

# European Mammal Assessment

## Species Accounts—going up and going down

Iberian Lynx  
*Lynx pardinus*



Europe  
**CR**

EU  
**CR**

The Iberian lynx is a specialised predator - rabbits account for at least 80% of its diet - that occurs in Mediterranean woodland and maquis thicket in Portugal and Spain. The lynx's highly specialised diet makes it a naturally vulnerable species and the rapid decline in rabbit populations since the 1950s has had a direct impact on lynx numbers. However the combined effects of habitat loss and persecution since the 1950's have also had a major impact on populations. New infrastructure projects continued to fragment lynx populations and created new barriers in corridor areas between the remaining populations in the 1960s. More than forty separate lynx populations in Spain and Portugal appear to have collapsed since the early 1980s.

With only two viable breeding populations in isolated locations in Spain, this species is now the world's most endangered cat species. Currently the total population is estimated between 84 – 143 individuals. Although already the target of many conservation efforts, without increased action, this species is likely to go extinct in the wild.

The Alpine ibex is endemic to Europe, where its native range is the Alps of France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and northern Italy. After centuries of decline caused primarily by intensive hunting, at the beginning of the 19th century only a few hundred Alpine ibex survived in the Gran Paradiso massif in Italy.

Current ibex populations of over 30,000 individuals are the result of both translocations from the original core of c.100 individuals and natural colonisation.



Europe  
**LC**

EU  
**LC**

Alpine Ibex  
*Capra ibex*



Bavarian Pine Vole  
*Microtus bavaricus*



Europe  
**CR**

EU  
**CR**

The Bavarian Pine Vole is part of a larger group of closely related species. Originally it came from a single species that had a continuous range across the Alps. This range was split into three parts during the last glaciation and this led to the evolution of three species.

This species is endemic to the North-eastern Alps and is restricted to one location, which is severely fragmented and under threat from habitat loss. There are confirmed extinctions of populations in Germany, and good certainty that the species is restricted to the one known location. The population size remains unknown but fewer than 50 individuals have ever been collected. This species is not currently listed on the Annexes of the Habitats Directive.

**KEY**

Population Trend: ↑ Increasing ↓ Decreasing — Stable or unknown  
Red List Category: **CR** Critically Endangered **EN** Endangered **VU** Vulnerable **LC** Least Concern

European Bison  
*Bison bonasus*



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↑  
Europe  
**VU**  
EU  
**VU**

European bison is the largest herbivore in Europe. Historically it was distributed throughout western, central, and south-eastern Europe and the Caucasus. By the end of the 19th century, there were only two populations of European bison left in the wild: in Bialowieza Forest and in the western Caucasus mountains, both of which were extirpated, leaving only populations in zoological gardens.

As a result of reintroductions and introductions, it now occurs in free-ranging and semi-free herds in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Slovakia. The total free standing population is approximately 1,800 individuals, with another 1,400 in captivity. Human population density, however, acts as a limiting factor on their potential future expansion.

The European Mink was formally widely distributed throughout Europe, extending from Northern Spain in the West to the Urals in the East. However, over the last 150 years it has severely declined and been extirpated or greatly reduced over most of its former range. The current range includes an isolated population in northern Spain and western France, which is widely separated from the main range in Eastern Europe.

European mink have specialised habitat requirements. They are semi-aquatic, inhabiting densely vegetated banks of lakeshores, rivers, streams and marshlands, and are rarely found more than 100 meters away from fresh water. Habitat destruction and degradation have had serious impacts on the species as has competition with American mink.

↓  
Europe  
**EN**  
EU  
**CR**

European Mink  
*Mustela lutreola*



© T. Moran

Balkan Mole Rat  
*Spalax graecus*

—  
Europe  
**NT**  
EU  
**NE**

The Balkan mole rat is a European endemic, known only from a small number of sites in Romania, south-eastern Ukraine, and Moldova. Its populations are severely fragmented and its habitat - steppe grassland, pastures, small cultivated fields and orchards - is threatened by the intensification of agricultural practices.

Little is known about the species and more research is needed to understand its population dynamics, main threats and appropriate conservation measures. This species is yet to be listed on the Annexes of the Habitats Directive.

The Eurasian beaver was once widespread in Europe and Asia. However, by the beginning of the 20th century, over-hunting had drastically reduced both the numbers and range of the species, to a total population of approximately 1,200 individuals.

Today, beaver populations in Europe are expanding rapidly, and there are no major threats. Considerable further expansion in range and population, especially in western Europe and the lower Danube basin, can be expected. If current trends continue, the Eurasian beaver will be a fairly common mammal in much of Europe within the next few decades.

A number of conservation measures have contributed to the species' recovery in Europe, including reintroductions and translocations, hunting restrictions, and habitat protection.

↑  
Europe  
**LC**  
EU  
**LC**

Eurasian Beaver  
*Castor fiber*



© Vilda—Rollin Verlinde

Mediterranean monk seal  
*Monachus monachus*

↓  
Europe  
**CR**  
EU  
**CR**

Mediterranean monk seals were once widely and continuously distributed in the Mediterranean, Black and adjacent seas, in North Atlantic waters off northwest Africa south to Cap Blanc, and possibly Senegal and Gambia. Today the distribution is extremely fragmented with three surviving small breeding populations located at opposite ends of the historic range. In the Mediterranean, the stronghold for the species is on islands in the Ionian and Aegean Seas, and along the coasts of Greece and western Turkey.

The Mediterranean monk seal is the most threatened pinniped species in the world, with an estimated population of 350-450 animals. The largest remaining population is that of the eastern Mediterranean, with 250-300 individuals, of which c.100 occur in Turkish waters

Mediterranean monk seals have a long history of interaction with humans that includes exploitation for subsistence needs, commercial harvest, and persecution as a competitor for fisheries resources. Reasons for recent population declines include habitat destruction along coasts, mortality due to fisheries bycatch and persecution, and the possible effects of toxics and pollutants.