

**European Community Directive
on the Conservation of Natural Habitats
and of Wild Fauna and Flora
(92/43/EEC)**

Supporting documentation for the
Third Report by the United Kingdom under
Article 17

on the implementation of the Directive
from January 2007 to December 2012
Conservation status assessment for

Species:

S1363 - Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*)

IMPORTANT NOTE – PLEASE READ

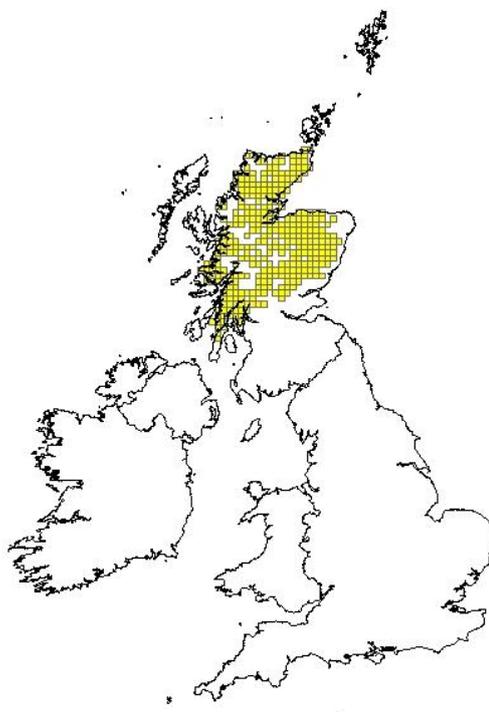
- The country-level reporting information contained in this document is a contribution to the Article 17 UK report for the habitat/species concerned.
- It has been provided by **Scottish Natural Heritage** and refers only to the state of the habitat/species in **Scotland** - it does not constitute an assessment for the whole of the UK.
- The Article 17 UK Approach document provides details on how this information has been used and, combined with information supplied by other Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies
- The format of the document is closely aligned to that set out by the European Commission for Member State reporting – as a result, some of the fields are not applicable at a country-level and have deliberately been left blank – in addition, the content of most fields is constrained by the EC reporting categories.

Reporting format on the 'main results of the surveillance under Article 11' for Annex II, IV & V species

<i>Field name</i>	<i>Brief explanations</i>	
0.2 Species	0.2.1 Species code	S1363
	0.2.2 Species scientific name	<i>Felis silvestris</i>
	0.2.3 Alternative species scientific name Optional	
	0.2.4 Common name Optional	Wildcat

1.1 Maps

1.1.1 Distribution map	Sensitive	False
<p>The current distribution of the Scottish Wildcat is considered to be the Highlands generally north of the Highland boundary fault and not including the islands. There are concentrations of public records in Caithness and Sutherland, Easter Ross, Cairngorms, Moray and Aberdeenshire, Morven, Ardnamurchan, Loch Lomond and Argyll. This broad distribution is supported by the Easterbee et al (1991) survey in the 1980s and the more recent Davis & Gray (2010) survey.</p>		



1.1.2 Method used - map	Estimate based on partial data with some extrapolation and/or modelling
1.1.3 Year or period	1980-2012

	<p>The 2007 assessment was based on records for the period 1980-2003. Many of these records came from the NCC Survey by Easterbee et al. (1991) which was carried out between 1983 and 1987. The survey commissioned by SNH in 1998 by Balharry & Daniels included all wild-living cats and did not attempt to distinguish between feral cats, hybrids and wildcats; hence this data set does not appear to be on the NBN.</p> <p>Consensus over the diagnostic pelage criteria for wildcats was only reached in 2005. Hence some caution can be attached to records in earlier surveys.</p> <p>SNH commissioned a new survey between 2006-2008 which attempted to use the pelage criteria to verify wildcat records. Unfortunately many of the public sightings records did not include sufficient details regarding distinguishing features to verify records, hence a subjective assessment of the reliability of the record was made based on the location and the recorders experience. The records are classed as 'probable', 'possible' or non-wildcat records, with only the 'probable' records having been included on the NBN and in this analysis. The records are a mixture of public sightings and questionnaire returns, hence it was not a systematic survey and suggests presence, but not necessarily absence. In comparison, the NCC Survey in the 80's was carried out by interviewing landowners and managers and achieved a much more comprehensive cover of presence/ absence records. Hence when the two surveys are compared it would appear that there has been a dramatic loss of range. However, this difference could be explained by the difference in the number of records and the methods by which the records were obtained.</p> <p>We might expect that wildcats are wide-ranging and there is good correspondence between the distribution of records in the most recent survey and the previous reporting period (albeit with more gaps), hence an amalgamation of these data would appear to be a reasonable approximation of the current wildcat range. We have no data to support their being a dramatic change in range since the 2007 assessment.</p> <p>Excluding records based on their location is a bit circular with respect to establishing range, however, is probably reasonable to exclude the few records for the islands and south of the Highland boundary faultline as they are few in number and clear outliers.</p>
1.1.4 Additional distribution map	False
1.1.5 Range map	

