

Conservation status

The historical conservation status of lynx in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

The destruction of biotopes and intensive hunting of large carnivores were the main reasons for the clearly visible reduction of their populations in the Czech Republic. Especially lynxes, as well as other large predators, have been the targets of hunts during the reign of Maria Theresa and the Joseph II of the Habsburgian dynasty, after a decree about „the hunt of large predators by hunters and serfs” has been introduced. The original decree issued by Emperor Joseph II in the year 1786 was amended several times to allow more and more people to legally hunt carnivores. Similar decrees were introduced in all parts of Bohemia over the years (Bohemia - 1866, Moravy - 1912, Silesia - 1903, according to Hell & Sládek, 1974).

It doesn't come as a surprise that lynx was eradicated in most of the Czech regions during the XVIII and XIX centuries. Nevertheless, lynx managed to hold its habitat in eastern parts of Moravia and Silesia, mostly because they were connected with the Carpathian population. The last shots at lynxes have been dated at the beginning of the XX century in the Beskydy Mountains. After 30 years of restoration the Czech lynxes faced yet another danger in a form of poachers. Later on, it was even declared legal again to hunt them, which nearly eradicated them for a second time in the 1970' (Hošek, 1974; Kunc, 1996). Later, hunting lynxes was again made illegal, which resulted in a recolonization of the Carpathian Mountains (Kunc, 1996).

Both periods of restoration of lynx in the Moravian regions were linked to the partial protection of lynxes in Slovakia in the years 1936-1955 and after the 1975, thanks to which the lynx could expand its natural range in the following years (Hell & Slamečka, 1996).

Current protection status of lynx in the Czech Republic (and Slovakia)

Lynx is protected by the European Union under Habitat directive nr 92/43/EEC (Annex II and IV), the Berne Convention (Appendix II) and is a subject of protection in the special habitat protection regions of the Beskids Mountains, Szumawa, the Blansky Forest and Boletika. Slovakia has established a total of 85 sites of European importance where lynx is under protection.

According to Czech legislation, lynx is a protected and endangered species (act # 114/1992, on the protection of wildlife and landscapes, decree # 395/1992), and every documented and proven damage to livestock is covered by the government (act # 115/2000). It has been declared forbidden to hunt an any individual of this species (act # 449/2001).

Lynx has been under constant, all-year protection since the year 1999, as decreed by the Ministry of Environment in the act # 543/2002 Zb. on the protection of wildlife and landscaped, and as in the decree # 24/2003 Zb. on protected animal species of European importance. The social value of lynx has been estimated at 2.655,51€.