

1 Are lynx native to Britain?

Yes. They once inhabited the whole of Britain and were part of a population that stretched over a vast area of Europe and Asia.

2 How long have lynx been extinct?

Nobody knows for sure but carbon dating from bone remains and cultural evidence suggests that lynx were last in Britain around 500 years ago.

3 Why did they become extinct?

Their eventual disappearance was probably caused by widespread loss of woodland and the collapse of wild deer populations, along with sustained persecution and hunting by people.

4 How big is a lynx?

Eurasian lynx are similar in size to a Labrador dog, but are not as heavy, weighing about the same as a Border Collie.

5 What do they eat?

Lynx prey predominantly on medium-sized woodland deer such as roe and sika deer, and the calves of red deer. Less often, they will take prey such as hares and foxes.

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Where do they live?

Lynx are solitary and have huge territories – much larger than that of smaller predators such as foxes and martens. They prefer woodland cover where their main source of prey is found, and where they can find den sites for their kittens.

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What's happening with lynx in Europe?

A reduction in hunting pressure and a softening of public attitudes towards large carnivores, has allowed lynx to slowly spread across mainland Europe in the last few decades. Their distribution remains patchy in many areas, but current population estimates suggest there are around 8,000 lynx living across 25 European countries.

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What are the challenges of living with lynx?

Britain has been without its native large carnivores for several centuries and unlike many European countries, we've 'forgotten' how to live alongside them. Lynx are secretive and elusive and pose no danger to people. Experience from elsewhere in Europe suggests that a minority of lynx would take some sheep, but that this would be uncommon and localised. This can be managed effectively through a range of prevention methods.

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What are the benefits of reintroducing lynx?

Lynx are known as a keystone species because they maintain balance and diversity in an ecosystem – and other species are affected by their absence.

Apex predators such as lynx are essential for healthy ecosystems as they help regulate numbers and behaviour of deer and some smaller carnivores – creating opportunities for other wildlife. In Scotland, where deer numbers are higher than most other European countries, lynx would provide an effective deer management service – helping to improve woodland regeneration and nutrient cycling, and so boosting biodiversity and tackling climate breakdown.

Lynx could also act as high-profile ambassadors for nature-rich landscapes, attracting valuable tourism revenue – potentially creating jobs and boosting local economies.

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Can they survive in Scotland?

There is adequate habitat and wild prey in Scotland to support a viable population of lynx, in the order of around 500. Their primary threat is people – collisions with cars and illegal persecution both being significant potential dangers.

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Is *Lynx to Scotland* a lynx reintroduction project?

The Lynx to Scotland partners wish to pursue a 5-year trial reintroduction of lynx but recognise that this relies on navigating complex social, cultural and political barriers that exist presently.

During 2023, the Lynx Focus Group will explore the barriers to lynx reintroduction, aiming to build trust between stakeholders and address areas of disagreement over science and local knowledge.

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Where would the trial reintroduction take place?

The ecological and social research carried out to date, suggests the Cairngorms National Park provides suitable conditions to support lynx without significant conflict with local communities. However, ongoing ecological modelling and public attitudes may lead the project elsewhere.

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Who is involved?

Lynx to Scotland is a partnership between Trees for Life, Lifescape and SCOTLAND: The Big Picture.