2.1 Biogeographical region & marine regions	ATL
2.2 Published sources	<p>"BALHARRY, E.M. and DANIELS, M. 1998. Wild living cats in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage, Research, Survey and Monitoring Report No. 23.</p> <p>DANIELS M.J., BALHARRY D., HIRST D., KITCHENER A.C. and ASPINALL R.J. 1998. Morphological and pelage characteristics of wild living cats in Scotland: implications for defining the 'wildcat'. Journal of Zoology 244, 231-247.</p> <p>DAVIS, A.R., & GRAY, D. 2010. The distribution of Scottish</p>

	<p>wildcats (<i>Felis silvestris</i>) in Scotland (2006-2008). Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 360.</p> <p>EASTERBEE, N., HEPBURN, L.V. and JEFFERIES, D.J. 1991. Survey of the status and distribution of the wildcat in Scotland, 1983–1987. Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, Edinburgh.</p> <p>HARRIS, S., MORRIS, P., WRAY, S. and YALDEN, D. 1995. A review of British Mammals: population estimates and conservation status of British mammals other than cetaceans. JNCC, Peterborough.</p> <p>HETHERINGTON, D. & CAMPBELL, R. 2012. The Cairngorms wildcat project. Final report to CNPA, SNH, RZSS, SGA and FCS</p> <p>KILSHAW, K., DRAKE, A., MACDONALD, D.W. & KITCHENER, A.C. 2010. The Scottish wildcat: a comparison of genetic and pelagic characteristics. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 356.</p> <p>KILSHAW, K. & MACDONALD, D.W. (2011). The use of camera trapping as a method to survey for the Scottish wildcat. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.479.</p> <p>KITCHENER, A. C., YAMAGUCHI, N., WARD, J. M. AND MACDONALD, D. W. 2005, A diagnosis for the Scottish wildcat (<i>Felis silvestris</i>): a tool for conservation action for a critically-endangered felid. <i>Animal Conservation</i>, 8: 223–237</p> <p>NORTON, L.R., MURPHY, J., REYNOLDS, B., MARKS, S., MACKAY, E.C. 2009. Countryside Survey: Scotland results from 2007. Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage. Downloaded from www.countrysidesurve.org.uk</p> <p>MACDONALD, D. W., DANIELS, M.J., DRISCOLL, C., KITCHENER, A. & YAMAGUCHI, N. 2004. The Scottish wildcat: Analyses for conservation and an action plan. <i>Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Oxford.</i>"</p> <hr/> <p>BALHARRY, E.M. and DANIELS, M. 1998. Wild living cats in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage, Research, Survey and Monitoring Report No. 23.</p> <p>DANIELS M.J., BALHARRY D., HIRST D., KITCHENER A.C. and ASPINALL R.J. 1998. Morphological and pelage characteristics of wild living cats in Scotland: implications for defining the 'wildcat'. <i>Journal of Zoology</i> 244, 231-247.</p> <p>DAVIS, A.R., & GRAY, D. 2010. The distribution of Scottish wildcats (<i>Felis silvestris</i>) in Scotland (2006-2008). Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 360.</p> <p>EASTERBEE, N., HEPBURN, L.V. and JEFFERIES, D.J. 1991. Survey of the status and distribution of the wildcat in Scotland, 1983–1987. Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, Edinburgh.</p> <p>HARRIS, S., MORRIS, P., WRAY, S. and YALDEN, D. 1995. A review of British Mammals: population estimates and conservation status of British mammals other than cetaceans. JNCC, Peterborough.</p> <p>HETHERINGTON, D. & CAMPBELL, R. 2012. The Cairngorms wildcat project. Final report to CNPA, SNH, RZSS, SGA and FCS</p>
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2.3 Range	
2.3.1 Surface area Range	
2.3.2 Method used Surface area of Range	Estimate based on partial data with some extrapolation and/or modelling
2.3.3 Short-term trend Period	1980-2012
2.3.4 Short term trend Trend direction	unknown Not possible to determine any short term trends due to the difference in survey methodologies between survey periods.
2.3.5 Short-term trend Magnitude	a) Minimum
	b) Maximum
2.3.6 Long-term trend Period	
2.3.7 Long-term trend Trend direction	
2.3.8 Long-term trend Magnitude	a) Minimum
Optional	

