoser

Legal and practical barriers to lynx reintroduction in Britain

Katherine Walsh, Natural England

This talk will provide an update on the current legal status of the Eurasian lynx in Great Britain. Ensuring the relevant legislation, associated country guidance, codes and application forms are followed is vital in any future release scenario, and this presentation will also discuss the level of information which would be required by a

statutory nature conservation organisation (SNCO) to assess an application for release.

It is important to note that although this talk covers Wales and Scotland it has an England focus.

Katherine is a Senior Environmental Specialist for terrestrial Mammals at Natural England (NE), the government's adviser for the natural environment in England. She leads on NE's mammal conservation agenda, establishes and commissions nationally strategic research and monitoring programmes for protected mammal species. She provides advice across NE's functions internally and externally to partners, customers and stakeholders on mammal ecology and the conservation of protected species. Her 20+ years' work in the environmental sector has spanned the charity, private and governmental sector both nationally and internationally. Katherine undertook a Churchill Fellowship in 2019/20 which looked at 'Assessing the suitability of Lynx and Wildcat reintroduction to the UK'.

EVENT FORMAT

- This event will take place in the Huxley Lecture Theatre and will be filmed and published on our Science and Conservation YouTube channel (zsl.org/IOZYouTube). Please be aware, by attending you consent to being recorded during the Q&A session.
- Seats are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Before attending, please read our Code of Conduct found [here](#).
- The event will run from 6pm – 7:30pm
- It will consist of short presentations from the speakers, followed by a Q&A and panel sessions.
- To submit a question to a speaker prior to the event, please send it to scientific.events@zsl.org. Please be aware we may not be able to answer all questions.
- There is no charge for this event, but registration is required.



Coral reef © Catherine Head

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