

Status of lynx protection in Poland

Historical status of the species protection

Lynx was a widespread species in the territory of Poland until Middle Ages. As a result of the human activity, i.e. the transformation of environment and hunting, the range of this carnivore started to shrink rapidly – in the end of XVIII century the lynx did not appear west of the Vistula River and in the last decades of XIX century it was limited only to the Carpathian Mountains, Masuria and Białowieża Forest.

The Ordinance of the President of the Republic of Poland of 1927 on the hunting law includes the first legal entries specifying the unified status of the species in the territory of the whole country. The ordinance places lynx on the list of game species and introduced the ban of hunting with the use of poisons and traps. Also the first data about lynx population come from this period. The species inventory carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1928 estimated the population at 300 individuals in the area of interwar Poland.

After the Second World War lynx was already a very rare species. The all year round protection period was introduced in 1953 with the *Ordinance of the Minister of Forestry concerning the protection period for hunted animals*. However, in the novelties from 1954 and 1955 the protection period for this predator was limited to the period from 11th February to 30th November. The increased hunting in 1960' caused the temporal extinction of the species in the Piski and Nidzki Forests. In this period lynxes also almost disappeared from the Białowieża Forest. After the limitation of hunting and an increase in the population number, the next exploitation of the species in 1980's caused the breakdown of the population which lasts till now.

Current status of the species protection

Granting lynx full species protection occurred in 1995. Lynx was listed as a strictly protected species with the *Ordinance of the Minister of the Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry of 6th January 1995 concerning the species protection of animals*. It was definitely excluded from the list of wild game species with the separate ordinance of 30th January 1995.

After updating the Ordinance concerning the wild species covered by the protection in 2004, lynx has been under strict protection as the species requiring active protection. The ordinance of the Minister of Environment of 12th October 2011 concerning the protection of the animal species imposes additional obligation of indicating 500 m of protection zones around the indicated places of lynx reproduction in the period from 1st April to 31st August. Lynx is listed in Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive and Appendix III of Bern Convention. It is under category NT – the species of the lower risk but near threatened in Polish Red Data List.