	b) Maximum	
2.3.9 Favourable reference range	a) Value in km²	43842
	Using 2007 assessment value. In the absence of anything else we are content with this value	
	b) Operator for FRR	
	c) FRR is unknown (indicated by "true")	False
	d) Method used to set FRR	
2.3.10 Reason for change Is the difference between the reported value in 2.3.1 and the previous reporting round mainly due to...	a) Genuine change?	False
	The baseline data is the same with some new records added since the last reporting period, hence they are expected to be very similar.	
	b) Improved knowledge/more accurate data?	False
	c) Use of different method (e.g. "Range tool")?	False

2.4 Population		
2.4.1 Population size estimation (using individuals or agreed exceptions where possible)	a) Unit	number of individuals
	b) Minimum	
	Unknown - we have no basis for population estimates. Previous estimates have been based on the potential available range and the number of wildcats that could be supported by that land area; with some account for the variation in the range size in east and west coast wildcats relating to published studies and some knowledge of prey types and availability. These figures were then further extrapolated based on the proportion of these wild-living cats that might be expected to conform to a wildcat phenotype based on sample surveys of wild-living cats. The number of unknowns and confidence intervals that	

	could be attached to these values probably renders them meaningless. Hence it would seem reasonable to say we do not currently have a population estimate at a Scotland level.	
	c) Maximum	
2.4.2 Population size estimation (using population unit other than individuals) Optional (<i>if 2.4.1 filled in</i>)	a) Unit	
	b) Minimum	
	c) Maximum	
2.4.3 Additional information on population estimates / conversion Optional	a) Definition of "locality"	
	b) Method to convert data	
	c) Problems encountered to provide population size estimation	
	The challenges of verifying records has already been highlighted under distributions. In addition, very few studies have examined abundance of this rare and cryptic mammal.	
2.4.4 Year or period		
2.4.5 Method used Population size	Absent data	
	We have no recent data on animal abundance at a Scotland-wide scale. The only national wildcat records relate to sightings and are therefore more appropriate for reporting distributions rather than abundance. Camera-trapping studies in and around the Cairngorms (Kilshaw & Macdonald 2011 and Hetherington & Campbell (2012) have produced some estimates of local abundance. However, these show quite a lot of spatial and temporal variation and are based on relatively small number of 'captures' hence extrapolation could lead to some very large confidence intervals.	
2.4.6 Short-term trend Period	1980-2012	
2.4.7 Short-term trend Trend direction	decrease	
2.4.8 Short-term trend Magnitude	a) Minimum	
	Unknown	

	b) Maximum	
	Unknown	
	c) Confidence interval	
	Unknown	
2.4.9 Short-term trend Method used	Estimate based on expert opinion with no or minimal sampling As previously, we have no national data on wildcat abundance from which to assess any population trends - noting that distribution data is also limited and hence covers the period 1980-2012.	
2.4.10 Long-term trend – Period	1980-2012	
2.4.11 Long-term trend Trend direction	decrease	
2.4.12 Long-term trend Magnitude Optional	a) Minimum	
	b) Maximum	
	c) Confidence interval	
2.4.13 Long term trend Method used	1 HETHERINGTON, D. & CAMPBELL, R. 2012. The Cairngorms wildcat project. Final report to CNPA, SNH, RZSS, SGA and FCS http://cairngorms.co.uk/look-after/conservation-projects/cairngorms-wildcat-project KILSHAW, K., DRAKE, A., MACDONALD, D.W. & KITCHENER, A.C. 2010. The Scottish wildcat: a comparison of genetic and pelagic characteristics. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 356. Although we have no national data on wildcat abundance, there has been some re-assessment of wild-living cat specimens in light of refined pelage criteria and some bringing together of this data with morphological and genetic studies of the same sample of cats (Kilshaw et al. 2010). In addition the Cairngorms Wildcat Project, Hetherington & Campbell (2012) has produced some new information on the relative occurrence	

