

THE MISSING LYNX PROJECT



Executive Summary

- Eurasian lynx was once a thriving species in Britain, and it was lost in the medieval period. This loss has upset the natural balance of our countryside.
- They're a forest animal that feeds mainly on deer, helping to make our woodlands healthier and allow wildlife to thrive. Tourism and conservation projects centered around lynx can boost local and rural economies. Such solutions to the biodiversity crisis, which also benefit people, can inspire hope.
- North-west Northumberland and bordering areas of Cumbria and southern Scotland have been identified as having the right conditions and sufficient habitat for reintroduced lynx to thrive.
- A questionnaire completed by over 1,000 residents of this proposed area recorded 72% support for lynx reintroduction.
- The Missing Lynx Project has met with more than 10,000 people in the area and formed focus groups on topics including farming, to discuss evidence-based information on lynx.
- The Missing Lynx Project intends to apply to Natural England for a reintroduction licence if it can finalise management plans with stakeholders that are acceptable, feasible and possible to implement.

What is a lynx?

A lynx is a medium-sized wild cat about the size of a slim labrador with distinctive tufted ears and a short bobtail. They live solitary lives typically in woodlands and are rarely seen by people. Lynx are found across Europe and, for thousands of years following the last Ice Age, lived in Britain, too.

Along with Britain's other native species, lynx are a critical part of the rich and functioning ecosystems of our island. Britain most likely lost its lynx during the medieval period (1066 to 1485) at the same time as it lost much of its remaining woodland ecosystems.



Why should lynx return to Britain's landscapes?

Our natural world is not as healthy as it should be. Britain's top carnivores are missing from our landscapes. In Europe, Eurasian lynx eat mostly deer, but they may also eat foxes and smaller animals such as rabbits. Their presence regulates other animals and has trickle-down benefits. By hunting deer and making them more wary, they can boost woodland regeneration. The carcasses they leave feed a wide range of animals, birds, and insects.

Restoring lynx to Britain can bring back these lost processes, enriching our natural world. Healthier ecosystems benefit both people and wildlife.

Is it possible to return lynx to Britain, and where?

The Missing Lynx Project continues to explore the ecological, practical and social feasibility of reintroducing lynx to Britain. Its research has shown that a healthy population would grow from 20 lynx released over five years in north-west Northumberland.

A second project, Lynx to Scotland, is assessing the feasibility of reintroducing lynx to northern Scotland.

Who is involved with the proposals?

The Missing Lynx Project is a charity partnership led by The Lifescape Project and supported by Northumberland Wildlife Trust and The Wildlife Trusts. Rewilding Britain is an advocate for the project. The Lifescape Project is also a partner in Lynx to Scotland, which ensures effective communication and cooperation between the two initiatives.



Will it benefit people?

Yes. Socio-economic analyses conducted by the Missing Lynx Project indicate that lynx reintroduction can generate substantial new business and employment opportunities in Britain, especially for young people and especially in remote and less advantaged areas. This is consistent with the experiences of other communities in Europe. For example, in Andújar, southern Spain, annual consumer spending linked directly to the Iberian lynx is estimated at €1.04 million, with a further €0.5 million generated in local hospitality and service expenditure.

Restoring the lynx can also nurture regional pride and entice more people to benefit from spending time in nature.

Is there public support?

Yes. The Missing Lynx Project welcomed nearly 10,000 visitors to an exhibition which toured the project area sharing information about lynx. Focus groups, workshops, interviews and meetings alongside this have enabled the local community to help shape the project.

The Missing Lynx Project created a questionnaire to gather views and opinions on lynx reintroduction and shared it around the project area. There were over 1,000 responses from people in the region, and 72% support the reintroduction of lynx.



Will it help meet the UK's nature recovery targets?

Yes. Reintroducing lynx supports the UK government's nature recovery targets. Restoring this missing native species would help deliver Environment Act targets for halting and reversing species decline, improving biodiversity and restoring habitats.

What do farmers think?

Evidence from across Europe shows that occasional sheep predation occurs, and there is a very low risk of this being widespread. Lynx behaviour, the risk of sheep predation, mitigation and compensation processes were discussed with livestock farmers from the project area.

The opinions and ideas from farmers were listened to in 3 focus groups, 36 interviews and during a visit with 7 farmers to visit lynx projects and farmers already living alongside lynx in Germany and Switzerland. This farmer feedback is being integrated into a coexistence management plan which will be collaboratively reviewed in further interviews.

How will a decision be made?

The Missing Lynx Project partnership will apply to Natural England for a licence for reintroduction if the conditions are right. This means if there is an area in Britain where lynx can live, if it's practically possible, and if local people are accepting of the animal back in the landscape. We anticipate that a potential application may occur in late 2026.

How can you help?

Restoring missing key species, like lynx, helps to create healthy, balanced ecosystems. Find out more on our [website](https://www.missinglynxproject.co.uk), follow us on social media, sign up for the [newsletter](#) or [get in touch](#) to discuss.

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