	<p>of wild, hybrid and domestic cats living in parts of the Cairngorms National Park.</p> <p>These studies both indicate that proportion of wild-living cats that are most distinct from domestic cats are relatively few and that domestic and feral cats are relatively more numerous and occupy the same areas as wildcats. Hence there is good reason to speculate a downwards trend in wildcat populations; partly due to a re-assessment of the criteria for assessing wildcats since the 1980's but also the ongoing nature of the threat from hybridisation.</p>	
2.4.14 Favourable reference population	a) Number of individuals/agreed exceptions/other units	
	<p>The value given in 2007 was 3,500 individuals based on Harris et al. 1995. This estimate is based on an extrapolation of the area of potential wildcat habitat and studies of wildcat home range size. Hence it is a more reasonable basis for estimating favourable reference population than it is for estimating current population size. In the absence of any more recent estimates, we are content to continue to use this reference point.</p> <p>Wildcats in Scotland are often associated with mountainous areas, moorland, upland woodlands and rough grazing. Whereas in other parts of Europe wildcats tend to occupy more lowland and wooded landscapes. Hence in parts of Scotland wildcats may occupy habitats that are sub-optimal either due to lack of suitable habitats or due to other pressures in their preferred habitats.</p>	
	b) Operator	
	c) FRP is unknown indicated by "true"	True
	d) Method used to set FRP	
2.4.15 Reason for change Is the difference between the value reported at 2.4.1 or 2.4.2 and the previous reporting round mainly due to:	a) Genuine change?	False
	b) Improved knowledge/more accurate data?	False
	c) Use of different method (e.g. "Range tool")?	False

2.5 Habitat for the species			
2.5.1 Area estimation	<p>Wildcats are typically species of woodland edge or scrub. Range is also determined by prey availability (dominated by rabbits, mice and voles) and hence includes rough grasslands, riparian habitats and moorland fringes.</p> <p>There is thought to be a sufficient amount of habitat in the UK to support a viable population of the species.</p> <p>Wildcats in Scotland are often associated with mountainous areas, moorland, upland woodlands and rough grazing. Whereas in other parts of Europe wildcats tend to occupy more lowland and wooded landscapes. Hence in parts of Scotland wildcats may occupy habitats that are sub-optimal either due to lack of suitable habitats or due to other pressures in their preferred habitats.</p> <p>There is thought to be a sufficient amount of habitat in the UK to support a viable population of the species.</p>		
2.5.2 Year or period	1980-2012		
2.5.3 Method used Habitat for the species	Estimate based on expert opinion with no or minimal sampling		
2.5.4 Quality of the habitat	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>a) Habitat quality</td> <td>Moderate</td> </tr> </table>	a) Habitat quality	Moderate
	a) Habitat quality	Moderate	
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>b) Assessment method</td> <td> <p>Habitat quality has not been assessed, but prey abundance is known to vary spatially and temporally. Wildcats are a wide ranging generalist species and hence make use of a variety of habitats over a wide area. Hence although habitat suitability could be enhanced for wildcats in many areas, this is not currently considered to be one of the key factors limiting their numbers. Hence an assessment of moderate quality has been assigned based on judgement rather than data.</p> <p>Some models of habitat suitability of European wildcats have been developed and work is ongoing to apply these in a Scottish context.</p> </td> </tr> </table>	b) Assessment method	<p>Habitat quality has not been assessed, but prey abundance is known to vary spatially and temporally. Wildcats are a wide ranging generalist species and hence make use of a variety of habitats over a wide area. Hence although habitat suitability could be enhanced for wildcats in many areas, this is not currently considered to be one of the key factors limiting their numbers. Hence an assessment of moderate quality has been assigned based on judgement rather than data.</p> <p>Some models of habitat suitability of European wildcats have been developed and work is ongoing to apply these in a Scottish context.</p>	
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2.5.5 Short-term trend Period	1998-2007	
2.5.6 Short-term trend Trend direction	increase	
	<p>NORTON, L.R., MURPHY, J., REYNOLDS, B., MARKS, S., MACKEY, E.C. 2009. Countryside Survey: Scotland results from 2007. Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage. Downloaded from www.countrysidesurve.org.uk</p> <p>Countryside Survey data (Norton et al, 2009) indicate that the area of Broadleaved Woodland increased by 10% in Scotland between 1998 and 2007 and the area of Coniferous Woodland decreased by 7.1%, giving an small, but significant, overall increase in woodland area, the most important habitat for wildcats.</p>	
2.5.7 Long-term trend Period		
2.5.8 Long-term trend Trend direction	unknown	
2.5.9 Area of suitable habitat for the species	a) Value in km²	
	Use range estimate as we have no specific data on habitat suitability. Wildcats are generalist species, hence although may exhibit habitat preferences, it is likely they can make use of a large variety of habitats.	
	b) Absence of data indicated as '0'	
2.5.10 Reason for change Is the difference between the value reported at 2.5.1 and the previous reporting round mainly due to	a) Genuine change?	True
	b) Improved knowledge/more accurate data?	False
	c) Use of different method (e.g. "Range tool")?	False

2.6 Main pressures		
a) Pressure	b) Ranking	c) Pollution qualifier
	H = high importance M = medium importance L = low importance	
F03: Hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial)	H	
I03: introduced genetic material, GMO	H	
D01: Roads, paths and railroads	M	
K03: Interspecific faunal relations	M	

The main pressure is considered to be the threat of genetic extinction from hybridisation with domestic cats. The Cairngorms Wildcat Project was a trail of practical conservation actions for the Scottish Wildcat which included the promotion of measures to reduce the number of un-neutered domestic and feral cats in the Cairngorms National Park; an area considered to be a stronghold for wildcats. This included promoting responsible domestic cat ownership and Trap-Neuter-Release of feral cats by volunteers. In parallel, the Project promoted a protocol to reduce the risks to wildcats from predator control activities on estates within the CNP. The project has recently ended and has reported on the success of these measures (Hetherington & Campbell 2012). SNH is now leading the development of a new national action plan for wildcats building on the lessons from the Cairngorm's Wildcat Project.

2.6.1 Method used – Pressures	mainly based on expert judgement and other data
	Risks are based on published literature on wildcats and hybridisation threats from domestic cats, e.g. Balharry & Daniels 1998 and experiences of Cairngorms Wildcat Project; Hetherington & Campbell (2012). There have been some studies on disease rates in wild-living cats by Daniels (1999), but the significance of these for the species' conservation has not been quantified. The effect of forest management under current forestry policies, is likely to be on balance, positive for wildcats. Rankings are based on expert judgement based on the above.

2.7 Threats		
a) Threat	b) Ranking	c) Pollution qualifier
	H = high importance M = medium importance L = low importance	
F03: Hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial)	H	
I03: introduced genetic material, GMO	H	
D01: Roads, paths and railroads	M	
K03: Interspecific faunal relations	M	

2.7.1 Method used – Threats	expert opinion
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2.8 Complementary information

2.8.1 Justification of % thresholds for trends

2.8.2 Other relevant information

Native. Extirpated in England and Wales; reduced distribution and numbers in Scotland

Low density, secretive and largely nocturnal species. Confusion with hybrids and wild-living domestic cats. Some previous surveys have relied on public sightings, which are difficult to verify. The last systematic survey was in the 1980's, hence recent records are patchy.

Future surveys must carefully distinguish wildcats from hybrids. Hence camera trapping is likely to be the most suitable method of obtaining verifiable records in conjunction with published pelage criteria. Such surveys would be resource-intensive to carry out in all areas.

BALHARRY, E.M. and DANIELS, M. 1998. Wild living cats in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage, Research, Survey and Monitoring Report No. 23.

DANIELS M.J., BALHARRY D., HIRST D., KITCHENER A.C. and ASPINALL R.J. 1998. Morphological and pelage characteristics of wild living cats in Scotland: implications for defining the 'wildcat'. *Journal of Zoology* 244, 231-247.

DAVIS, A.R., & GRAY, D. 2010. The distribution of Scottish wildcats (*Felis silvestris*) in Scotland (2006-2008). Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 360.

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HARRIS, S., MORRIS, P., WRAY, S. and YALDEN, D. 1995. A review of British Mammals: population estimates and conservation status of British

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2.8.3 Trans-boundary assessment	

2.9 Conclusions (*assessment of conservation status at end of reporting period*)

Please refer to the United Kingdom assessment for this species.

3 Natura 2000 coverage & conservation measures - Annex II species (*only applies to species listed under Annex II of the Directive*)

3.1 Population

3.1.1 Population size

Estimation of population size included in the SAC network

a) Unit

b) Minimum

c) Maximum

3.1.2 Method used

3.1.3 Trend of population size within the network (short-term trend)	

3.2 Conservation measures

Conservation measures taken (i.e. already being implemented) within the reporting period and provided information about their importance, location and evaluation.

3.2.1 Measure	3.2.2 Type					3.2.3 Ranking H = high importance M = medium importance L = low importance	3.2.4 Location where the measure is PRIMARILY applied			3.2.5 Broad evaluation of the measure					
	a) Legal/statutory	b) Administrative	c) Contractual	d) Recurrent	e) One-off		a) Inside	b) Outside	c) Both inside & outside	a) Maintain	b) Enhance	c) Long term	d) No effect	e) Unknown	f) Not evaluated

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